BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
ACTION TRACKER

Ayrshire College

COMMITTEE: Board of Management Meeting, 17 June 2021 (Numeration Reset)

(Paper 1a)

DATE RAISED	ACTION No	ACTION	DUE DATE	OWNER	STATUS*	COMMENTS
28.09.17	1	The Board and the College continue to ensure that all relevant stakeholders remain fully briefed on the impact that the PFI payment continues to have on the fiscal health of the College.	Ongoing	Board Chair and Principal	Ongoing	Following discussions with SFC, the Board approved the preparation and submission of a Financial Sustainability Plan (FSP) covering the two years 2019 to 2021 and forwarded to SFC in November 2018. As a part of this process, an offer of £700K of strategic funding had been received from SFC for each of the two years of the FSP. This represented approximately 50% of the annual PFI costs to the College and the FSP had been calculated on that basis prior to its submission. The period of additional strategic funding of £700K p/a expires on 31 July 2021 and the College will resume meeting the full cost of the PFI payment in 2021-22. Consequently, the Board approved a 2021-22 Financial Sustainability Plan in November 2020 to take account of the expiry of the additional strategic funding support provided by SFC over the previous two years. At the core of this plan was the requirement to make further savings, including through the implementation of a voluntary severance scheme. That scheme is currently in the early stages of implementation The Board also notes SFC's intention to introduce a revised college funding model with effect from academic year 2022-23.

DATE RAISED	ACTION No	ACTION	DUE DATE	OWNER	STATUS*	COMMENTS
12.12.19	2	An externally held Board Meeting, at locations conducive with Board Stakeholders, be incorporated annually into the Schedule of Meetings from 2020-21.	Annually	Chair/Board Secretary	Ongoing	Covid19 restrictions prevented the September 2020 meeting from being held at NATS. All Board and committee meetings to be held virtually until further notice. This action will be maintained in the Action Tracker to inform anticipated new postholders and office bearers in the future.
25.03.21	3	The 2021-22 meeting dates be circulated to members immediately together with advice that these dates should be inserted into member's diaries, pending confirmation of committee memberships for 2021-22. (The Board Office)	ASAP	Board Secretary/Y Melvin	Completed	

* Not Started; In Progress/Ongoing; Completed

Ayrshire College (Paper 2)

Board of Management Meeting

17 June 2021

Subject:	Student Association Report
Purpose:	To update Board Members on Student Association activity since the last meeting
Recommendation:	That Board Members note the content of the report and feedback any recommendations they may have

1. Background

Lauren Howieson, Student President, and Steven Oliver, Student Vice President, continue to deliver the core service of the Student Association through a variety of virtual platforms and through student email, with the support of the Student Association Advisor. Work of the Student Association has been supported by a core group of students who have taken responsibility for co facilitating and moderating the Student Associations clubs and societies.

2. Current Situation

The Student Association is maintaining consistent levels of student engagement through various clubs, focus groups, and dealing daily with student feedback and concerns. We have recently undergone the Student President Elections 2021 and have successfully returned a new Student Vice President and a returning Student Vice President for 2021/22.

3. Association Activity

Student President Elections

The Student President Elections, which took place from the 10 – 14 May, successfully returned two officers to the positions of Student President and Student Vice President. From an initial five candidates, three candidates stood in the elections and we are delighted to announce that the results are as follows:

Student President Elect : Ellie Jamieson
Student Vice President Elect : Steven Oliver

The new Student President, Ellie, will take up position on the 1 July alongside returning officer, Steven, who will serve a second year as Student Vice President.

SFC Additional Funding

The Student Association is part of a short life working group which is looking at bids from students and curriculum areas for pots of money to deliver projects which help improve and maintain positive mental health. The first round of applications has been considered and the successful applicants are being contacted. We look forward to supporting the proposed projects.

Ambassador Focus Groups

The second round of Your Voice Matters Focus Groups were delivered in May. These included questions in relation to the Organisational Effectiveness Review and questions which will also inform the Student Mental Health Agreement 2021/22 and Promoting Wellbeing Action Plan 2021-24. These were delivered by the Ambassadors, with the support of the Student Officers by the end of May.

The S Word
The Student Association will be working on a project alongside the Equlities Advisor and Mental Health Liaison Officer to help normalise talking about mental health, and in particular, suicide. This project will be incorporated into a revised Wear it on Your Sleeve Campaign to encourage males to discuss their mental health. The project will include a male only safe space online to come together socially.

Ayrshire College Gaming Society

The Ayrshire College Gaming Society is still being utilised daily with a membership of almost one hundred students. Feedback from members has been really positive and many informal student networks have formed as a result of shared interests. An event will be in the works shortly to remind students of ACGS in an attempt to recruit new members.

Mental Health Awareness Week

On the 11th and 12th of May we held an online event hosted by Midnight Entertainment to promote Mental Health Awareness Week. This consisted of a mental health related quiz on the first evening and interactive games the following evening. We also partnered up with Brothers in Arms which is a Scottish men's mental health charity.
Throughout the event there were links to their donation page as well as an information page to help inform people of the amazing work they carry out.

Choose College Event

The Student Association were invited to take part in the College Development Networks, Choose College Event which took place on the 26 May. We delivered a ten minute live presentation at the event on the support that students should expect to receive when they come to Ayrshire College, from a student's perspective. We delivered this alongside the marketing team who have a stall at the marketplace event and the Head of Student Experience who is taking part in a questions and answer panel.

4. **Proposals**

   N/A

5. **Risks**

   Due to the challenging issues dealt with within the SA there is a risk of reputational damage.

6. **Equality Impact Assessment**

   Due to the nature of this paper an equality impact assessment has not been undertaken.

7. **Conclusion**

   ACSA will continue to work alongside staff in order to best support and encourage student and make the 2020/21 session, despite the unprecedented challenges it brings, both enjoyable and successful for students.

Lauren Howieson
Student President
June 2021

Publication
This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College *(Paper 5)*

Board of Management Meeting

17 June 2021

Subject:	Board Member Recruitment Process 2021
Purpose:	To advise the Board of the final outcomes and recommendations from the Search and Nominations Committee following completion of the 2021 Board member recruitment process.
Recommendation:	The Board is asked to approve the recommendations as detailed.

1   Background

Legislation and regulations which govern the appointment of non-executive members to the Board of Management are set out in the Ministerial Guidance on College Sector Board Appointments (2014), the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges and the Board Development Framework Guidance Notes for Boards in the College Sector.   All proposed appointments and re-appointments require the support of the Board Chair, the Search and Nominations Committee, the External Independent Member of the Search and Nomination Committee and approval by the Board before being submitted for approval by Scottish Ministers.

The Board of Ayrshire College is currently constituted as set out in the Board Terms of Reference; the Board shall consist of not less than 15 or more than 18 persons, being made up of a Chair appointed by Scottish Ministers, the Principal (ex-officio), elected members and up to 12 non-executive members.

In seeking applications for and appointing to its non-executive membership, the recruitment process takes full cognisance of the diversity and demography of the Ayrshire region and equal opportunity requirements.

2   Current Situation

In accordance with their Terms of Reference, the Search and Nomination Committee has taken forward the 2021 Board Member recruitment process; meeting on two occasions, 25 February 2021, and 25 May 2021. Key points for the Board to note include:

- A total of 8 candidates, all exceptional calibre in their fields, had taken part in the interview process. Three candidates were selected to progress to the staff and student review stage.

- Concurrently, the Chair received and, with much reluctance, accepted the resignation of Dr Sathish Srinivasan, effective immediately (24 May 2021). The Board is asked to note that this was due only to Dr Srinivasan's competing work commitments, which had significantly increased because of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chair advised that Dr Srinivasan had expressed his good wishes and continued support to the College.

