Borders College

Review of Regional Board Effectiveness

May 2026

by

Strong Assurance

Contents

Section 1 Introduction

This Externally Facilitated Regional Board Effectiveness Review (EFBER) was commissioned by Border's College Regional Board. The purpose of the EFBER is to meet the requirements of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (the Code) 2024 edition which sets out the principals of good governance for colleges in Scotland.

As the College receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the College is required to ensure compliance with the Code including Section D.24 which states that:

"The Regional Board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness every three to five years. The Regional Board should determine the timing for this externally facilitated review as part of the annual effectiveness review. The Regional Board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and Regional Board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online."

In order to comply with the Code, this independent EFBER was carried out between December 2025 and May 2026.

The scope of the review is outlined below.

In broad terms, the review set out to cover:

(1) Whether 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.

Wbg's role was to make an independent assessment of the arrangements and to provide an opinion to the Regional Board on these matters.

Our findings, recommendations and suggested action plans are set out in Sections 4, 5, and 6 below.

To reach these findings, we undertook a series of interviews and attended two Regional Board Meetings and three subcommittee meetings for the Audit & Risk Committee, Finance & Resources Committee and the Curriculum, Quality & Student

Experience Committee. In addition, we reviewed several governance documents to assess their adequacy, this included the following:

- Regional Board Papers for October 2025 – March 2026.
- Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee Papers for September 2025 and March 2026.
- Audit & Risk Committee Papers for October 2025 and February 2026.
- Finance & Resources Committee Papers for November 2025 and March 2026.
- College Code of Conduct and Signed Code of Conduct for seven Regional Board members.
- Regional Board and Committee Self Evaluation documents.
- Regional Chair and Principal Self Evaluation documents.
- Agendas for the Regional Board Development and Planning Session for April 2025 and November 2025.
- Regional Board Handbook for 2025/26.
- College Standing Orders.
- Terms of Reference for the following: Audit & Risk Committee; Finance & Resources Committee; Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee; Nominations Committee; Chairs Committee; Remuneration Committee.
- Corporate Governance Guide for 2025.
- Governance Action Plan for April 2026.
- Regional Board and Committee Meetings Attendance Log.
- Agenda Planners for 2025/26 for the following: Regional Board; Audit & Risk Committee; Finance & Resources Committee; Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee.
- College 2030 Vision and supporting strategies.

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

i) A full list of all the Regional Board & staff Members interviewed during this process;
ii) A copy of the Regional Board Agenda from 11 December 2025 and 26 March 2026; and
iii) Grading Structure.

Wbg 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 Governance Professional to the Regional Board 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 will be to assess whether:

- 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 College is complying with 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:

- Step One – Initiation Meeting
  - Discussions with the Governance Professional, Chair of the Regional Board, and the Principal to confirm the brief and identify any priority issues.
  - Agree questionnaire to be issued in line with Framework and any specific questions to suit the College's needs.
- Step Two – Questionnaire
  - Members of Regional Board and Senior Management Team complete the questionnaire
  - Draft a summary of views from the questionnaire.
- Step Three – Testing and Meetings
  - Attend and observe two Regional Board meetings and three Committee meetings
  - Review relevant governance documentation including:

- Regional Board and Committee remits, minutes, agendas, and papers.
- Determine whether corporate documents are aligned with corporate objectives.
- Review risk registers in place.
- Review the structure of the Regional Board and Regional Board member development plans, appraisals, skills mix, and induction arrangements.
- Review any audit reports on governance.
- Examine recent surveys undertaken which include Regional Board responses.

  - One to One interviews with the Chair of the Regional Board, Committee members, and the Senior Management Team, including the Vice Principal – Finance and Corporate Services .

- Step Four – Closing Meeting and Draft Report
  - We will hold a formal closing meeting with the Governance Professional, and the Chair of the Regional Board to review and discuss our findings.
  - We will draft our report and issue this to the Governance Professional and the Chair of the Regional Board for review, consideration and return of management responses to any recommendations raised.
- Step Five – Final Report
  - We will present our final report to the Regional Board.

Section 3 Overall Conclusion

Our review considered:

- Regional Board and Committee papers;
- Attendance at a Regional Board and subcommittee meetings for the period December 2025 – April 2026.
- Interviews with Regional Members (including the Chair, the Principal, the Governance Professional, and subcommittee Chairs);
- Questionnaire results; and
- Various Governance documentation.

In reaching our overall conclusion we have identified **15 areas** of ***Good Practice***, **nine actions for improvement** (see **Section 4**) and **three Observation** (see **Section 6**) for continued improvement in this regard.

Overall, we can provide a ***Strong*** level of assurance over the 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 4 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.

