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REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

Subject: Board Self-Evaluation and Development and Enhancement Plan	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☒
Prepared by: Ingrid Earp	**Date: 30 Sept 2021**

Purpose: To provide Board with the results of the Self-Evaluation Survey and the resulting Board Development and Enhancement Plan for 2021/22.

Linked to Strategic Ambition: Take a leading role in enabling an inclusive, resilient and sustainable Scotland

Performance Measures: Recogise nationally as a progressive organisation

Linked to Strategic Risk Register: New Risk (outwith themes)

New Risk Commentary:

Executive Summary:

The annual Board Self-Evaluation Survey was undertaken during June 2021. A response rate of 73% was achieved and thanks is extended to those who took the time to respond. This, along with the recommendations from the External Effectiveness Review (EER) and individual Board Member annual reviews carried out by the Chair, forms the basis of the Board Development and Enhancement Plan.

Any items that had responses at four or below in the Self-Evaluation Survey are included as an item for action in the Plan, as are any items that have not been addressed that were recommendations from the EER.

A particular challenge in drawing up the Plan is to balance the requests from Board Members to help enable them to undertake the role of Board Member to their full potential with the aim of not to over burden Board Members. Feedback from Members would be welcome on how best to achieve this.

The collated results of the Self-Evaluation Survey are attached along with comparison with the previous year results, as well as the Board Development and Enhancement Plan.

Recommendation: Members to note Plan and provide any feedback to the Board Secretary.

Previous Committee Approvals:

For publication ☐	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

BORDERS COLLEGE

Board Development and Enhancement Plan 2021-22

Regionally Focused — Globally Engaged

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT PLAN (2021-22)

Borders College External Effectiveness Review (EER) took place early 2021 and the recommendations resulting from that are included here along with the feedback received from the Board Self-Evaluation which takes place in May/June each year, and outcomes from individual Board Member reviews with the Chair.

	Area for Development	Impact	Actions to be taken	Responsibility	Current Update (September 2021)
1	**Vision and Strategy**				
	The Board has set out clear strategic priorities and aims, and reviews performance against them.	Board will have clear reference points regarding the College progression across the year(s) against the Strategic Ambition which is now agreed and is in place until 2025.	Summary of KPIs and progress against targets to be provided regularly.	Chair/Principal/Board Secretary	The Principal will provide a 'dashboard' of KPIs, and progress against them, in their Principal's Reports to Board List of KPIs to be agreed at October Board meeting.
	The Board undertakes regular strategic reviews/scenario planning, and ensures the College strategy is aligned to the regional strategies of stakeholder organisations.	Scenario planning, and evidence of, will provide Board with reassurance that the challenges of the upcoming years have been considered and planned for as much as possible.	Dedicate time for scenario planning away from regular meetings to allow focus on specific items (and agree what this commitment will look like in terms of days/hours).	Chair/Board Secretary	Consider dedicated time for scenario planning reporting, although this is usually covered in specific Committee papers.
			Organise a planning day at least once per year with clear agenda agreed beforehand. Consider use of facilitator to ensure maximum effectiveness of the day.	Board Secretary	Next planning day in diaries is 11 November 2021. Think ahead to future days, spacing and timings.
	Area for Development	**Impact**	**Actions to be taken**	**Responsibility**	**Current Update**

					(September 2021)
		Regular strategic information and discussion sessions with key stakeholders will ensure coherence across all sectors.		Chair/Principal/Board Secretary	The development of 'strategic sessions' with key stakeholders will continue to support this. Programme for 2021/22 to be drawn up.
2	**Corporate and Social Responsibility**	All Board Members remain aware of their responsibilities.	Board Secretary to provide annual awareness checks of the Nine Principles of Public Life, the Board Code of Conduct and other relevant documentation. Board Secretary to promote exploration of Board web pages which have lots of relevant documentation, links, reports etc.	Board Secretary	Board Secretary will do this at the start of each AY.
3	**Student Engagement and Student Board Member Participation** Student Members are active at Board level, and the Board and Committees pay close regard to Student Member participation.	Student Board Members feel able to contribute fully to Board business and are encouraged to undertake this with the needs and requirements of the student body in mind.	Continued and ongoing support for student members from the Student Mentor. Encouragement from Board Secretary to attend training where possible.	Student Mentor/Board Secretary	Ongoing
	Area for Development	**Impact**	**Actions to be taken**	**Responsibility**	**Current Update**

