

Glasgow Clyde College

Governance Effectiveness Review

May 2026

FINAL REPORT



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1 INTRODUCTION

The Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (the Code) sets out the principles of good governance for colleges in Scotland. This review is against the 2025 Edition of the Code.

This review also considers the CDN [‘Overview of the External Governance Effectiveness Reviews for Scotland's Colleges 2020/21’](#) and the examples of effective governance practice highlighted in the report.

All colleges that receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council or a regional strategic body must comply with the Code as a condition of grant. Each board must state its adoption of the Code in its corporate governance statement contained within its annual financial statement.

The five principles set out in the Code provide a framework within which colleges are expected to develop their own policies and procedures.

The Code states that the college board must have in place a robust self-evaluation process.

D.23 ‘The Board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness every three to five years.’

‘The Guide for Board Members in the College Sector’ and the ‘Board Development Framework’ provide additional guidance for college board members and Governance Professionals.

Evidence

This governance effectiveness review drew on evidence from a wide range of sources in order to establish an overview of the board's effectiveness. This included,

- Initial meeting with the Chair and Governance Professional to agree the scope of the review and the overall project plan (29 January 2026)
- Observation of the 1st of April 2026 Board meeting
- A desk-based review of core governance documentation, including Board and Committee agendas, reports and minutes, audit reports and the 2026 version of the Board Member Handbook. See Annex 1
- Interviews with 12 Board members including the Chair, Vice Chair, Chair of each committee, Principal, Student Members, Staff Members, TU Member, and the Governance Professional
- Board survey to seek Members' views of governing processes and effectiveness
- Board workshop to test and validate the review's conclusions and recommendations.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the evidence reviewed, Glasgow Clyde College's governance arrangements are appropriately designed, operating effectively, and fully compliant with the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges. The recommendations in this report are therefore intended to further strengthen and enhance the already effective governance framework.

This is an effective Board which benefits from strong leadership from the Chair and skilled and experienced Board members who are fully engaged, collaborative and well informed.

The transition to the college's new status as a Regional College and a new Chair and in August 2025 has been managed successfully.

Building on the strong legacy of the previous Chair, the Board culture reflects respect, openness, and teamwork, with decisions made in the spirit of collective responsibility. Governance of the college is robust and mature, characterised by high-quality reporting to the Board and committees, constructive challenge balanced with support for the executive team, and appropriate trust in the committee structure to provide scrutiny and assurance.

There continues to be a clear focus on enhancing the student experience, significant improvements in retention and outcomes have been noted in the 2024-25 Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP).

While financial sustainability continues to be a challenge across the sector, a carefully monitored three-year financial plan is in place to ensure that college finances are sustainable.

To ensure continued strategic oversight, performance reporting on high-level objectives should be summarised for the Board through a business report and dashboard based on an agreed set of strategic KPIs.

Board development requires renewed attention to maintain momentum and support continuous improvement.

Survey Results

The Board survey provides further evidence that the board is operating effectively, with especially strong confidence in board behaviour, meeting quality, and the quality of information shared with members. Respondents consistently described a positive, open and collaborative culture, and the comments indicate that board members feel able to contribute meaningfully to discussion and decision-making.

The main opportunities for improvement relate to sharpening strategic focus, improving the clarity and usefulness of performance reporting, deepening discussion of risk, and broadening engagement with stakeholders.

3 EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW AGAINST THE CODE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

3.1 Leadership and Strategy

Leadership

This period has been one of significant transition, marked by the College's move to Regional College status and the appointment of a new Chair in August 2025.

The Board continues to benefit from strong leadership, highly skilled and experienced members, and a constructive culture. Board members consistently highlight the clarity, openness and supportive approach demonstrated by the Chair, the Senior Leadership Team and the Governance Professional.

The Board's culture is characterised by respect, teamwork and purposeful discussion. Collaboration and reflective practice are evident across meetings and development activities. Decisions are made in the spirit of collective responsibility.

