

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 26 March 2025
Paper No.	BoM3-D
Agenda Item	2.3
Subject of Paper	Principal's Report: March 2025
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Dr Paul Little CBE DL Principal & Chief Executive
Date of production	19 March 2025
Action	For Discussion

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To discuss the Principal's quarterly report to the Board of Management.

2. Consultation

- 2.1. In progressing the matters outlined in the report, colleagues in the College and across the sector, as well as regional, national and international partners, have been engaged.

3. Key Insights

- 3.1. The Principal is responsible for the operational management of the College, as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation, subject to the strategic and policy direction of the Board.
- 3.2. The Board has the responsibility of setting the strategic direction of the College. The College's [Strategic Plan 2021-30](#), refreshed in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, outlines our commitment to Let Learning Flourish through the inspiration, excellence and innovation of our leading teaching methods and world-class facilities. Our eight strategic priorities, shown below, are mapped across four strategic themes:

Students

- 1: To be an inspirational place of learning.
2: To enable individuals to excel and realise their full potential.

Growth and Development

- 3: To live our values, value our people, and innovate in partnership.
4: To be a valued partner in the city region, supporting the national economy, and the international learning community.

People and Processes

- 5: To deliver excellence in performance.
6: To be efficient, effective, innovating, and vigilant.

Finance

- 7: To maintain our long-term financial stability.
8: To secure diversity of income and sustainable development.

- 3.3. Five supporting strategies – [Student Academic Experience](#), [People & Culture](#), [Corporate Development](#), [Digital](#) and [Sustainability](#) – have been developed to deliver on the Strategic Plan. Progress is measured and tracked through the College's Balanced Scorecard.
- 3.4. By delivering on our strategic priorities, the College will facilitate opportunities for our students, support industry, build communities and, in so doing, affect positive change in people's lives in and beyond the city whose name we are proud to bear.

4. Impact and Implications

- 4.1. The Principal's report ensures that Board members remain informed of the work of the College, delivery of the Strategic Plan and key developments affecting the College and sector.

Appendix 1: Principal's Report

Principal's Report to the Board of Management: 26 March 2025

Students

1. Student Transition and Induction planning is underway for academic session 25/26, a cross-college activity led by the VP Student Experience and a fundamental part of the planning cycle, ensuring those who are recruited early in 2025, get regular familiarisation and practical information ahead of their start date next August. This is a core element of our retention strategy and is well received by students, as confirmed in last October's Student Experience Survey.
2. On student retention in 2024/25, I am pleased to report that early withdrawal figures (those leaving before the end of September) have improved since last year to rates of 2.3% compared to 3%, equating to 361 vs 478 students; and further withdrawal until January has also declined compared with last year by 12% compared to 15% (1134 vs 1451 students). These are positive signs at this point in the year against the wider background of our focus on the complex task of improving student success.
3. A central element of our Student Academic Experience Strategy (SAES) is to deliver an annual 'sector leading' Learning and Teaching Conference. Our fifth such event took place on 21 January under the theme of '*A Celebration of Learning and Teaching*'. The Conference represents an invaluable opportunity for our own learning professionals, and other players in Scotland's tertiary education system to share practice and to learn from colleagues and contributors from across the sector. Next year's event is already in the diary for 20 January 2026.
4. 'Learning Spaces' is an innovative project to develop new types of learner-focused environments across the College: a 4-year project plan is in place, together with a Project Board that includes student representatives, and colleagues from other relevant areas, all under the oversight of the College's Project Management Office. We are currently in Year 1 of the project, involving piloting 14 learning spaces, currently in procurement. Evaluation in semester 1 of 2026 will inform developments for years 2-4. The project will transform our learning spaces, better to support active, blended, and connected learning and teaching, mindful of the challenges of restricted capital funding available.
5. The pilot of the new Student Success Framework (SSF) (SAES 3.2) to achieve a step change in attainment is underway, with one curriculum team in each Faculty working with the Learning and Teaching Academy to review activity within the four themes of the framework. Separately, work continues with the Performance team to consider how the SSF will align with our internal review requirements under the new quality framework. We are also in the early stages of developing an enhancement project which will explore the use of the SSF as a means of better understanding the causes of lower levels of successful completion among care-experienced students.

6. Lecturer Development: The College has begun discussions with the University of Strathclyde on renewing its contract for delivery of the Teaching Quality for Further Education (TQFE) programme. We are currently considering updates to our Memorandum of Understanding with Strathclyde with a view to continuing the one-day-a-week secondment to the programme team of a lecturer from the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA), thus supporting collaboration on the development of teaching and learning.
7. In the Creative Industries Faculty, a successful bid to the Learning and Teaching Fund has led to the development and use of Haptic technology (tactile immersive technology of the kind we experience in smart phones) in the Craft and Design curriculum.
8. In Hospitality & Leisure, I am pleased to say that the Faculty has had notable industry award successes, with wins at ScotHot 2025 (an industry competition, open to professional and students): our students picked up awards in disciplines from pasta-making to cocktails!
9. In the Nautical & STEM faculty, a continued excellent relationship with industry partners is exemplified in the recent donation to the Faculty by partners Glen Dimplex of retrofit rigs and other key built environment technologies.
10. The Education & Humanities Faculty of Education and Humanities has provided Neurodiversity and Neuroinclusion training for Qatar Museums. This was a commercial contract to deliver training to 80 staff across 5 museums. The feedback to date has been extremely positive.
11. In further good news, Year 1 Applications for 2025-26 have increased by 10%.