- The above resignation has resulted in two vacant Board Member positions for the Committee to consider, instead of the original one vacancy.

- The Committee considered the recommendation from the Chair to put forward, as an appointable Board Member, the candidate who had been identified as a reserve following the 2020 Board Recruitment process. This recommendation was unanimously supported.

For the purposes of completeness, the Board is also reminded of the approval from the Board meeting held on 25 March 2021:

- The Board agreed to recommend to Scottish Ministers the reappointment of Beth Clelland, Mary McClung, and Steven Wallace as Board Members with effect from 1 August 2021 until 31 July 2025.

- H Murphy will stand down as a Board Member at the end of her current period of appointment on 31 July 2021.

3 Proposals

Following its deliberations, the Committee found itself in the position of having more eminently appointable individuals than the number of vacancies available.

The Committee considered that the exceptional standard of applications received, the calibre of those selected for interview and the successful outcomes from the interview process itself; reflected very positively on the reputation of the College.

Given the number of appointable candidates, the Committee unanimously agreed the following proposals which will bring the Board to full membership and support a pipeline to appoint future Board Members:

Outcome	Justification	Response received
• Two Candidates confirmed appointable as Board Members.	• exceptional candidates with very high capability to undertake the role of a Board member.	Both candidates have confirmed approval for their name to be put forward to Scottish Ministers.
• Two Candidates confirmed appointable as co-opted members to a Committee of the Board.	• considered would be an asset to the Board as further vacancies become available.	Both candidates have confirmed their acceptance.
• Two Candidates proposed as Ambassadors for the College.	• significant enthusiasm and commitment to the work of the College portrayed at interview.	*Both candidates have confirmed their interest.

*Discussions with proposed Ambassadors will be taken forward by the Principal.

4 Consultation

Search and Nominations Committee, Board Governance Adviser.

5 Resource Implications

None.

6 Risks

If the appointment of Board Members is not undertaken in line with Scottish Government guidance, the Board runs the risk that its proposals to Scottish Ministers for the appointment of Board Members will not receive approval.

- The Chair, Committee members and the External Independent Panel Member confirmed and agreed that the recruitment process had been undertaken in compliance with all required guidance, had followed due process and had been conducted to the highest standards.

7 Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

The above proposals maintain the gender balance of the Board of Management in line with Scottish Government requirements.

8 Conclusion

The Board is asked to:

a) Approve the submission of a proposal to the Scottish Ministers for the appointment of two new Board Members.

b) Approve the approach to appoint two co-opted members to Committees of the Board and two College Ambassadors.

c) Note the resignation of Dr Sathish Srinivasan as a Board Member of Ayrshire College.

Pauline Donald
Board Governance Adviser
June 2021

Appendix 1: Biographies: proposed Board Members/proposed as co-opted members to a Committee of the Board.

Board Recruitment 2021 – Candidate Biographies

Candidate: **Norman Bone -** confirmed appointable as Non-Exec Board Member

Norman is native to Ayrshire and grew up in Kilmarnock. He is currently Chair and Managing Director of Leonardo UK Ltd as well as Leonardo Global Managing Director for Electronics. His career developed from various operational roles at United Distillers (Diageo) in Kilmarnock and, from there, he held various Director level appointments until he was appointed Managing Director of the Airborne and Space Systems Division in Leonardo before being appointed to his current position. Norman is also a member of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS) and has been since 2017.

Norman has stated that he would value the opportunity to bring his knowledge and experience to the Ayrshire College Board to understand and shape youth education and to serve the community he was brought up in.

Candidate: **Sharon Morrow -** confirmed appointable as Non-Exec Board Member

Following her resignation as Co-owner, Managing and Operations Director with Three Towns and Kilwinning Dental Care, Sharon established her own consultancy business called Tomorrow Services Ltd. The business sold last year and Sharon has undertaken a role as Volunteer Coordinator with The Living Room to establish and develop a local community hub for people experiencing mental health issues.

Sharon believes that, having owned her own business providing business consultancy services, her experiences, skills and knowledge working with small to medium enterprises would be valuable as a Board Member. Sharon also believes that volunteering within the third sector to establish and develop a local community hub for people experiencing mental health issues has provided her with a thorough understanding of the issues facing communities and the challenges of funding for government and third sector based organisations.

Candidate: **Gillian Murray -** confirmed appointable as a co-opted member to a Committee of the Board

Gillian is currently employed as a Senior Associate within the Dispute Resolution Department at Anderson Strathern. She is passionate about supporting people in their career and personal development through further education and, having previously worked in the Further Education sector, is aware of the difference that College can make to a person's life and the positive impact this can have on the local community.

Gillian has an Honors Degree in Law and is a member of The Law Society (LS). She took a break from her career in law as a Commercial Litigator in 2016 and, during this time, undertook the role of Clerk to the Board of Glasgow Clyde College, her main role in which was to set up a good governance framework for the new Board. Following her time as Clerk to the Board of Glasgow Clyde College, Gillian returned to her career as a Commercial Litigator in 2020.

As part of her job with Anderson Strathern, Gillian works closely with the HALO Project and believes this project and others, such as the Ayrshire Growth Deal, are critical in improving the local community.

Candidate: **Gordon Neil -** confirmed appointable as a co-opted member to a Committee of the Board

Since attending Ayr Technical College for an HNC in Construction Management, Gordon went on to progress in his career in the construction industry over 15 years, the latter of which as a Project and Contracts Manager. In 2012, Gordon was appointed Estates Officer with NHS Ayrshire and Arran during which time he continued his studies with Glasgow Caledonian University to gain a BSC in Construction Management. Following this, Gordon accepted the position of Estates Manager with the Princes Foundation (formerly Great Steward of Scotland's Dumfries House Trust) in 2015 at Dumfries House and has since progressed to Executive Director.

Gordon has stated that he is particularly interested in joining the Board of Ayrshire College, as he is keen to engage with and support an organisation that operates in his local community. He also stated that the Ayrshire College motto 'Start Here, Go Anywhere', resonated with him as he strongly believes his own college education was the gateway to gaining the skills, experience and confidence to progress his career. He hopes that his journey may provide inspiration and motivation to others.

**Minute of the Learning & Teaching
Committee Meeting
Held via Video Conference using Zoom,
On Thursday 4 March 2021**

Ayrshire College

(Paper 10.1)

Present: Fiona McQueen (Chair)
Elaine Anderson
Steven Fegan
Steve Graham
Janette Moore
Hazel Murphy
Steven Oliver
Mike Stewart
Alison Sutherland
Carol Turnbull
Steven Wallace
Matthew Wilson

In attendance: Brendan Ferguson (Board Secretary)
Yvonne Melvin (Board Administrative Officer)
Michael Breen (Vice Principal – Finance)
Anne Campbell (Vice Principal – Curriculum)
Jane McKie (Vice Principal – People)
Elaine Hutton (Director of Curriculum)
Julie Maxwell (Director of Curriculum)
Gavin Murray (Director of Curriculum)

1   Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no declarations of Interest.

2   Apologies

Apologies were received from Committee members Beth Clelland, Lauren Howieson, Mary McClung and Sathish Srinivasan and from SLT member James Thomson.

3   Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 12 November 2020 *(Paper 1) (C/P)*

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: M Stewart   **Seconded:** E Anderson

It was noted from the minutes that benchmark comparison data from the College sector on College Leaver Destinations 2019-20 was to be provided at this meeting of the Committee. A Campbell confirmed that the data had not yet been published by SFC and it was the intention that it be provided to the Committee at their meeting in May 2021, subject to SFC publication. It was agreed this be logged on the Action Tracker.

Action Tracker *(Paper 1a)*

The Chair introduced Paper 1a.

