

Board Meeting

Date of Meeting	Monday 25 March 2019
Paper Title	Board Annual Self-Evaluation
Agenda Item	12
Paper Number	BM3-M
Responsible Officer	Penny Davis, Board Secretary
Recommended Status	Temporary exemption under FOI(S)A S.22 - for future publication and submission to SFC (31 March 2019).
Action	For Approval

1. Report Purpose

- 1.1. To provide the Board with assurance on the evaluation process undertaken and feedback from its 2018-19 self-evaluation questionnaire.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Board is invited to **consider** and **approve** the report and note that results will inform the draft Development Plan 2019-20.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Code of Good Governance requires that:

The board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness at least every three years. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated self-evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online.

- 3.2. GCRB underwent an externally facilitated evaluation in 2018 and will do so again in 2021. The interim 2019 report that follows:

- a) Outlines the self-evaluation activities undertaken during the course of the year, in accordance with the process approved by the Nominations & Remuneration Committee and reported to the Board in October 2018.
- b) Outlines feedback received in response to the self-evaluation questionnaire circulated to Members in February 2019, providing a snapshot of the Board's opinion of its effectiveness during 2018-19 in relation to key principles in the Code of Good Governance.

4. GCRB Self-Evaluation Process

- 4.1. In accordance with the approved plan, the following activities have been undertaken since March 2018.

- a) Individual self-evaluation meetings between all Members and the Board Chair took place during June and July 2018, including consideration of development needs and setting objectives for the year ahead. To bring this activity into line with other self-evaluation activities, interim meetings will be held in July 2019 and full review meetings will be held during December-January 2019-20 (and annually at that time thereafter). The Chair provided generalised feedback on training and development needs, which was incorporated into the development action plan.
- b) At their December 2018 meetings, All committees considered and approved reports on their membership, attendance and activity during the year, key decisions taken, and priorities for the year ahead. Reports were presented to the Board in January 2019. Committees also reviewed their Terms of Reference between December 2018 and March 2019 and, in each case, agreed recommendations to the Board for changes to reflect their operation and/or responsibilities more fully.
- c) The Senior Independent Member undertook an evaluation of the Board Chair including a scaled questionnaire with space for qualitative feedback, and follow-up interviews with a sample of Board Members including Non-Executive, Assigned College Chair, Staff and Student Members. A verbal report will be provided to the Board at its March meeting and feedback will be shared with Scottish Government as the appointing body.
- d) A detailed questionnaire relating to overall board effectiveness, based on principles in the Code of Good Governance, was circulated to Members during February 2019. Section 5. below summarises the feedback received.

5. Board Effectiveness Questionnaire 2018-19

- 5.1.** The questionnaire used was the same as that used by the external assessor in 2018, with two minor amendments to wording and the addition of one question relating to members' knowledge of the funding environment.
- 5.2.** While it is possible to draw comparison between last year's and this year's results, it is important to note that:
 - a) the turnover in membership of the Board in the past year has been significant (seven new members have joined since the period of the last review), so the pool of potential respondents is significantly different;
 - b) the response rate is also a factor: in 2018, there were eleven out of a potential seventeen respondents; in 2019 there have been ten out of a potential eighteen (and in a very few cases respondents did not comment on some statements about which they did not feel adequately informed);
 - c) no follow-up interviews were conducted to provide insight into responses given although written comments were provided in some cases.

For the above reasons, detailed comparison of 2018 with 2019 responses is not provided. Some comparisons are included, however, on the basis that they provide a high-level overview of how the Board sees itself from one year to the next and, in some cases, suggest movement in areas where recommendations were made by the external assessor in 2018 and which featured, therefore, in the Board's 2018-19 Development Plan.

A summary report on progress against the Development Plan is provided as a separate paper, and takes account of feedback, where relevant, from this questionnaire.

