

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 June 2026
Paper No.	BoM4-H
Agenda Item	3.3
Subject of Paper	Principal's Report
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Dr Paul Little CBE DL Principal & Chief Executive
Date of production	08 June 2026
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**
Priorities 1 and 2
- **Growth and Development**
Priorities 3 and 4
- **People and Processes**
Priorities 5 and 6
- **Finance**
Priorities 7 and 8



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: June 2026

Strategic Planning

1. City of Glasgow College is a resilient institution with deep strategic, operational, tactical, and crisis-planning expertise as evidenced by the successful planning for a four-way College merger, navigating a financial crisis, the creation of Scotland's first super campus, a global pandemic, a cost of living crisis, and a funding and financial crisis.
2. Since 2009, some seven strategic level plans have been prepared as our tertiary institution was evolving rapidly for: merger, the super campus masterplan, and iterative three to five-year strategic plans. Our existing 2021-30 plan was, however, our first 10-year strategic plan, which is now itself up for renewal. Being Scotland's largest college and one of the largest in the UK, and indeed beyond, we take the long view and seek to be a system leader rather than merely reacting to funding or governmental cycles.
3. I have previously prepared a [road map](#) for the Board to enable the preparation of our 2040 plan. Meanwhile, awaiting the strategic direction of the Board, I have personally delivered three strategic training workshops – especially important given the renewal of ELT and SMT – to secure their shared understanding, shared language of strategic planning, and shared commitment to the subsequent delivery of this 2040 plan.
4. Mindful of our strategic surveillance, I encouraged ELT at last week's planning workshop to do some future gazing on how tertiary education will evolve in Scotland and beyond – given that we are very much a global player across 40 countries nowadays. Previously, I had prompted ELT and SMT to ask themselves better questions such as “who we are as an institution?” and “who do we need to be?”. We are also beginning our review as a senior leadership team asking, “what did we actually achieve during the life of the last strategic plan (2021-30)?”.

Strategic Positioning

5. City of Glasgow College – as the largest college in Scotland – intentionally positions itself as a system leader in the college sector, and, increasingly, in Scotland's emerging Tertiary sector, as both an influential flagship institution and as a centre of excellence (technological and professional education and higher skills). We have been a civic anchor institution since our inception and, following the publication of the Cumberford-Little Report (2020), we have publicly promoted that regional positioning further. Our pre-merger legacy institutions were all specialist central colleges (i.e. Higher Education Colleges) and never Further Education community colleges, as most smaller colleges in Glasgow and across Scotland are. City of Glasgow College delivers 56% of all SFC credits in Higher Education, which is more than double the volume of any other college in Scotland, and accounts for 22% of total HE provision across the sector. Furthermore, 57% of our students who progress from us to university do so with Advanced Standing.
6. Unlike any other college in Scotland, we benefit from an extensive global reputation, and our curriculum is dominated by Higher Education. We are highly regarded as entrepreneurial, resilient, and strategic. Our strategic approach dominating our political engagement is to advocate for sustainable levels of funding for our institution and for the wider sector while simultaneously campaigning for greater financial flexibilities. Specifically, the flexibilities we are seeking are for strong colleges in Scotland who need them, to be afforded the ability to build reserves, retain surpluses, and responsibly borrow. These are particularly necessary for

our institution if we are to realise the competitive advantage of progressing our Riverside Innovation Campus. During this year's Holyrood Election campaign – thanks to our and Colleges Scotland's political advocacy – a welcome consensus emerged amongst all main opposition parties for these financial constraints on colleges to be lifted.