People and processes

12. Dr Claire Carney, Vice Principal for Student Experience, has taken the personal decision to step down from her Vice Principal position at the College. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr Carney for her exemplary and significant contribution to our College since she joined us in January 2020, including transforming the student experience and quality of education at the College during that time.
13. Claire pioneered our innovative Student Academic Experience Strategy which has delivered a number of key changes across the college, including our successful move to Canvas – our Virtual Learning Environment.
14. Claire has now been backfilled on an interim 6-month basis by Dean Siobhan Wilson following an internal competition. An Executive Search Agency has been engaged to help us recruit for a substantive replacement before the start of the next academic year.
15. Executive Leadership Team approved the purchase of a new integrated HR System, which will see the HR, Payroll, Recruitment and Learning Systems combined into one system.

16. The College appointed Aspen People to manage the recruitment process for the new Depute Principal & COO. Aspen was appointed following a procurement process which shortlisted 3 potential agencies (Aspen, Odgers and Saxton Bampfylde). The recruitment began in November with nearly 1000 interested in the microsite and following a rigorous process, Roy Gardner was duly appointed the successful candidate.

Growth & Development

17. The development of the Riverside innovation campus Business Case is progressing well and in line with the delivery plan. Consultations have been completed with Scottish Funding Council (SFC)/Scottish Government and Glasgow City Region colleagues, as well as key internal stakeholders; Faculty, International, Events and Finance. The full business case is due end of April 2025, in time for UKREiF - The UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum, taking place in Leeds in May 2025.
18. A capital works request for Riverside Hall of Residence is under consideration, with plans to implement improvements over a four-year period.
19. Our Summer School 2025 is scheduled to commence on Monday 30 June.
20. We have partnered with the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre and BE-ST to deliver an Innovation Bootcamps. 48 businesses have been engaged so far. An additional funding (£1.2m) has been granted to College Partnership West for a 12-month project confirmed by Innovate UK.
21. Met with Chair and CEO of the Commonwealth Games 2026: In discussions with Head of HR regarding training for staff and volunteers, including how our TV/media students can help there too.
22. International activity:
 - Visiting delegations: hosted from Senegal (Ambassadorial visit), Brazil (Ministerial visit), Angola, and China since December. Upcoming delegations visiting from Canada, South Africa, Iceland, and Thailand.
 - Funded Projects:
 - Scottish Government SEEP project: successfully awarded funding. Focus on entrepreneurship with staff mobilities to Indonesia, India and Ghana.
 - British Council Brazil project: successfully awarded funding. Focus on reduction of gender-based violence in Higher Education. Will involve Emily Test.
 - British Council Ghana Project: Invitation to participate in project dissemination event in Accra in May 2025.
 - Hosted a large, multi-national British Council Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) conference in February, further establishing City of Glasgow College

relationship with British Council and generating potential international partnership opportunities in Malawi and Tanzania.

○ Commercial projects:

- European Vocational Academy, Malta, with franchised SQA NC Bakery programme due to start in last quarter of 2024/25.
- Successful Business Development visits to India, Indonesia, Turkey and Italy have taken place since Jan 2025. Several opportunities in discussion.
- CFMA Angola: establishing upskilling route for experienced seafarers at Ratings level to transition to cadet / officer route (deck and engine). Projecting start in second half of 2025.

23. The College passed annual UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) Basic Compliance Assessment in January 2025. We retain our UKVI Student Sponsor License.

Finance

24. Q2 Forecast presented to Finance Committee showing a slight improved deficit of £350k.

25. 95% on target for Commercial & International AY24/25 Target.

26. Capital Expenditure Budget for 2025/26 of £2.8m, was presented to Finance Committee, allowing the college to progress with some key capital projects.

27. Over the coming weeks/months the College will be undertaking the Budget Process for 2025/26, with a view to final approval being sought at the June Board Meeting.

28. Mimecast was introduced Feb 25 and provides advanced threat protection for emails that offers multiple layers of protection to stop known and emerging email threats before they reach our network.

29. The Network tender for the remaining three phases has now been issued against the ITS2008NE Higher Education Networking Supply Services 2 (HENS2) framework on 5 February 2025.

30. A number of staff have recently undertaken training on “Data Science for Data professionals” to advance our strategic thinking in this area on topics such as data analytics and AI. Additional staff have also undertaken PowerBI for Business users training.

31. 10% increase in first choice applications. 2% down on offers made this time last session but 35% up on planned interviews reflecting the increase in curriculum teams choosing to interview and engage early with applicants. Student Support funds are 93% committed, with a planned cost of living payment in April that will take us to 98%, leaving money for emergencies and transition payments through summer so projection is that we will spend the £10m budget.

