

**Borders College Regional Board
Review of Board Effectiveness
March 2021**

by



Strong Assurance

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Section 1 Introduction

The review of Regional Board Effectiveness was commissioned by the Borders College Regional Board in November 2020 to ensure compliance with the Governance requirements set out by the *Scottish Funding Council* and underpinned by good Governance Guidance produced by *Colleges Scotland* for Colleges operating in the Scottish Further Education sector. The review was independently carried out by Wylie & Bisset LLP during December 2020-March 2021.

The scope of the review is outlined below.

In broad terms the review set out to cover:

- (1) That the Regional Board are compliant with the Code of Good Governance;
- (2) The progress the Regional Board are making in relation to self-evaluation; and
- (3) What levels of participation there are by the Regional Board Members in this process and in the strategic decisions taken by the College.

Wylie & Bisset LLP's role was to make an independent assessment of the arrangement and to provide an opinion to the Regional Board on these matters.

Our findings, recommendations and suggested action plans are set out in Sections 3, 5 and 6 below.

To reach these findings, we undertook a series of interviews both on a one to one, and group basis. In addition, we reviewed all Regional Board and Committee papers of Academic Year (AY) 2018/19, 2019/20 and the first half of 2020/21 including Regional Board papers for the meeting on 3rd December 2020. We also attended the Regional Board meeting via Microsoft Teams (due to COVID 19 restrictions) on 3rd December 2020.

Section 7 includes relevant Annexes to support our findings as follows:

- i) A full list of all the Regional Board and Staff members interviewed during this process; and
- ii) A copy of the Regional Board Agenda from 3rd December 2020.

Wylie & Bisset LLP would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Regional Board Members and Staff involved in this review for their time, energy and commitment to help us conclude our review, and for the positive and open way in which they all engaged in this process.

Section 2 Scope

In agreement with the Chair of the Regional Board and the Regional Board Secretary on behalf of the Regional Board, the Scope for the Review is set out below. Our report considered each element in turn and provides observations, recommendations and actions based on our findings.

Scope of review

Our objectives for this review were to ensure:

- The Regional Board assesses its effectiveness and has a robust self-evaluation process in place.
- The effectiveness review covers the five sections of the Code of Good Governance.
- The Regional Board sends its self-evaluation and Regional Board development plan to the funding body.
- There is sufficient input by Regional Board Members into the self-evaluation process.
- Any actions arising from the self-evaluation are being actioned.

Approach

Our approach to the review was:

- To review Regional Board and Committee remits, minutes, agendas and papers.
- To determine whether corporate documents are aligned with corporate objectives.
- To review risk registers in place.
- To interview Regional Board Members and staff based on the pro-forma/questionnaire by Colleges Scotland.
- To review the structure of the Regional Board and Regional Board Member development plans, appraisals, skills mix and induction arrangements.
- To examine recent surveys undertaken which include Regional Board responses.
- To review any audit reports on governance.

Section 3 Good Practice Identified

Outlined in this section are the areas of good practice we identified at the College whilst undertaking our review of Governance Effectiveness.

Good Practice 1

During the Regional Board meeting on 3rd December 2020, the College held discussions on two areas of controversy and disagreement within the Board. One was to do with the removal of a risk from the Risk Register and the other was to do with a late notified item from the External Auditors.

Both issues received significant discussion, and input, from Board Members and the Executive. Despite there being fundamental differences in the views initially outlined, the discussions and subsequent decisions were held in, and arrived at, in a manner which we saw as being in the best interests of the College. It was good to see such lively debate and challenge going on within the Board, particularly as in both instances resulted in a collective and agreed decision being arrived at.

Good Practice 2

The Regional Board meeting on 3rd December 2020 had a comprehensive and complex agenda to work through. The agenda and chairing of the meeting were all the more difficult due to COVID -19 restrictions which has meant all meetings of the Regional Board and its Committees have taken place virtually using Microsoft Teams since March 2020. Chairing a virtual meeting is a real skill, particularly when you are remote from all of the attendees, who are also remote from each other. Despite all of these hurdles and complexities in our view, the Board meeting was very well chaired.