7. We will seek to build momentum on this whilst also influencing and shaping the outcomes emanating from the Scottish Government's *College Sector of the Future* workstream. The first phase will review existing reports – including the Cumberford-Little Report – and evidence before developing recommendations for Ministers, while also identifying early adopter projects to test new approaches to collaboration and regional delivery. Following the outcome of the election on 7 May, and subsequent appointment of the First Minister and his ministerial team, I swiftly sent congratulatory letters to John Swinney; Mairi McCallan, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic; Stephen Flynn, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Tourism and Transport; Ivan McKee, Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform; Ben Macpherson, Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education; and also to our constituency MSPs, City's Alison Thewliss (SNP, appointed Minister for Community Care); and Riverside's Holly Bruce (Scottish Greens). As soon as the new Parliamentary Committees have been formed, we will similarly engage with appropriate Parliamentary Committee Conveners, Members and Clerks. In addition, we will engage with the First Minister's new team of Special Advisers once they have been appointed. We continue to also engage proactively with UK Government Ministers, Officials and Special Advisers, particularly with the Scotland Office, Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence in the context of the expected announcements of DTECs in Scotland over the summer period.
8. Because we are being handicapped by a 10-year out-of-date Scottish Funding Council funding model that leaves our College the lowest funded institution on a price-per-credit basis, we are redoubling our efforts to differentiate ourselves, harnessing our national and international centre of excellence to hone our particular institutional narrative as Scotland's next-generation Polytechnic. This strategic positioning more accurately reflects our strengths in higher education within college education, our world-class facilities and expertise in professional and technological education, our top award-winning applied research, our flagship position in innovation and in industry engagement. The transition from the long-established "Super College" brand towards a more distinctive Polytechnic identity is progressing through stakeholder engagement, strategic communications activity and external positioning work. This approach aligns more closely with the College's ambitions around innovation, technology, applied learning, and economic impact. The College, therefore, continues to engage proactively with the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government (at CEO / DG level) on a range of strategic policy matters including Scotland's skills ecosystem.
9. International engagement activity continues apace as we proactively strengthen the College's global profile, deepen international strategic partnerships, and create new opportunities for student mobility, workforce development, applied research and external investment. Only last week we hosted an academic delegation of some 60 senior teachers from Iceland at our City campus whilst in Quarter 3, I made targeted follow up visits to both Japan (Tokyo) and the United States (New York), along with the Vice Principal, Corporate Development and Innovation, building on existing relationships while opening new avenues for collaboration across education, industry, innovation, and philanthropy. Whilst in country we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) partnership agreement with the State University of New York (SUNY Maritime College), whilst making new links with the City University of New York (Borough of Manhattan Community College). The President of SUNY is subsequently

flying to see us at the start of July to sign an MoU partnership agreement to also be witnessed by the Lord Provost of Glasgow, whom we supported during Tartan Week in NYC this year. Hopefully without confusing new members, we already have an MoU partnership signed last year with CINY (Culinary Institute of New York – a constituent College of Monroe University).

10. Such is our impressive international standing with strategic partners that the President of the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology – with whom I signed an MoU partnership agreement in 2025 – is flying in for meetings (autonomous shipping joint research) with us in December. I also accompanied the Leader of Glasgow in Tokyo at the G-Nets world city leaders' summit (top 50 mayors) and also at the SUSHi-Tech Innovation conference – the largest such innovation conference in Asia. Last week, we hosted the UK /Scotland Trade Envoy from Tokyo for a two-day immersive visit to meet ELT and Faculty. Elsewhere in Asia, our strategic partnership with the Zhejiang Technical Institute of Economics (ZJTIE), in China, saw this year's graduation celebrate 30 students, bringing the total number of graduates from the partnership to more than 300 since its inception. Now in its 11th year, the partnership continues to be a strong example of successful transnational education, creating opportunities for students and strengthening collaboration between both institutions. We are also discussing future developments, with two new joint programmes currently under consideration, subject to government approval.
11. I am delighted to report that our next generation Polytechnic was robustly and independently assessed as 'Best in Class' in all six areas by the UK STEM Foundation. STEM Assured is a standard that provides independent, industry-backed validation of the quality of an institution's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics provision. It is an outcome-based standard that:
 - Demonstrates an institution's capability to meet the needs of business and industry.
 - Encourages and fosters a high level of consistency in the quality of STEM education and training and drives professionalism in students.
 - Promotes cross-curricular collaboration in teaching and learning, knowledge transfer, and business innovation.

The STEM Assured Certificate is valid for a period of three years from the date of the validation panel meeting.

12. It is interesting to reflect that our previous HE FE Minister continues in his role, albeit with a new title in this newly elected administration of Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education. He is set to make an early visit to see us as we have directly influenced all three of his ministerial portfolios. [The Herald newspaper](#) has already spotted this link with us playing a sector-leading role in tertiary education. [The Herald Scotland](#) also recently featured the College's use of advanced simulation technology to prepare cadets for life at sea.