Strategic Positioning

32. A very full period of strategic stakeholder engagement, marked by several on-site visits (such sessions typically comprise a discussion and a tour of the College). In the last period we welcomed Glasgow City Region MPs, including:
- Patricia Ferguson MP - Glasgow West MP and Chair of the Scottish Affairs Committee.
 - Maureen Burke MP - Glasgow North-East MP and constituency MP for City campus.
 - John Grady MP - Glasgow East
 - Katrina Murray - MP (Cumbernauld & Kilsyth).
33. We have similarly undertaken targeted engagement with the Scottish Parliament including Anas Sarwar (Labour party leader) with the recently appointed Convener of the Education, Children & Young People Committee, Douglas Ross (Conservative) MSP. The Committee will act as lead Committee in the scrutiny of the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding & Governance) Bill currently before the Parliament. The same Committee is also currently undertaking an inquiry into widening access to higher education. The College made a full submission to the inquiry, highlighting the significant role City plays in supporting disadvantaged learners, and preparing them for university, in line with the Government's policy ambitions.
34. Upcoming engagements include the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport Maree Todd MSP will be visiting the college on 20 March.
35. In partnership with the Scottish Government, we have been working towards identifying foundation courses relating to urban studies and planning that will support the Scottish Government's imminent Planning Skills Commitment Plan.
36. The Scottish Government introduced to the Scottish Parliament its 'Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill' – The Bill includes provisions to simplify funding for post school education and skills, including by transferring funding for training and apprentices to the Scottish Funding Council from Skills Development Scotland. The Education, Children and Young People Committee has been appointed as the lead committee in the scrutiny of the Bill and the College recently met the Committee convener Douglas Ross MSP. A call for views has been issued with a closing date of 11 April and the College will prepare a submission.
37. Glasgow colleges, has continued to encourage momentum on the dissolution of the Glasgow Colleges Regional Board, as announced by Minister for Higher and Further Education Graeme Dey MSP. The timeline outlined by the Scottish Government still has the board of GCRB set to be dissolved by 31 July 2025.
38. We contributed to Clyde Maritime Skills Study – RAND Europe, following a commission by Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland and private sector partners, to understand skills gaps and future skills and resource requirements. The study outlines that based on forecast demand by businesses, the sector will need to undertake a

recruitment drive 50% higher than its most successful year in 2023. A number of skills and apprenticeship proposals are being discussed with the Deputy First Minister and are expected to receive up to £2m funding. The study references the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce which I led, and the college is therefore well positioned in this activity as the leading maritime skills provider.

39. Glasgow City Centre Taskforce: The college continues to participate on the taskforce to support city centre recovery as a key asset and to support the student experience.
40. We are also contributing to the ongoing discussions around the £3.5M for development of Offshore and Healthcare training. Also working closely with the Faculty of N&S to ensure that the announcement for the Maritime Skills (£2M) is bid for in conjunction with relevant employers & Skills Development Scotland.
41. I was delighted to host on Riverside Campus the Royal Navy's Second in Command, Vice Admiral Sir Martin Connell KCB CBE, to see for himself the UK's leading maritime education facility including our latest investment in Navigation Simulators. He also spoke with three successive intakes of Royal Navy Marine Engineering Cadets now studying at our College. I had an opportunity afterwards to reinforce the strong and enduring partnership between City of Glasgow College and the Royal Navy.
42. During his visit, Vice Admiral Connell, whose grandfather came from Ireland to work in Glasgow, also learned about the College's lifesaving research into oxygen depletion on board ships, for which we received the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Award.
43. Global demand for highly trained maritime professionals is currently at an all-time high, driven by the expansion of the offshore renewables sector, the growth in global trade, a renaissance in UK shipbuilding, and industry demographics, including workforce retirement. The expected increase in investment into the UK's defence sector will further fuel demand for even more skilled professionals in both the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Royal Navy. Our College is ideally placed and highly networked to benefit from this boom.
44. We can also benefit from funding for Scottish Enterprise offshore investment on cable laying with our general maritime expertise and our high voltage training expertise.
45. Our Annual Burns Supper marking the Bard's 266th birthday saw us hosting distinguished guests from members of the Board of Management to civic leaders of Glasgow, including both the Lord Provost, Jacqueline McLaren, and Council Leader Susan Aitken to the world of academia represented by the President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Professor Anton Muscatelli, who is also the Principal of the University of Glasgow, and Jen Johnstone representing Colleges Scotland.
46. This evening reinforces the College's pre-eminence as Scotland's culinary centre of excellence and is an invaluable investment in soft power and influence with specially invited 'high heid yins'.

47. In fact, City's culinary excellence was further showcased last week at the 30th Annual Burns Night Celebration in the University Club of New York City with yet another City of Glasgow College student, Charlton Russell, playing a starring role and was presented with the inaugural Young Chef Wallace Award from the American-Scottish Foundation.
48. Such learning opportunities reflect the strong partnerships we enjoy between City of Glasgow College, the American-Scottish Foundation and the influential Scottish Diaspora.