The Chair did a fantastic job of ensuring each agenda item was dealt with appropriately, providing sufficient time for discussion, debate and resolution, whilst also keeping meticulously to time. This included the debates outlined above, as well as other tricky items, which could have taken the focus away from the considered nature each item received. In our view the Chair promoted contributions and discussion by every Regional Board member and allowed sufficient time for each item, which led to apposite decisions being made on the day.

Chairing a meeting and keeping it to time is a key skill and is one which the current Chair of Borders College certainly demonstrated. Indeed, all Regional Board Members interviewed spoke highly of the Chair's ability to keep to time and maintain focus on each agenda item, so appropriate decisions could be made.

Good Practice 3

At the Board meeting on 3rd December 2020 there was a detailed discussion on the College Risk Register and the steps that the College were taking to make it more strategic and appropriate for a College in 2021 and beyond. A series of Executive led, (with Board Members participating) workshops are planned for early 2021. These workshops are aiming to streamline and simplify the Risk Register. At the time of writing our report, we understand the workshops are underway, and are being positively received.

The good practice here is the active engagement the Board are having with the risk shaping process as well as the Executive leading a 'live' approach to risk management and mitigation. This for us seems to be sector leading, which we believe other Colleges can learn from.

Good Practice 4

Our desk top review highlighted the well-advanced self-evaluation process the Board has undertaken over recent years. In discussions with the Chair, Members and the Regional Board Secretary this process is an ever evolving one, which provides the Board with an ideal opportunity to reflect upon what it does, how it does it and what they have added to College life as a result of their involvement with the College. The evidence highlights matters being picked up as areas for improvement (for example updating the Risk Management Strategy) being progressed and positively dealt with as learning opportunities for all. These culminate in the annual Board Enhancement Plans, (sent to the Scottish Funding Council) which are also revisited to ensure legacy items like our example above are concluded appropriately. In our view we believe this Board takes individual and collective member self-evaluation seriously and are doing so to continually add value to their involvement in College life.

Section 4 Overall Conclusion

Using the Good Governance 'Regional Board Effectiveness Template' developed by *Colleges Scotland*, our review considered:

- Regional Board and Committee papers for academic years 2018/19, 2019/20 & 2020/21
- Attendance at a Regional Board meeting (3rd December 2020)
- Interviews with Regional Board Members (including the Chair, Principal and Regional Board Secretary as well as Committee Chairs)
- Various Governance documentation

In reaching our overall conclusion we have identified **4 areas of *Good Practice*** (see **Section 3**) and **8 *Recommendations and Actions*** (see **Section 6** below) for continued improvement in this regard.

Overall, we are able to provide a ***STRONG*** level of assurance over Regional Board Effectiveness at Borders College. Our assurance level is predicated on continued improvements being made by the Regional Board in their approach to Governance.

Section 5 Findings

5.1 Compliance with the Code of Good Governance

5.1.1 Leadership & Strategy

The College has its '*Code of Conduct*' for Regional Board Members which outlines what is expected from them on a personal and professional basis. The Code is based around the *9 Principles of Public Life*. From the Regional Board papers reviewed and from discussions held and witnessed, it is clear that these principles form the framework for decision making and underlying conduct of the Regional Board.

There is a clear vision, mission and values for the College. This is evidenced in their Strategic and Operational plans as well as in the conduct of the Regional Board Members.

The College has a suite of key performance metrics, which are used to inform the decision-making processes. With the onset of their 'cloud migration project' good quality data is going to become a clear focus on how the College is governed and managed in the future. Regional Board Members interviewed thought it was important to have a clear set of performance metrics which could allow them to obtain a clear snapshot of high-level strategic information at each of their meetings. Regional Board Members thought that these metrics would allow them to make better informed decisions. See **Recommendation 1** for further information.

As a Regional College in its own right, there is good scope for the College's 'area' stakeholders to be engaged in shaping the area *Outcome Agreement*. The College appears to have well developed relationships with its stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally. The College has involvement with the '*Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Regional Deal (ESECR City Deal)*' the '*Borderland Deal*' as well as being active within the South of Scotland Enterprise initiative and many others including 'local' Universities. Regional Board Members thought the College having influence within all of their collaborations should help secure long term financial and social benefits for the College and the community it serves.