Students

13. I am encouraged by the applications for AY2026/27; we have received 15,829 1st choice applications despite having only 6,575 credit places available for full-time courses starting in August. Our popularity continues to grow amongst Scottish school leavers with an 11% rise on this time last year. The percentage of offers exceeds enrolment targets (109%), while an impressive 61% of students with an unconditional offer have already pre-enrolled to start with us in the next academic year. These are very welcome figures despite the College operating in an increasingly competitive market and in direct competition with many universities seeking

to survive at our expense. International recruitment across maritime, creative, and transnational education programmes remains positive through overseas partnerships and mobility activity.

14. We have an impressive and sector-leading 93% satisfaction rate in the national student survey with a really healthy response rate of 67% - an increase of 9% on last year, and our highest ever participation rate. 5,989 of our students took part (730 more than last year) and we expect this to be the highest ever response rate in the history of the survey in Scotland's college sector. It is also pleasing that all our Faculties recorded a student satisfaction rate of over 90%.
15. Furthermore, the Scottish Funding Council's college sector leaver destination data, published in late April, reported that 97% of our students confirmed a positive destination, once again, maintaining the College's sector-leading position. Indeed, with 4,587 leavers surveyed, we also had the largest sample in the Scottish sector. Of those confirming a positive destination, 80% progressed into further study (2% above the sector average), while 17% entered employment (equal to the sector). Progression into work related to study remains strong and above sector benchmarks, particularly within Engineering, Business, Nautical, and Computing. It is encouraging to note that 77% progressed into work related to study, which is up 4% on last year and 10% higher than the sector average. This reinforces our Polytechnic's focus on curriculum-industry alignment and employer engagement. The data also revealed that 89% of our students continuing within the College progressed to a higher SCQF level, outperforming the sector average and improving slightly on last year. Overall, the College continues to perform well-above the sector on quality of outcomes.
16. More granularly and pertinent for our funding, I am also pleased to report that the latest figures show a reduction in early withdrawals for both FE and HE courses; in AY25/26 FE early withdrawals declined from 5.4% to 4.7% and HE early withdrawals fell from 3.1% to 2.2% compared to the previous year, while the same time period recorded a fall in further withdrawals from 19.4% to 15.6% in FE and from 13.9% to 10.4% in HE. I commended our Deans and course teaching teams within Faculties for successfully continuing to focus on the reductions of early and further withdrawals.
17. To add a little individual colour to all these important performance statistics, Sports Therapy student Rachel Kerr gave us a timely reminder of the practical impact of our College's curriculum during a medical emergency at a Higher Biology examination venue. Rachel applied the CPR and emergency response skills developed through her studies, providing immediate assistance to an individual who had collapsed while emergency services were contacted and a defibrillator was brought to the scene. Her actions helped save the life of that individual before the arrival of paramedics. The incident highlights the value of embedding practical, industry-relevant skills within the curriculum and reflects the high-quality learning and teaching taking place across the College.
18. Also adding colour from an engagement with Shipping Primes, in May, the College welcomed senior representatives from Carnival Corporation – one of the world's largest cruise companies – to discuss the growing global demand for maritime talent and the challenges facing the sector. Industry leaders highlighted that cruising is expanding faster than the talent pipeline, with shortages of senior officers and experienced technical crew. One of the biggest challenges remains sea time training, as cadets require onboard placements to qualify while ships have limited training capacity. Through our pioneering work with the International Maritime Organisation and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), the MCA will now

credit 15 days of sea time for cadets completing each of our five-day structured simulator courses – a significant development.

19. Our Law section within the Faculty of Education & Humanities continues to flourish; this time spectacularly beating Glasgow University no less in the recent Sheriff Mooting competition (mock court) held at the Royal Faculty of Procurators in Glasgow. Our students' work was considered "outstanding", and they were highly commended for their "ability to deal with interruptions from the bench".

