

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 29 November 2021
Paper Title	Glasgow College Region Strategy Development Update
Agenda Item	14
Paper Number	BM2-I
Responsible Officer	Martin Boyle, Executive Director
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Noting

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board's current overarching strategy *Glasgow Region Strategic Plan for College Education 2017-2022* is the current overarching strategic document which seeks to provide coherent direction to the Glasgow college regional system, comprising GCRB, City of Glasgow College, Glasgow Clyde College and Glasgow Kelvin College.
- 1.2** The existing strategy continues to provide direction for operational activity, including the development of the Outcome Agreement for the Glasgow college region.
- 1.3** However, a new, longer-term strategy is required for launch in the middle part of 2022, and initial work has commenced. Board will continue to be updated on progress, engaged in further development, and take a lead role in completion of the strategy through 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Board is invited to **note** the current position of the work, and **note** the planned schedule of activity and development work.

3. Report

- 3.1** The current Glasgow Region Strategic Plan for College Education 2017-2022ⁱ was the first multi-college regional strategic development of its kind, providing a useful baseline for strategic activity as well as articulating a key set of ambitions. It has operated for some time, providing direction, and operating as the core reference for development of the annual Outcome Agreement document.
- 3.2** It has supported significant regional progress during this period, including the development of a variety of coherent cross-colleges and cross-region planning and delivery. This has included the development of the associated Memorandum of Understanding which seeks to provide region-wide curriculum planning and cooperation, shared projects such as ESOL and Foundation Apprenticeships, and targeted action for key groups via the Programme of Action, which is intended as direct, operational project delivery in support of strategy.
- 3.3** However, it is recognised that a different type of strategy is now required for a variety of reasons, and this work is intended to begin to address this and to take forward development of a new strategy.
- 3.4** Activity to date includes:
- Economic and industry regional engagement session
 - College of the Future engagement session
 - Development of new board priorities/thematic outcomes as part of regional review activity;
 - Development session with board to consider priorities and to develop initial direction for future development, including input from Glasgow college principals;
 - Initial collation of key documents and policies to inform future development work, taking account of key areas including national and governmental policies, stakeholder and partner developments, and wider context, including economic development, local authority work, environment and sustainability development, and other drivers of strategy.
- 3.5** It had been intended that the recruitment of an external consultant for the Glasgow region review work would increase capacity in the existing team. However, that position has now been changed following on-going discussion with Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Therefore, planning is underway to ensure activity continues to a planned timescale. As an overview to board of strategy and associated activity, the following timetable of activity is intended as an indicative initial framework for on-going development:
- November 2021: Regional Outcome Agreement 21-22 completed;
 - November 2021: Regional Review internal reports completed;
 - November 2021: Evaluative reports completed, and submitted alongside OA to SFC;
 - December 2021: Initial OA KPIs 2022-2023 shared with Glasgow colleges for draft, and with board in early 2022;

- February/March 2023: Impact Assessment (replacement for OA) 22-23 draft completed;
- January-April 2023: Further development and engagement sessions around strategy development, including focused workshop on resources and funding and operational outcomes;
- May 2023: May 2022: Glasgow Region Strategy 2023-2040 draft with board;
- Latter 2022-early 2023: Following review and strategy development, refresh associated Curriculum and Estates/Resources Plan, and Regional Curriculum Plans;

3.6 At this time, the development of the Outcome Agreement 2022-2023 and strategy development work will seek to increasingly mirror content, with the following board-approved focus at the heart of both elements:

3.7 The first set of thematic drivers will be the 10 themes developed in initial phases of our regional review, and agreed by board. These were:

- Theme One: Current and future students, and equalities, at the heart of everything
- Theme Two: Glasgow colleges as centres of excellence in learning
- Theme Three: Glasgow colleges supporting those most in need
- Theme Four: Glasgow colleges at the heart of communities
- Theme Five: Effective Strategic Direction and Relationships
- Theme Six: Enhancing Collaboration
- Theme Seven: Financial Sustainability
- Theme Eight: Funding – Effective, efficient and responsive
- Theme Nine: Governance – Strategic, coherent and clear
- Theme 10: Future Structures

3.8 The **second** set of measures are the SFC's key recommendations in their RSB review, which out to be built in as Outcome Agreement and strategy drivers, and which are summarised as follows:

- Maintaining effective relationships
- Further develop and ensure that the region's running/operating costs are appropriate and efficient
- Explore other organisational options, including:
 - build on and secure pan-regional planning;
 - further efficiency gains;

- the financial viability of the constituent colleges;
- a Glasgow front door for students, employers and other stakeholders.

