Audit Committee Meeting

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 6 March 2018
Paper Title	Audit Scotland External Review
Agenda Item	11
Paper Number	AC3-G
Responsible Officer	Robin Ashton, GCRB Executive Director
Recommended Status	Disclosable
Action	For noting

1. **Report Purpose**

   1.1. To report on an Audit Scotland review of GCRB.

2. **Recommendations**

   2.1. The Committee is invited to **note** this report and **request** a further update on the outputs of the Audit Scotland review of GCRB at a future meeting of the Committee.

3. **Audit Scotland Review of GCRB**

   3.1. Members will be aware that Audit Scotland undertake an annual overview of Scotland's Colleges. The fieldwork takes place during February and March each year with the report being published in June. A copy of the 2017 report is available via the following link (http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/scotlands-colleges-2017) and was considered by the GCRB Audit Committee in October 2017.

   3.2. For the 2018 Audit Scotland report, the remit was extended to include an assessment of the difference regional bodies in the three multi-college regions have made. A full project scope is attached for information as Annex A.

   3.3. GCRB liaised with Mark McCabe, Audit Scotland's Lead Manager regarding their information requirements and audit fieldwork. A range of regional background documents were provided including; the Strategic Plan, Regional Outcome Agreement, Annual Report and Accounts and GCRB Board and Committee reports and minutes. A statement on the positive impact of collaboration across the colleges and GCRB was collated for review participants and is attached for member information as Annex B.

   3.4. Audit Scotland asked to meet a range of people within the region as part of their audit programme and a schedule was drawn up, including meetings with:

   - Chair of the GCRB, Assigned College Chair, GCRB Vice-Chair, and GCRB Committee Chairs

   - GCRB Executive Director and Finance and Resources Director

- College Principals

- GCRB Student Board Member

- Chair of Regional Learning and Teaching Group

- Regional Leads for Developing the Young Workforce and Student Data

- SFC Assistant Director and Glasgow Region ROA Manager

- Employment and Skills Principal Officer at Glasgow City Council Education Services

3.5. At the time of writing, the review activity has yet to conclude and no formal feedback has been provided. However, Audit Scotland have suggested that an opportunity to discuss initial outputs of the audit work will be provided in March/April with the final report due to be published in June 2018.

4. **Risk Analysis, legal implications, financial implications and Strategic Plan implications**

4.1. As the report findings are not yet known, it is not possible to assess implications of the review. However, the review has provided an opportunity to demonstrate the positive impact of a strategic approach and greater collaboration across the Glasgow College Region.

Project scope

Scotland's colleges 2018

AUDITORGENERAL

Scotland's colleges contribute to sustainable economic growth by helping to develop a highly educated and skilled workforce. Scotland's colleges operate across 13 regions, delivering a wide range of further and higher education courses to over 220,000 students. These courses provide people with a variety of skills and experience to take forward into the workplace or on to further training or education.

The Scottish Government provides Scotland's colleges with over £550 million a year to deliver agreed levels of further and higher education. In

Scotland's colleges 2017 ⬇ we reported that the financial health of the sector had deteriorated and college finances will continue to be central to our audit work this year.

What is the scope of the audit?

This year's overview will consider how colleges are positioned to meet the future challenges – both financial and otherwise. In addition, we will consider how the regional arrangements in the three multi-college regions are helping the sector.

The 2018 audit will build on last year's report published in June 2017. In this year's overview our analysis of the sector will include both incorporated colleges (ie, publicly funded colleges established under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992) and non-incorporated colleges. The audit will:

- assess how colleges performed over the past year

- review the financial position of the sector and assess how well colleges manage their finances

- assess what difference the regional bodies in the three multi-college regions have made.

How will we carry out this audit?

We will mostly draw information from colleges' annual accounts and audit reports. We will also use information held by organisations including individual colleges, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government. We will interview senior officials in the sector and consult with other stakeholders, including staff and student unions.

What impact will the audit have?

Our report will examine the financial position of Scotland's colleges and trends in student participation (including student attainment and retention). These two areas have been of significant public interest.

By reviewing all of Scotland's colleges, the 2018 overview will give a comprehensive picture of performance against the Scottish Government's national target for learning activity.