Growth & Development

20. A Vision and Objectives Report has been commissioned for the Charles Oakley Building and surrounding estate to help inform future strategic development opportunities and support the College's longer-term ambitions for estate enhancement, innovation activity, and regional economic impact.
21. The College continues to utilise Learning and Teaching Fund investment to support a range of Further Education enhancement projects. Running parallel to these, all Faculties are actively progressing work on the development of Faculty Centres for Excellence, collating and mapping evidence against agreed excellence criteria to support the development process, continuous improvement, and sector-leading practice.
22. The College successfully completed the Qualifications Scotland (formerly SQA) System Verification process, achieving a rating of **High Confidence** and successfully meeting all required criteria. Verifiers highlighted the significant progress made since the previous review, noting they were *"blown away by how far you have come since the last review"* and commended *"wonderful feedback from learners who were enthusiastic and delighted with their experience at the College"*. The full verification report will be published later in the year.
23. External recognition of the College's excellence continues. To date, the College has secured 15 awards during the academic year, including a prestigious UK Association of Colleges Beacon Award, and was shortlisted for three Herald Higher Education Awards. Recent student successes include recognition in winning the Young Football Sportswriter of the Year Awards, the Portrait of Britain Awards, and the MasterChef GB Team Competition. Students across the Faculty of Hospitality and Leisure continue to shine in competitions across areas: Hairdressing and Barbering students secured two 1st and 2nd places in the Association of Hairdressers and Therapists National Finals. Our Sports students were crowned Scottish Student Sport College Cup champions for the fifth consecutive year. At The Worshipful Company of Cutlers in London, HND Jewellery Arts & Technology student Alice Sinclair Best won the competition and will refine her design with industry experts before it is produced in precious metal and added to the Company's permanent heritage collection. CoGC, UofG, GSA, RC and GCU's Creative Cluster application has gone through to the final stage in July.
24. The wider HR team is now working closely with MHR to finalise the implementation plan for the new integrated HR system. The project remains a key organisational transformation initiative and will deliver enhanced automation, improved reporting capability, and greater operational efficiency across HR processes.
25. Commercial, international and innovation activity continues to generate new partnership and income opportunities across multiple sectors and both UK and global regions. Innovation activity has grown significantly, with the College Local Innovation Centres project securing a

national Association of Colleges Beacon Award, with the innovation development pipeline now being valued at more than £550,000.

People and Processes

26. The long-term absence of the Dean of Faculty for Nautical & STEM continues to be monitored, with arrangements in place and remaining under review to ensure continuity of leadership and operational effectiveness within the Faculty.
27. A review of the Curriculum Head role is ongoing following concerns regarding the increasing administrative burden associated with the post. Initial work has commenced to identify opportunities to streamline processes and reduce administrative pressures, allowing Curriculum Heads to focus more effectively on academic leadership and curriculum development. We will also carry out a review of all College administration assessing whether AI can add meaningful value.
28. The College's Wellbeing Officer continues to work closely with managers to close out historical actions arising from the *Robertson Cooper Good Day at Work* survey. Preparatory activity has also commenced for the next staff survey cycle, supporting the College's ongoing commitment to staff wellbeing and continuous improvement.
29. The newly established Data Governance Group will have met twice before the end of the academic year. In addition to supporting compliance with the Data Use and Access Act 2025 (DUAA) – which amended but did not replace the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) – the Group is helping to strengthen the College's approach to data management, retention, reporting, and information governance. It will also act as a central source of assurance for institutional data, statistics, and management information.
30. International compliance processes and agent agreements have been reviewed and updated in line with new UK regulatory requirements and emerging ethical recruitment frameworks. This work supports the College's continued commitment to maintaining high standards of compliance, student support, and international recruitment practice.
31. Workforce Development teams continue preparations for potential HM Inspectorate activity while also progressing the transfer of Engineering SVQ provision into a centralised delivery model. This approach is intended to improve consistency, strengthen quality assurance arrangements, and deliver greater operational and cost efficiency.
32. At the Local Negotiating Committee (LNC), efforts to reset the relationship with EIS-FELA continue against the backdrop of the ongoing Welding and Fabrication dispute. Five formal meetings have taken place during AY2025/26. Typically, the average number of annual meetings is two, where items of discussion are usually:
 - Fair Work
 - Health & Safety 'ongoing dispute'
 - College Finances
 - Policy Reviews
33. The Deputy Principal & Chief Operating Officer remains in regular dialogue with the General Secretary and national officials of EIS-FELA to bring industrial action to a conclusion, with discussions ongoing, and a final outcome anticipated in June.

