

Nominations & Remuneration Committee

Date of Meeting	Thursday 23 September 2021
Paper Title	Diversity Succession Planning Review 2021
Agenda Item	12
Paper Number	NRC1-G
Responsible Officer	Board Secretary
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Decision

1. Executive Summary

1.1 As part of its membership and recruitment remit, the Committee retains oversight of Board diversity succession planning.

1.2 The following report provides:

- a breakdown of current gender balance;
- a summary report on activity relevant to board diversity and diversity planning in the course of the last year;
- the current Diversity Succession Plan for comment/amendment and approval.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is invited to:

- **consider** the report on progress against the current Diversity Succession Plan;
- **agree** any changes to the plan for 2021-22.

3. Background

- 3.1** Public authorities are required, under the Equality Act 2010 to have in place succession plans to increase the diversity of their boards.
- 3.2** Board diversity refers, in the context of the Scottish Specific Duties, to the protected characteristics defined in the Equalities Act. In terms of the Scottish Government's and the Board's own expectations of what will lead to strong and effective governance, however, diversity refers also to the range of social, educational, economic, and other perspectives that will make for a balanced and representative board. That broad and inclusive definition of diversity has been the basis for GCRB's planning since a Diversity Succession Plan was first agreed in 2017.
- 3.3** While the Board cannot exercise influence over Student and Staff appointments or the Board Chair, Non-Executive appointments/extensions and the appointment/extension of College Board Chairs are within the Board's powers. Non-executive Members account for 56% of the Board.
- 3.4** 2020-21 has been a year of considerable recruitment and appointment activity (a separate paper on membership matters refers to this in more detail), including an open recruitment round to fill three non-executive vacancies.

4. Gender Balance

- 4.1** The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act was passed in 2018 requiring boards to appoint in the interest of achieving 50% women members where there are two or more equally suitable candidates, one of whom is a woman, for a non-executive vacancy.
- 4.2** GCRB has adhered to the new legislation in all of its recruitment activity. The recent recruitment round has resulted in a shift away from the optimum balance to a 30%/70% balance of women to men in the non-executive membership of the Board. This was on the basis that the three candidates chosen (one woman, two men) were judged unanimously by the recruitment panel to be the three best-qualified candidates for the roles.
- 4.3** The three other new appointments in 2020-21 – two Student Members and one Staff Member – were made on the basis of election processes. All three are women.
- 4.4** Other equalities data is retained (anonymised) when new GCRB Board Members are appointed, but is not currently collected by Scottish Government¹.

¹ The Scottish Government has said that it will collate board data on protected characteristics from across the sector and return contextualised data to individual boards.

	Male	Female
Full Board	10 members: 56%	8 members: 44%
By membership category		
Chair of the Board	•	1
Non-Executives	7: 70%	3: 30%
Assigned College Chairs	3: 100%	•
Staff Members	•	2: 100%
Student Members	•	2: 100%

5. Progress Report 2020-21

5.1 Appointments

- a) Three new non-executive members were recruited to fill vacancies arising on 1 August 2021, and the appointments of two existing non-executive members were extended to a second term.

In preparation for recruitment/extension activity, a new Board Skills Matrix was developed, which sought to reflect the wide range of skills, knowledge and experience required. In addition to statutory requirements, and key areas such as finance and education, the new matrix includes teamworking and communication skills, and other areas identified in the diversity succession plan such as equalities, health, including mental health, and social deprivation.

A panel including a Student Board Member and an Independent Person (as specified in the Ministerial guidance) was approved by the Board to undertake the recruitment process. The panel comprised three women and one man.

The departing members' particular strengths included education, higher education and local government/public sector leadership, and the panel felt that these areas, alongside the regional economy and community, should be prioritised.

A video and e-bulletin were produced to promote the vacancies more widely. Thirteen applications were received, from eight men and five women. Four men and four men were interviewed and two men and one woman were appointed.

