# **GITY** OF **GLASGOW COLLEGE**

## Board of Management Audit Committee

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 September 2017
Paper No.	AC1-E
Agenda Item	8.1
Subject of Paper	Internal Audit Report – Curriculum Planning
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Henderson Loggie
Date of production	August 2017
Action	For Discussion and Decision

### Recommendations

The Committee is asked to consider and discuss the report and the management responses to the internal audit recommendations.

### 1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this review is to provide management and the Audit Committee with assurance on key controls relating to the curriculum and financial plans in place for City of Glasgow College and their alignment with the regional plan for Glasgow and the college student number targets.

### 2. Context and Discussion

Following the Audit Needs Assessment undertaken by Henderson Loggie in session 2016-17, and the consequent Internal Audit Strategic Plan 2016-2020, both approved by the Committee in March 2017, an operating plan was created for the year ended 31 July 2017.

This internal audit of Curriculum Planning provides an outline of the objectives, scope, findings and graded recommendations as appropriate, together with management responses. This constitutes an action pan for improvement.

The Report includes a number of audit findings which are assessed and graded to denote the overall level of assurance that can be taken from the Report. The gradings are defined as follows:

Good	System meets control objectives.
Satisfactory	System meets control objectives with
	some weaknesses present.
Requires improvement	System has weaknesses that could
	prevent it achieving control objectives.
Unacceptable	System cannot meet control objectives.

### 3. Impact and implications

Refer to internal audit report.

City of Glasgow College Curriculum Planning Audit Report No: 2017/05 Draft issued: 30 June 2017 Final issued: 14 August 2017

**LEVEL OF ASSURANCE:** 

Satisfactory

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### **Level of Assurance**

In addition to the grading of individual recommendations in the action plan, audit findings are assessed and graded on an overall basis to denote the level of assurance that can be taken from the report. Risk and materiality levels are considered in the assessment and grading process as well as the general quality of the procedures in place.

Gradings are defined as follows:

Good	System meets control objectives.
Satisfactory	System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.
Requires improvement	System has weaknesses that could prevent it achieving control objectives.
Unacceptable	System cannot meet control objectives.

### **Action Grades**

Priority 1	Issue subjecting the College to material risk and which requires to be brought to the attention of management and the Audit Committee.
Priority 2	Issue subjecting the College to significant risk and which should be addressed by management.
Priority 3	Matters subjecting the College to minor risk or which, if addressed, will enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

### 1. Overall Level of Assurance

**Satisfactory** 

System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.

### 2. Risk Assessment

This review focused on the controls in place to mitigate the following risks on the City of Glasgow College ('the College') Risk Register:

- Failure to support student success (net risk score: 5);
- Failure to achieve good student outcome/progression levels (net risk score: 5); and
- Failure to achieve improved performance (net risk score: 5).

### 3. Background

As part of the Internal Audit programme at the College for 2016/17 we carried out a review of the systems in place for curriculum planning. The Audit Needs Assessment, completed in March 2017, identified this as an area where risk can arise and where Internal Audit can assist in providing assurances to the Board of Management and the Principal that the related control environment is operating effectively, ensuring risk is maintained at an acceptable level.

Poor curriculum portfolio choices affect student enrolments, the achievement of credits and ultimately the financial security of the College and the student experience.

It is important for the College to review its curriculum and course provision on a regular basis to ensure that it remains aligned with the needs of employers and individual learners and to ensure that programmes that are not cost effective are discontinued or amended.

Every year the College forecasts the credits it will earn for each course and ensures that it has planned to deliver sufficient credits to meet its Regional Outcome Agreement credits target. This is then monitored throughout the year as a guideline to whether the credits target will be met. If credits are forecast to be lower than the target then decisions can be made to run additional courses or course cohorts in year.

### 4. Scope, Objectives and Overall Findings

This audit considered the key risks in relation to the College's curriculum planning process.

