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REGIONAL BOARD

14 December 2023

Board Chair's Evaluation

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For information

1.1 To note updates from the Chair re their development plan.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The Chair has added commentary to the actions and development points agreed by Board.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

3.1 I recommend that the Regional Board: -

3.1.1 For information – any feedback can be noted to the Chair.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 N/A

5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.2 Learner Implications

5.3 Staff Implications

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

5.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

6.0 RISK COMMENTARY

6.1 The Chair of the Board has ultimate responsibility for the overall governance of the College, working alongside the Board Members, the Executive Team and the Board Secretary. It is a key risk for the College if the Chair does not have the skills and experience required to lead and guide the Board.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Members to note the update.

Ray McCowan, Board Chair

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals: None

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For publication ☒	**Not for publication** ☐ **If not, why not?**

Appendix 1

REGIONAL BOARD

Annual Chair Development Meeting with the Senior Independent Member

Section A: Chair information (to be completed by the Board Secretary prior to the meeting).	
Name: Ray McCowan	Date of Review: 15th September 2023
Attendance Levels At Board Meetings (2021-22)**: 100%** (2022-23): **88%** (missed planning evening in April due to illness)	
Any offices held *(eg Depute Chair, Chair of Committee etc)* Chair of Borders College Regional Board	
Start Date: February 1st 2022 Reappointed:	End/re-election date: 31st January 2026

Annual Chair Development Meeting with the Senior Independent Member

Section B – Chair self-evaluation (to be completed by Chair prior to meeting with SIM).			
	Over the last year, where have I made an effective contribution or developed my skills/knowledge? Anything I could have done better?	**Looking to next year, where would I like to make a contribution and/or develop my skills/knowledge?**	
Knowledge of the external environment	Maintained connections to policy agendas and emerging issues via close working with Scottish Government on the NSET Board, Education Scotland Board, Adult Learning Strategy Board and Colleges Scotland. Following Board feedback last year regarding concerns about representation on national forums, I have sought to be more proactive as a Chair with Colleges Scotland. I have made representations and recommendations on sector wide communications strategy and tactics, suggested a different communications approach to trade union negotiations and co- lead/Chair the TTU Digital Working Group with the Principal of Dumfries and Galloway College. More locally I have supported Executive colleagues in discussions with SRUC and helped turnaround a negative situation with a local councillor to a positive relationship	I still feel disconnected from the wider region partnerships. That said in my discussions with the Principal and Executive Team I want to add discrete and complementary value not duplicate current efforts. SOSE has remained challengingly elusive in our attempts to engage but we will continue to try.	

Chair skills	My initial focus with the Board was to establish relationships, create a new team, value everyone's contribution and integrate new members effectively. The environment has been less stable than I might have expected with a turnover of both Board members and in the Executive Team. I feel like we are in the "storming" phase of our Boards evolution with emerging challenges within the Board and between the Board and the Executive Team.	New Board member integration and development of the Board team will remain a priority. Managing and reconciling the different expectations between Board members and between the Board and the Executive as to what practices constitutes effective governance will remain a challenge.	
Knowledge of the organisation's business	This has evolved in the past twelve months from a more macro oriented perspective through my wider role in the sector to a more bespoke focus on Borders centric knowledge. First hand Learning for Leading experiences in Marketing and with the DEBI Team have given me a better insight of those areas and the L for L Reports have provided valuable additional context. Regular meetings with the Principal and some occasional meetings for briefings by Executive Team colleagues on specific issues have also helped gather more knowledge about the College. Meetings with the Student President and Vice Presidents have also given me greater insight into the student experience at Borders College.	This remains a work in progress This year I will take on two L for L Team Reviews in Finance and Estates/Facilities, both of which: in the current climate, are strategically significant. While a further twelve months as Chair will inevitably lead to more knowledge about Borders College, I will continue to look for ways to accelerate that process and seek advice from both Executive and Non-Executive colleagues on how I might do this.	

