

**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT - ANNUAL INTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2022**

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 7 February 2022 Board meeting that, for the annual *internal* Board effectiveness review 2022, the same survey that was used in 2021 should be issued to all Board members again this year. The survey was issued on Tuesday 1 March 2022 with a closing date of Friday 18 March 2022. Responses were received from 10 members, out of a possible 16. 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 on 3 February 2020.

It is noted that two new non-Executive Board Members took up their first Term of Office from 1 December 2021 and one new non-Executive on 1 February 2022. With that in mind and as the survey had to be conducted in March so early into their terms, they were asked to include comments on their experience / practice from other organisations they had worked with, so the Board may benefit from that information, and it may be transferrable to the College.

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.
* Board Members' contributions in meetings.
* 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.
* Profile of the student contribution to Board Meetings.
* Chair promotes a culture of openness and debate.
* Content of the agenda and time allocated for discussion.
* Process for Board Member Appraisal.

Comments submitted on how the effectiveness of Board Meetings could be enhanced were:

* As a new Board member, I am very impressed with the format and attendance at the board, particularly following my CDN training and seeing best practice in practice.
* If board papers could be issued on the Friday ten days before the board meeting on the Monday it would be helpful. The papers can be very substantial and an additional weekend to read them would be helpful particularly given other commitments and working full time. Hopefully it would not be too onerous for the Management team as it is only one business day earlier than they are currently issued.
* Perhaps an area for improvement would be around the student association and the active voice of the students.
* Encourage more participation and scrutiny.
* The use of MS Teams should continue - the ability for comments and responses without interrupting proceedings is helpful, as is the ability to view documents, web pages and other information whilst in meetings is also helpful and enhances our effectiveness to contribute and to check information there and then.
* Hard to answer as we remain fully online which brings challenges for full engagement. I think meetings are as effective as they can be within that constraint. Papers are generally fine but having some form of dashboard and / or action tracker tied to the KPIs, and strategic plan would make it much easier to understand where we are in terms of performance at any given time. This was highlighted at sector level in CDN's EER overview report last autumn.
* Where I scored slightly lower relates to the challenges of having online board meetings due to covid restrictions. A blended model going forward would be helpful to ensure we get to know each other better, to understand perspectives and have constructive debate on key issues.
* I find the board meetings very effective, very well managed and communication / distribution of documents is very good. I have only attended a couple of board meetings so the only very minor criticism I would have is the agenda is very full but I expect this is a rarity as opposed to the norm.

**Part 2 – Board Committees**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Amount of advice and direction provided to the Board Committees to discharge their remit and decision making.
* 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.
* Committee(s) effectiveness overall.

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

* Frequency and timings of committees.

Comments submitted on how the effectiveness of Board Committees could be enhanced were:

* I think there is still a bedding in process with the new committee structure, but I think it is a positive improvement. The focus areas on the LTQ committee are useful.
* The new arrangements are working well. The changes both in the board and the senior management team are working effectively and continue to build on the excellent foundations in place but take it to the next level. Changes to reporting templates etc are also working well.
* Encourage wider participation and scrutiny.
* I think the new committees are still bedding in and need to establish their annual patterns of work, but they seem to be working well so far.
* We have evolved our committee structure which allows us to manage board meetings more effectively with a strategic focus on the agenda. Our deeper dive sessions allow us to step back from the formal governance arrangements and take time to understand some of the key areas of the business.
* I am on a committee but have not attended any committee meetings yet as I have only recently joined the board so unable to comment much here.

**Part 3 – Board Membership and Contribution**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

* Balance and skills of Board Members.
* 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:

* I personally feel returning to in person meetings will enrich my role on the Board with the ability to meet and talk with the other members pre and post meetings.
* The deep dive sessions are very useful. Continued use of these, more time on campus and more interaction with students and other stakeholders.
* The deep dive sessions continue to be effective, and the next strategy session will give a key insight into the future developments for the board and college.
* The Board needs to be provided with relevant metrics / KPIs setting out how the college is performing in meeting its strategic, financial, and statutory obligations.
* Meeting board colleagues personally.
* This may be an issue of still being affected by COVID restrictions, but it would be good to see more opportunities for development as a group. The deep dive sessions are excellent, but these are more about our understanding of the college than about the development of our own effectiveness as a board. We are told about the CDN governance sessions, and I have attended many of these but have only seen one or two other WCS board members (always the same ones) at them. I realise this is an issue of time and availability but as in person meetings become possible again, I would like to see some development sessions for the whole board, which would also help with team building given that there has been a high turnover of members.
* We have had a lot of new members in the past 2 years, and we would benefit from more face-to-face interaction. Board social activity like college visits, dinners etc have additional benefits on our effectiveness that we have lost during current restrictions