All outstanding actions had been completed to March 2021

4   Student Association Report *(Paper 2) (P)*

S Oliver introduced Paper 2 and took the Committee through it as presented. It was noted that the number of students involved in the Ayrshire College Gaming Society continued to rise and feedback had been very positive. S Oliver also highlighted that a music appreciation group was being discussed and could potentially be incorporated into the students' coursework.

It was noted that the Student Association worked with the newly recruited Student Ambassadors throughout December 2020 on delivering student focus groups. The Committee further noted that the Student Ambassadors would be working with curriculum areas on the second round of focus groups scheduled to take place in March 2021.

S Oliver also updated the Committee on the support provided by the Student Association to the College's Marketing Department on the Keep Calm Cameras On campaign, to encourage more students to take part in online classes with their cameras on. It was noted that the Student Association would be consulting with NUS on potential resources that could be used in a short session with students to encourage them to engage with cameras on, the first session of which would be held in March 2021.

The Committee noted and welcomed the above report. The Committee also congratulated the Student Association on achieving the Carers Scotland, Student Carers Recognition Award. This was considered to be a worthy achievement and recognition of the tremendous work in this area undertaken by the Student Association.

5   Covid-19 Update *(Paper 3) (P)*

A Campbell introduced Paper 3 as presented and updated the Committee on the changing and continuously evolving situation. As part of the Scottish Government's updated Strategic Framework, the First Minister had announced that from 15 March 2021, colleges would be able to prioritise the return of those students requiring in-person provision to complete or progress their studies but that the total number of students on campus at any one time should be restricted to 5%. A Campbell further advised that, at present, the number of students studying with the College whose return to campus was critical for their studies was more than 5%. The Committee noted that the current restrictions on the number of students permitted to attend campus to undertake the practical element of their coursework may result in a number of students being deferred to AY 2021-22. This would have a resultant negative impact on the College's staffing and resources in the next academic year.

The Committee noted that A Campbell and C Turnbull were actively discussing a possible increase in flexibility on the 5% cap at a national level and were working on various scenarios and the implications of the deferral of students to be presented to the Scottish Government for consideration.

A Campbell added that the College was working closely with the various Awarding Bodies on possible adaptations to practical assessments in certain course areas,

which would potentially allow those students affected to complete their course within this academic year. A caveat to this was that while any adaptations agreed may reduce the number of students deferred, it would not mitigate the possible high numbers of students affected.

A discussion followed during which questions were asked and satisfactory responses provided.

The Committee noted the content of Paper 4 and commended the work of the College and the commitment of staff toward students during this most challenging of times.

6   **2020-21 Interim Outcome and Impact Framework** *(Paper 4) (P)*

A Campbell introduced Paper 4 and reminded the Committee that this year's Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) had been replaced by the new streamlined Outcome and Impact Framework.

A Campbell outlined the three outcome areas; Outcomes for Students, Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal, and Responsiveness and Collaborative. The Committee noted that the 2020-21 Interim Outcome and Impact Framework would be provided to the Board for consideration at their meeting in March and, if approved, would be published in April 2021.

Further discussion took place, with various questions raised and answered satisfactorily. In response to one question, it was noted that the College did not foresee any issues with student progression in the area of Health and Social Care in relation to the nationwide vaccination roll-out. In circumstances where students were unable to undertake work placements as part of their course, simulated training had been agreed as an acceptable alternative.

Discussion moved on to Phase 1 of the National Transition Training Fund. The Committee was advised that priority for the initial phase would be the upskilling and re-skilling of displaced Engineers located at Prestwick Airport. It was noted that a temporary moveable facility would be placed at the airport for bespoke training to take place, and that future training sites were being considered.

The Committee confirmed its support of the 2020-21 Interim Outcome and Impact Framework and recommended it to the Board for approval at their meeting in March 2021.

7   **2020-21 Credit Activity Target (position as at 17 February 2021)** *(Paper 5) (P)*

A Campbell introduced Paper 5, confirming that the College is projecting a shortfall against its credit target by 565 credits. The Committee noted that this was primarily down to the reduction in planned activity and operational constraints imposed by Government public health guidance in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were reminded that, normally, SFC reserves the right to clawback funding should the College not meet the agreed activity target. The Committee noted that confirmation had been received from SFC that it will not seek to recover funds for AY2020-21 for shortfalls against Outcome Agreement targets which were Covid-19 related.

The Committee noted Paper 5 and the projected credit position of the College. The Committee also noted the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on the ability of the College to meet its Credit Activity Targets and welcomed the pragmatism of SFC in recognising the challenges inherent in this situation and reacting accordingly.

8   **2020-21 Early Withdrawals at November 2020** *(Paper 6) (P)*

A Campbell introduced Paper 6, advising that the figures presented had yet to be verified. Figures presented demonstrated a slight increase in early withdrawals across HE full-time courses but a decrease in early withdrawals in FE full-time courses. A Campbell further advised that as a result of recent Curriculum Area Review meetings, she had cause to question the data on HE full-time programmes and that further analysis would be provided to members in due course.

It was noted that course teams would be analysing data for their own respective curriculum areas, with actions and intervention being discussed at the Curriculum Area Review meetings.

The Committee noted Paper 6 and the interventions as listed.

9   **2020-21 Student Support Funds (position as at 11 February)** *(Paper 7) (P)*

M Breen took the Committee through Paper 7. The caveat on page 1 advising members on the significant number of variables still to be factored in to the projected expenditure was noted.

The Committee noted that the total 2020-21 SFC provided student support funds included circa £1.9m in relation to 255 care-experienced students. The Committee was aware that the College actively promoted the additional support available to care-experienced students, with the number of identified care experienced students potentially increasing during AY2020-21. M Breen highlighted to the Committee a projected underspend in the College's Education Maintenance Allowance allocation for AY2020-21 and noted that the figure included January 2021 starts.

M Breen also advised the Committee on a recent announcement by SAAS on additional HE Discretionary Funding, of which c£280k had been awarded to the College. It was noted that the additional funding was to be used by 31 March 2021 and that any unused funds were to be returned to SAAS in April 2021. M Breen advised the Committee that SAAS guidance stated that funds were to be prioritised to those students facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19 and that the Student Funding team was working on proposals for how this additional funding could be effectively utilised within the timescales and guidance issued by SAAS.

The Committee noted Paper 7 and the position of the College as at 11 February 2021.

10   **Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning Report** *(Paper 8) (P)*

G Murray introduced Paper 8 and took the Committee through it in detail, advising that the content of the report described the current position, taking into account the

impact of COVID-19 on the College's Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning provision.

The Committee noted that the pace of recruitment for Modern Apprentices in 2020-21 had been impacted by Covid-19, however, there were signs of recovery in most sectors. G Murray advised that, despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the College had received a positive level of enquiries in both Construction and Engineering, which it hoped would translate into new starts at a level close to the contracted volume. The Committee also noted that SDS and SQA had recognised that work placements for Foundation Apprentices were likely to be significantly impacted by the ongoing pandemic situation in 2020-21, but alternative solutions were being explored. G Murray highlighted that it had been indicated that future funding for Foundation Apprenticeships would be dispersed via SFC, rather than SDS, in the form of additional credits from academic year 2021-22. The implications of this change were unclear at present and would be reported to the Committee when further details became available.

In addition, G Murray advised the Committee on recruitment incentives to encourage employers to recruit apprentices during the period until 31st March. The Committee noted that the Adopt An Apprentice scheme was currently underway to encourage employers to recruit an apprentice who had been made redundant recently. G Murray advised that incentives in the scheme have increased interest in the apprenticeship programme and that the College had received a number of new enquiries.

G Murray noted that the College was working closely with the local authorities to finalise agreements and would continue to work with employers and partners to promote apprenticeships to industry and young people, to maximise recruitment in 2020-21 and minimise the impact of COVID-19 on the skills pipeline.