- 5.3. The structure of the questionnaire reflected the sections in the Code of Good Governance. Forty-seven statements were included, with a five-point scale ranking performance from *very poor* to *very good* against each statement.
- 5.4. Overall, the survey returned a positive view of the Board. Out of a maximum score of 5, the result averaged across all questions was 4.2, meaning that Board assessed its performance overall to be between *good* and *very good* (last year's score was 4). No statement anywhere in the survey received an average score below the midpoint of 3, *satisfactory*.
- 5.5. In **Section A: Leadership and Strategy**, the overall average score was slightly higher than the previous year, at 3.9 across the six statements (the 2018 average was 3.8). However, notable in this section was the lowest single average score in the survey, of 3.2 in response to the statement *we determine the vision, direction, educational character, values and ethos of the college region*. (In 2018, this statement also received a relatively low average score, of 3.5.)

Statements concerning adherence to the Code of Conduct, the performance management system, stakeholder engagement in the development of the outcome agreement and leadership on ethics, equalities and staff welfare received average scores ranging between 3.8 and 4.0.

The one statement in this section to receive an average score above 4 (4.4) concerned the Board having regard to the social and economic needs to the region.

- 5.6. In **Section B: Quality of the Student Experience**, the average score was also improved from the previous year, at 3.9 (the average score in 2018 was 3.7). Results were consistently moderate to good, ranging between averages of 3.8 to 3.9 across all four statements, concerning the voice of students in decision-making, engagement with and support for students associations, fostering relationships with relevant external organisations, and ensuring oversight of the quality and inclusiveness of learning.
- 5.7. In **Section C: Accountability**, which was the largest section, with twenty-one statements, there was a strong overall average score of 4.4 (compared with 4.1 in 2018), and scores throughout the section - looking at how the board meets its accountability requirements - were good or very good.

Statements concerning the scheme of delegation, communications between board, committees and staff, the operation of the committees, and compliance received particularly high average scores of between 4.3 and 4.9.

Two statements on risk, concerning the setting of risk appetite and the effectiveness of risk management systems in place received average scores of 4.2 and 4.4 respectively (both, in 2018, received a score of 4.1).

No statement in this section received an average score of less than 4.0.

A new statement was added to this section: *we have a sound understanding of the funding and regulatory environment in which our body operates and adequate expertise*

to discharge our responsibilities as a funding body. This statement received an average score of 4.3.

- 5.8.** In **Section D: Effectiveness** the average score was 4.2 across the twelve statements (compared with 4.0 in 2018). Statements concerning Board membership, roles and responsibilities consistently scored 4 or above.

Two statements received slightly lower average scores, relating to collective responsibility - 3.6, and Board training and development - 3.7. Both, however, showed an improvement (by 0.5 points and 0.2 points respectively) on the previous year's scores.

- 5.9.** In **Section E: Relationships and Collaboration** the average score across the four statements was unchanged from the previous year at 4.0.

Statements concerning partnership working to secure coherent regional provision, achieve common outcomes, develop agreed priorities and address both local and national priorities and specialisms all scored between 3.9 and 4.1 on average.

- 5.10** In summary, responses to the questionnaire present a generally very positive picture. Overall, eleven statements received an average score between 3 and 4, the remaining thirty-six statements averaging between 4 and 5 (in 2018, nineteen statements received a score between 3 and 4).

Four of the five sections showed a modest improvement on the previous year's average scores, with one section, Relationships and Collaboration, being unchanged.

Statements concerning accountability received consistently good average scores.

No particular, new concerns have emerged from the feedback, although it is clear that the sections of the Code where there remains most room for improvement remain Strategy and Leadership, Quality of the Student Experience, and Relationships and Collaboration.

Account should also be taken of the small number of other statements (referred to above) which scored an average of less than 4, when agreeing a Development Plan for 2019-20.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1.** The report contributes to mitigation of Risk 0011: The capacity and capability of the Board is inadequate and standards of governance fall below the level required, and Risk 0012: There is a breach of legislation/guidance/code of practice and this results in a failure of governance.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1.** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. Strategic Implications

- 8.1.** There are no direct implications for the Regional Outcome Agreement or Strategic Plan associated with this paper. However, development recommendations will be informed

by the content of this report and will promote effective governance and thereby support the achievement of regional outcomes.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1. No equalities implications have been identified in this report.