

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	25 March 2026
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Agenda Item	3.2
Subject of Paper	Chair's Report: March 2025
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Chris Deery, Chair of the Board
Date of production	17 March 2026
Action	For Discussion & Noting

1. Recommendations

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

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To update the Board of Management on the Chair's activities since the last meeting of the Board.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. In progressing the matters outlined in the Chair's report, colleagues across the College and across the sector have been engaged.

4. Key Insights

- 4.1. The Chair is responsible for the leadership of the Board of Management as the College's governing body. The Chair works in partnership with the Board and the Principal to set the strategic direction of the College, monitor performance and ensure high-quality learning and outcomes are delivered for students. The Chair also has an ambassadorial role for the Board within the College, and for the College with external stakeholders.

5. Impact and Implications

- 5.1. The Chair's report ensures that Board members remain informed of the Chair's recent activities and other key developments and activities of interest to members.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Chair's Report

Chair's Report to the Board of Management: March 2026

1. Introduction and Reflections

Over recent months, through discussions across the sector and engagement with national policy work, it has become increasingly clear that Scotland's college system is entering a period of significant transition.

Much of this thinking is reflected in the Colleges Scotland manifesto *Opportunity That Works*, which sets out the sector's ambition to play a central role in supporting Scotland's economic growth, developing the workforce needed for emerging industries and widening access to opportunity.

At the same time, work is beginning across government, the Scottish Funding Council and College sector leaders on the Future Positive programme exploring the long-term development of Scotland's tertiary education system.

These developments reinforce the importance of the role colleges play within regional economies. For City of Glasgow College in particular, operating on a significantly larger scale within the Glasgow City Region, nationally and beyond, this creates both opportunities and system leadership responsibilities.

The Board's role will be to ensure that the College continues to deliver strongly for its students, industry and SME partners and communities, whilst simultaneously competitively positioning itself effectively within this changing environment.

2. Sector Context and Funding Environment

The forthcoming Scottish Parliament election has inevitably sharpened the focus on post school education, skills and economic growth. Colleges Scotland have been engaging actively with political parties to ensure that the role of colleges in delivering skills, widening access and supporting regional economies is clearly understood.

The Scottish Government's recent budget settlement included an additional £70 million for the college sector. While this has been welcomed across the sector, discussions with our colleagues continue to highlight the longer-term funding pressures affecting colleges.

Indicative allocations from the Scottish Funding Council are expected around 25th March. For City of Glasgow College these allocations will be particularly important in providing clarity on the College's financial position for the coming year and in shaping decisions around investment, workforce planning and the delivery of our strategic priorities.

During this quarter members of the Finance Committee also met with colleagues from the Scottish Funding Council to better understand the model used to determine college funding allocations. This discussion provided useful insight into the structural factors influencing funding across the sector.

It clarified why City of Glasgow College gets the sector's lowest price per credit funding per student, as the methodology reflects outdated historical policy decisions. This discussion reinforced the importance of the growing sector debate about whether the current funding model remains fit for purpose.

3. Engagement Across the Sector and Region

Alongside national discussions, the Principal and I have continued to engage actively through the Colleges Chairs' Group, the Chairs and Principals Forum and the Glasgow Colleges Leadership Group (GCLG).

For me, the most valuable insight from these discussions has been the increasing recognition that regional collaboration will play a much greater role in how the college sector operates in future.

Within Glasgow, the three colleges collectively serve a very large and diverse student population and play a significant role in supporting the city region's workforce and economic development. Through the GCLG there has been growing discussion about how these Glasgow institutions can work together even more strategically to ensure that provision across the city remains aligned with regional skills priorities.

These discussions are not simply about cooperation between institutions. They increasingly focus on how colleges position themselves collectively within the wider economic development agenda of the Glasgow City Region and beyond.

For City of Glasgow College, which operates on a significant scale within the region and across our sector, this presents an opportunity to play a leading role in shaping how the college sector contributes to regional growth and skills development.

4. Board Development and Governance

Board Development

Our next Board Development Session is scheduled for Wednesday, 22 April 2026. This will now take place as a half day afternoon session, focusing on the College's internal context. At our Board meeting on 25 March 2026, I welcome feedback from Members on areas of the College they would like to understand better, to support informed strategic discussion as we move further into a period of strategic renewal.

Based on earlier feedback, I invited the College Development Network (CDN) to deliver a session on Board roles, responsibilities, and duties. Unfortunately, due to limited availability among Board Members, we were unable to secure a suitable date last month, and CDN colleagues were also unable to join us in April. It is therefore proposed that we schedule this session before the end of this academic year.

Over the past quarter, I have continued to meet with individual Board Members to gather feedback on Board operations and to understand perspectives on how we might further strengthen our governance approach.

These discussions confirm that the Board has strong foundations in place, while also highlighting opportunities to refine how we work - particularly in ensuring that Board discussions remain focused on strategic oversight and long-term direction.

I will share some early reflections on potential enhancements to our governance approach with the Conveners Committee in the coming weeks.