A discussion followed during which a number of questions were asked and satisfactory responses received

The Committee noted the contents of Paper 8 and commended the ongoing work and positive news despite the impact of the ongoing pandemic restrictions on apprenticeships and work based learning.

11   **Risk Register – Learning and Teaching Extract at February 2021** *(Paper 9) (R)*

A Campbell introduced the draft LTC extract from V2 of the Risk Register, advising that a total of 5 Risks had been identified for discussion. Following discussion, the Committee agreed a minor change to the wording used to describe the risk in L&T3. It was agreed that this would be updated to read 'There is a risk that the College will fail to achieve its SFC credit activity target, resulting in SFC clawback'.

A Campbell then took the Committee through each Risk as outlined in Paper 9.

The Committee agreed the following in relation to the Risks contained within the extract:

- **L&T1 - Risk Assessment increased to 20 to reflect the Scottish Government announcement of a 5% cap on the number of students allowed on campus at any one time.**

- **L&T3 - Risk Assessment increased to 20 to reflect the projected shortfall in the AY2020-21 Credit Activity Target due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.**

The remaining Risks were within the Risk Appetite of the Committee and were maintained at the same levels.

The Committee approved the Risk Register – Learning and Teaching Extract at February 2021.

Action: The wording used to describe the risk in L&T3 is to be updated to read 'There is a risk that the College will fail to achieve its SFC credit activity target, resulting in SFC clawback'. This will align the wording with that used in the other risks.

<u>Received for Information</u>

12   2019-20 ROA Self-Evaluation Report *(Paper 10) (P)*

13   Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 27 May 2021 at 4.00pm

(C/P) Confirmed minutes will be published (P) Papers will be published on the College website
(R) Papers will not be published for reasons of commercial sensitivity or for reasons of personal data confidentiality

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Minute of the Business, Resources and Infrastructure Committee Meeting Held via Video Conference Using Zoom On Tuesday 9 March 2021

Ayrshire College

Present: Steven Wallace (Chair)   *(Paper 10.2)*
                    Willie Mackie (Vice Chair)
                    Beth Clelland
                    Scott Cooley
                    Steven Fegan
                    Lauren Howieson
                    Mary McClung
                    Fiona McQueen
                    Mike Stewart
                    Carol Turnbull (Principal)

In attendance: Brendan Ferguson (Board Secretary)
                    Yvonne Melvin (Board Administrative Officer)
                    Michael Breen (Vice Principal – Finance)
                    Anne Campbell (Vice Principal – Curriculum)
                    Jane McKie (Vice Principal – People)
                    James Thomson (Director of Finance, Student Funding and Estates)
                    David Davidson (Director of HR and Organisational Development
                    Gavin Murray (Director of Curriculum)
                    Sara Turkington (Equality and Inclusion Advisor) – *Item 11 Only*
                    Nuala Boyle (Head of Business Growth) – *Item 16 Only*

1   Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

2   Apologies

Apologies were received from Committee members Janette Moore and Sathish Srinivasan.

3   Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 17 November 2020 *(Paper 1) (P)*

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Willie Mackie   **Seconded:**   Mary McClung

Action Tracker *(Paper 1a) (P)*

Action 16 -   The Committee agreed this remain In Progress. A further update is expected at the next meeting in June 2021.

4   Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not covered in the main agenda.

5   2020-21 Management Accounts (position as at 31 January 2021) *(Paper 2)* *(P)*

M Breen introduced the item, advising that a presentation would accompany the Paper to provide the Committee with a high-level overview of the 2020-21 Management Accounts as at 31 January 2021.

J Thomson provided the presentation (contained in Admincontrol) and took the Committee through the year to date variances against the year to date approved budget. The impact from the Covid-19 operational restrictions on the principal variances was discussed in detail and the Committee was re-assured by the projection that forecast reductions in commercial income would be offset by corresponding savings made in these areas and underspends in other expenditure areas. J Thomson concluded that the College was currently projected to exceed its budgeted position, but added the caveat that further COVID-19 operational restrictions could impact adversely on the final position.

Discussion followed during which a number of questions of clarification were asked, and satisfactory responses received. In response to one query, M Breen advised members that the position of other colleges in the sector was varied depending on a number of factors and that the projected position of Ayrshire College was positive in comparison to some.

The Committee noted the position presented in unprecedented and challenging times and approved the 2020-21 Management Accounts as at 31 January 2021. The Committee also commended the College, and in particular the Finance Team, for its continued financial acuity during this period.

6   SFC Indicative Funding 2021-22 Revenue & Capital *(Verbal) (R)*

M Breen provided the Committee with a verbal update, advising that, whilst no formal announcement of the SFC Offer of Grant for 2021-22 had been received to date, the outline draft budget for the college sector had been announced by the Scottish Government. The informal indications at this stage suggested that the SFC settlement looked fairly positive for the sector, with an inflationary uplift indicated. The overall capital position appeared tight for the sector, however there was no indication on the possible capital allocation for the College. At present, these indications were based on budget predictions, until such time as the draft Scottish budget received the approval of the Scottish Parliament.

It was agreed that an update would be circulated to members when the Offer of Grant had been published, with a draft College Budget for 2021-22 provided to the Committee as its meeting in June 2021. The Committee noted that a draft SFC budget for the college sector was expected to be submitted to the SFC Board by 12 March 2021.

The Committee thanked M Breen for the update and looked forward to further information being circulated in due course. The Committee also looked forward to receiving the draft 2021-22 College Budget for consideration at its scheduled June 2021 meeting.

Action: M Breen to circulate an update to members on receipt of the SFC Offer of Grant.

7   2020-21 Cashflow Projections (position as at 25 February 2021) *(Paper 3)* *(R)*

J Thomson introduced Paper 3 as presented. The Committee noted the projected trading cashflow balance as at 25 February 2021 and that trading cashflow remained positive in the period and in line with expectations.

The Committee noted Paper 3 and the positive position in the period.

8   2020-21 SFC Capital Expenditure (position as at 25 February 2021) *(Paper 4) (R)*

J Thomson took the Committee through Paper 4, highlighting Table 2 and the progress made against the project budgets agreed by the Board of Management on 18 June 2020.

The Committee noted the projected budget underspend in relation to the North Ayrshire Future Skills Hub as set out in Table 2. J Thomson advised that the College had discussed with SFC the carry forward of these unspent funds into the next financial year and stated that although positive a further update would be provided when the outcome of those discussions was known.

The Committee noted the capital expenditure against approved capital budgets as at 25 February 2021.

9   National Bargaining Update *(Verbal) (R)*

C Turnbull provided a verbal update. The Committee was advised that a 2% pay award for Lecturing and Support Staff had been proposed. It was noted that the proposed pay award had been agreed with EIS-FELA, but that discussions with the support staff trade unions remained ongoing.

C Turnbull noted that, in response to a national dispute regarding the role of a Lecturer, EIS-FELA membership had been balloted and had voted for industrial action. It was noted that the strike action could potentially result in disruption to learning and teaching for students for 15 days over the coming months. C Turnbull added that the College was working with union representatives at a local level to mitigate any further disruption to student learning.

The Committee noted the verbal update, and also noted with disappointment the decision by some members of EIS-FELA to approve strike action at this most difficult and challenging time for learners. The Committee looked forward to receiving further updates, as they become available, on the progress being made in resolving this dispute.

10   Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2019-21, Including Presentation *(Papers 5 & 6) (R)*

D Davidson introduced the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2019-21, advising that the report sets out the steps taken by the College to mainstream equality and also covers the final two years of the current Equality Outcomes, as published in 2017. The Committee noted that, for the College to meet the General Duty and Specific Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), a new set of equality outcomes would require to be published every 4

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years, with an interim report on progress every 2 years. D Davidson also advised members that additional scrutiny required the report be submitted to SFC once approved.