5.2 Raising Awareness of the Board and its Work

- a) The pandemic has continued to have an impact in this area. An information session that was to have been held as part of the recruitment process did not go ahead. However, a web page (deferred from last year) was launched in April in parallel with the recruitment process to offer an alternative route for anyone who may be interested working with the Board but did not feel in a position to apply for membership.
- b) Digital communications have been enhanced, and Twitter followers have increased by 58% over the past two years.
- c) The website has also been kept under review to ensure information and news are updated regularly.

- d) A mental health [magazine](#) was published featuring regional resources and support available across the Glasgow college region, highlighting GCRB's role and Board member Moira Connolly's specialist input in this field.
- e) Three Glasgow Focus magazines were published featuring interviews and profiles with Board Members. These were designed for staff primarily but also promoted via social media.

5.3 Improving Induction and Support

- a) Core induction sessions were undertaken with all new Members, and finance induction sessions are planned. Induction arrangements have also been expanded to offer new members the opportunity to meet with Executive Team members.
- b) New students joining in August 2021 will be taking up the offer of a more experienced 'mentor' on the Board.
- c) Informal meetings with the Chair were held throughout 2020-21, and were well attended.

5.4 Developing Board Structures and Processes

- a) The review of committee membership subsequent to new appointments has taken account of gender balance, although the Audit & Assurance Committee membership is still predominantly male and there is an overbalance towards female membership on the Nominations & Remuneration Committee.
- b) Home-working and remote meetings continued through the period of the report. Attendance data shows an improvement across all committees and the Board (ref Annual Review of Membership and Tenure).

5.5 Enhancing Board Member Training and Awareness

- a) There has been no Board Member training during 2019-20 focused on equality and diversity.

5.6 Working in Partnership

- a) GCRB has continued to work in partnership, including engagement in Community Planning Partnerships and its work with community organisations.
- b) The regional review process has brought Board Members and other key stakeholders together for a series of consultation and strategic sessions.

6. Current Plan of Action for Promoting Board Diversity

6.1 Introduction

- a) GCRB has had a Diversity Succession Plan in place since 2017, setting out its approach to ensuring a diverse and representative governing body for the Glasgow college region. This plan is reviewed annually by the GCRB Nominations & Remuneration Committee, which has oversight of GCRB's recruitment and appointment activity.
- b) The Scottish Government's guidance on succession planning for public sector boards makes the following case for board diversity:

Diverse boards are more likely to be better able to understand their stakeholders and to benefit from fresh perspectives, new ideas, vigorous challenges and broad experience. This diversity of thought and contribution should result in better corporate governance and decision-making, and, in turn, support continuous improvement of our public services in Scotland.

A Board that reflects the people and communities that it serves is also more likely to have credibility with them, thus promoting public trust in Board decision-making.

6.2 Outline of GCRB's Key Strategic Outcomes

- a) The Glasgow Region Strategic Plan for College Education 2017-2022, seeks to build Scotland's most inclusive, most responsive, and most effective regional college system through the following areas of strategic focus:
 - Ambitious for Glasgow: better lives in a better economy
 - Ambitious for Learners: widening access to life-changing learning
 - Ambitious for Colleges: unlocking regional potential and adding value

6.3 Overview of Target Groups

- a) The Glasgow college region comprises a large, diverse and predominantly metropolitan population and as such, a Board that is truly representative of the Glasgow college region should include members drawn from a range of social and employment backgrounds relative to the Glasgow college region, and embody as far as possible diversity in terms of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- b) GCRB has identified, together with the Glasgow College Boards, a need to attract in particular young members, members drawn from BME communities and members with disabilities.
- c) Given the Board's leadership role in co-ordinating the delivery of a coherent and high quality regional college education service, members with extensive leadership experience and knowledge of the education sector are essential to GCRB fulfilling its ambitions.
- d) Members drawn from industry and commerce – the major Scottish and regional industries, but also SMEs and start-ups – will bring an understanding of the economy into which students will emerge and which they must be equipped to support and lead.
- e) Understanding of the wider economic and political context in which colleges are currently operating is also key, given the changing nature of post-16 education including the move towards more coherent public services and towards a learner journey that is seen as a continuum with alternative progression routes available to learners. Thus, board members drawn from public sector leadership positions and other areas of the education spectrum who have knowledge and experience of the wider educational context are an important component of the Board.
- f) Given that almost a third of the region's students come from the 10% most deprived areas, the Regional Board should include members who have a sound understanding of

social and economic factors affecting the Glasgow region and drivers for social and economic development.