Non-Executive Recruitment

Work has continued during the quarter to recruit two new non-executive members to join the Board.

Following an open recruitment process, a recommendation for only one appointment has now been submitted to the Minister for Higher and Further Education for approval. The recruitment exercise attracted strong interest, with 27 applications received and six candidates shortlisted for interview.

The recruitment panel included Board members, the Student President and an independent panel member from Colleges Scotland. The panel focused on identifying candidates who would complement the existing strengths of the Board and bring additional expertise in areas such as organisational development, digital capability and environmental sustainability.

Subject to Ministerial approval, this appointment will further strengthen the Board's collective capability. The recruitment process for a second non-executive member is continuing, and a further update will be provided to the Board once that process has been concluded.

5. Committee Insights

My attendance at Board's committee meetings continues to provide me with valuable insights.

The Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (LTSE) Committee reviewed encouraging progress in student outcomes, particularly within full-time HE provision where completion rates now exceed the sector average. At the same time, discussions highlighted the increasing complexity of student needs, with many learners requiring additional financial, wellbeing and learning support.

The Development Committee discussions reinforced the importance of continuing to invest in facilities and building partnerships that support high-quality professional & technical education and higher skills.

The People and Culture Committee reviewed workforce developments across the College and highlighted the volume of HR activity currently being managed across the organisation, which inevitably places additional pressure on teams and reinforces the importance of maintaining focus on the issues that matter most.

The Finance Committee affirmed that the College remains financially well managed, though our discussions with SFC were less conclusive than I had hoped for. The Committee also welcomed enhancements to financial reporting, including improved visibility on cash flow trends and a more frequent review of in-year and forward forecasts.

Although I was not in attendance at the most recent meeting of the Audit & Assurance Committee, I am pleased that the Committee undertook a detailed examination of the findings arising from the QAA Targeted Peer Review of the University of Glasgow. This external review considered potential systemic risks to academic standards and areas of non-compliance with assessment regulations. In response to the Report, the College will commence a comprehensive review of its own assessment procedures.

Across all committees, a consistent theme has been the increasing complexity and uncertainty of the environment in which the College operates, delivering strong outcomes for students while responding to financial pressures, workforce challenges and evolving expectations from government and industry.

6. Student Engagement

Earlier this quarter I joined colleagues from the Creative Industries faculty to judge a design competition involving students from the College's HND Jewellery programme.

Students were invited to design a bespoke lapel pin for the Board of Management under the theme "Let Learning Flourish." The brief required them to work through the full professional design process - from concept development through to prototyping and presentation.

The quality and creativity of the work was extremely impressive, with the winning design by Lucy Renwick now set to be manufactured using traditional jewellery-making techniques. It was a great example of the creativity, professionalism and practical skills our students develop through their studies at the College.

7. Board Priorities

Reflecting on these discussions, I believe the Board should focus particularly on four areas over the coming period.

Financial sustainability and funding reform

While the College remains financially stable, the wider funding environment means that careful stewardship and long-term planning will remain essential. The recent discussion with the Scottish Funding Council regarding the funding model also highlighted the importance of the ongoing sector debate about whether the current approach remains appropriate for institutions operating at the scale and complexity of City of Glasgow College.

This will be an important topic for the Principal and I through the GCLG forthcoming meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council.

Development of the 2040 Strategy

The development of the College's 2040 strategy comes at a time of rapid change across the skills landscape. Shifts in how people learn, how industries evolve and how skills are delivered mean that this strategy will play an important role in positioning City of Glasgow College for the opportunities ahead.

Both the Executive Leadership Team and the Senior Management Team have met to discuss strategic planning, following the Board's strategy day in November 2025. The Principal, through his Report, will provide an update on the strategic planning process at the forthcoming Board meeting.

Workforce sustainability and organisational capacity

Like many organisations across the education sector, the College is operating in an increasingly demanding environment. Ensuring that the College continues to attract, develop and retain the

highly skilled staff required to deliver professional & technical education and higher skills will remain a key priority.

Through its committees, the Board can also help ensure that priorities remain clear and manageable so that teams have the capacity to focus on the areas that matter most.

Regional leadership and sector transformation

Finally, the strengthening collaboration between the Glasgow colleges presents an important opportunity for City of Glasgow College to play a leading role in shaping how the sector contributes to regional economic development.

This will also be important as the Principal and I engage with the Future Positive programme exploring the future development of Scotland's tertiary education system. Given the scale and importance of City of Glasgow College, it will be important that the College contributes actively to shaping these discussions.

8. Closing Reflections

We continue to operate in a demanding environment, but the strength of the institution through its leadership, staff, students and partnerships means we are well placed to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

I have been so impressed with the level of collaboration between Board Members and Senior Leadership across all our committees in providing clear strategic oversight while supporting the College to continue delivering outstanding outcomes for learners and communities.

In doing so, we remain guided by the College's mission to '*Let Learning Flourish*' as we continue working together to ensure the College remains strong, focused and ambitious for the future.