
Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 29 November 2021
Paper Title	Communications Strategy and Update 2021
Agenda Item	20
Paper Number	BM2-P
Responsible Officer	Breea Keenan, GCRB Marketing and Communications' Lead
Status	Disclosable
Action	For Information

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** Communications Update covering period August – November 2021.
- 1.2** Our **Communications Strategy for 2021/22** is presented to highlight plans and outlines our aims, principles and strategic direction. The communications strategy is agile and a tailored change communications strategy will be developed, as appropriate, to align with and support the Glasgow college region's agreed strategic direction.
- 1.3** A **longer-term communications strategy** will be developed to align with and support GCRB's new strategy for 2022-2040, building on the Communications Strategy for 2021/22, to promote the Glasgow college region's activities to a wider audience, incorporating key messages to highlight the region's collaborative approach.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Board is recommended to **note** the past activity in respect of GCRB communications and the future plans.

3. Communications Update

3.1 Communications activity from August 2021 to November 2021 has included:

- Development of **2021/22 Communications Strategy, Operational Plan and Activities Planner** and preparation of future plans, including budget requirements
- **Ebulletins** and news updates including the region's COP26 [ebulletin](#), [Board](#) appointment announcement, following our recruitment campaign earlier this year, GCRB environmental and sustainability [appointment](#) and new student presidents [announcement](#). Working on a post-COP26 ebulletin, presenting the region's successful events, activities and approach.
- Writing, editing, designing and distribution of [Glasgow Focus](#) newsletter
- **COP26 activities:** Liaising with three colleges, students and partners such as Young Enterprise Scotland and Climate Fresk to develop ebulletin, content, communications toolkit and promotional messaging. [The Herald](#) article references City of Glasgow college's and the region's role around Climate Fresk.
- **Social media activity:** shared messaging around new college term starting, including Welcome to Glasgow student video, college COVID updates and achievements, Togetherall and mental health resources and sector news including Scottish Funding Council's Phase 3 review report.
- Hosted meetings with Glasgow's three colleges' communications teams in September and October. Executive Director Martin Boyle attended October meeting to provide and update on regional review activity.

4. 2021-22 Communications Strategy

4.1 This [Communications Overview](#) highlights key work carried out since the communications strategy agreed by the Board in October 2019.

4.2 Our communications for 2021-22 will:

- be **agile**, supporting the Glasgow college region's agreed strategic direction and establish strong roots and positioning, with tailored **change communications strategy** for our audience groups (staff, students and stakeholders) to build understanding of the region's direction, highlighting changes
- align with and highlight the region's activities, short-term and long-term agenda
- align with, support and promote Glasgow's three colleges' communications
- celebrate success of Glasgow's learners, colleges and the Glasgow college region working collaboratively as one region;
- provide Board members with regular communications updates on key activities, messages, stakeholder and sector news;
- develop and manage the GCRB's reputation and that of the wider Glasgow college region;
- support stakeholder and digital relations and deliver complementary communications.

4.3 Communications Aims

Our aims are to:

- provide consistent communications, continuing to build and enhance our collaborative culture;
- support GCRB's values and aims;
- make key groups aware of our successes and potential of the region
- ensure Board members are informed and empowered to support collaborative working
- develop and strengthen GCRB's reputation
- develop our digital communications and channels

4.4 Communications Principles

Our communications principles will be:

- authoritative, positive and assertive: developing trust in the region, following the regional review
- audience focused: addressing each audience group through appropriate channels
- collaborative: one region with shared communications and messages to celebrate regional partnerships and successes.
- values driven: Ambitious, Regional, and Collaborative.
- regular and cumulative: to meet our communications aims and convey and develop a community of interest in our work.
- human: connecting policy and its benefits for learners, staff and Glasgow's people
- practical: recognising resource

5. Strategic Development

5.1 We will develop:

- our **values**: ambitious, regional and collaborative and our values-based **regional identity**: supporting organisational aims and strengthening our reputation. This will be particularly important as we emerge with a new direction following the regional review
- digital: develop and improve our digital channels to reach our audiences effectively
- a long-term narrative based on the benefits of regionalisation, our values and aims
- a community of interest with plans to reach each audience
- professional approach: investing in our communications

5.2 Messages Development

Tailored communications and key messages will be developed for each audience group including:

- Our mission: to build Scotland's most inclusive, responsive and effective regional college system

- Themes and stories of progress and success, shining a light on government policy in regional action and activity, through the Glasgow college region's people
- Positive impact and value for money, generated by regional coherence and collaboration
- Continued focus and drive to improve the student experience in Glasgow

6. Operational activity for 2021-22

6.1. Details listed in annex below.

7. Risk and Compliance Analysis

7.1. This strategy mitigates the risk that 'The reputation of the College Sector in Glasgow is damaged as a result of adverse publicity.' (Risk 003)

8. Financial and Resource Analysis

8.1 The implementation of this work requires the commitment of staff resources and some additional expenditure. This is contained within the GCRB operational budget for 2021/22. A dedicated budget for Marketing and Communications will be allocated for 2022/23 and beyond, to include events, exploring development options for new GCRB website and graphic design support.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

10. Learner implications

10.1. This strategy contributes to the effective working environment of GCRB and the delivery of the Strategic Plan for the Glasgow college region.

