

# BOARD OF MANAGEMENT ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW



2018

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## 1. Background

It was agreed that for the annual Board effectiveness review a survey should be developed and issued to all Board members. The survey was issued in early May with a return date of 14 May 2018. Responses were received from 10 members, out of a possible 18. The following report summarises the responses received and highlights areas of good practice and areas where further consideration and improvement could be made.

## 2. Feedback from Board Members

The survey form was split into 5 parts and the report provides feedback received on each of these parts, as well as an overall summary of the main conclusions and recommendations for improvement.

### Part 1 - Board Meetings

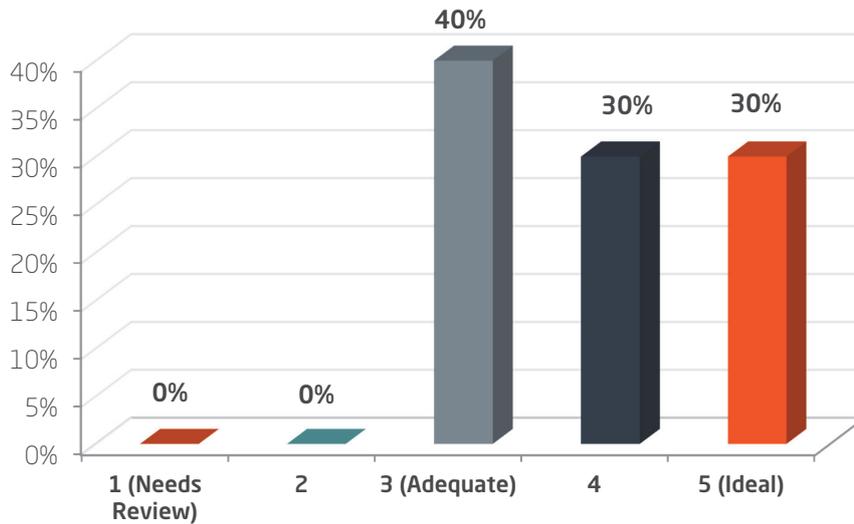
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Overall the feedback is very positive and confirms that the Board members are satisfied with the quality and quantity of information provided, the contributions of the Board members and the Executive in the meetings, and the overall effectiveness of the meetings. In particular Board members confirmed that the Chair promotes a culture of openness and debate. The answers to all of these questions were rated either 4 or 5, with 5 being ideal.

However, there were some areas where some further thought might be given to considering how to make improvements. In relation to the content of the agenda and time allocated for discussion the feedback indicated that some further consideration could be given to this. Although still scoring relatively highly – see diagram below – there is a view that consideration might be given to holding “6 meetings a year to improve Board supervision and agenda pressures”. There is also a comment that

- ◆ **Board agenda could be better focused around issues and key deliverables. Pre-reads vital to cover info and background on issues. Meeting composed of three sections. Dashboard (30 mins) (discuss only issues that impact delivery). Subcon (30 mins) (recommends and decisions) Implementing Strategy (60 mins) (presentations on future issues and step change initiatives).**

**Q10. The content of the agenda and time allocated for discussion.**



## Part 2 - Board Committees

In relation to the committees the Board members confirmed that they are satisfied with the amount of advice and direction provided to the committees to discharge their remit and decision-making, the input from the Senior Management Team to support the work of the committees, as well as the opportunity afforded to provide relevant information to the full Board at Board meetings. There is also positive feedback on the use of co-opted members to support the work of the committees and the general view that the committees are effective. There is perhaps a case for reviewing the frequency and timing of meetings which, although still positive, feedback ranges from a rating of 3 (adequate) 30% to 5 (ideal) 40% (with 30% rating this 4).

While comments received confirmed that overall the committees are working well a view was expressed that more information on some of the agenda items might be helpful, "such as how options were included or discounted for going forwards".

## Part 3 - Board Membership and Contribution

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The feedback relating to the balance and skills of Board members, the effectiveness of Induction arrangements for new members and the on-going development for Board members is overall positive. However, there is a greater spread of responses ranging from 3 (adequate) to 5 (ideal) in each of these areas, although the majority have rated these areas 4 or 5. When asked to identify any development requirements which could enhance the Board's effectiveness there were some ideas proposed. Some of the feedback is provided below:

- ◆ **More externally facilitated strategy sessions**
- ◆ **Board has impressive set of skills and experience. Improving diversity is only way to ensure that communities (the college serves) are fully represented.**
- ◆ **On-going development training for board members similar to the staff online modules would be helpful to ensure competencies are kept current.**
- ◆ **I have a long list of things I would like to know more of, and I'm aware of the opportunities for development, however this is a volunteering position for me that I fit around work and family commitments. I am time poor for attending training events. I would prefer development opportunities to be delivered flexibly and preferably online.**

This last point is an important one for the Board to consider. Board members are volunteers and do have other commitments. A balance needs to be struck between the development needs of the Board and the opportunities, along with the associated time commitment involved, to be provided. Development priorities need to be identified and then consideration given to how best to meet these. The College Development Network (CDN) does already provide a significant amount of information and various on-line modules through its governance network. The Board needs to consider if the College needs to develop some on-line development modules, or if some of those provided for staff could also be shared with Board members, or adapted to meet their needs.

When asked the direct question about individual development requirements, the responses seemed to indicate that keeping up to date with policy/legislation/financial changes and latest trends in education and thinking on skills development are a high priority. Efforts are made to ensure that all the latest reports relating to the sector are circulated to the Board, either at Board meetings as part of the Chair or Chief Executive Reports or between meetings when such reports become available, or through the regular policy briefings issued by Colleges Scotland which are circulated to the Board.