D Davidson then introduced his colleague, S Turkington, who provided members with a presentation. The Committee noted the following:

- The Report was split into four sections; Our People, Equal Pay, Mainstreaming, and Responding to the future through Equality Outcomes and mainstreaming equality themes
- Each section had areas of focus but the Mainstreaming section was split into 6x areas to enable benchmarking.
- Proposed Equality Outcomes for 2021-2025 had been identified from the findings and as a reflection of the current situation exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

S Turkington took the Committee through the findings in each section in further detail, following which further discussion took place during which a number of questions were asked and satisfactory responses provided.

The Committee thanked S Turkington for the presentation and commended the work in producing the report. The Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2019-21 was recommended to the Board at its meeting in March 2021 for final approval.

11   VS Update *(Verbal) (R)*

J McKie provided a verbal update, reminding members that the Voluntary Severance Scheme had opened to all staff in November 2020 with a closing date in December 2020. The Committee noted that the closing date had subsequently been extended to January 2021 to account for further lockdown measures imposed by the Scottish Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

J McKie further advised that a number of applications had been received and considered by a panel and that a total of 25 applications had been approved. Jane McKie advised that ELT had met to consider the balance of savings achieved to date through the 25 applications approved against the indicative funding gap estimated for next year. After consideration, ELT had decided that the remaining gap would be bridged by other saving measures, rather than a further extension to the VS scheme being offered during AY 2020-21.

The Committee noted that College management had informed those staff whose applications for voluntary severance had been agreed and that the HR Team was processing the necessary paperwork.

The Committee thanked J McKie for the verbal update.

12   HR & Staff Learning and Development Report *(Paper 7) (R)*

D Davidson introduced Paper 7 as presented, advising that the decrease in reported short-term sickness absence was still in evidence and HR staff continued to work with and support managers and staff.

The Committee noted that the focus in the reporting period had been on the provision of leadership and management development opportunities for staff. The College had utilised the Flexible Workforce Development Fund to support a total of 22 members of staff to achieve the ILM Award in Leadership & Management and CDN Coaching for the Future Programme. D Davidson added that, in direct response to manager feedback, the College's Staff Learning and Development Team had designed, developed and launched the fully online based Growing Leaders Framework to deliver essential skills for managers at all levels. The Committee was further advised that sessions had been delivered in February 2021 with a total of 78 managers in attendance and that future progress was being monitored.

The Committee noted and welcomed the content of Paper 7.

13   **Health, Safety and Wellbeing & Equality and Inclusion Report** *(Paper 8) (P)*

J McKie introduced Paper 8 and took the Committee through the report as presented. It was highlighted that the College's overarching Covid-19 risk assessment continued to be monitored by the Return to Campus Operations Steering Group. This essential corporate document was updated by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing manager on an ongoing basis, taking account of all relevant national guidance, as issued. J McKie further highlighted the work undertaken by the HSW team in supporting the Return to Campus Operations Steering Group over the past year in all the work undertaken to re-open and manage the campuses safely and in accordance with the UK and Scottish Government guidelines.

The Committee also noted that the Equality Matters e-Newsletter had received a positive response from staff and agreed that future issues of the e-Newsletter be shared with Board members for information.

The Committee noted and welcomed the content of Paper 8.

Action: Y Melvin to circulate future editions of the Equality Matters e-Newsletter to Board members as provided by S Fegan.

14   **2020-21 Student Support Funds (position as at 11 February 2021)** *(Paper 9) (P)*

J Thomson introduced Paper 9, noting the final position of the College as a favourable variance of c£2.1m against the budgeted position. It was noted that there were no significant issues to report in relation to EMA and SAAS funds.

The Committee was also advised of a recent announcement by SAAS of additional HE Discretionary Funding, of which c£0.283m had been awarded to the College. It was noted that the additional funding had to be used by 31 March 2021 and that any unused funds would be returned to SAAS in April 2021. M Breen advised the Committee that SAAS guidance stated that funds were to be prioritised to those students facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19 and that the Student Funding team was working on proposals for how this additional funding could be effectively utilised within the timescales and guidance issued by SAAS.

The Committee noted Paper 9 and the position of the College as at 11 February 2021. The Committee also noted the additional funding provided by SAAS and looked forward to hearing how those funds had been utilised within the timescale set.

15   **Business Growth Update** *(Paper 10) (R)*

M Breen introduced Paper 10 and Nuala Boyle, Head of Business Growth attended for this item to provide an update.

Nuala Boyle took the Committee through Paper 10 as presented.   The Committee noted that government constraints imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent lockdowns, had impacted significantly on the College's ability to complete its agreed FWDF training. In response, the Scottish Government had formally extended the 2019-20 FWDF into 2020-21. N Boyle added that the Scottish Government had subsequently announced Phase 2 of the FWDF in December 2020, which included an increase in the College's funding allocation.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Team remained actively engaged with Companies and that applications for the 2020-21 FWDF was good, with a healthy pipeline of potential applicants. It was also noted that good progress was being made in scheduling and delivering virtual training for the 2019-20 FWDF.

N Boyle also updated members on the FWDF SME fund, advising that the Team had been focused on developing Covid-19 relevant training offerings as well as heavily promoting the fund throughout the Ayrshire communities. The Committee was pleased to note that interest had been high and had received a good response.

During the discussion that followed a number of questions were asked and satisfactory responses were received.

The Committee noted the content of Paper 10, commended the work and achievements of the Business Growth Team in challenging circumstances and looked forward to future updates.

16   **2020-21 Complaints Report Qtr. 1** *(Paper 12) (P)*

The Committee noted Paper 12 and its contents.

17   **Date of Next Meeting –** Tuesday 1 June 2021

Reserved Items on the next Page.

Minute of the Audit and Risk Committee Meeting
Held on Tuesday 16 March 2021
Via Video Conference using Zoom

(Paper 10.3)

Present: Hazel Murphy (Chair)
             Steve Graham (Vice Chair)
             Alison Sutherland
             Matthew Wilson

In attendance: Brendan Ferguson (Board Secretary)
             Yvonne Melvin (Board Administrative Officer)
             Michael Breen (Vice Principal - Finance)
             Anne Campbell (Vice Principal – Curriculum)
             Jane McKie (Vice Principal – People)
             James Thomson (Director of Finance, Student Funding & Estates)
             Chloe Ridley (BDO – Internal Auditors)
             Joanne Buchanan (Mazars – External Auditors)

1   Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Chloe Ridley to her first meeting of the Committee as representative of the Internal Auditors BDO.

There were no declarations of interest.

2   Apologies

Apologies were received from Committee members Elaine Anderson and Scott Cooley.

3   Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 24 November 2020 *(Paper 1)* C/P

Page 6, Item 12 – The Chair asked members to consider whether the item remain in the Reserved Items section of the minutes or if it should be moved to the main section. The Board Secretary advised members that the information contained in Item 12 was not confidentially sensitive and did not breach any data protection legislation. The Committee discussed the matter and agreed that Item 12 be moved to the main section of the minutes.

The minutes were approved as a correct record, subject to the above amendment.

Proposed: Steve Graham   Seconded: Matthew Wilson

Audit Action Tracker *(Paper 1A) (P)*

Action 2   The Committee agreed that this Action should now be considered under the remit of BRIC and should be removed from the Audit Action Tracker and transferred as a BRIC action.

Action 5   The Committee agreed this would be marked as Completed.

Action 6   The Committee agreed this would be marked as Completed.

4   Matters Arising

There were no matters arising not dealt with on the Agenda.