Our review of Regional Board papers and our attendance at the Regional Board meeting on 3rd December 2020 highlighted that the Regional Board are making improvements to what they consider and how they consider it. All Members interviewed indicated that the Committee system was really working as it allowed time to look at things in detail by each Committee. And then at the Regional Board they felt there was opportunity for those seeing the information for the first time to engage with issues and contribute to the Regional Board's strategic decision-making process. **Annex ii** includes the agenda for this meeting. **Good Practice Point 1** in Section 3 above also refers.

During 2020, there has been a significant change in the Board make up, and in how the Board were/are serviced. An interim Chair was engaged to replace the former Chair who retired in March 2020. The Interim Chair feels they are really well supported by the Board Secretary, who themselves have only been in post for around 12 months. With such changes at the 'top' there is naturally a different approach to how agenda matters, and papers are prepared for the Regional Board. From what we have seen from our *Desk Top Review*, these changes at the

top seem to be have been seamless with the established good governance work progressing albeit in a ‘different’¹ manner to the past. Our interviews with the Board did highlight some niggles with the quality and timing of Regional Board papers, the current Chair & Board Secretary are very aware of these matters and are actively working to resolve these. This is not unusual in an organisation going through change and whose staff resources are being stretched. **See recommendation 2.**

5.1.2 Quality of the Student Experience

Our review of Regional Board and other papers indicated that attendance by Student Regional Board Members was reasonable. Indeed, it was as good as other Colleges we work with. Having two Student Members, seems to allow for effective succession planning and may also help meet Best Practice in relation to Student Regional Board Members.

Our review indicated that the Student President will retire at the end of Session 2020/21. **See recommendation 3.**

Despite there being significant geographical challenges to overcome because of the remote and rural spread of learning centres, improvements to the role and activities of the Student Association have taken place over the last couple of years. Given the breadth and level of students attending the College, some Board Members thought the Student Association could be better resourced to help meet the needs arising from this comprehensive mix of competing needs. This point was however well countered [balanced] by all of the work the College had undertaken to support all students, vulnerable or not during the outset of the pandemic in Spring 2020, which it continues to do today. Laptops, digital devices, internet access and mobile dongles had been provided to students to help ensure they could continue on their courses. **See recommendation 3.** Board Members all spoke very highly of the approach the College & Executive as well as Student Services and Information Technology sections have taken to support students (and staff) during the pandemic.

From our review we found that the curriculum offered by the College seems to meet the demands of students, local employers and stakeholders. The College seems to be well engaged with its community and in recent times has taken steps to ensure its curriculum is fit for purpose and sits well within the framework to address local, regional and national priorities.

Ensuring the quality of the student experience, despite resources being tight, does seem to be at the core of what the College is doing.

The Learning for Leading project has meant Board Members getting closer to the curriculum offer and support areas in the College. This is another route to help ensure the curriculum is

¹ We were pleased to note that Board Members were all enjoying their new ways of working with the Interim Chair, with everyone commenting positively on this.

designed to meet demand and which should ultimately lead to Borders College students being employment ready.

5.1.3 Accountability

From reading the Committee and Regional Board papers along with speaking with Regional Board Members, the College does what it can to influence the shape of the Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the funding body. The current Chair was the Chair of the Finance and General Practice Committee before taking on the Chair's role and fully understands the importance of the Outcome Agreement and that compliance with the SFC's Financial Memorandum is for the College's long-term financial sustainability.

Our *Desk Top Review* indicated that the College is performing reasonably well against the targets required to be delivered as part of the Outcome Agreement. Indeed, the Board meeting on 3rd December 2020 highlighted many of the operational difficulties the College faces in the short to medium term along with the strategic moves it is taking to address these (Cloud Migration Project for example). The College seems to be very aware of where the issues are and what they need to do to address this. The College's measured response to dealing with the first COVID-19 lockdown also suggests to us that the College has turned what could have been a threat to its long-term survivability into an opportunity which will further strengthen its resilience and ability to deliver for its remote and rural constituents.

Members attendance at Board and Committee Meetings is excellent, with consistent attendance patterns being the order of the day at Borders College. Conflicts of interest are noted and dealt with appropriately by the Regional Board and its Committees. The Regional Board have a register of interest, with interests being declared where appropriate.