					(September 2021)
4	**Learning and Teaching/Student Support** Learning and Teaching performance is overseen effectively, challenging student success targets are set and the student experience is central to Board decisions.	Board receives a more rounded view of the learner experience. Board is reassured that targets are ambitious and achievable.	More discussion of learning and teaching quality, examination of quality targets and less straight reporting of 'facts and figures'. Reflect on presentation of success against targets, as these are generally good for the College, and they may not be clear to all Board Members at present.	VP for Curriculum/Chair of CQC/Board Secretary	Relevant KPIs to this area will be discussed at CQC, and summarised at Board. Remind all Board Members that they can attend CQC even if not an official Committee Member. Members of staff to be invited to CQC to share their thoughts/experiences. Members of staff representing student support and the online learning experience were invited to Board Meetings in April and June 2021. These sessions were well received but ate into time available for other Board business. Invite staff from other areas to pre-Board meet.
5	**Accountability and Delegation; Risk and Audit**	The Board is assured that all policies and procedures are adhered to and that audit and risk management practices are comprehensive and clearly reported.	New approach to the Risk Register and presentation of this to Committees and Boards to be implemented.	VP Finance and Corporate Services/Committee Chairs/Principal	During 2020/21 a major reshaping of the Risk Register was undertaken with considerable Board consultation. The proposed changes to the approach to, and presentation of, Risk and the Risk Register was approved at an Extraordinary Audit Committee meeting in September 21.
	Area for Development	**Impact**	**Actions to be taken**	**Responsibility**	**Current Update (September 2021)**

6	**Remuneration, Sustainability and Staff Governance**				
	Funds used efficiently and effectively and fair and effective management of staff is a priority.	Board is assured that there is compliance with all funding regulations and that staff are managed in an appropriate way.	Executive Team ensure that the assurance required by Board is available and transparent.	Executive Team	Ongoing, and as part of F&GP Committee business.
	Role as trustees of a Charity is clear.	Board is aware of their responsibilities.	Board Secretary to remind Members of their responsibilities.	Board Secretary	Will be included at the beginning of the AY in the Board Secretary's Report.
7	**Post Holder Effectiveness**				
	The Board works well as a team and has a good mix of skills.	Board work well together towards common goals with appreciation of fellow members skills, experience and knowledge.	Board meetings to be held on campus as soon as possible with opportunity for members to meet informally beforehand.	Board Secretary	The aim is to hold a Board meeting on campus as soon as guidelines allow. Board will then rotate around the various campus, COVID guidelines permitting.
		Although not afraid to challenge our Board operates by consensus rather than through formal votes where possible. This is a strength of our Board and demonstrates the collaborative nature of our Board.	Use the Board Away Day to undertake some group work.	Chair/Principal/Board Secretary	Away day scheduled for 11 Nov 2021.
			Appraisal of current skills mix and any gaps identified, prior to a round of Member recruitment.	Chair/Board Secretary	Recent Board recruitment has been effective at filling the skills/experience gaps identified.
	Area for Development	**Impact**	**Actions to be taken**	**Responsibility**	**Current Update (September 2021)**

8	**Board Member Development** There are sufficient opportunities for Board induction and development.	Board will operate effectively and efficiently and be clear of what the role requires.	Liaise with CDN re training and development of more online opportunities. Consider more use of Teams for consultation and/or workshops for larger agenda items prior to meetings.	Board Secretary Chair/Principal/ Committee Chairs/Board Secretary	Ongoing, CDN continue to develop new online training opportunities that the Board Secretary regularly promotes to all Board Members. We are holding 'strategic sessions' to allow Board to meet and question key stakeholders to give the context of the 'bigger picture'. Use Committee structure to fully debate larger agenda items and feed back to Board on those discussions and decisions in exec summary for the item.
9	**Partnership Working** Opportunities for Members to engage and communicate with stakeholders.	Members and stakeholders have increased awareness of the role of each other and the impact they can make.	All parties invited to College events, particularly when back on campus, to allow interaction. Define and identify stakeholders. Key stakeholders invited to Board information sessions and pre-Board Meeting gatherings.	Chair/Principal/Board Secretary	Current restrictions limit the number of on campus events that can be held and the number of people that can attend such events.
	Area for Development	**Impact**	**Actions to be taken**	**Responsibility**	**Current Update (September 2021)**