5   Internal Audit - BDO

   i.   Internal Audit Report 2020-21 – Partnership Working *(Paper 2) (P)*

   C Ridley introduced Paper 2 as presented, advising members that there were no findings to note from the review.

   ii.   Internal Audit Report 2020-21 – Financial Controls *(Paper 3) (P)*

   C Ridley took the Committee through Paper 3 and stated that the College had excellent Financial Controls in place, as reflected in the report, with only one low level recommendation identified.

   iii. Internal Audit 2019-20 – Progress Report *(Paper 4) (P)*

   C Ridley introduced Paper 4 and took members through the progress made to date. It was noted that a further report had been completed and would being considered by the Senior Leadership Team at their meeting in June 2021.

   In response to a question from the Chair, J Thomson confirmed that it remained the intention that the Commercial Income audit would go ahead as planned.

   The Committee approved Papers 2 and 3 and noted the Progress Report to date.

6   Business Continuity Plan *(Paper 5) (P)*

   J Thomson introduced Paper 5. The Committee was reminded that, in order to ensure the experiences and lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic were utilised in the ongoing development of the BCP, the College had commissioned Zurich Municipal (College Insurers) to undertake a lessons learned and horizon scan exercise. J Thomson further advised that the findings from the survey were used to update the Business Continuity Plan as presented to members today.

   J Thomson then provided members with a presentation (contained in Admincontrol) highlighting the extracted findings from the Zurich Municipal Survey. The Committee was provided with graphical information outlining the areas of strength and areas for improvement as well as the recurring comments made in the survey. Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to also receive a copy of the full Zurich Municipal Report on the survey. M Breen confirmed that this would be circulated to members for their information.

   J Thomson then directed members attention to the Business Continuity Plan, highlighting the various sections contained therein and outlining the actions to be taken.

   The Committee discussed the BCP in detail and a number of questions were given satisfactory responses. In relation to one query, M Breen advised that the College had increased its focus on cyber security and had recently agreed a contract with a specialist company to undertake a full and high level review of the College's ICT systems and security. The Committee asked to be kept informed of the progress of this review at future meetings.

The Committee approved the revised Business Continuity Plan and thanked J Thomson and M Breen for their comprehensive report.

Action: M Breen / J Thomson to circulate the full Zurich Municipal Survey Report to members.

Action: Updates on the progress of the College Cyber Security Review be provided at future meetings of the Committee pending, completion of and presentation of the review report to this Committee.

7   **Internal Audit Rolling Action Plan as at 8 March 2021 (Standing Report)** *(Paper 6) (P)*

J Thomson introduced Paper 6, advising that the two audit recommendations due in the period had been completed.

The Committee noted and welcomed Paper 6.

8   **Audit Development Session** *(Verbal) (P)*

J Thomson provided a verbal update and asked the Committee to consider whether an Audit Development Session would be beneficial.

The Committee discussed various topics and agreed that a session would be welcomed, particularly in light of the number of new Board members. Topics to be covered included risk management and the role of audit. J Thomson confirmed that he would organise a session and would provide further information in due course.

The Committee thanked J Thomson and looked forward to receiving further information.

Action: J Thomson to work with Y Melvin to organise an Audit Development Session

9   **Internal Audit Services for AY 2021-22** *(Verbal) (R)*

The Internal and External Auditors left the meeting.

J Thomson provided a verbal update, reminding members that the previous Tender process for Internal Audit Services took place 3 years ago and BDO, as the successful Auditors, were awarded the contract.

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Services for AY 2021-22 and agreed that the contract of the current Internal Auditors, BDO, be extended by 1 year.

The Committee thanked J Thomson for the update and agreed the extension of BDO's contract by 1 year.

10   **Date of Next Meeting –** Tuesday 8 June 2021 at 4pm

P - Papers will be published on the College Website, R - Papers will not be published for reasons of commercial confidentiality or for reasons associated with data protection legislation, C/P - Confirmed minutes will be published on the College Website

Reserved Items on the next page.

Scottish Funding Council Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability – College Sector Phase Three Proposals – May 2021

Introduction

Colleges Scotland welcomes the continued opportunity to contribute to the ongoing Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability and to engage with other key stakeholders in ensuring that this review represents a key moment for system change.

We have a number of areas of interest in this review, and this paper reflects the key proposals the college sector wishes to see taken forward in meaningful and substantive discussions.

We acknowledge the ongoing work of the Review Reference Groups in taking forward discussions regarding the Future Funding Model, the Impact and Accountability Framework and Research and Innovation.

To make the most of the opportunity provided by the Review, we would look for the SFC to take the following proposals into account, both through these Reference Groups, as well as into the Phase Three report and any subsequent stages of the Review.

As part of this Colleges Scotland would look to work together with SFC moving forward to develop these proposals forward into recommendations for Scottish Government Ministers and subsequently into realistic actions that can be delivered for the benefit of the college sector in Scotland and to fully maximise its role in supporting the national social and economic recovery from COVID-19.

Key Proposals to be Taken Forward Through Phase Three

On the basis of the evidence received from the sector in response to the Phase One Report and Phase Two discussions, can Colleges Scotland re-emphasise our key proposals which have not so far been reflected in Phase Three related discussions to date.

1. System Purpose and System Change

> **Proposal One –** *SFC to work towards delivery of **Equity in Tertiary Education**, reflecting the need for a whole-system view through the development of a connected and integrated tertiary education and skills system for learners and employers, with greater alignment of activity, purpose, and funding. This should build on the current good examples of integration with a view to developing a comprehensive tertiary system, which also provides coherent progression and greater emphasis on school to college partnership working.*

The college sector agrees with the narrative unpacked in the SFC Phase One Report with regards to the current system and changes that are required in relation to the funding model and outcome

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agreements. Such changes should be made to ensure the design and delivery of an education and skills system that is definitively outcomes focused, whilst measuring and taking account of social and economic value generated through activity.

In order to realise such a vision there is a need for Scottish Government, SFC, SDS, SAAS and other relevant agencies to be structured in a manner that truly enables colleges to focus on and deliver their primary aims of upskilling and reskilling those students and apprentices. This would be building on the skills alignment work that has commenced to date.

Similarly, to enable those activities around Green Economy and Regional Development to occur there is a need for closer alignment around a single shared purpose for Scottish Government and relevant agencies, building on the existing work taken forward and in line with the objectives of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.

As the Commission on the College of the Future evidenced with the launch of its Scotland specific nation report in December 2020 there is a need for a more integrated and connected tertiary system, echoing similar messages emphasised in the Cumberford-Little report. Such a system will also facilitate the space required to focus on supporting learner pathways and identifying areas of duplication.

In order for this system change to be taken forward there is also a need for the ONS classification of colleges to be reconsidered. Re-classification will allow greater flexibility around budgeting, reporting and accounting practices that enable colleges to maximise their role within an equitable tertiary system.

Taken together these actions can support a broader repositioning of the college of the future, the evolution of the next generation offer and the development of a stronger focus on future skills and meta skills in areas such as innovation and creativity to support learners to thrive in their lifelong learning and training journeys through various jobs and careers, irrespective of their point of entry.

Colleges are Scotland's key centres of technical and vocational excellence and mastery, with a core ambition to develop not just work-ready skills but also the vital meta-skills to allow individuals to thrive. The delivery of Equity in Tertiary Education is vital to ensuring this ambition can be realised.

2. Stable and Sustainable Core Funding

Proposal Two – *SFC to Establish a **stable and sustainable core future funding model** for the College Sector no later than academic year 2021/22. This should involve reform to the current funding model by focusing on outcomes, not inputs. In order to support this the current 116k FTE activity target needs to be replaced by an appropriate mechanism which acts as a system enabler, recognising and enabling colleges to maximise their potential contribution to business support and agility and responsiveness to employer demand. In addition to sustainable funding for institutions, equity of funding for students across Further and Higher Education is required.*

Underpinning all of the proposed activity above is the need to establish stable and sustainable core funding. It has been referenced across both the Cumberford-Little and Commission reports that the college sector has tremendous value for education and the economy but that it has tremendous potential to do much more. Key to unlocking this potential is the development and delivery of a balanced and streamlined approach to funding, one which incorporates equity of approach at its centre.