Regional Board and Committee papers are prepared for each meeting. Conversations with Regional Board Members indicated on the whole members were happy with the papers they were sent. As all Board Members except the Chair are volunteers, members suggested that their time needed to be used effectively as is practical. In that regard, a few members suggested these papers would benefit from being briefer through the use of cover/summary papers (no more than one side of A4) setting out clearly what the Board are being asked, and why they are being asked for it, with the detailed information following behind to fully inform Board Members. Members felt that taking this approach would result in better informed Board Members who, if they so wished and had the time to read more could explore the paper/item further and would allow the Board to make better informed decisions. There were also a couple of comments made to us on paper quality and timeliness, however on the whole we found papers to be comprehensive and of a reasonable quality. Both the Chair and Regional Secretary are alert to these issues and are taking steps to resolve this for future meetings. **See Recommendations 2 and 4.**

The College makes good use of their Regional Board Committee structure, with all members of the Leadership Team, and others, contributing to paper creation. This is in line with good practice.

Terms of reference for the Regional Board and its Committees are clear and unambiguous. The schemes of delegation are in line with schedules we have reviewed elsewhere. We recognise that the Regional Board is on a developmental journey in relation to Governance and that this should be taken into consideration when they undertake their Corporate (collective) Self-Evaluation exercise. This should then feed into the overall improvements they are wishing to make to how they conduct Regional Board business at Borders College.

Having attended the Regional Board Meeting on the 3rd December 2020 to observe how the Regional Board operated/functioned, it was clear, despite the virtual nature of the meeting, this Board seem to work well together. **Good Practice Point 1** in Section 3 above underlines this observation.

The Committees of the Regional Board appear to be working well, with the majority of the work being done initially at Committee level; with non-Committee members having the opportunity to scrutinise matters at the Regional Board. Indeed, at the 3rd December 2020 meeting, we saw this in practice where there was good engagement and reasonable and effective challenge being shown by the Regional Board over matters discussed in Committee which were explored further at the Board by non-Committee members. **Good Practice Points 1 and 2** at Section 3 above refers.

The 2019/20 Financial Statements are compliant with OSCR's charity regulations and as far as we can determine (from the information we have seen) the 2020/21 accounts (via in-year latest estimates) will also be compliant. The financial information provided to the Board and its Committees were good quality and should provide the Board with the assurances they seek in relation to compliance with the SFC financial requirements for Colleges.

Lockdown 1 in March 2020 allowed the College to think more about what kind of employer it wanted to be. From the conversations we had with Board Members and the Leadership Team, everyone was keen to stress how impressed they were with the methods and ways in which the College supported staff and how attuned to the varying needs of staff the College were. This supportive approach seemed to make working from home easier for people, which then allowed the student experience to continue as best as it could under the circumstances.

5.1.4 Effectiveness

From the interviews we conducted with both Regional Board and Staff Members **Annex i**, the consensus was that the Chair of the Regional Board was very effective. In their view, the Chair provides the character and leadership expected of the role. The unanimous view was that given the challenges faced by the Regional Board, the Chair seems to have the right character and balance for the type of institution Borders College is. The Chair's style is fair, respectful, consultative, inclusive and very much team based, which appears to work well both internally and externally at organisations like the SFC and Colleges Scotland. All commented on how difficult it must have been for the current Chair to replace the former Chair who was steeped in Further Education (FE) and how it [FE] fitted in to Government Policy.

Having observed the Chair and their interactions with the Principal, Regional Board Secretary and others, it was evident to us that they work well with all of those they are tasked with leading. The Chair appears to provide excellent leadership to the Regional Board, particularly given they are only carrying out the role on an interim basis.

It is essential, given the Chair has provided notice of stepping down when a full time Chair is recruited, that the transition period when it occurs is well managed and is seamless to ensure there is continuity in the College's mission. Please see **Recommendation 5**.

There seems to be a good mix of skills and experience on the Borders College Regional Board, with all areas of the (wider) Borders community being represented. There does not seem to be an issue with succession in the short term, given recent new Regional Board appointments.

Good Practice point 2 outlines how well the Chair of the Regional Board conducts the meetings. Indeed, throughout the [December 2020] meeting there are good examples of how professional they are through their examinations of each of the key decision items on the agenda outlined at **Annex ii**.