The table below notes each separate objective for this review and records the results:

Objective		Findings				
Th	e objective of this audit was to obtain	A	1	2	3	Actions
reasonable assurance that:		Assurance	No. of Agreed Actions		already planned	
1.	The core College curriculum is aligned with national priorities and the needs of regional industry, employers and individual learners	Satisfactory	0	0	3	$\checkmark$
2.	There is a process in place to review and refresh existing programmes on a regular basis	Good	0	0	0	$\checkmark$
3.	Adequate controls are in place over the development of new programmes including the preparation of a business case, costing and pricing	Requires Improvement	0	0	0	~
4.	The curriculum planning process takes sufficient cognisance of the College's share of the Region's credits target	Good	0	0	1	
			0	0	4	
Overall Level of Assurance		Satisfactory	,	n meets c ome wea		bjectives present.

### 5. Audit Approach

Interviews were held with the Vice Principal Student Experience, Performance and Improvement Director, a sample of Faculty Directors, and other relevant staff in order to document the systems and processes in place. A detailed assessment of the key internal controls was then performed and detailed audit testing undertaken where appropriate.

### 6. Summary of the Main Findings

### Strengths

- The College is involved in a wide range of activities to help identify what is appropriate curriculum to meet national, regional, employer and individual learner needs;
- There are a number of ways that the College uses to review and refresh its curriculum; and
- A robust process is in place to ensure that sufficient course provision is planned to meet credits targets. Any changes in year are monitored and proactive action is required to be taken to ensure that credits targets are met.

#### Weaknesses

- We noted that there could be greater controls put in place to ensure that sufficient employer engagement activity was being undertaken within all Faculties. There was also the need for actions or opportunities from Faculty employer engagement to be formally recorded and followed-up and appropriate inclusion of the Industry Academy Heads and Business Development Officers in Faculty employer engagement activity; and
- There was no formal process required to be followed for new course approval in 2016/17. However, we noted that a new process is being planned for 2017/18 and as action is already being undertaken no recommendation has been raised regarding this.

### 7. Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the College who helped us during the course of our audit visit.

### 8. Main Findings and Action Plan

Objective 1: The core College curriculum is aligned with national priorities and the needs of regional industry, employers and individual learners

#### National Priorities and Regional Industry and Sector Needs

The national priorities and regional industry / sector economic needs were reviewed at a regional level leading to the publishing of the 'Glasgow Region Curriculum and Estates Plan 2015-2020'. This Plan resulted in a range of curriculum rationalisation and movement of curriculum among the Glasgow colleges and is reflected in the sector credits targets set out in the Glasgow Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA).

The Glasgow Colleges Regional Board (GCRB) has a Learning and Teaching Group which has representatives from the three Glasgow colleges and, under the Learning and Teaching Group, there are individual Curriculum Hubs (each covering a specific curriculum area(s) which are comprised of academic staff from the three colleges. The Curriculum Hubs have reviewed the regional framework of courses being delivered to ensure that it is comprehensive and provides appropriate progression routes for students. We noted that within the Curriculum Hubs there was limited sharing of intelligence between the Glasgow colleges regarding employer needs and future trends. We recognise that these are not City of Glasgow College groups and that it is the convenors of the Curriculum Hubs (which may be from other colleges) that drive their workload. The Vice Principal, Student Experience advised that she will chair the Learning and Teaching Group in 2017/18 and hopes to set out a work plan for the Curriculum Hubs for the following 12 months which would include improving the sharing of information between Glasgow colleges regarding employer needs and future trends.

There are a number of regional initiatives which involve cross-college working, which at a regional level provide challenge about what curriculum to provide, and cover Foundation Apprenticeships, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and childcare provision.

The College's Strategic Plan and five supporting strategies, including the key Student Engagement Strategy, provide a platform for meeting national and regional priorities, including through the City Learning 4.0 project which aims to ensure that learning and teaching in the College is as progressive as it can be.

There are a range of Skills Investment Plans covering different sectors, which aim to identify areas of future demand. These feed into the Regional Skills Assessments produced annually by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and are presented to the GCRB Learning and Teaching Group, and from there feed down to individual colleges. The Vice Principal, Student Experience advised that she meets with SDS Regional Skills Assessments Leads to discuss how the Skills Investment Plans are being implemented and how the College can be involved with these. The Skills Investment Plans are also taken into account when setting the ROA sector targets.