Vision and Strategy

The Board has been fully engaged in shaping the new five-year strategic plan, **Igniting Opportunity 2031**, which will be launched in autumn 2026 and will guide the College from 2026 to 2031.

The Strategic Plan is built around three priorities:

1. Transformative Learning
2. Sustainable College
3. Economic Catalyst

Strategic planning has been well planned and well-structured. Initial discussions started at the end of the 2024/25 academic year, followed by a Board Development Day in September 2025. Further consideration was given at the October Board meeting before the draft plan was issued for consultation. The final plan was approved by the Board on 1st April 2026.

A further Board Development Day in September 2026 will be used to agree the strategic KPIs and targets that will underpin performance monitoring against the new strategy.

The Plan articulates the College's intended contribution to the economic, cultural and social wellbeing of the region.

"This strategy is more than a plan. It is a commitment to our students, our staff, our communities, and our city. Together, we will continue to push boundaries, transform lives, and shape a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future. Together, we are Igniting Opportunity."

Performance

KPIs are reviewed and scrutinised by the Board subcommittees. There is an appropriate level of trust in the Committees to undertake the detailed scrutiny and provide assurance to the Board. However, the Board would benefit from a high-level, strategic overview of performance against the new plan. A consolidated “business report” or dashboard would support this by presenting key strategic KPIs without duplicating committee-level work.

Recommendation

1. Develop a high-level ‘business report’ for the Board, providing strategic oversight of performance against the new Strategic Plan, without duplicating the more detailed scrutiny undertaken by committees.

3.2 Quality of the Student Experience

There is a strong and consistent focus on the quality of the student experience, which remains central to Board decision-making.

The new five-year strategic plan, **Igniting Opportunity 2031**, reinforces the College’s commitment to delivering relevant, high-quality learning.

Under the strategic priority **Transformative Learning**, the College sets out its ambition:

“We will deliver transformative learning experiences through inspirational teaching, placing the student experience at the heart of everything we do, and achieving sector-leading outcomes that change lives.”

Scrutiny and Assurance

The Learning and Teaching Committee plays a key role in providing the detailed scrutiny and assurance on the quality of learning and teaching. The Board, and the Learning and Teaching Committee, takes a robust approach to data analysis, enabling effective monitoring of performance and outcomes.

The 2024-25 Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) reported significant improvements in attainment across full-time and part-time FE and HE provision. Many curriculum areas achieved their highest attainment levels since the College was established.

Student Engagement

The Student Engagement and Partnership section of the Self Evaluation and Action Plan, authored by the Students' Association, highlighted the strength of the partnership between the College and the Student Association:

“A key strength at Glasgow Clyde is the strong partnership with the Students' Association (SA). This collaboration lies at the heart of the student support system, ensuring the voices of students are heard and acted upon.”

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction levels remain high. The recent Student Satisfaction Survey reported that 96.7% of students who responded were satisfied with their overall college experience, reflecting the effectiveness of the College's approach to learning, support and engagement

3.3 Board Accountability

As a regional college, the Board is now directly accountable to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for the delivery of agreed outcomes. At its April meeting, the Board reviewed the *Credits Projection and Attainment Summary 2025/26* report and noted that the College is on track to meet, and slightly exceed, the SFC target.

Board and committee meetings are well structured, with agenda planning sessions held between the respective Chairs and the executive team.

Decision-making processes are transparent, well informed, and rigorous, with all decisions taken in the spirit of collective responsibility.

Reports presented to the Board and its committees are of a high standard, providing clear background information and setting out the context for discussion and decision making. Members are confident that they receive timely, relevant information to support effective strategic oversight.

However, some Board papers are lengthy and overly detailed, occasionally straying into operational territory. Members expressed a desire for a sharper strategic focus and more concise reporting on KPIs at Board level.

The committees are well structured with clear remits that are reviewed on a regular basis. Each committee and the Board have an annual workplan which sets out the cycle of business coming to each meeting of the committee or Board.

There is an appropriate level of trust in committees to scrutinise and provide assurance to the Board.