Contribution to Board team work	For reasons noted above the Board and the Executive Team remains in an evolving and transitional phase which is posing some challenges to team dynamics. Prior relationships in other organisations between Board members and members of the Executive Team are compounding these issues. I am trying to manage these interpersonal challenges cautiously and subtly while at the same time looking to improve, with the Board Secretary, some core governance practices [changes to TORS, using the Chairs Committee differently and better] that may remove some of the catalysts for these differences of opinion.	I think we can reasonably anticipate some further challenges or differences of opinion between members of the Board and between the Board and the Executive. The emerging external environment is hugely challenging. This will require very difficult, unpalatable decisions and will compound or exacerbate differences of opinion between colleagues. My role is to manage the scale and tone of these challenges so that the Board stays unified in its support of the Executive.	
Part C – To be completed by the chair and agreed with the board member as a confidential summary of their discussion.			
	Chair Development Plan agreed with Senior Independent Member Reviewer		
Knowledge of the external environment	1. I would welcome some specific input from Board colleagues on this please. Given that the Executive Team and DEBI appear to have effective relationships with most key stakeholders, where can I add some discrete complementary value in region? **Update December 2023: No ongoing action at present. I will continue to look for opportunities via Board or Executive colleges where I can add clear complementary value add**		

	2. Persist with attempts to improve engagement with SOSE but [with the Principal] also enhance our development work with Dumfries and Galloway College to maximise and evidence our impacts across the South of Scotland. **Update December 2023: The Principal and Chair continue to liaise with both the Principal and Chair of Dumfries and Galloway College on how best to leverage joint development opportunities across the south of Scotland and to ensure both colleges continue to be aligned with and contribute to the skills needs for the south of Scotland** 3. Continue to contribute to wider policy issues across Scotland notably on Think the Unthinkable (TTU). **Update December 2023: The Chair works with the Principal of Dumfries and Galloway College on the joint chairing of the Digital Group for TTU. Some meaningful progress is being made around cross sectoral curriculum development and the development of a digital strategy for the college sector in partnership with JISC. The Chair is also meeting on 29th November with fellow Chairs to explore alternative structures for FE colleges in Scotland**
Non-executive skills	4. Continue to work collaboratively with new Board members and Sub Committee Chairs to integrate new Board members **Update December 2023: Latest round of Board recruitment just completed. Three appointable candidates from latest round of recruitment all recommended for appointment. As and when these appointments are approved, we will need to revisit the composition of sub committees to accommodate these new members and possibly move some people between sub committees on order to achieve an optimal gender balance at each committee** 5. Improve communication to Board members between meetings by developing a monthly blog to provide interim updates and reports of progress/Chairs activity. **Update December 2023: The commitment to ongoing communications between meetings is only now just starting. Board members were given key messages for wider dissemination at the end of the last Board meeting and an action note and**

	communications from the Development Day. The next end of month communications will be sent out from the Chair at the end of November. 6. Improve organisation and time management of Board meetings to enable Board to focus on strategy but to spend less time on lower priority issues. **Update December 2023: Ongoing efforts in Board planning to better balance the agenda, to allow more time for value added presentations to improve knowledge, to ensure there is enough time for items we need to discuss decide and agree, and that items of lower importance are included for information only** 7. More effectively use the Chairs Committee between Board meetings to test emerging ideas or proposals or [by exception] take an urgent decision on behalf of the Board. **Update December 2023: No need to call a Chairs Committees so far in this academic year**
Knowledge of the organisation's business	8. Continue to engage with Student President and Vice Presidents to better understand and influence the wider student experience notably in relation to activities beyond learning and teaching. **Update December 2023: Item also covered in Board Development Plan. Meetings between Student President and Vice Presidents already reinstated with the Chair. The Chair met for a one to one with the Student President on 26th October and is meeting the Student President and two Vice Presidents on Thursday 30th November** 9. Work with the Principal Executive Team and Board colleagues to develop a stronger regional vision for the College and on how we share that vision with key stakeholders across the region. **Update December 2023: The discussion on a stronger regional vision for the college was part of the Principals briefing on strategic options at the Board Development Day**
Contribution to Board Team Work	10. Create more and better opportunities for all Board members to understand the wider College context, the emerging challenges and risks and to set an appropriate strategic direction.

	Update December 2023: Hopefully partly covered by agenda and contributions at the last Board Development Day and will be re-enforced by presentations on emerging challenges and risks at future Board meetings and at the next Board Development Day 11. Monitor the balance between challenge and support that the Board provides to the Executive and the extent to which the Board and Executive work collaboratively to deliver our agreed aims. **Update December 2023: The Principal and Chair are working close together on this as regards board planning, board papers, post meeting communications and ensuring that so far as possible, work is carried forward under our joint oversight while the Board and Executives discrete and separate roles and functions**