In the first instance to accelerate the work of colleges in contributing to regional economic development there must be a review of the existing funding model and a focus on re-developing this into a single, flexible model – one which embeds flexibility whilst removing the scenario of multiple funding streams, with multiple reporting mechanisms, which colleges across Scotland are

currently required to comply with. It is widely agreed across the sector that such a methodology will also support economic responsiveness and maximise the impact of colleges as civic anchors.

Existing structures with regards to student funding are also in need of alignment and revision so as to bring in equity across schools, colleges and universities, as well as for those adults learning in the community. In effect, student funding should be equitable and equalised regardless of an individual's learning journey and their entry point into the education system, as well as being adequate and appropriate for individual needs, subject areas and levels of study. For example, there should be fair and flexible funding to support access and progression for marginalised adults.

As part of this there is also a requirement for the existing framework of Outcome Agreements to be reviewed. Consideration has to be given to moving away from FTE targets and other reporting requirements.

There is a further requirement to develop a co-created strategic approach to infrastructure and capital development, to address the current absence of a coherent and long-term strategy for capital investment in the college sector which supports the sector vision and ambition for 21st century learning spaces. This approach would also enable the college sector to facilitate the development of a sustainable modern college sector, whilst enabling a number of other priorities around Digital, Innovation and Regional Economic Development.

3. Flexibility and Simplification of Learner Pathways

Proposal Three – *SFC to define the respective roles and remit of colleges and universities in terms of the types of provision and levels/qualifications which they deliver and for which they are funded. This should be taken forward through collaboration for change with the sector to get the best outcomes for our institutions and our students. This should include stronger engagement from within the school sector, and enhanced recognition and equity of communication in relation to the role and value of Foundation Apprenticeships and other college-based qualifications for school pupils. As part of this agenda, the SFC should also support the development of recommendations from the Adult Learning Strategy once launched.*

In light of COVID-19 and the Learner Journey Report in May 2018, we have already seen the start of a genuinely co-productive approach taken by schools, colleges and universities to ensure that all young people gain as much as possible from the wider education and skills system. The economy is changing through the impact of the pandemic, and as such there is a need to ensure that the education system develops in tandem with these changes.

This development should incorporate a stronger emphasis on School College Partnerships, which should be seen as a core and interdependent component of the Senior Phase which has real and tangible enrichment for young learners. The numbers of learners engaging in such Partnerships has been increasing in recent years, including for session 2020/21, and it is important that this learner pathway is further expanded and cemented in an equitable tertiary system and the wider education and skills system.

This ethos of co-production should also extend to Adult Learning contexts and learning throughout life, ensuring that those adult learners and learners returning to education from employment have a similar ability to maximise their opportunities through the provision of quality careers information, advice and guidance. As part of this there is also a need for flexible and simple pathways for disadvantaged adult learners. We would advise that this work should build upon, and be directly informed by, the Adult Learning Strategy once this is finalised and launched.

Incorporation of international standards, frameworks and levels of best practice that are driven by excellence and developed with the involvement of international businesses, such as those outlined by WorldSkills, should be considered.

Both the Commission report and the Cumberford-Little Report have evidenced the need for colleges to be more distinctly defined in terms of their role and remit in regards to delivering higher level technical and professional qualifications up to up to SCQF Level 7 and 8 and/or HNC and HND. This will avoid unnecessary competition and duplication for learners, easing their learner journey and time in the skills pipeline and giving them faster access to the workforce and/or widening access and facilitating progression for individuals to degree programmes.

As outlined previously in the Commission report the SFC in partnership with Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland, should set out an action plan and timetable to fully implement the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access and the National Articulation Forum to create a National Articulation Framework. This should then be rolled out in the form of regional. articulation agreements. Such progression, taken forward at a faster and deeper pace than hitherto, will be vital in supporting the development of a flexible learner journey and a truly tertiary sector.

Across all of these streams there should be an emphasis on efficiency of approach wherein educational routes are truly grounded in partnership working and purposeful collaboration with clear lines of alignment and progression. Such an approach will be critical to support the smooth transition of learners through the skills pipeline and into the workforce to support inclusive economic growth and social justice, and to create shorter journeys for learners into successful and sustained careers.

4. Anchor Institutions and Regional Economic Development

Proposal Four – *SFC to fully recognise colleges as national assets and civic anchors by facilitating greater enablement of business and innovation support. This should be done by designing and developing mechanisms which amplify the role of colleges as strategic support vehicles to employers with regards to innovation and skills. Activity of this nature should establish the role of colleges by designating business support and innovation activity as a core part of their remit – enabling long term relationships with employers and industry to be built. Greater budget flexibility should be implemented in order to support this, and colleges need to be supported to enable them to be fully involved in City and Growth Deals to support economic development.*

As has been stated in the Cumberford-Little Report, colleges are 'anchor institutions' that really are at the heart of the communities they serve. It will be through the continued efforts of staff, students and stakeholders from every college community around Scotland that the necessary support, opportunities and end results will come. Despite the uncertainty created by COVID-19 strong connections exist between colleges and the communities they serve through Community Planning Partnerships and the joint work delivered through such initiatives. As part of the national response to COVID-19 colleges will continue to take this work forward to deliver positive outcomes for communities across Scotland.

In this role as anchor institutions serving communities and areas, including those of significant multiple deprivation, colleges have an important role to play in the months ahead, as the Scottish Government and partner agencies look to implement programmes and initiatives to deal with the ramifications of COVID-19 that require direct delivery and intervention by colleges. Work is already underway in this space; being taken forward by the Economic Recovery Group, a working group established by the College Chairs Group.

The regionally positioned colleges are also of scale now to be key players in the regional lead economic recovery, providing upskilling and reskilling needs that will support the requirements of the local area.

This activity will also involve colleges leading on youth education and employment options, employee reskilling and upskilling, and short-term training initiatives for those who are unemployed. The need for that work to be done fairly and equitably will be vital, with limited face-to-face interaction (expected to be in place in the short-term) supplemented by similarly equitable digital access and interaction that is crucial as we operate in such a fluid situation.

As part of this Scotland-wide approach for the college sector and for community partners, the practical need for best practice sharing, team working, and innovative thinking will be fundamental to the level of success achieved. Existing structures such as City Region Deals, will be crucial in taking forward new concepts around Employer Hubs and by utilising prospective, locally led, funding streams such as the Shared Prosperity Fund. This will involve new ways of working, new ways of thinking, suitable course offerings on both an online and in-person basis, skills-specific needs of employers, and the need to ensure equality and fairness across rural and urban areas.

This need to work promptly, flexibly and efficiently across communities and regions will require investment in services, systems and strategies within the college sector that are mindful of equality of access and opportunity, understand that a greater demand for holistic pastoral support will occur, utilise the most effective modes of communication, and carry a shared interest in achieving the best outcomes for all users.

Following the request from SFC to identify how to best engage with the college sector in this space, we would welcome the opportunity to take discussions forward with SFC in regard to innovation. Colleges have a crucial role to play in facilitating skills and process innovation activity to support local and regional economies and increase productivity across Scotland. In particular, this would build on their relationships with SMEs through initiatives such as the Flexible Workforce Development Fund and giving those enterprises opportunities to develop new and innovative business processes. On that basis it is crucial that this element is taken forward in ongoing discussions as part of the review.

