

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT - ANNUAL INTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2021**

1. **Background**

In accordance with Paragraph D.23 of The Code of Good Governance for Scotland’s Colleges, *“the board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness at least every three years. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year’s plan) to its funding body and publish them online”.*

It was agreed at the 1 February 2021 Board meeting that, for the annual internal Board effectiveness review 2021, the same survey that was used in 2018 and 2019 should be issued to all Board members again this year. The survey was issued on 1 March 2021 with a closing date of 19 March 2021. Responses were received from 7 members, out of a possible 18. The following report summarises the responses received.

The Board last undertook an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness in late 2019 with the feedback report being approved at the Board meeting held in February 2020.

It is noted that three new Non-Executive Board Members took up their first Term of Office from 1 February 2021. Furthermore. following approval of a Committee restructure at the Board meeting held on 1 February 2021, the Board and Committees were asked to approve their revised remits and memberships in March 2021. These meetings were the first Board / Committee meetings for the three new members and, therefore, a caveat is included in this analysis report acknowledging that.

1. **Feedback from Board Members**

The survey was split into 6 parts and this report provides feedback received on each of these parts, as well as an overall summary of the main conclusions.

**Part 1 – Board Meetings**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Frequency of Board meetings.
* Distribution of papers for Board Meetings.
* How meetings are chaired.
* Executive contributions in meetings.
* Overall effectiveness of the Board Meetings.
* Quality and quantity of information and advice provided to Board Members to support effective discussion and decision making.
* Chair promotes a culture of openness and debate.

There were some areas identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements including:

* Board Members' contributions in meetings.
* The profile of the student contribution to Board Meetings.
* The content of the agenda and time allocated for discussion.
* The process for Board Member Appraisal.

Comments submitted were:

* Early days with new structure yet so not able to rank yet. Good that meetings are ending early which means necessary space is being created for much needed forward looking strategic debate on the big issues.
* We should encourage a greater level of constructive criticism to hold the Executive team to account and keep us all honest. Some management team members favour very formal formats which doesn’t lend to discussion. The Board largely react to management’s priorities as opposed to any Board plan for its work and key objectives. The entire board should determine and agree upon what we want to accomplish over the next 12 months, three years, five years.
* I genuinely feel that we've taken on board so many comments and actions from previous effectiveness reviews, to get to a place where everything really is working well. Of course, nothing is ever perfect and there is always room for improvement, but I do feel we've got the right balance of membership and everyone is encouraged to get involved and make their voices heard.
* It is difficult to have a full discussion on all areas due to time. However, this is amplified due to calls being online and I would hope we can move back to face to face meetings when conditions allow.

**Part 2 – Board Committees**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Opportunity to provide relevant information to the full Board at Board Meetings.
* Use of co-opted members to support the work of the committees.
* Input of the wider Senior Management Team to the relevant committee.
* Frequency and timings of committees.
* Committee(s) effectiveness overall.

There was one area identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements:

* Amount of advice and direction provided to the Board Committees to discharge their remit and decision making.

Comments submitted were:

* Ensure that each agenda has at least one item examining options rather than merely approving recommendations.
* I think the new committee structure will take time to become embedded as we realign existing priorities into the new framework. However, based on the existing structure, things have worked well, and adequate time is available to discuss key points during each committee meeting, for feedback into the wider BoM meetings.
* It is early days in the new committee structure to comment but a greater time opportunity to feedback to board will be important. Too often committee reports are at the end of the agenda and can feel rushed.

**Part 3 – Board Membership and Contribution**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Balance and skills of Board Members.

There were two areas identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements:

* Effectiveness of the induction arrangements for new Members.
* Ongoing development for Board Members.

When asked to identify any development requirements which could enhance the Board’s effectiveness, the following comments were submitted:

* Latest thought leaders in education.
* I think we can always be open to new opportunities for development as we live in a constantly evolving world - COVID-19 has taught us that! That said, I don't feel there's anything "pressing" that needs to be addressed urgently.
* A number of new members have joined in the past year. It is difficult to build relationships and trust amongst members whilst on Teams calls.

When asked the question about individual development requirements that would enhance contribution, responses included:

* Understanding of the senior school - college - university landscape and how it connects.
* I'm always looking for new opportunities to develop my existing skillset and become a more active contributor to Board and Committee forums.
* None other than getting to know my fellow board members better.

In relation to improving the overall membership of the Board, the following comments were submitted:

* Improve diversity of ideas and thought through use of co-opted members on committees from differing backgrounds.
* I think we do have a good balance of members at the present time however we do need to keep this under constant review to ensure a diverse range of people feed into the work of the Board.
* The work undertaken on this by the board has been effective.

**Part 4 – Leadership and Strategy**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Access to and provision of information on Scottish Government priorities to inform decision making and the development of College Strategic Priorities.
* Access to and provision of information on Scottish Funding Council priorities to inform decision making and the development of College Strategic Priorities.
* Contribution of the Board to determine the College Strategic direction.
* Collective responsibility of the Board and Executive to activate the overarching College Strategic Priorities.

There were a few areas identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements including:

* Approach to monitoring and reporting on agreed KPIs.
* Approach to monitoring and reporting on agreed KPIs associated with committee priorities.
* Board’s contribution to improving the economic and social wellbeing in the West Region.
* Leadership of the Board in equality and diversity.

Comments submitted were:

* Urgent need to adopt a more KPI driven approach to evaluating the benefit of strategy and whether or not it is being achieved by the College. We currently have a list that serves little real purpose (classic tick box).
* The right structures and approaches appear to be in place.
* I've always found the WCS board to be very effective however we've taken the time learn from any mistakes and taken the advice of previous reviews to make improvements in certain areas.
* Input by SFC and Scotland's colleges has not created confidence from the board. This can be a frustration but is by no means a criticism of the college executive team.

**Part 5 – College Executive**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Experience of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Executive in serving the Board.
* Clarity of the role and responsibilities of the Board and the College Executive.

There was one area identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements:

* Effectiveness of the working relationship between the Board and the Executive/SMT.

Comments submitted were:

* Very fortunate to have a team who are obviously very motivated to include the board in the decision-making process.
* I think the Executive for the most part play an important role in keeping the Board updated on any issues we need to be aware of; the Executive are always very engaging with the Board and quickly provide additional information that may be sought for future meetings, for example.
* We are fortunate to have an excellent executive team who work well with the board and the committees.

**Part 6 – Student Experience**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Quality of the student experience is central to Board decisions.
* Autonomy of the Student Association.

There was one area identified where some further thought might be given to how to make improvements:

* The student voice and influence at Board Meetings.

Comments submitted were:

* Good record of ensuring we understand the student point of view and feelings.
* I should like to see a larger role for the student voice and a sense that the student member is able to contribute across the whole business of the board and not just in relation to the reports from the student association.
* I think the involvement of Student President and other representatives of the SA is invaluable in keeping the Board aware of what the students want although I do wonder whether more direct linkage with the students whenever possible would add more real benefit in helping the Board to engage with the student body.
* The student representatives are always engaged as any board member would be. Having their report further up the agenda has helped.

1. **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the feedback is positive. There are a few areas where ideas for improvement have been suggested and the Board is invited to consider these and suggest how they may form part of the Board Development Action Plan 2021.

It is noted that three new Non-Executive Board Members took up their first Term of Office from 1 February 2021. Furthermore. following approval of a Committee restructure at the Board meeting held on 1 February 2021, the Board and Committees were asked to approve their revised remits and memberships in March 2021. These meetings were the first Board / Committee meetings for the three new members and, therefore, a caveat is included in this analysis report acknowledging that.