There has been a question raised around combining the Remuneration and Nominations and Governance Committees. However, the Code requires that

‘As a minimum the committees required are Audit, Remuneration, Finance and Nominations/Appointments.’

Keeping the current structure aligns with the Code while maintaining a degree of separation.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee provides an annual report to the Board prior to the approval of the College Financial Statements. The purpose is

“to inform the Board of Management of the adequacy and effectiveness of the College’s internal financial and management systems controls, and the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

From the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2024/25, the Internal Auditors opinion was that the College had *“adequate and effective arrangements for risk management, control and governance and that proper arrangements are in place to promote and secure Value for Money.”*

The overall conclusion from the external audit report, prepared by Audit Scotland, was

- *an unqualified opinion on the financial statements;*
- *an unqualified opinion on the regularity of expenditure and income; and*
- *an unqualified opinion on other requirements.*

The internal auditors completed a review of Corporate Governance in February 2025. This was to allow Board Members to highlight any improvements needed in existing governance arrangements. The recommendations from the report were added to the Board Development Plan for 2024/25. Some recommendations were carried forward into the 2025/26 Board Development Plan.

Risk Management

The College has a Risk Management Policy which was approved by the Board of Management.

The Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing the College's internal control and risk management systems.

The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed at each meeting of the Audit Committee and is reviewed quarterly by the Board.

The Board sets the risk appetite for each individual risk, which is noted on the Risk Register. Each risk is scored based on assessment of impact and probability and is owned by a member of the Senior Management Team who is responsible for identifying mitigating actions.

The Board is of the view that there is satisfactory process for identifying, evaluating and managing the significant risks faced by the college.

A new Risk Committee has been established which will seek to oversee a risk management framework ensuring effective risk governance, aligning risk strategies with corporate objectives. The Terms of reference were approved by the Audit Committee at their March 2026 meeting pending some clarification around reporting lines.

Board members have expressed a desire for deeper discussions on risk and risk appetite and the alignment of operational and strategic risks. The impact and effectiveness of the new committee in addressing these issues should be reviewed at an appropriate point.

Financial Sustainability

The Board is responsible for ensuring the financial sustainability of the college. Failure to manage this is the top risk on the risk register, mitigating actions are in place which are monitored by the Board.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements notes that in order to secure medium-term financial sustainability, the College has a three-year financial plan which was approved by the Board of Management in June 2025 and submitted to the SFC. While the College has a plan to grow its commercial income, it anticipates having to continue to take significant decisions on spending priorities and its operating model, requiring substantial savings.

The Finance and Resources Committee undertakes the more detailed financial scrutiny and is tasked with '*ensuring the maintenance of a robust long term financial strategy.*'

Financial forecasts were submitted to SFC for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29.

At the 1 April 2026 meeting the Board discussed the financial position for the six-month period to January 2026 and the current full year forecast noting that the financial position had improved in comparison to the approved budget.

Recommendations

2. Add 'Board Reporting' to the agenda for the Board Development session in September. Members to collaborate with the executive team to agree a form of reporting which has a sharper strategic focus with more concise reporting on KPIs.
3. The Audit Committee should consider an appropriate timescale for an initial review of the impact and effectiveness of the new Risk Committee.

3.4 Board Effectiveness

This is an effective Board, underpinned by a positive and open culture where healthy debate, constructive questioning and collaboration are encouraged. Discussions are forward focused and marked by mutual respect among members. Decisions are made with the quality of the student experience at the core and in the spirit of collective responsibility.

This is a mature Board, with most members having served for over two years, many for significantly longer. There is a genuine sense of teamwork and productive working relationships between members.

The Nominations and Governance Committee reviews committee membership on a regular basis in order to ensure an appropriate balance of skills and experience to enable the committees to operate effectively. The N&G Committee also considers succession planning for the committees and the Board.

Recruitment to fill the current non-executive vacancy is paused pending the outcome of the Governance Effectiveness Review. It is recommended that future recruitment draws on the **Model Board Member Skills Matrix** to identify any skills gaps on the Board. This is available through the CDN dedicated Governance Professional platform.