The College works with a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), including collaborating to ensure that optional units included in courses will not duplicate courses in HEIs that College students may progress onto.

#### **Employer Needs**

The College maintains links with the local community and employers in a number of ways, including through work placements, staff involvement in industry liaison groups and staff who work part-time in their sectors.

Each Faculty has an Industry Academy Head assigned to it who is responsible for overseeing a range of employer focussed activities, such as student work experience, work placements, stakeholder forums and external speakers. There is a list of Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets for each activity which are set within each Faculty. We were advised by the Head of Business and Academy Development that she had analysed the KPI targets and noted that there was some disparity in targets between Faculties, and within curriculum areas in Faculties, and she had noted that KPI targets had been lowered between 2015/16 and 2016/17. The results of her findings were reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee and actions are already being planned to make improvements in this area, such as the development of a refined set of Industry Academy KPIs along with an updated set of KPI definitions for 2017/18.

Currently Industry Academy Heads must ask their Faculty's staff to advise them of the numbers of employer focussed activities they have undertaken so that they can collate these for their Faculty and provide these to the Performance and Improvement Director, who compares them against targets. We noted that there was no audit trail back to what students or events made up the figures. However, the Performance and Improvement Director is currently driving forward a project to implement an electronic solution for capturing the KPI activity which will have to set out exactly what made up the activity (rather than just the number of activities undertaken). At the time of audit fieldwork this was in development, with the aim to have this rolled out to staff in September 2017.

We noted that there is a range of work with employers through both the Industry Academies and the work done by Business Development Officers. This has the risk that some employers may be approached multiple times by different staff in the College (which does not provide employers with a view that the College is taking a co-ordinated approach to dealing with employers), and also the risk of some employers not being approached at all (where these employers could be useful in providing assistance to the College). A common approach to mitigating these risks is through the use of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The College does not have such a system however we noted that the College's Corporate Development Strategy includes this under Aim 5: brand penetration.

Networking opportunities, such as 'meet and greet' events, are sometimes held where employers and potential workplace providers can meet graduating students.

A One City event has been undertaken where staff, employers and students showcased the College's City Living 4.0 project, with external speakers talking about current trends and sector changes.

#### **Employer needs - SQA**

The majority of courses offered relate to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) awards, such as National Qualifications (NQs), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) and Higher National Certificates and Diplomas (HNC/Ds). The SQA has a number of ways to identify employer needs and consider how to ensure that course content is appropriate.

The SQA develops and refreshes courses in conjunction with industry and education establishments to ensure that provision is aligned with the current demands of employers. Course refreshes are normally done every five years, although can be more frequent than this, through the Quality Development Team (QDT) process which includes college reps, employers and industry representatives meeting to discuss what should be included in a qualification.

SQA courses are reviewed by Qualification Support Teams (QSTs), which include staff from different colleges, to ensure that the qualifications are fit for purpose. They discuss how the courses are delivered, include discussion with stakeholders to determine whether their needs have changed and are a means of exchanging information and sharing good practice.

There are at least annual SQA organised networking events for each subject. The College can take a number of staff to these where they can meet with employers and representatives of industry organisations in order to share knowledge about the relevant industry.

Increasingly employers are looking for individuals who have not only the required technical skills, but also appropriate soft skills, values and behaviours. From discussion with College staff we were advised that soft skills are developed through activities included in the curriculum and values and behaviours are discussed at inductions and lecturers are encouraged to use and embed appropriate values and behaviours in their curriculum provision.

#### Individual Learners

At a regional level, the review of appropriate progression routes and an appropriate range of Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) rated courses for individuals' varying needs has been undertaken through the Curriculum Hubs.