Building on this request, we would make the ask of SFC to work in partnership with the college sector to raise the profile of colleges as regional and local partners in supporting economic development and recovery in both rural and non-rural areas, across Scottish Government departments. Such action would help to ensure that colleges can truly maximise their role in supporting economic recovery from COVID-19.

5. Digital

Proposal Five – *SFC to support the Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges as part of the wider digital revolution for learners, in order to support planning for the new digital age and ensure learners have the opportunity to upskill digitally and reskill to prepare them for the new working practices that will emerge. As part of this there should be a joint focus shared by SFC and the college sector on taking forward the Digital Roadmap and Implementation Plan to ensure the Digital Ambition is delivered in full for the benefit of learners and staff, in line with the key areas outlined in the document.*

The college sector is already engaged in building a Digital Scotland in which learners can be prepared for entering the workplace of the future, and wherein training and skills development is available for the existing workforce through colleges across Scotland. Within this, colleges will ensure that the workforce in areas such as construction, engineering and creative industries is equipped with the digital skills required to succeed in changing working environments.

The college sector has recently launched the Digital Ambition for Scotland's Colleges, which evidences the sector's digital intentions and enables the sector to support the full range of learners accessing college-based learning platforms across Scotland.

As a forward-thinking document, it's implementation will also ensure that colleges can quickly respond to the changing needs of the labour market and deliver skills for the new economy 4.0, having been developed and agreed following consultation with the sector and key partners in the digital industry. Whilst the Ambition is focused around digital, it is also people centred and has been developed to meet the needs of learners; both those in the workforce today and those aiming to enter the workforce of the future.

We want college learners to be well prepared to participate in a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive, and sustainable economy and to be able to become a part of thriving and innovative businesses and take up quality jobs. Similarly, we want our learners to be able to overcome disadvantage and the impact of poverty through access to digital technology, ensuring that no one is left behind.

6. Green Jobs Revolution

> **Proposal Six –** *SFC to enable the college sector to play a full role in supporting the Green, Net-Zero Economic Recovery and Inward Investment agendas,* building on existing initiatives already in place. As part of this there should be a clear designated reference from SFC designating the college sector as a key partner in delivering Scotland's inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth and in maximising the economic and social opportunities that the move to a net-zero economy by 2045 offers.

Colleges are ideally placed to support organisations across Scotland to rebuild businesses and their confidence as part of the economic recovery from COVID-19 and will continue to help Scottish workers, and Scottish apprentices, to keep pace with technological, environmental and labour market changes and to increase workforce and business resilience to future disruption as the economy both recovers from the impact of Covid-19 and transitions to a net-zero, low-carbon inclusive format in response to the Climate Emergency.

Given the college sector's extensive networks and unique reach to SMEs, colleges have a key role to play in supporting net-zero related innovation activity in these businesses, whilst driving regional economic developments and recoveries focused around moving towards a net zero economy and simultaneously maximising the upskilling and reskilling opportunities for workers to develop their skills as part of these changes.

In order to support a transition to a net-zero carbon economy there should be a sustained focus on creating and maintaining apprenticeship pathways, in addition to developing fast track and micro-credential courses (particularly at this time of economic uncertainty as a result of Covid-19), to provide a skills pipeline to support any increased activity in relevant sectors of the economy, and more importantly to give young people the opportunities to forge successful careers in this context. As traditional apprenticeships in the Oil and Gas sector may be susceptible to the transition to net-zero it is vital that apprentices are not adversely affected.

Such activity will also complement the direction of travel being taken by the Scottish Government with the commitment in the Draft Budget 2021-22 to invest £2 billion additional funding to facilitate decarbonisation activity and to support new green Scottish industries, the allocation of an initial £14 million from the Green Jobs Fund, and the intention to establish a Green Jobs Workforce Academy. Similarly, the sector supporting this agenda will build upon the Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency being taken forward by College Development Network and the ongoing sector priority in developing activity focused around the COP26 conference to be held in Glasgow in November 2021.

Current Context and the Role of Colleges in Economic Recovery

Colleges have a critical role to play in Scotland's recovery, supporting its future and building a more successful country, getting our citizens into and back to work, ensuring an absolute focus on both social and economic recovery, and contributing to the success of the changed economy of the future – in other words playing a vital role in helping us re-build better. Colleges will work with the Scottish Government and its agencies to align the curriculum and its delivery directly to jobs.

Simultaneously the college sector in Scotland has a vital role to play in providing opportunities for individuals. Through the delivery provision of various learner centred approaches that a college education provides for individuals, there are a number of benefits including better employment prospects, increased earning potential, a lower likelihood of unemployment and opportunities for upskilling and retraining.

The college sector will be vital, as it has been in supporting previous economic downturns, to unlocking sustainable and inclusive place-based and regional economies, and for that reason we know that continued investment in colleges across Scotland will deliver more resilient and sustainable local and regional communities.

Such investment will facilitate ongoing sector activity in aid of the skills-led recovery that will be vital for Scotland's national response to COVID-19, in the form of rapid retraining that will be required to support those individuals affected by the economic impact of COVID-19 on business and employers across Scotland.

Through their close working with industry and individual business, colleges across Scotland also have a vital part in supporting business development and sustainability, enabling the sector to play a role in supporting Scotland's research and innovation economy and positioning them to make a difference to future prosperity, building on existing work in this space around emerging skills needs and areas of innovative economic growth.

Colleges Scotland is supportive of reviewing key areas of process and governance that currently impact the college sector, in order to maximise the opportunities for colleges to service their regions for economic recovery and growth as required and generate an environment that is agile, flexible and responsive. These include:

- the funding model
- the Regional Outcome Agreements to ensure they are shortened and focus on deliverables rather than management issues
- the current volume target
- building on the good practice highlighted by the National Articulation Report
- consideration of how Office for National Statistics (ONS) classification impacts the college sector to ensure colleges move beyond the constraints of a one-year planning cycle and have the flexibility to deliver the skills required for their region (as highlighted in both the Cumberford - Little report and the SFC Review Phase 1 report)

Timescales

Whilst we fully welcome and appreciate the opportunity to be involved in recent and ongoing stakeholder discussions around the Funding Model; the Accountability Framework and Research and Innovation we would want to raise our concerns around the timelines of the Review.

By working at the current pace and against what we would advise are narrow timescales we would question whether the process is providing an appropriate opportunity for comment, and whether this will enable stakeholders to take advantage of the moment available to us for change in response to the pandemic.

We know from the views of sector representatives that their ability to focus on the review, and to give their full consideration to issues as complex and as prominent as systems change – and

issues which merit full consideration - has been impacted by the ongoing need to steer their institutions through the continuously challenging impact of COVID-19 on students, staff and the safe delivery of learning and teaching. We are sure SFC also recognises this situation.

To ensure that this Review could be seen in time as a missed opportunity to initiate real, transformative change in the provision and sustainability of tertiary education in Scotland, we would welcome further opportunities for engagement, in addition to the ongoing discussions.

Summary

This paper has laid out the key college sector proposals which we believe are important for further consideration as part of the ongoing discussions in relation to Phase 3 of the Review. We are keen to continue working collaboratively with the SFC and other key stakeholders in developing these proposals into realistic deliverable actions for future implementation.

It is important that areas around resourcing, capacity, and future planning are captured within ongoing discussions across the sector and with SFC as the Review continues, to ensure that the Review and its outcomes enable the college sector to support learners, communities and economies across Scotland.

Whilst we recognise the role of the Reference Groups in taking forward discussions on the Review, namely in relation to the Future Funding Model, the Impact and Accountability Framework and Research and Innovation, we would welcome the opportunity to hold further discussions with the SFC regarding the implementation of any recommendations for Scottish Government Ministers emerging from the Phase Three Report.

Colleges Scotland
May 2021