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.	
1.	Through our attendance at Regional Board and Subcommittee meetings, we confirmed that papers were circulated to Regional Board members in a timely manner to support effective decision-making.
2.	Our review identified that Regional Board papers are of a good standard and support effective discussion and decision-making. While some opportunities for improvement were noted in relation to volume, dashboard reporting and the number of forward-looking papers, the papers are currently presented in a clear and consistent format that is readily understood by Regional Board members. This view was reinforced during the meetings attended, where Regional Board members made a number of positive comments regarding the quality of the papers.
3.	We confirmed that the Chair of the Regional Board was effective in the overall management of meetings, including encouraging robust participation, facilitating meaningful discussion, and supporting appropriate decision-making. This was also reflected in the approach taken by Subcommittee Chairs, who provided appropriate leadership to support effective decisions throughout meetings. Chairs also demonstrated a clear understanding of the purpose of each paper and ensured that decisions were taken appropriately where required.
4.	Throughout our attendance at Regional Board and Subcommittee meetings, we observed strong levels of engagement from Regional Board members. Discussions were facilitated effectively by the Chair and were constructive and aligned to the papers presented.
5.	We confirmed that management and Regional Board members presented papers clearly and concisely. Presentations were appropriately focused, reflecting the expectation that papers had been read in advance, while key points and more complex or critical matters were highlighted where necessary.

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.	
6.	We confirmed that the College has a robust approach to self-evaluation. The annual review process covers individual Regional Board member performance, committee performance, Chair performance, and Principal performance. The results are then used to inform the Regional Board Development Plan, including the identification of training requirements where skills gaps have been identified.
7.	The College undertakes two formal Regional Board Development Sessions each year. In 2025/26, sessions were held in November and April and included workshops on risk and risk appetite, curriculum planning, the College Development Plan, the Corporate Plan, performance management, and the Estates Masterplan.
8.	The College's Standing Orders are clearly structured and appropriately authorised. We confirmed that they reflect good practice and include the key information expected within such a document.
9.	The purpose and responsibilities of the College's Subcommittees are clearly defined within their respective Terms of Reference, which are presented in a consistent format. We also confirmed that responsibilities are clearly delineated and do not overlap.
10.	The College's Governance Guide provides a clear and structured overview of the governance framework, setting out Regional Board responsibilities, committee arrangements, key governance roles, and supporting policies in a single document.
11.	The College has a robust Governance Action Plan in place, structured in line with the Code of Good Governance.
12.	We confirmed that the College has strong arrangements in place for recording and monitoring attendance. Attendance is captured both in a formal attendance records and within the minutes of each meeting. Any instances of poor attendance are followed up promptly by the Regional Board Chair and Governance Professional.

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.	
13.	The College maintains agenda planners for the Regional Board and Subcommittees which set out the proposed agenda items for each meeting. These are prepared at the start of the year and updated as required. This provides members with oversight of planned discussions across the year and supports effective forward planning to ensure key deadlines and reporting requirements are met.
14.	The College has a strong Vision 2030 which clearly sets out its strategic ambitions for growth and development.
15.	We issued a questionnaire to Regional Board members and received an overall response rate of 89%. Responses were positive overall, particularly in relation to Reginal Regional Board members' understanding of their responsibilities, satisfaction with the training and resources provided by the College, and the effectiveness of the Regional Board.

Section 5 Findings

We have provided an overview below of findings from the work undertaken. These are narrative focused and highlight the circumstances found to be in place at the time of the review. Recommendations are included in Section 6.

5.1 Compliance with the Code of Good Governance

5.1.1 Leadership & Strategy

Conduct in Public Life

The College has a Code of Conduct in place that sets out the standards of behaviour expected of Regional Board members in line with the Scottish Code of Good Governance. The Code was last formally reviewed and updated in June 2022 and has not been reviewed since. An action point has therefore been raised to complete a formal review of the Code.

The Code sets out the key principles with which Regional Board members are expected to comply, including the following:

- *Duty*
- *Selflessness*
- *Objectivity*
- *Accountability and Stewardship*
- *Openness*
- *Honesty*
- *Leadership*
- *Respect*

The Code of Conduct is issued to Regional Board members on appointment for acknowledgement; however, Regional Board members are not currently required to confirm annual acceptance of the Code in line with good practice. An action point has therefore been raised.

Vision and Strategy

The College has developed a 2030 Vision that sets out its strategic direction for the next five years. The Vision was developed in consultation with students, staff, and key stakeholders, and was discussed and approved at the June 2025 Regional Board meeting.

The Vision for the College can be summarised as follows:

Our College will ensure the people and businesses across the Scottish Borders have access to the breadth of learning and skills opportunities they need to raise aspirations, inspire entrepreneurship, enhance lives, and drive economic growth.