3.9 The third set of potential guiding measures are contained in the SFC’s Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research (29 June 2021) which sets out a set of ‘guiding principles’ to underpin future functions. These are:

- Keeps the interests of current and future students and researchers, and equalities, at the centre of our work;
- Takes a system-wide perspective;
- Supports local decision making;
- Secures quality and public value;
- Is fair.

3.10 The **fourth** set develop these guiding principles further, with the report providing an overview into what SFC deem to be a ‘coherent system’. They include the following:

For a learner, a coherent system means:

- You have learning, skills and qualifications that provide knowledge and attributes that are transferable, updatable and relevant internationally.
- Wherever you live and wherever you come from, you have regional access to education up to SCQF level 8 (Higher National Diploma, Diploma for Higher Education).
- You have opportunities for learning and training that contribute to Scotland’s social and economic prosperity over your lifetime, irrespective of mode or level of study.
- You take fewer wrong turns, dead ends, and repeats, and you have effective guidance and information to help you find an efficient path through your learner journey.

For an employer or business, a coherent system means:

- Whatever the size and nature of your business, there are channels for you to engage with the expertise of colleges and universities, when and where you need it.
- You have access to an educated and skilled workforce that is ready for the world of work and can quickly develop new or specialist skills when you need them.
- You have opportunities to develop the expertise to optimise your business performance and productivity through connections with colleges and universities.

- You can work with colleges and universities to accelerate and grow through knowledge exchange and technology transfer, and to plan for the skills you need to change and innovate.

For Scotland, the coherent system is:

- Resilient for the future.
- Affordable in the short and long term.
- Effective: it provides a diverse and required mix of provision at regional and national level; is capable of delivering new insights, quality provision, employable graduates, excellent research, innovation & enterprise; and tackles inequality.
- Efficient: it operates at the right scale, and with others, to minimise duplication, optimise digital technology, and tackle the climate crisis.
- Able to deliver research and teaching at world-class level with global impact, making Scotland an attractive place to invest in, study, research and locate your business.
- Strengthening communities and building partnerships that collectively address the challenges and opportunities for economic and social transformation.

3.11 The Glasgow strategic drivers were seen as a distillation of these interlinked strategic indicators, and articulated as follows:

1. For **learners**, change ensures that they are at the centre of the system, with ensured equality, fairness, lifetime access to learning, skills, qualifications, guidance and information to help you find an efficient learner journey with more right turns, effective progression, and appropriate progress. The Glasgow college system effectively supports those most in need.
2. For **communities**, change ensures colleges at the heart of their communities, with effective local decision making, effectively meeting the needs of those most in need to access effective life-changing education opportunities. Colleges will play a key role in strengthening communities and building partnerships that collectively address the challenges and opportunities for economic and social transformation.
3. For **colleges**, as anchor institutions at the heart of the Glasgow eco-system, they are enabled to deliver outstanding learning, skills and qualifications at all relevant levels of the SCQF ladder which enhances Glasgow and Scotland's social and economic prosperity, across multiple modes and levels of study.
4. For the **Glasgow college system**, clear and effective strategic structures, direction and relationships deliver enhanced pan-regional planning and collaboration through strategic, coherent, clear governance and management.
5. For **Scotland's education system, learners, communities, employers, employees and colleges**, Glasgow's colleges are financially viable for the long term, including through further efficiency gains to secure quality and public value. The Glasgow college system is affordable, efficient in operating at the right scale, and with others,

to minimise unnecessary duplication, optimise digital technology, and tackle the climate crisis.

- 3.12** A further strategy development session will be held with board in early 2022, and dates confirmed as soon as possible.

4. Risk and Compliance Analysis

- 4.1** The Glasgow college region strategy is a cross-cutting document with direct links across all risks, as highlighted in the GCRB Risk Register.
- 4.2** In order to mitigate these risks, we seek to be proactive in early engagement with board in the development of a new strategy. In addition, we maintain regular internal and external stakeholder engagement, and ensure that developments are effectively aligned with relevant policies and strategies.

5. Financial and Resource Analysis

- 5.1** Delivery and support of the Glasgow region strategy is a key element of GCRB's funding and resources, all of which are effectively managed to ensure delivery within set parameters.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1** Effective, coherent support for learner cohorts from protected characteristics groups is a key element of the Glasgow region strategy, is directly linked to Programme of Action activity, and remains a clear area of board-directed focus for this development activity.

7. Learner Implications

- 7.1** Outcomes for learners, including effective access to college education, in-college support, progression, and effective transition into further learning and/or employment aligned to business and economic need are all key focuses of strategy. Board has already indicated prioritisation with learner needs at the forefront, and this will remain a core feature of the development.

ⁱ <https://www.gcrb.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/StrategicPlanOct2017.pdf>