10	**Timely distribution of papers with a succinct exec summary.**	Members will have time to consider papers and any discussion/questions they may wish to raise and the exec summary will provide all the pertinent points required (with further reading/reports available if required).	Discuss and agree achievable and relevant deadlines. Consider what makes a good exec summary – it needs to be able to stand on its own, be succinct, short and include all key information.	Principal/Chair/Board Secretary	This is ongoing. Agreement to be reached re paper deadlines that is achievable by all.

Regional Board Self Evaluation 2020-21 to inform Enhancement plan for 2021-22

1. Background and Introduction

The *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges*[1] *("the Code")* has been developed and is owned by the college sector. The Code establishes standards of good governance practice for all boards, and provides the essential foundations for compliance within the legislative framework. The Board must also comply with all other statutory requirements.

The Code requires that Boards "have in place a robust self-evaluation process" which should comprise an annual internal review and an externally facilitated effectiveness review every three years.

The following is an analysis of the results of the self-evaluation questionnaires returned in 2020-21. In total there were 11 returned questionnaires, a response rate of 73%.

The questionnaire answers were ranked from one to six with one being Low/Disagree and six being High/Agree.

The overall responses were positive with 57% of responses being the highest ranking although this is down from 77% in the previous year. There were 1.5% of responses scored at three or below as opposed to zero the previous year. There were 1% of responses that did provide an answer.

All areas had overall lower response rates than the previous year which may be explained by particular circumstances and/or require further investigation.

2020/21 had exceptional challenges in terms of the COVID 19 Pandemic and several national lockdowns. There have been no Board or Committee meetings on campus since March 2020 with all meetings being held virtually. This worked well given the circumstances and some of these practices will undoubtedly continue in a hybrid way of carrying out Board business.

The Board has also had an Interim Chair since March 2020 with all such recruitment being put on hold by Scottish Government during the Pandemic. The Board is fortunate that the Interim Chair was already an experienced Board Member and Committee Chair who took over seamlessly from the outgoing Chair. The recruitment of a permanent Chair began early September 2021. The Board SIM also stepped down during the year, with the recruitment of a new SIM leaving a vacancy for Interim Vice Chair.

[1] Code-of-Good-Governance-for-Scotland's-Colleges-August-2016.pdf

2. Vision and Strategy

Overall this area had the second highest percentage in point four or below, although overall 82% of responses were at points five and six. In the previous year 12% of responses were at point four or below and 88% of responses at point six.

The statement that received the lowest ratings was statement four relating to strategic reviews and scenario planning.

Statement one scored slightly better at the highest level than it did the previous year, as did statement three reflecting the increased involvement of the Board in the development of the new Strategic Ambition and the strategic planning events which were held with regional stakeholders. There has also been opportunity for Board to give feedback via various consultation documents from key partner organisations. All Board Members should be clear on the College's strategic priorities. The requirement for clear KPIs against the Strategic Ambition is being addressed with a concise table of performance against target on key areas of activity being planned as part of the Principal's Report for each Board meeting.

The requirement for regular scenario planning is noted bearing in mind competing demands for Members' time.

Comments

Although the Board have agreed to undertake scenario planning, it hasn't yet fully come into practice. Regional strategies are a little clouded with the inception of SOSE, whose aims are a little different to the college, and the apparent "encouragement" from government to work in tandem with D&G College. Both of these mean that Borders College is not entirely free to set the strategy it may wish to.
Strategic ambition approved; strategies and operational plans continue to be developed.
SOSE regional plans interrupted by COVID, continue to develop close relationship to ensure alignment. Our strategic ambition states 'regionally focused globally connected'.