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response	
<ul> <li>Stakeholder Forums</li> <li>A key means of working with employers is through Stakeholder Forums. These are forums organised by College Faculties where employers with a key interest in a qualification(s) are invited to meet College staff and to provide input into the development of students' learning and teaching.</li> <li>Each Faculty has a target number of Stakeholder Forums, which is set by each Faculty when setting Faculty Industry Academy targets. It was noted that some Faculties, and some curriculum areas in Faculties, were more active at organising Stakeholder Forums than others.</li> <li>It was also noted that some curriculum areas are less suited to having Stakeholder Forums than others. We consider that there may be benefit in considering other ways to gain stakeholder feedback in such areas, like having an online survey.</li> </ul>	Insufficient feedback might be received from employers, leading to course content and delivery not being as appropriate as possible to help give students the skills and experience that employers are seeking.	<b>R1</b> As part of the current review of KPIs for Industry Academy Heads, consider putting in place the requirement for each curriculum area to justify the level and type of employer engagement they plan to undertake. Consideration should be given to other means of obtaining feedback from employers, such as surveys. If other actions such as surveys were to be used it would be beneficial to do a pilot of these to determine how effective these are first.	As part of a review of the Coll endeavour to include a more s reflecting on our stakeholder e the Corporate Development S consideration of the ways in w stakeholder feedback. <b>To be actioned by:</b> Vice Prin Experience, Executive Director Development and Innovation <b>No Later Than:</b> June 2018	ystematic approach to engagement. As part of trategy this will also take hich we gather and use ncipal – Student
			Grade	3

learners (Continued)				
Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response	
From discussion with a sample of Industry Academy Heads it was noted that not all were involved with the Stakeholder Forums. It was also noted that not all Business Development Officers attended the Faculty meetings (meetings between the Faculty Directors and their Curriculum Heads held monthly) for the Faculties they were assigned to.	As above	<b>R2</b> Ensure that key business development roles are involved in the employer engagement forums and attend Faculty meetings.	To encourage greater collabor Development staff and curricul development activity should be for discussion at Faculty manage a regular basis. Appropriate B personnel should be in attenda Furthermore, Business Develop involved in the new curriculum ensure there is a coordinated provision provided within the <b>To be actioned by:</b> Faculty B Development Officers	llum areas, business e a standing agenda item gement team meetings on Business Development ance for this discussion. Opment personnel will be n planning process to approach to commercial Faculties. Directors and Business
			Grade	3

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Respo	nse
<b>Stakeholder Forums (Continued)</b> We noted that there is no formal process to note down action points arising from Stakeholder Forums and follow these up. There is a possibility that the centralised system for recording Industry Academy activities which is being developed could have an action log of points noted from interaction with employers included within this, with reports being able to be run to show outstanding actions for review by Faculty Directors and the Vice Principal, Student Experience.	Information and leads gained through Stakeholder Forums may not be appropriately followed-up (or not appropriately justified with a reason as to why these are not followed-up).	<b>R3</b> Consider building into the planned new system for recording Industry Academy Head KPI activities, the ability to include actions identified from employer related activities and have reporting that allows oversight to ensure that these have been followed-up.	There is a new CRM system being considered which will allow a mechanism to record employer engagement activity. As part of th systems integration strategy this information should form part of any employer engageme reporting and subsequent actions. <b>To be actioned by:</b> Executive Director – Corporate Development and Innovation <b>No Later Than:</b> March 2018	
			Grade	3

Objective 2: There is a process in place to review and refresh existing programmes on a regular basis

#### **Review of courses**

Review of courses relates to the process of reviewing courses for appropriate performance, including considering key performance indicators such as those relating to retention and attainment.