All Regional Board members interviewed seemed to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The Regional Board Secretary is very clear about what their role is, as was the Chair of the Regional Board. Please see **Recommendation 6**.

Regional Board recruitment at all levels: staff, student, and general members appears to be in line with what we would expect to see at a modern Scottish College. General membership is open as was demonstrated in the last 2018/19 campaign to recruit new Regional Board Members for Sessions 2018/19 and 2019/20. Another recruitment campaign was undertaken in 2020/21 with a skills matrix developed, Nominations Committee meetings held to determine key skills/experience required in new members and a widespread recruitment campaign to attract suitable candidates from those professional backgrounds. Three new members were recruited after a very successful campaign.

We have concluded the campaigns were a success given that vacancies were filled, and the new Regional Board members have been working hard to establish themselves within the Regional Board.

From our discussions with Regional Board members it was clear that training was a key element of their individual and collective development. Please see **Recommendation 7**. This had particular resonance with newer board members.

Good Practice Point 3 – Risk Management is a good example of Regional Board Members engaging in continued learning and development that is relevant to them, we understand uptake and attendance at these events has been excellent.

5.1.5 Relationships and Collaboration

From discussions held with Regional Board members, the Chair and Principal, it appears that the College is very well connected locally, regionally and nationally. **Section 5.1.1 above** refers.

Locally the College appears to be a key partner with Borders Council, particularly within the schools network. Regionally the College is working with NHS Borders on Health and Social Care, Skills Development Scotland and has a key voice within the South of Scotland Enterprise initiative, which created a new enterprise agency for the South of Scotland area which the College sits in. Nationally the College is involved in the '*Borderlands' Regional Deal* project as well as '*ESECRCityDeal*', local Universities and other Colleges. Both the UK Government Funded Regional Deal projects are aimed at delivering significant economic growth for these areas and, from what we can determine, the College seems to be well placed to benefit from these initiatives in the long term. Given that Workforce Readiness, Development and closing Skills Gaps are central to helping deliver these visions, the College seems well placed.

From all of the conversations we had, everyone on the Board were very much minded that the College had a central role to play in ensuring the needs of the local, regional and national communities are met and that the College does so on a basis which is sustainable for them through sharing in the economic benefits all these initiatives accrue.

Board Members said that despite being a small College they believed they were placed to deliver on these commitments, and they evidenced this commitment through the recent appointment of a Director of Development. This post is seen as an investment in creating a sustainable future for the College, and one which looks to add depth to College income sources as well as breath to the capacity it has for maintaining current collaborations and growing new ones.

5.2 Regional Board Self-Evaluation

5.2.1 Individual Regional Board Members

As outlined in **Good Practice Point 4** above the Board are well placed in the process of individual and collective self-evaluation. This is a key strength for the Board, as it shows a willingness of the Board to look at what they do, how they do it and what they can individually and collectively do to ensure there is continual development and evolution in the governance of Borders College.

During Session 2019/20 the full Board took part in individual self-assessment exercise. A report collating the results of these assessments was collated and considered by the full Board in February 2020. The results provided a backdrop for the Board Enhancement Plan for Session 2020/21, as well as feeding into each Board Members individual development plans.

Individual self-evaluation seems to be a corner stone of what this Board does to help assess individual contributions and overall Board effectiveness. As outlined at **Good Practice Point 4**

at Section 3 above, we believe this practice is sector leading, and in our view many Colleges could learn from this.

We encourage the Board to continue with their individual self-evaluation for session 2020/21.

5.2.2 The Collective Regional Board

As well as individual self-evaluation, collective self-evaluation seems to be a foundation in what the Board do each year. This represents very good practice. Our review found however, that for 2020/21 the Regional Board have yet to undertake a Collective Self Evaluation of their performance. We suggest that the Board continue with its good practice and make this action a priority before the end of this session. See **Recommendation 8**.

5.3 Regional Board Member Participation in Strategic decisions

The Regional Board papers, subsequent minutes and discussions observed during this review indicates that Borders College Regional Board Members all appear to participate in decision making at the College. That aside, however, many of those interviewed indicated that they would like better [shorter] and more timely information which they believe they could use to help make better informed decisions. See **Recommendation 2**.