3. Corporate and Social Responsibility

Overall, this area scored well with the majority of responses being at points five and six. However, those ranking the highest is down from 83% the previous year to 55% with more answers ranking five this year.

The College's values are reiterated in the Strategic Ambition so any discussion of this should also cover the values.

The Board Secretary will regularly remind Members of the Code of Conduct and the Nine Principles of Public Life.

Comments

As a staff board member, I was not aware of these principles [of public life] in the first year. Would be important for future members to be made aware of these.

4. Student Engagement

Overall, the scores for this section are good but a reduction on the previous year when 4% were ranked five and 96% ranked at six.

Student Engagement received 94% of responses in points five and six on the scale, slightly down from 100% in the previous year. The value placed on the student members' engagement is clear as is the commitment from student members. A new student member will join in 2021/22 and the Board Secretary will ensure support and guidance along with encouragement to participate on CDN training.

Comments

2021\22 will be a tough year for the Students Association with funding under pressure and issues around students not being on campus/returning to campus/new ways of learning. Mental Health and isolation are going to be very important to monitor and student support will be under pressure.
Board operates in an inclusive manner, with two Student Association officers in membership. These members are participative and pro-active. They are supported outside meetings by Board Members and College staff.
I suggest we put a bit more time into ensuring Board understands the student perspective, and that students feel their voice is heard.
Input from Student representatives is regular, valuable and respected.

5. Learning and Teaching/Student Support

This area saw the most significant fall in responses at point six, down 25% on the previous year and the lowest across all questions. It also has the highest number of responses at point four or below.

The College has very good PIs nationally and across the Sector with regard to student success and satisfaction, so how this information is presented to Board Members should be examined. It may be that Members not part of CQC feel they don't see the level of information that CQC members do to be able to answer these questions fully.

Comments

It has been difficult over the last 15 months to rigorously evaluate student satisfaction and experience, but Board regularly get qualitative student feedback and progress on student engagement and retention which are key indicators of satisfaction and success.
Whilst the student experience IS key in Board decision making, there also has to be account taken of the sustainability of operations and delivery of courses so not every issue can be 100% resolved. Lecturers have also come under increased pressure to act as additional support to students during Covid, rising amazingly to the challenge, but this is an unsustainable expectation on their time and roles.
I think it is important for the Board to continue to hear the student experiences from the staff on the front line, this is more powerful and gives the Board a true reflection of the work of the support staff.

6. Accountability & Delegation; Risk & Audit

This is a reduction on the previous year scoring. All scores are reduced with 15% being below four or with no response, against zero the previous year.

The Risk Register and associated Strategy has been under review during 2020/21 with several consultations with Board. It is anticipated that a more user friendly and informative Risk Register will be implemented for 2021/22. New Members will also be able to see a full year of reports and processes when only seeing a part year for 2020/21 and this may have influenced some responses in this section.

Accountability and Delegation; Risk and Audit 2020 and 2021 Comparison
1. The Board recognises its chain of accountability and corporate governance…
2021
2020
2. The Board is open in its decision-making and facilitates disclosure
2021
2020
3. The Board delegates responsibilities to appropriate committees
2021
2020
4. The Board has in place an effective risk management strategy
2021
2020
5. The College's audit processes are comprehensive and rigorous
2021
2020
6. The Board publishes high quality Annual Reports
2021
2020
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Low
2
3
4
5
High
No Answer

Comments

Changes to the Risk Register format, in response to board feedback will allow Board to focus on strategic risk and opportunity. This is important in the current skills funding and delivery environment in order to remain sustainable.
Although good at present, Risk Assessment/management is undergoing a review which should be for the better.
Risk management strategy format and reporting arrangements are under review. The aim is that the revised format will simplify reporting and review opportunities, align with the Strategic Ambition and be sufficiently durable to remain in the new format for the duration of the current Strategic Ambition.
I'm not sure if I have understood question 3. I have interpreted this as the delegation of risk to appropriate committees. While this has not happened previously, it is being introduced for the new term.
High quality governance is very evident.