- g) The Board's appointment decisions should also reflect the fact that successful regional governance depends on effective relationships and partnership working across a complex and unique FE governance structure.
- h) The complexity and scale of GCRB's financial responsibilities demand a particular focus on members with financial expertise and the increasing regulation and scrutiny of the sector and its stewardship of public funds necessitate strength, too, in the fields of audit and risk.

7. Proposed Actions for promoting diversity among Board members

7.1 Raising Awareness of the Board and its Work

- a) Ensure statements on diversity and gender balance is clearly visible on Board's web pages.
- b) Continue to develop ways to promote the Board and its work to a wider audience, for example, through social media, stakeholder communications, and regular updates to keep information on the website live.
- c) Continue to work with Equality and Diversity professionals within the college region and external organisations to explore ways to reach underrepresented groups and promote inclusion.
- d) Explore further and, in collaboration with the Colleges, take forward suggestions from the 2018 Joint Boards Diversity Event, for example:
 - Glasgow-wide information events;
 - An information leaflet;
 - Use of networks to extend reach into underrepresented communities;
 - A shared online presence to promote diversity.

7.2 Improving Induction and Support

- a) Consider co-option and/or shadowing to engage less-experienced candidates with potential in the work of the Board.
- b) Explore option of mentoring for new and/or less experienced Board members, creating a more supportive environment.
- c) Encourage good candidates who are not appointed by providing constructive feedback and other opportunities to engage in the work of the Board that may support their development.

7.3 Developing Board Structures and Processes

- a) Continue to develop the Nominations & Remuneration Committee's role, for example, in reviewing and developing its approach to identifying candidates for co-option.
- b) Continue to review recruitment procedures against the diversity checklist to ensure they optimise the potential for underrepresented groups to access membership opportunities and provide for reasonable adjustments during application/interview stages.
- c) Identify and remove potential barriers for appointed members where possible, for example, by keeping the timing of meetings under review to ensure those who are working and/or have childcare commitments are able to attend, or allowing for attendance by video-conference.
- d) Consider ways to encourage members to declare and 'own' their diversity.
- e) Progress Board Members' self-assessment against the revised skills matrix to create a more meaningful record of the Board's strengths and areas for development.

7.4 Enhancing Board Member Training and Awareness

- a) Seek to ensure diversity features in the Board's annual development programme.
- b) Identify external opportunities and encourage Board members' attendance (for example, Changing the Chemistry events).

7.5 Working in Partnership

- a) Continue to work with the College Boards to build on the positive outcomes of previous years' events.
- b) Continue to work with other sector boards/board secretaries, CDN and others to develop and share good practice across the sector.
- c) Engage with bodies, for example, Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government, ACOSVO or the Institute of Directors that may be promoting programmes to develop the 'pipeline' of candidates for non-executive board roles from diverse backgrounds.

8. Risk & Compliance Analysis

- 8.1** If GCRB does not have a sufficiently diverse and skilled membership, it will not operate as effectively as it might. The action plan contained within this report is therefore intended primarily to mitigate risk 0012: the capacity and capability of the Board is inadequate and standards of governance fall below the level required.

9. Financial & Resource Implications

- 9.1.** There are no anticipated costs at this stage for activity associated with the report. Promotional or training activity using external consultants would be managed within existing budgets.

10. Equalities Implications

10.1 The Diversity Succession Plan is compliant with relevant Equalities legislation and regulation and supports the Board's development with regard to equality and diversity objectives.

11. Learner Implications

11.1 This report is not directly relevant to the Regional Outcome Agreement, however, a balanced Board and robust governance arrangements are the essential to the effective determination and delivery of GCRB objectives.