The overview will provide the first assessment of the effectiveness of regional arrangements, with a particular focus on the regional bodies in multi-college regions.

We will also highlight any future challenges the sector faces. Based on this, we will make recommendations for colleges, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government to support the ongoing performance and financial sustainability of the sector.

Audit timetable

We aim to publish our report in June 2018. Following publication, the Auditor General for Scotland will present the findings to the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee. This is one of a range of reports Audit Scotland plans to publish in 2018. Our full rolling work programme can be accessed at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/our-work/future-work/our-work-programme ⬎.

Contact

If you have any questions about this audit, please get in touch with Mark McCabe, Audit Manager, on 0131 625 1806 or by email at mmccabe@audit-scotland.gov.uk ✉.

Making a difference to the Glasgow College Region

1. Introduction

This paper summarises the significant impacts that regional collaboration and coordination is having on learners, stakeholders and college service delivery in Glasgow. It focuses on the following areas:
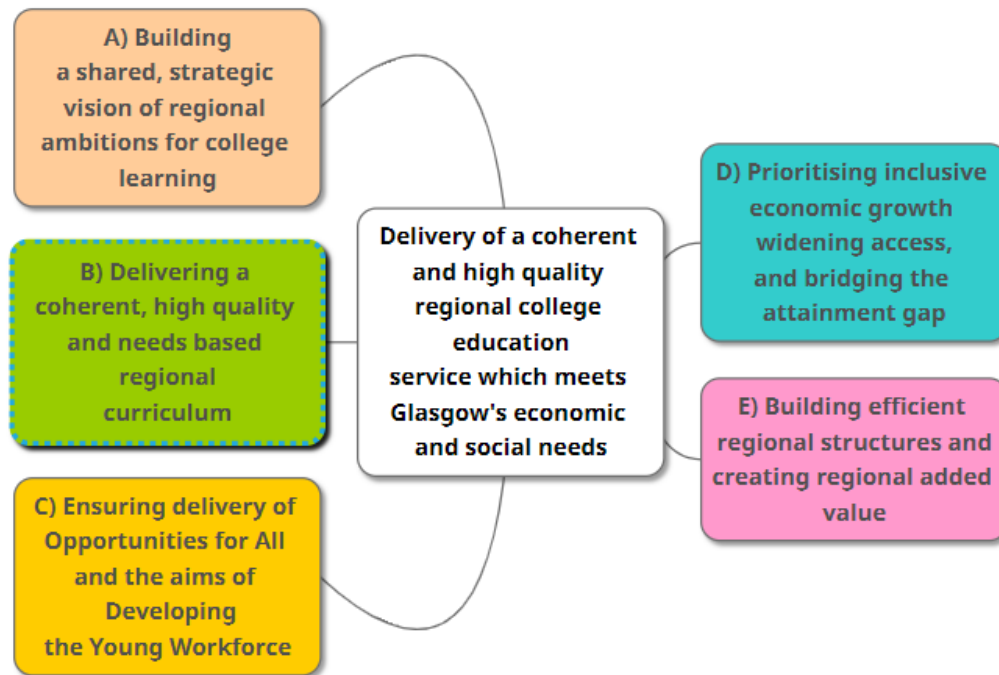
2. Impacts on learners, stakeholders and college service delivery

2.1 What we've achieved so far

A) Building a shared, strategic vision of regional ambitions for college learning

- In October <u>we launched Glasgow's first Regional Strategy for College Education</u>, containing the overarching ambition to build Scotland's most inclusive, most responsive and most effective regional college system. This jointly developed strategy will be driven by the strong partnerships which exist between GCRB, the Glasgow colleges and regional partners.

- <u>We have developed and implemented an enhanced stakeholder engagement structure</u>. Colleagues in education, partners in industry and other stakeholders now benefit from 'one-door' access to GCRB. Our 'Glasgow's Big Asks' event gathered stakeholders' views on the future strategic priorities for the Glasgow college region.

- Working with the New Engineering Foundation (NEF), <u>we have developed a regional STEM strategy with integrated STEM strategies for the individual colleges.</u> These ensure that a coherent and future-oriented strategic framework supports curriculum and resource development.