From discussion and review of documentation we noted that there are a range of ways courses are reviewed including:

- Lecturers and Curriculum Heads can review course performance indicators on the College Dashboard which has key statistics in relation to retention, student outcomes and attainment at Faculty, curriculum area, course and individual student level. Any poor performance figures should be investigated and action taken. Senior staff such as the Faculty Directors and Vice Principal, Student Experience also have access to the Dashboard system and refer to these statistics when considering the performance of existing provision and when planning future delivery;
- Faculty Director alerts are emails that are sent fortnightly and identify areas for action or noting by Faculty Directors such as the number of withdrawals and number of unit results outstanding;
- Faculties have meetings of the Faculty Directors and their Curriculum Heads regularly where performance indicators are reviewed. Industry Academy Heads may attend these meetings to give feedback and input;
- The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has a performance indicator benchmarking tool which it publishes and this includes each course that is eligible for credits in Scotland. The Performance and Improvement Director reviews this national performance indicator data from SFC and has analysed this for benchmarking individual courses to determine whether poor performance is generally the case nationally or whether it may be a local delivery issue. He provided a report to the College Senior Management Team in March 2017 setting out where planned improvement actions had not shown any improvement in performance indicators and this led to suggestions about what courses should be removed, and what course should be monitored (given one more year before considering removing);
- There is a formal performance review process with meetings between Faculty staff, the Performance and Improvement Director and the Vice Principal, Student Experience which were held in both November 2016 and June 2017. These meeting involved reviewing predicted course performance indicators for the 2016/17 academic year and discussing which courses to remove; and
- Periodic reporting to the Learning and Teaching Committee or Performance, Remuneration and Nominations Committee about curriculum provision. We noted that one such report was provided in May 2017 which set out what was being planned regarding changes in the curriculum, and advised that some work was being undertaken to help streamline the curriculum in line with future trends. This is linked to work being done on Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and also the proposed Industry 4.0 project which has been taken to the Senior Management Team.

Objective 2: There is a process in place to review and refresh existing programmes on a regular basis (Continued)

### **Refreshing of courses**

Refreshing courses refers to considering whether courses have the most appropriate: optional units; use of the Virtual Learning Environment; delivery mode (including work placements); and provision of skills for learning, life and work.

From discussion and review of documentation we noted that there are a range of ways courses are reviewed including:

- Curriculum Heads are responsible for ensuring that optional units are the most relevant for the needs of employers, and they do this through the knowledge they have gained from interaction with employers, industry bodies and other forums;
- Ensuring that appropriate 'skills for learning, life and work' (which covers employability skills and core skills) are included on courses is the responsibility of the Curriculum Heads. Some skills for learning, life and work are embedded and contextualised within courses, rather than being separately taught. We were advised that there had previously been a mapping undertaken to ensure that appropriate 'skills for learning, life and work' were included on courses. Currently the College is considering a new model for the provision of skills for learning, life and work and we were advised by the Vice Principal, Student Experience that the coverage and adequacy of this provision will be considered as part of that review;
- Course Action and Development Meetings (CADM) should be held three times a year for each course and are attended by the Course Leader (lecturer, senior lecturer or Curriculum Head) who invites the teaching lecturers for that block and student reps from classes to discuss areas for action, such as the Virtual Learning Environment, performance indicators and actions from previous meetings. These should be minuted on a CADM report, which includes an action plan, with the Curriculum Head ensuring that action points are followed-up. Minutes of these meetings have to be submitted to the Performance and Improvement Director advised that he has reviewed a spread of these minutes from across the College and has found the quality and comprehensiveness of reports varies. Although agreed actions from the first review should be followed-up at the following meeting, the Performance and Improvement Director advised that there is no formal requirement for this. However, from 2017/18, there will be a new format of the CADM minute based on the new Education Scotland framework. The Performance and Improvement Director is planning to implement an electronic system where the CADM minutes would be uploaded to this system and would allow reports to be run showing outstanding CADM minutes;
- The Student Engagement Team run two 'Finger on the Pulse' meetings for each Faculty each year whereby the Faculty Director, Students Association reps and a sample of students meet and discuss matters relevant to that Faculty;
- There is a City Learning 4.0 initiative which has been set up to ensure that learning and teaching is engaging, including embedding new pedagogy, digital learning, and flexible learning. This will start to be rolled out in 2017/18 and cover a three-year period; and
- Every year students are asked to complete two surveys: a first impressions survey; and a learning and teaching survey. The results of these surveys are available on the College Dashboard and can be drilled into at curriculum area and course level. The results from these surveys can be used to help refresh courses and Curriculum Heads are required to prepare course improvement plans as a result of any significantly adverse findings from these surveys.