Section 6 Recommendations, Client Comments and Action Plan

	Finding	Recommendation	Priority	Client Comments	Agreed Actions and Responsibility	Timeline
1.	The Regional Board Members valued the performance information they currently receive. Members were aware that with the move to 'cloud-based systems' good quality reliable data was going to be key to informing the Board's decision-making processes.	<p>We recommend that the Regional Board continue their work to develop a suite of KPI's relevant to Borders College, which provide the Regional Board with the high-level information they seek.</p> <p>Given Wylie Bisset's experience of the sector and Big Data, we can help the Regional Board facilitate the development of these measures.</p>	Priority 3 - Low	<p>Initially the Principal and Board Secretary are working on a list of KPIs which the Principal will include in their Board report, in a table format.</p> <p>Longer term plans are to have a dashboard of all College performance indicators which the Principal can share with the Board in real time at meetings.</p>	The Principal, Chair, Board Secretary and wider Board to build on the initial KPIs and ways of reporting to reach a point where a clear, concise report is available and up to date.	<p>Already started, end of June 2021 for initial list and start of Board discussion. Discussions to be held within Committees re KPIs pertinent to them.</p> <p>This ties in to the wider College plans for IT and Infrastructure changes over the next 12-18 months.</p>
2.	Our review highlighted that Regional Board Members were concerned over the quality and timeliness of some Regional Board papers.	<p>We recommend that the Regional Board Members work with the Regional Board Secretary and current Chair to specify the types of papers they wish to see and the timelines over which they wish to receive these.</p> <p>We further recommend that those tasked with creating Regional Board and Committee papers, put aside appropriate</p>	Priority 3 - Low	The Chair and Board Secretary are aware of these concerns and action has already started to address these.	The Chair, Board Secretary and Committee Chairs to work with those that produce the papers (largely VPs, but also other members of the Senior Leadership Team) to produce quality	This is an ongoing process. A focus on a good Exec Summary for each paper will be a priority, allowing Board Members to have a clear summary of the issues and

		<p>time in their diaries to ensure that papers are comprehensive, informative and meet the known timetables for the delivery of such papers. Board Members have requested that papers should have a clear summary of what the Board are being asked for along with what the underpinning rationale for the action being requested is. In short, a 1-page A4 paper outlining exactly what the Board are being asked for and why they are being asked for it, could be produced.</p> <p>Detailed papers could still be provided as back up evidence, however Board Members tell us they would like short, sharp and succinct papers to consider.</p> <p>Again, given Wylie Bisset's sector experience in this regard, we can help facilitate the development of quality and timely Regional Board papers.</p>			papers that are informative and timely.	recommendations. Additional reading can be made available if required.
3.	Our review highlighted that the Student President retires at the end of session 2020/21, and the term of office of the Vice-President will also end. Resources provided to the Student Association came under scrutiny.	We recommend that the College continues to support the transition of this role to ensure the new President and Vice-President can make effective contributions as soon as is practicable	Priority 3 - Low	The College and Board will continue to support student members.	The Board will consider the appointment of an independent member as mentor for student members.	Immediate
					The Board Secretary to remind student members of their availability for help and advice, and to make contact regularly with student members.	Immediate

		<p>We further recommend that Student Board member training has a focus on strategic contribution. This approach should help Board discussions about the student experience thereby avoiding operational day to day matters.</p> <p>We also recommend that the Board continues to review the levels of resources available to the Student Association to ensure they are in line with best practice within the sector.</p>		<p>The Board Secretary will continue to encourage students to attend training as early as possible in their term of office.</p> <p>The Board reviews all College resources and will be given the opportunity to see how BCSA compares, when benchmarked against other College Student Associations, with regard to funding.</p>	<p>Board Secretary</p> <p>Board Secretary/Student President/VP Finance and Corporate Services</p>	<p>Ongoing – within two weeks of appointment beginning.</p> <p>Immediate</p>
4.	Our review highlighted the ongoing development of Governance Practice at Borders College	<p>We recognise that the Regional Board is on a developmental journey in relation to how it operates, considers business and makes decisions. Indeed, the relatively recent appointment of the Regional Board Secretary presents the Regional Board with an opportunity to consider what information it wants, when it wants it and the quality of information it receives. Refer to Recommendation 2. We recommend, therefore, that this work continues, and that appropriate tools and technologies are considered to ensure that the Regional Board are as effective as they can be.</p>	Priority 3– Low	<p>Board development and progression is always evolving and the Chair and Board Secretary are keen to embrace new approaches and tools to enable Board Member contributions, and their experiences, to be as useful and fulfilling as possible.</p>	<p>Chair and Board Secretary to work with Board Members</p>	<p>Ongoing, all matters identified for 20/21 to be completed by end of June 21 where ever possible.</p>