When asked about individual Board member development requirements that would enhance contribution, responses were:

* Good support shared by the Board Secretary of CDN courses.
* I am looking forward to the campus tours.
* Recently appointed into new roles and have support from the Secretary to the Board, CDN and other avenues including much appreciated support from the Chair and Executive Team.
* Knowing more about funding council and bodies like Education Scotland
* The deep dive sessions help a lot and I'd like to see these continue. They fulfil my main requirement which is to gain an understanding of the issues the college faces. As per my last comment, I think that as we emerge from COVID restrictions, sessions that allow me to get to know other board members better would be very beneficial. When fully online and with many new members I don't feel I have gelled with others as a team yet and would like to be able to get to know the rest of the board better so that we can function effectively together.
* No, I am fully supported in this through CDN and my annual review discussions with the chair.
* Yes, I would like to learn more about the College, there are already plans for this and it is only because I am so new to the board.

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

* Encourage younger members?
* I think the balance of the membership is good, although having got a good balance in terms of age, gender, and areas of expertise we could still do with considering other areas such as ethnicity and disability.
* We have worked tirelessly on this area and have made significant progress as a board.

**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.
* Contribution of the Board to determine the College Strategic direction.
* Collective responsibility of the Board and Executive to activate the overarching College Strategic Priorities.
* Board’s contribution to improving the economic and social wellbeing in the West Region.
* Leadership of the Board in equality and diversity.

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

* Access to and provision of information on Scottish Funding Council priorities to inform decision making and the development of College Strategic Priorities.
* Approach to monitoring and reporting on agreed KPIs.
* Approach to monitoring and reporting on agreed KPIs associated with committee priorities.

Comments submitted on how the leadership of the full Board could be enhanced were:

* I believe enhanced use of KPIs / scorecards will be beneficial.
* The Board has yet to receive formal KPIs to enable it to monitor the college's performance across strategic, financial, and statutory obligations / commitments.
* CDN needs to do more?
* As noted in previous answers, I would appreciate a clearer reporting framework or dashboard for the key KPIs. We are often presented with a large volume of papers (which in themselves are always excellent) but support for understanding the overall picture would be helpful. For example, being able to see the level of credits achieved, enrolments, attainment and retention against targets would be invaluable. This is not about getting too involved in the detail and it may be because I'm not reading the papers well enough, but I don't feel sighted properly on these issues. On the point about the wider environment, since the departure of the policy officer we no longer have the excellent policy briefings which provided this wider picture, and it would be helpful to have something similar again. Forwarding emails from bodies such as Colleges Scotland and CDN is helpful, but they sometimes need context or summaries.
* Greater visibility and interaction with SFC.

**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.
* Effectiveness of the working relationship between the Board and the Executive / SMT.
* Clarity of the role and responsibilities of the Board and the College Executive.

Comments submitted on how improvements could be made were:

* Understanding more about who does what and why.
* I think this area works well. If there is an improvement that could be made it's perhaps in being clearer what we can do to help the Executive - their work is excellent and we rarely have substantive changes to strategic papers and policies to suggest, so it's hard to know what other than providing positive feedback we can do. So it may be that it would help to know a bit more about what we can provide in terms of expertise that would help.
* We have an excellent executive who work well with the board whilst understanding the respective governance arrangements.

**Part 6 – Student Experience**

Feedback confirms that Board members are satisfied with the:

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

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

* Autonomy of the Student Association.
* The student voice and influence at Board Meetings.

Comments submitted on how improvements could be made were:

* The student rep should be encouraged to provide more input to the wider agenda at Board. This would help promote the student voice and be invaluable in their own development.
* Board to hear more student stories.
* Inclusion of Student unions and maybe election of a representative from class reps not involved with the Student Association - a student without any influence except from other class reps.
* The reports from the SA president are always encouraging and informative. It would be good to see the student members being able to contribute more as board members in their own right and this may mean that more support needs to be given to them either through the college or sparqs to make sure that they are able to engage confidently and understand their role and the issues before the board. This is not a comment on the student board members as individuals, they are clearly very able, it's about how we as a board support them to be effective members.
* This has ebbed and flowed depending on the student representatives. I believe we need to strive for greater input to discussion and provide the necessary support and coaching to undertake this. It is not easy for the students involved but vital to the work of the board.
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 2022.

It is noted that two new non-Executive Board Members took up their first Term of Office from 1 December 2021 and one new non-Executive on 1 February 2022 and a caveat is included in this analysis report acknowledging that.