7. Remuneration, Sustainability and Staff Governance

A slight fall from 100% at points five and six the previous year to 91% this year. Statement nine referring to charitable status responsibilities had the least positive results.

There is opportunity for the Board Secretary to remind Members of their responsibilities at the start of each new year. Points eight and 10 could be explored with further discussion.

Remuneration, Sustainability and Staff Governance 2020 and 2021 Comparison
7. There is a formal process for setting the Principal's remuneration
2021
2020
8. Funds are planned and used economically, efficiently, and effectively
2021
2020
9. Board members are aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees
2021
2020
10.The Board prioritises the fair and effective management of staff
2021
2020
11.The Board recognises its responsibility for ensuring the financial and institutional sustainability of the College
2021
2020
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Low
2
3
4
5
High
No Answer

Comments

Reminder about responsibilities as Charity Trustees might be useful? EER – awarded highest grade
I do not know the answers to question 1. I can say that I understand my responsibility as charity trustee, but cannot say for everyone.

8. Post Holder Effectiveness

Overall, this area scored well. The number of responses in point six is similar to the previous year (78%), however 7% of responses this year are at point four or did not have an answer.

The achievement of open discussion despite all meetings being held virtually is welcome. Development of team work amongst Board Members has been limited due to no meetings in person, and three new Members who have yet to meet existing Members, concerted effort into improving this will be a priority.

Comments

It has been difficult for newer Board Members to build a relationship with other Board Members as we have only been meeting remotely. It would be a good idea to organise a dinner or other social event next term to allow people to connect.
This Board has an excellent working relationship with each other and, with recent appointments, have filled potential skills gaps. It is one of the most open and effective groups I have been involved with who work well with the Executive Team but are never afraid to challenge them.
Discussion on strategic matters inhibited by time constraints. Chair wishes to review approach adopted in last year i.e. introduced strategic consultation sessions outside Board meetings, and inputs at Board from visiting speakers and Agencies. My suggestions for consideration include improved shorter Papers, timed agendas, open fora, webinars, review of effectiveness of awaydays, devolved leadership etc
I think the Board has a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience, which is strengthened by the latest intake of new Board members.
We work well as a board and the targeted workshop session have helped a more open discussion on strategic matters. I feel it would be important to continue these going forward.

9. Board Member Development and Evaluation

Overall, a slight fall on the previous year with 67% at point six this year as opposed to 75% the previous year.

The Board Secretary will regularly remind Members of the availability of online training via CDN which can be done at a time and pace that suits Members.

The three year Effectiveness Evaluation Review (EER) was completed during 2020/21 and will be carried out again in three to five years in line with government guidance, and a Board Development and Enhancement Plan derived from the EER feedback and the outcome of this self-evaluation.

Comments

The opportunities are there for development but are sometimes difficult to take up because of work commitments.
Board induction has been regularly reviewed and mentoring of new Board Members has been agreed to be introduced. Development is harder as it is an extra call on Member's voluntary time.
Re 6 – Induction and development opportunities are highlighted, but we need to be mindful of time constraints which Members have in personal/professional lives. CDN on-line events welcomed. Feedback from Members (especially recently appointed members) should inform future action. Cross refers also to 4 above.
Important that staff members get an induction within the first couple of months in post.
It would be good to have sessions with regards to challenging decisions, I know the ex-Chair talked about holding development sessions.

10. Partnership Working

96% of responses are at point five and six although there is a fall at point 6 of 25% on the previous year.

Comments

The recent introduction of 'spotlight' sessions with key stakeholders has provided Board members with a different perspective/voice on strategic matters. These should continue to be promoted. SOSE, SDS, SFC. Perhaps future sessions with Borders Council, ESECRD, Visit Scotland, LANTRA, Chamber of Commerce, SCDI?
Communication with stakeholders has been improved and is now very good, but always room for improvement. Relevance of learning provision is hard to accomplish because the system that the College is required to follow means, by definition, provision of courses is reactionary rather than being procreative.
DEBI (new) and Principal's representative/ambassadorial role provide assurance.