5.	At our meeting on 8 th December 2020, the Interim Chair confirmed their resignation as Chair and will step down once the Scottish Government appoint a permanent Chair.	We recommend that the Regional Board ensure there is absolute continuity during the transition period. The Interim Chair, given their experience of the College is well placed to provide this stability in the short term, as they will be stepping back into the role to Chair the Finance Committee and can provide support to the new appointee where necessary.	Priority 3 - Low	The aim would always be to have a smooth transition between Chairs.	The current interim Chair will work with the Board Secretary and the incoming Chair to ensure a smooth handover.	When the process to appointment a new Chair is started by Scottish Government.
6.	The Regional Board Secretary is relatively new into post and although they bring a wealth of experience from elsewhere, seems to be already benefiting from peer to peer support from sector colleagues.	We recommend that the Regional Board Secretary continues to develop their network of support within the sector, as we have found this appears to be already paying dividends for the College.	Priority 3 - Low	The Board Secretary has participated in a number of Board Secretary Network (BSN) events and meetings already and feels that good support and advice is always available from the Network. The Board Secretary also has a mentor in the form of a very experienced Board Secretary and Governance specialist from another College.	The Board Secretary will continue to network with the other Secretaries and undertake training and attend information events as appropriate.	Ongoing, BSN meetings approximately four times per year.
7.	Regional Board Member Training and Development opportunities suggested that physically attending events may be more beneficial than using video conference, however everyone was very mindful of current COVID-19 restrictions, which has curtailed social gatherings out with family bubbles.	We recommend that Regional Board Members are encouraged to participate in training events, and that where time and budgets allow, that attendance online and or on site is encouraged when it is safe to do so.	Priority 3 - Low	All Board Members are welcome to attend training as and when it is necessary.	The Board Secretary will promote training opportunities and the Chair will continue to identify any training and development requirements during annual reviews. The Board Secretary collates all training requirements from Board Member reviews as they are completed.	Ongoing. Board Secretary to raise, as part of their report and update to Board, on a regular basis.

		We further recommend that the Board training issues identified in the 2020/21 Board Enhancement Plans are taken forward as soon as it practical to do so.		The Board Enhancement Plans evolve, develop and change according to the College, Sector and individual Member requirements.	The Chair and Board Secretary will continue to progress the Plans.	Ongoing, the intention is to complete actions within the relevant AY and if there are actions carried forward these will be clearly identified.
8.	The review of the Regional Board Self Evaluation indicated that the annual Collective Evaluation took place for session 2019/20.	We recommend that Collective self-evaluation for 2020/21 take places at the earliest opportunity. We recognise matters are more problematic this session due to COVID-19, however the College seems to have a good virtual environment in place to conduct its business. As they are currently running smaller workshops for other matters [Risk Management for example] this approach could provide a good model for considering Board Effectiveness and contribution each member has to its mission.	Priority 3 - Low	<p>The Board Self-Evaluation takes place towards the end of summer term each year to allow for reflection over the preceding year and for the majority of meetings to have been held.</p> <p>Part of ongoing plans for Board Development, and resulting from the Self-Evaluation, is that regular strategic sessions will be held to examine and discuss key areas for the College such as a curriculum area or changes in SFC strategy. There will also be sessions with key stakeholders allowing for more in-depth discussion.</p>	<p>The Board Secretary will issue the questionnaire towards the end of May and collate and analyse responses for discussion at Board.</p> <p>The Board Secretary will continue to work on a plan for subjects to discuss and stakeholders to engage with in conjunction with the Chair and Principal.</p>	<p>May/June each AY</p> <p>Ongoing. Committee and meeting schedule as well as planning day and strategic sessions to be timetabled before the start of each new AY.</p>