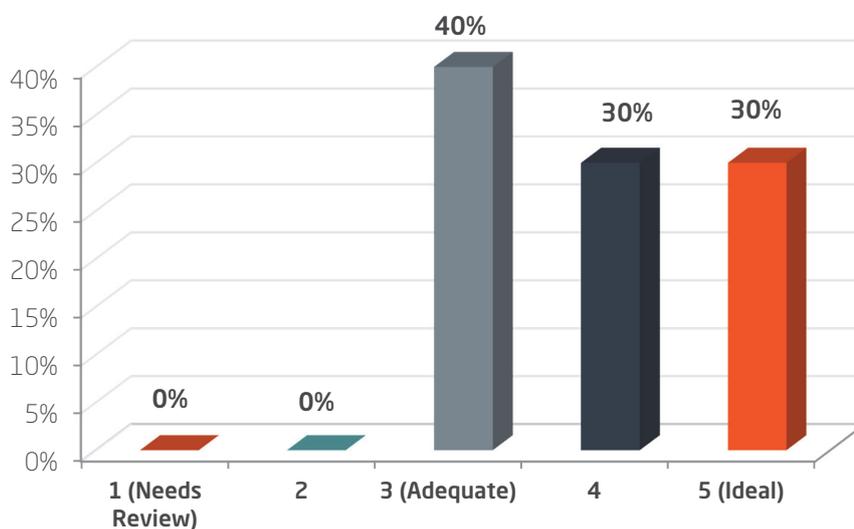
In relation to improving the overall membership of the Board the comment was made that widening diversity would help. The Board established a Short Life Working Group specifically to look at Board Diversity and how greater diversity could be achieved. This Group will report to the Board at its meeting in June 2018 with a clear plan for action.

## Part 4 - Leadership and Strategy

Feedback has confirmed that Board members are satisfied with the contribution of the Board to determine the College strategic direction – see diagram.

Similarly, the feedback confirms that the collective responsibility of the Board and the Executive to achieve the overarching College strategic priorities is achieved - with ratings of 4 (44%) and 5 (56%).

### Q10. The content of the agenda and time allocated for discussion.



There is more of a spread of ratings in response to the questions about access to and provision of information on both the Scottish Government and the SFC priorities to inform decision-making and the development of College strategic priorities, although the majority (66% in both cases) have rated this either a 4 or 5 (ideal). As indicated earlier information from both the Scottish Government and the SFC are provided regularly to the Board through the reports from the Chair and the Chief Executive, as well as through the policy digest from Colleges Scotland. Also sector reports, and other reports that have a bearing on the sector, are circulated to the Board for information. Further, more detailed reports are frequently provided to the Committees in order to assist them in their deliberations. It is queried what more could be provided without overloading Board members with information.

The approach to monitoring and reporting on agreed key performance indicators (kpi's) shows more of a spread in the ratings returned. However, the comments provided do acknowledge that the kpi's have been reviewed and a dashboard is in operation, but it is still early days. A corporate planning session was held recently, attended by Board members and the Senior Management Team. This was a very useful session and was very well received by all who attended. The feedback from this exercise will also feed into the Board Development Action Plan and help shape the kpi's for the future. Further consideration will be given to how best to achieve this.

## Part 5 - College Executive

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The feedback on the College Executive is very positive with most ratings being 5 (ideal). Board members have confirmed that the Executive are efficient and effective in serving the Board and the working relationship between the Board and the Executive/Senior Management Team is excellent. There is also clarity about the role and responsibilities of the Board and the Executive.

One point raised is

- ◆ **I would like to have an ongoing "open question" system where Board Members could ask questions to the Secretary and these are given to SMT to answer - with no particular rush - to fill in knowledge gaps or help with understanding. I know sometimes when Board Members ask questions of individual staff members this can feel daunting or challenging, but I think all of the Board would appreciate an open environment where "silly" questions could be forwarded to a member of SMT to spark further discussion or inform knowledge.**

## Part 6 - Student Experience

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The feedback on the student experience shows more of a spread in ratings. While the majority of responses are positive there is a view that students should be encouraged to contribute more to the Board meetings. Board members are aware that the student members on the Board are actively encouraged to contribute to all matters that come before the Board. However, this can be a daunting prospect for some students. Some of the comments are

- ◆ **Encourage students to contribute more. Spend more time on analysing and acting upon student surveys.**
- ◆ **The heavy and ever- increasing weight of governance (required by Govt.) allows little time to focus on students. Should consider placing Curriculum development / issues at the head of every board agenda.**

Further consideration will be given to this matter.

## 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

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It is pleasing to note that overall the feedback is positive and there are no areas of concern. There are a few areas where ideas for improvement have been suggested and the Board is invited to consider the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1:

the Board should consider the number of meetings it holds each year and whether there is a need to increase the number to 6.

### Recommendation 2:

the Board should review the content and structure of the agenda and the time allocated to each item for discussion and consideration, paying particular attention to the positioning of matters relating to the student experience.

### Recommendation 3:

the frequency and timing of Committee meetings should be considered.

### Recommendation 4

further consideration should be given to the provision of development opportunities for Board members to provide a mix of delivery modes, such as more external speakers and more on-line module options.

### Recommendation 5:

the Board and Committees should continue to monitor the development of the College dashboard and the kpi's used with a view to refining these as appropriate.

### Recommendation 6:

consideration should be given to the development of a communication strategy for the Board and how information is communicated to Board members at the appropriate time.

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