Objective 2: There is a process in place to review and refresh existing programmes on a regular basis (Continued)

#### **Education Scotland**

The last Education Scotland external review, for which the fieldwork was undertaken in January 2016, was very positive on the College's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders, with only a few areas for development. Some excerpts from this report are noted below:

- The Principal and senior managers provide strong strategic direction for the curriculum and leadership to enhance learning and teaching;
- The College offers a wide range of programmes from SCQF levels 2-11 that meet the needs of the College's learners, employers and communities well;
- Staff ensure that the majority of learners are provided with a broad range of opportunities to achieve more widely and develop skills for learning, life and work;
- Learners regularly contribute their views through questionnaires, focus groups, 'you are the expert' meetings and class representation;
- The College has established Industry Academies to involve employers in designing programmes which help learners to develop the values, behaviours and professional standards required by industry. Through the development of a number of Industry Academies across the curriculum, College staff engage directly with a wide range of local and national employers to collaborate, identify skills gaps, and provide learners with real-life work experiences;
- The College has a clear commitment to incorporating essential skills development into all programmes; and
- Most programme teams routinely involve external stakeholders, including employers, in self-evaluation activities to ensure their programmes are relevant and meet employers' needs.

Objective 3: Adequate controls are in place over the development of new programmes including the preparation of a business case, costing and pricing

For new courses approved for 2016/17 there was no formal process required to be followed. From discussion with staff it was noted that the general process was that: the Curriculum Head would raise the need for a new course; the Faculty Director and Vice Principal, Student Experience would consider this and verbally approve or reject it; the Curriculum Head would prepare the required documentation and store this in a course 'master folder' on the College network; and then the Qualifications Manager would check whether the required information for SQA or other awarding body was adequate.

We discussed with a sample of Faculty Directors the reasons for a sample of new courses proposed within 2016/17 and noted that appropriate justifications were provided for each new course reviewed.

Pricing is based on a College price per credit and costs are covered by having minimum course numbers. Courses are generally not run if below these levels.

A new process is being planned for 2017/18 whereby at the first performance review (planned for September 2017) there will be a review of the need for new courses in the Faculties and these will be discussed with the Vice Principal, Student Experience. If approved in principle then the Curriculum Heads will work on developing these into formal business cases for further consideration and final approval. As work is being planned in this area no recommendation has been raised.

#### Objective 4: The curriculum planning process takes sufficient cognisance of the College's share of the Region's credits target

The Regional Outcome Agreement sets out credits targets by curriculum area for the College and these targets are assigned to Faculty Directors to achieve.

The College courses are rolled over from the previous year on the Student Recruitment Planner (SRP) spreadsheet, with courses then added or removed where there are new courses or courses no longer to be run. The number of students that are expected to be recruited and to remain at the credits funding cut-off date are then estimated by Faculty staff based on historic trends and staff knowledge. The SRP then calculates the expected number of credits based on the courses and expected number of students on each course. If the planned provision was below the sector credits target then the Faculty Director would look to create new courses or put on more cohorts until the predicted credit provision was in line with the target.

During the year there are monthly reports sent out to Faculty Directors with their Faculty's excerpt of the SRP in order for them to monitor progress against their credits targets, and to take proactive action where these are projecting any under provision.

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Respo	onse
The SRP is not updated on a real-time basis for any changes that Faculty Directors or Curriculum Heads may have made. We were advised by the Vice Principal, Student Experience that this meant that staff were not always working on the most accurate credits projections.	Staff may not identify credit under provision on a timely basis.	<b>R4</b> Migrate the information from using the static SRP system towards using a real-time system.	As part of the systems in method of capturing a " planning tool should be then be used to support planning / performance in <b>To be actioned by:</b> Vi Infrastructure, Vice Prin Experience <b>No Later Than:</b> June 2	real-time" curriculum implemented. This will the revised curriculum management process. ce Principal – cipal – Student
			Grade	3