Section 7 Annexes

Annex i

Regional Board Interviewee List

Interviewee and Role	Method	Location
Elaine Acaster – Interim Chair	1-2-1	Zoom
Angela Cox – Principal	1-2-1	Zoom
Ingrid Earp – Board Secretary	1-2-1	Zoom
Paul Scrimger – Chair of Audit	1-2-1	Zoom
Nuala Broderick – Chair of CQC	1-2-1	Zoom
Virginia Grant – Senior Independent Member	1-2-1	Zoom
Jen Mackenzie – Support Staff Board Member	Group 1	Zoom
David Johnson – Board Member	Group 1	Zoom
David Black – Teaching Staff Board Member	1-2-1	Zoom
Jess McBeath – Board Member	1-2-1	Zoom
Liz Parkes – Board Member	1-2-1	Zoom
Hazel Robertson – Vice Principal	1-2-1	Teams
Heather Anderson – Vice Principal	1-2-1	Teams

Annex ii

Regional Board Agenda – 3rd December 2020

**REGIONAL BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
Wednesday 3rd December 2020
Via Microsoft Teams**

REGIONAL BOARD MEETING

There will be a meeting of the Borders College Regional Board on Thursday 3 December 2020 at 5.30pm via Teams

AGENDA

		Paper
94/20	Chair's Opening Remarks	
95/20	Apologies for Absence	
96/20	Minutes of Extraordinary Board Meeting held on 22 October 2020	A
97/20	Matters Arising	
98/20	Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest/Register of Interests Update	
99/20	Introduction to EER (Ben McLeish)	
SECTION "A" – ITEMS FOR APPROVAL		
100/20	Annual Report and Financial Statements 2019-2020 (H Robertson)	B
101/20	Letter of Representation (H Robertson)	C
102/20	Regional Outcome Agreement Update (A Cox)	
103/20	Digital Transformation Programme – Next Steps (H Robertson)	D
104/20	Committee Terms of Reference – Chair's Committee (I Earp)	E
105/20	Supporting Strategies for Strategic Ambition 2020-2025:	
	- Sustainability Strategy (A Cox)	F
	- Asset Management Strategy (H Robertson)	G
	- Workforce Strategy (A Cox)	H
106/20	Borders College Student Partnership Agreement 2020-2021 (A Letham)	I
SECTION "B" – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION		
107/20	Principal's Report (A Cox)	J
108/20	Chair and Board Development (V Grant)	
109/20	COVID-19 Update (H Robertson)	
110/20	Strategic Risk Register (H Robertson)	K
SECTION "C" – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION		
111/20	Board Secretary's Update (I Earp)	L
112/20	Health & Safety Annual Report (K Fitzgerald)	M
113/20	BCSA Update (A Letham)	N
114/20	Reports from Committee Chairs, including annual reports	
	- Finance & General Purposes Committee (E Acaster)	O
	- Audit Committee (P Scrimger)	P
	- Curriculum & Quality Committee (N Broderick)	Q

	- Chair's Committee (E Acaster)	R
115/20	Standing Items	
	- Health & Safety	
	- Equality & Diversity	
	- Environmental & Sustainability	
116/20	Agenda Items for Next Meeting	
117/20	Board Papers for Publication	
118/20	Any Other Business	
119/20	Date of Next Meeting – 4 March 2021	

Assurance Levels

Strong	Controls satisfactory, no major weaknesses found, no or only minor recommendations identified.
Substantial	Controls largely satisfactory although some weaknesses identified, recommendations for improvement made.
Weak	Controls unsatisfactory and major systems weaknesses identified that require to be addressed immediately.
No	No or very limited controls in place leaving the system open to significant error or abuse, recommendations made require to be implemented immediately.

Recommendation Priorities

Priority	Classification
1 (High)	Weakness that we consider needs to be brought to the attention of the Board and addressed by the Organisation
2 (Medium)	Significant issue or weakness/improvement which should be addressed by the Organisation as soon as possible
3 (Low)	Minor issue or weakness/improvement reported where the Organisation may wish to consider our recommendation