10.2. The communications strategy is learner-focused and highlights student support initiatives, activities and opportunities available across the region.

Operational Plans for 2021/22:

Audience	Aims	Core messaging and approach	Channels	Action
Board Members	Board member engagement to support active and informed individuals who shape decision making process, with focus on improving the learner journey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External approach: Highlight Board members' experience and backgrounds, shaping the future of Glasgow's learners Internal approach: Support Board members with GCRB news, key dates, college news, sector updates 	Regular, targeted Board briefings Communications updates provided at each Board meeting Board informal networking sessions Social media: LinkedIn, Twitter Social media discussion/training available Videos	Increase two-way communications and sharing of GCRB messages Introduce elevator pitch for Board members, following review outcome Develop external engagement and ambassadorial role of Board through networking/ events Develop supporting tool kits to support Board in sharing messaging
Glasgow college staff	College staff engagement to increase understanding of the regional approach and opportunities, encourage collaborative working activities and projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional and GCRB news, events, interviews and activities. Sector and Scottish Government updates 	Glasgow colleges' communications teams Glasgow Focus newsletter Ebulletins	Increase frequency of regional comms manager meetings Establish further regional social media content and campaigns

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight college staff involvement in key regional projects • Work with comms manager to identify opportunities for collaboration and alignment of activity 	Videos Social media	Develop contacts in the wider sector in Glasgow for further collaboration Develop supporting tool kits to support in sharing messaging
Learners	Regional opportunities and support available collaborative approach and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow learners are at the heart of, and involved in shaping, the decision-making process • The region is working to improve the student experience • Highlighting student support initiatives Programme of Action activities and initiatives e.g. mental health 	Social media Ebulletins GCRB Spotlight magazines GCRB Glasgow Focus newsletter Media	Targeted social media approach, working with GCRSE, three colleges and wider community

		resources to increase uptake		
Glasgow Colleges' Regional Student Executive Team (GCRSE)	Supporting GCRSE to feel empowered, given the importance of their regional role and as part of GCRB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage increase in regional initiatives and activities 	Meetings Board Briefings Informal networking sessions Ebulletins	Develop supporting toolkits and provide social media support Student/Board member mentorship partnership programme
Partners	Support and endorse GCRB's aims and strategic direction and collaborate to highlight success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varied messaging dependant on news angle/ organisation 	Ebulletins Social media	Meetings with partners' comms managers and key staff to identify opportunities Develop supporting tool kits to support in sharing messaging
Stakeholders	Awareness of GCRB's aims, strategic direction and contribution to Glasgow and the college region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication collaborative activities and region's successes Highlight Scottish Government funding in key areas and illustrate how policy/funding 		Develop a stakeholder policy and community of interest, formed following stakeholder mapping exercise

Media	Increase awareness of regional, collaborative approach across Glasgow's three colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored messaging depending on news angle, with emphasis on regional approach 	Press release Media list	Working with partners and colleges' comms teams to identify opportunities

GCRB Executive team	Develop and support GCRB's internal and external communications	Support in producing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate documents (Annual Report, ROA) Briefing documents Speech writing Develop regional key messages/lines to take 		Develop Activity Planner with key activities per calendar year
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Outputs:

- Board Briefs highlighting key regional news and activities, Board news, messaging and supporting information, stakeholder and sector news. Increase board brief engagement by 10% over the next six months.
- Communications Updates provided at each Board meeting, outlining previous and planned communications activities.
- Regular e-bulletins and news round ups, highlighting regional news items, activities and initiatives. Focused activity to increase ebulletin/newsletter sign ups amongst Glasgow college staff.
- Glasgow Focus newsletter issued bi-annually. Increase engagement figures by 10% over the next year, measuring engagement and viewing statistics.

- Continue to develop our digital communications channels, with a focus on video and images to increase engagement. We will build and join national and regional campaigns and initiatives with a regional slant/focus
- Produce and develop digital content (online magazines/ 2-3 videos per year) on topics of national interest at key points – e.g. mental health, climate change and monitor user statistics/engagement.
- Develop suite of GCRB branded digital content to highlight regional messages (infographics, video content, social media messaging) to assist with increasing engagement online, aiming to increase social media following by a further 25%.
- Develop our strategic use of social media, produce an annual social media calendar with key messages and share relevant college content, successes and stakeholder posts on GCRB's social media channels each month.
- Deliver/co-host events with supporting communications to highlight successes, subject to Government restrictions.
- Support the Chair and GCRB with regular communications briefings and speeches
- Produce branded statutory and strategic documents e.g. Annual Report
- Develop and delivery of new website with enhanced digital focus following the outcome of the regional review to reflect our ambitions, aims and achievements.
- Continue to host regular communications meetings with three colleges to discuss forthcoming activities and plans and deliver a joined-up approach, increasing by 30% over the next year.
- Develop relationships with stakeholders and partners in the sector via strategic mapping and plans.

Budget

2021/22 budget includes: PageTiger: £1980 per annum (excl VAT); video content: approx. £2k per video, with further costs to be agreed in line with overall GCRB budget.

Dedicated Marketing and Comms budget to be allocated for 2022/23 and beyond, to include events, exploring development options for new GCRB website and graphic design support.

Note: The Marketing and Communications' Lead is currently contracted to work 19 hours per week.