B) Delivering a coherent, high quality and needs based regional curriculum

- Our development plan for the Glasgow region curriculum and estate has ensured that <u>the right provision is provided in the right place, and with the best possible use of the three colleges' resources and facilities</u>. The poorest quality accommodation of the Glasgow estate (the former Stow College) has been closed through inter-college transfers of activity totalling 15,000 Credits.

- <u>We have significantly improved overall learner attainment levels. Now,</u> the region with by far the largest proportion of delivery to learners from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds has an overall attainment rate above the national average for Scotland (75% compared to 72% in Scotland). This is clear evidence that the Glasgow College Region is bridging the attainment gap.

- <u>We have aligned the curriculum more closely to employment needs</u> and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of learner journeys. Our economic sector targets have driven a more coherent regional curriculum. Furthermore, curriculum hubs have supported the development of regional curriculum maps to set out more efficient pathways and opportunities for learners' progression across the Glasgow Region's curriculum.

C) Ensuring delivery of Opportunities for All and the aims of Developing the Young Workforce

- <u>We now deliver the largest Regional Foundation Apprenticeship programme in Scotland.</u> This is achieved in partnership with SDS and coordinated regionally by a single team with specialist school and employer engagement staff.

- The development of annual regional DYW development plans <u>has increased significantly the range and relevance of Senior Phase college learning opportunities</u> (from 95 programmes in 2014-15 to 155 in 2016-17). This has strengthened alignment to regional jobs and growth and also increased collaboration with local employers.

- <u>We have created regional vocational progression pathways videos and curriculum maps</u> designed to promote and improve understanding of college learning opportunities for school pupils and how these integrate with mainstream college courses.

D) Prioritising inclusive economic growth widening access, and bridging the attainment gap

- In response to the higher than average levels of Glasgow region residents with low or no qualifications, <u>we have increased the volume of curriculum delivery provided at Further Education levels.</u> This means that more learners can access college study learning opportunities and progress to higher level study.

- <u>We have increased the volume of activity provided to SIMD10 residents</u>. By expanding activity in community locations, we have also our increased our delivery of community-based learning.

- Our new Regional Applications Working Group Agreeing <u>has agreed common regional entry qualifications across subject groupings</u>. This is improving the consistency and quality of support offered to learners across the region.

E) Building efficient regional structures and adding value

- <u>We have saved £1.7 million through a regional approach to procurement.</u> APUC's national frameworks for purchases as varied as library systems, sports and art kits, security services, and waste management have freed up more regional resources for learning.

- <u>We have further developed regional funding arrangements that align better with strategic goals.</u> National formula-based approaches, have been replaced with a regional needs-based, capital funding process. This ensures that Glasgow's capital expenditure is strategically aligned to areas of greatest regional need. It also supports regional efficiencies.

- <u>We have established a regional collaborative management structure</u> with nominated Regional Leads coordinating the development of shared delivery in areas such as Organisational Development, Student Experience and Student Data Systems.

2.2 Our future regional priorities

A key regional priority is to continue to widen access to life-changing college learning and support more Glasgow residents, and particularly those from who can benefit most from college learning, in building successful careers and contributing to inclusive economic growth. Our colleges will work jointly with Education Scotland to drive improvements in retention and attainment rates, including those for protected characteristic groups and learners from the 10% most deprived postcode areas.

Our regional Curriculum Hubs will continue to build clearer and more flexible vocational learning pathways across the regional curriculum, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of learner journeys. We will also develop a regional approach to student data services facilitating seamless progression between our colleges, and from school and to university.

We will also continue to expand our Senior Phase offer, including a target of 1,000 Foundation Apprenticeships by 2020 and we will extend early intervention approaches to tackle subject-based gender imbalances.

The collaborative development of regional strategic approaches to finance and estates will support institutional sustainability and drive more efficient service delivery.

We will offer a more coherent and consistent student experience and deliver an inclusive and supportive student experience for all learners across the Glasgow college region. We will also encourage all students to enhance their learning as individuals, as representatives, and as officers in strong and eff-ective student associations.

Our regional collaboration will provide more opportunities for staff to share knowledge and skills through a regional professional learning community. This will create a wider range and depth of regional CPD opportunities, with greater support for staff industry placements. We will also ensure that the Fair Work Framework is at the heart of working relationships and that all Glasgow colleges and GCRB are Living Wage Accredited employers.