34. Constructive engagement continues with UNISON regarding the recruitment of a local branch representative and the further development of partnership working arrangements. Separately, requests received from GMB concerning local recognition, facility time, and committee representation have been considered and politely declined given the union is recognised nationally but there are no existing local recognition arrangements.
35. The operational planning cycle for AY2026/27 is now in its final stages. All Faculties and Directorates have actively participated in planning workshops throughout April and May, identifying key priorities, interdependencies, and budget requirements. Final plans are expected to be approved by the Executive Leadership Team before publication in July.
36. Development activity relating to the Riverside Innovation Centre and Riverside Accommodation proposals continues. The Business Case has now been condensed into a stakeholder-facing [promotional prospectus](#) which has been shared with key partners and investors. As part of this engagement programme, the Depute Principal & Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer attended the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) from 19 - 21 May. As part of 'Team Glasgow' with Glasgow City Council, colleagues reinforced our civic role with over 30 other delegates promoting Glasgow as a destination to invest in. UKREiIF is the largest event of its kind attracting over 16,000 visitors and building on last year's participation, held structured discussions with various investors, developers and service providers about the [investment opportunity](#) within our Riverside Campus. Further updates will be provided to the Development Committee and Board during AY2026/27.
37. Significant work has also been undertaken in relation to the planned exit from the St Luke's Halls of Residence accommodation arrangement in July 2026. The Depute Principal & Chief Operating Officer, Vice Principal Corporate Development & Innovation, and Chief Financial Officer have been engaged in ongoing negotiations with the owners, supported by specialist legal advisers, Dentons – who have specific knowledge of and expertise on the lease agreement that is currently in place until May 2030 – to secure appropriate exit arrangements. In parallel, the Halls of Residence team has been proactively planning alternative accommodation solutions for an end of July exit, including maximising Riverside capacity, and securing additional rooms from local providers at preferential rates to ensure continuity of provision for students. 40 cadets are scheduled to transfer from St Luke's to Riverside between May and July to honour lease commitments; numbers may increase due to late applications. Riverside Accommodation is currently operating at 89% capacity, with St Luke's at 88%.
38. The College successfully completed our annual Customer Service Excellence audit in June. The auditors were very impressed by the extent to which we are maintaining and enhancing our standards. We retained all 22 of our compliance plus areas (with the potential to increase to 23) and significantly reduced our areas for development from 15 down to just four.

Finance

39. The Quarter 3 Forecast presented to the Finance Committee shows a projected year-end deficit of £800k, representing an improvement of £400k compared with the Quarter 2 forecast. This positive movement reflects ongoing financial management activity across the College and continued focus on income generation and expenditure control.

40. The Scottish Funding Council published the [college sector's final funding allocations](#) in June for AY26/27. There are no changes for the College from the indicative funding allocations published in March; City of Glasgow College's teaching funding is £49,397,259, which equates to an increase from AY25/26 of 7.9%.
41. The College remains on track to deliver 100% of its Scottish Funding Council credit allocation in 2025/26. Planning assumptions for Academic Year 2026/27 currently project delivery at 101.8% of target, with Faculties working towards an initial operating position of 104% to provide sufficient resilience and maximise the likelihood of achieving full credit delivery by year-end.
42. Fee income performance remains strong, with total fee income for 2025/26 currently projected at £18.3 million. This reflects sustained activity across a range of funded provision and demonstrates the continued attractiveness of the College's educational offer.
43. Modern Apprenticeship activity has exceeded both recruitment and financial targets during the year, generating contractual income of £1.26 million and reinforcing the College's key role in supporting workforce development and employer-led skills provision across multiple sectors.
44. Innovation-related income has continued to grow, increasing from £350,000 to £511,000 in Quarter 3. A healthy pipeline of both internal and externally funded opportunities remains under development, providing scope for further growth and diversification of income streams in future years.
45. Commercial and international income performance remains mixed, with some areas continuing to track below target. Additional partnership development activity, programme expansion opportunities, and focussed business development initiatives are underway to strengthen performance and maximise year-end income generation.
46. Accommodation income and associated summer school activity continue to be affected by uncertainty surrounding the future of the St Luke's accommodation arrangements. The College continues to monitor the position closely while progressing contingency planning to mitigate financial and operational impacts.

Forward Look

47. Our final Open Day of AY2025/26 takes place on Wednesday, 17 June with both campuses open to prospective students and current offer holders.
48. Our 16th Summer Graduation in the historic 12th Century Glasgow Cathedral is set for Thursday, 18 June, and I am delighted to report that our Guest of Honour is the Royal Navy's Rear Admiral Steven McCarthy.
49. Following the huge success of our One City staff event last year, this year's One City event is scheduled for Tuesday, 23 June 2026. It will be a whole-day event, and we ask our talented, skilled, and enthusiastic staff to help make it a success. Last year, our colleagues organised and offered diverse activities of all kinds, including making your own jewellery, South Asian cooking, walking tours, meditation, barista skills, drumming, resilience, Zumba, bookbinding, and much more. I encourage Board of Management members to take part if diaries permit.