There is an effective and mature working relationship between the Board and the senior management team based on mutual respect and clear understanding of roles. The Board provides an appropriate level of constructive challenge balanced with support to the executive team.

Agenda planning sessions take place with Board and Committee Chairs to ensure strategic alignment. Each Committee operates to a defined workplan outlining the business to be covered throughout the session.

Board Development

Enhancing induction training for new members was identified as a priority in the 2024-25 Board Development Plan. The Governance Professional coordinates the induction programme using a checklist to ensure all aspects are covered. This includes the CDN online training provision. All new members receive the Board Member Handbook as part of this process.

Each member should be encouraged to maintain a personal development plan, reviewed annually with the Chair as part of the appraisal process. These discussions should be structured around the Core Skills Matrix and the four Pillars of Board Development, helping members reflect on how their skills and knowledge have evolved over the year and identify future development priorities.

Further guidance is available in the CDN publication [A Board Development Framework](#) which includes more information on the Core Skills Matrix and the four Pillars of Board Development.

Personal development plans should align with the overall Board Development Plan to help identify shared training needs. Time could also be allocated before Board meetings for short training or development sessions, making effective use of the wider governance space. This would also provide an opportunity for greater stakeholder engagement, at a strategic level.

The Nominations and Governance Committee oversees and monitors progress against the Board Development Plan.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that future recruitment draws on the **Model Board Member Skills Matrix** to identify any skills gaps. This is available through the CDN dedicated Governance Professional platform.
5. Personal development plans should align with the overall Board Development Plan to help identify shared training needs. Time could be allocated before Board meetings for short training or development sessions, making effective use of the wider governance space. This would also provide an opportunity for the greater stakeholder engagement, at a strategic level.

3.5 Relationships and Collaboration

Glasgow Clyde College works in partnership both at a regional and a national level to ensure the coherent provision for high quality, relevant further and higher education in the region.

The college is part of the Glasgow Colleges' Leadership Group which meets to discuss sector wide strategic and funding issues which impact on Glasgow's colleges.

The new strategic plan, **Igniting Opportunity 2031**, was subject to consultation with partners and stakeholders as part of the strategic planning process. Feedback was carefully considered and where appropriate incorporated in the final plan.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Develop a high-level 'business report' for the Board, providing strategic oversight of performance against the new Strategic Plan. This should not duplicate the more detailed scrutiny undertaken by committees.
2	Add 'Board Reporting' to the agenda for the Board Development session in September. Members to collaborate with the executive team to agree a form of reporting which has a sharper strategic focus with more concise reporting on KPIs.
3	The Audit Committee should consider an appropriate timescale for an initial review of the impact and effectiveness of the new Risk Committee.
4	It is recommended that future recruitment draws on the Model Board Member Skills Matrix to identify any skills gaps. This is available through the CDN dedicated Governance Professional platform.
5	Personal development plans should align with the overall Board Development Plan to help identify shared training needs. Time could be allocated before Board meetings for short training or development sessions, making effective use of the wider governance space. This would also provide an opportunity for the greater stakeholder engagement, at a strategic level.

5 ANNEX 1

5.1 Document Review

1. Board and Committee
 - Terms of reference
 - Work plans for 2025/26
2. Board Member Handbook February 2026
3. Glasgow Clyde College Annual Report and Financial Statements July 2026
4. Glasgow Clyde College 2024/25 Annual Audit Report
5. Internal Audit Reports, including report on Corporate Governance February 2025
6. Board agenda and papers for December 2025 and April 2026 meetings
7. Committee agendas and papers – all committees
8. Board member profile
9. Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2024/25
10. Strategic Risk Register
11. External Effectiveness Review March 2021
12. Board Development Plan 2025/26
13. College Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031

Footnote

The reviewer would like to thank the Board Chair, Principal, members, and the Governance Professional for their assistance and insight with this governance effectiveness review.