

Plan of Action for Promoting Board Diversity 2020-21

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.

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

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.

4. Proposed Actions for promoting diversity among Board members

i) Raising Awareness of the Board and its Work

- a) Ensure statement 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.

ii) 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.

iii) 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.

iv) 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).

v) 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.