The Vision is supported by five strategic outcomes designed to facilitate appropriate growth. These are as follows:

- *Improved Learner Success;*
- *Sustainable curriculum that meets the needs of the College's curriculum;*
- *Increased support to regional businesses;*
- *Reduced Environmental Impact; and*
- *An efficient estate and optimal use of technology.*

Performance

To support Vision 2030, the College has developed six strategies with defined KPI metrics to measure success. These include a Skills and Enterprise Strategy, People Strategy, Estates Strategy, Digital and Data Strategy, Sustainability Strategy, and Financial Strategy. Each strategy has clearly defined KPIs that are reported at Regional Board and subcommittee level. The People Strategy, for example, includes eight KPIs covering attraction and retention, leadership development, diversity, absence levels, and employee engagement.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Colleges are required to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates high levels of corporate social responsibility, evidencing ethical practice while contributing effectively to the local economy and improving quality of life within the local community.

Borders College has several initiatives in place to support compliance with this requirement, including its Equality and Diversity Policy, active reporting on equality outcomes, and the provision of relevant performance reports to the Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee, outlining positive contributions to the local community.

The College also places strong emphasis on sustainability through its Sustainability Strategy, which sets out the College's commitment to Net Zero and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

5.1.2 Quality of Student Experience

Student Engagement

The College demonstrates a strong commitment to student engagement and inclusion. This is evidenced primarily through the College's Student Association, with both the President and Vice President also serving as members of the Regional Board. Representatives of the Student Association present a report at each Regional Board meeting to highlight student views and recurring feedback. Student Association members are also actively encouraged to contribute to discussions during Regional Board meetings and to identify the potential impact of matters discussed on student life.

The College also undertakes several surveys throughout the year at departmental level, in addition to a formal annual Student Satisfaction Survey. The 2024/25 survey identified a 98% satisfaction rate among students, representing a record high for the College.

Relevant and High-Quality Learning and Quality Monitoring and Oversight

Colleges are required to secure coherent provision for students, understand the impact of external bodies on the quality of education, and foster positive partnerships to enhance the student experience.

As noted above, the College has a dedicated Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee that receives regular reporting on curriculum and quality matters. Each meeting includes dedicated reports on Performance and Quality, Skills and Curriculum Planning, and Learning Support and Guidance, alongside updates from the College's Student Association.

At the most recent meeting in March 2026, the College was focused on improving student outcomes that were below College and national averages. The College engaged with staff to identify where additional support was required to enable more effective student engagement and improve outcomes. Common themes arising from these discussions included the use of AI to reduce assessment burden, alongside a review of pastoral support and course tutor arrangements. The College is actively considering these themes and implementing action plans to ensure staff are appropriately supported to improve outcomes.

5.1.3 Accountability

Accountability and Delegation

The College seeks to ensure that decision-making is transparent and that decisions are made collectively. Agendas and papers are structured and provide members with detailed quality information to support discussion and decision-making. We noted opportunities for improvement in relation to the number of forward-looking papers and the level of reporting presented at certain meetings, and action points have been raised accordingly.

Regional Board and Committee papers are published on the College website to provide transparency to stakeholders. The Committee structure in place at the College is operating effectively, with each Committee Chair providing updates to the Regional Board on discussions held and decisions taken. This demonstrates a clear level of trust and accountability between the Regional Board, its Committees, and the Senior Management Team. This was also supported by our questionnaire findings, with all responding Regional Board members indicating that they considered the structure to be effective.

Risk Management

Colleges are required to manage risk effectively and ensure that appropriate internal control systems and risk appetites are in place to address current and emerging risks.

Risk is a standing agenda item at each Regional Board meeting, with the risk register presented at every meeting. Each Regional Board report also follows a standardised format, including a section addressing the risk implications of the matter under consideration. Risks are allocated across the Regional Board and Subcommittees, with the Audit & Risk Committee providing oversight of the process. The Risk Register currently includes fifteen risks across the College's risk categories. All risks fall within the College's risk appetite, with the exception of the risk relating to *Delivering College outcomes is unaffordable.*

Audit Committee

The College has an Audit & Risk Committee that is responsible for the following:

- Scrutinising internal and external audit reports;
- Monitoring the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations;

- Monitoring and ensuring the effectiveness of the College's strategic risk framework
- Overseeing the College's compliance with legislation and guidelines
- Ensuring efficient and economical management of the College's resources;
- Confirming whether the College's governance arrangements are in line with good practice; and
- Ensuring that the College is acting in accordance with the SFC Code of Audit Practice.

The College's Audit & Risk Committee meets four times a year, and our attendance at the Committee as part of the BER review confirmed that its key responsibilities were being discharged appropriately.

Remuneration Committee

The College has a Remuneration Committee comprising three members. The Committee is responsible for reviewing the salaries, terms and conditions, and pension arrangements of the Principal and other members of the Executive Team. It is also responsible for determining the performance framework to be applied to the Principal and Senior Management, responding to any appeals raised by senior executives, and demonstrating the efficient and effective use of public funds in relation to Committee decisions.

The Remuneration Committee recently met in December 2025 with the findings presented during the March 2026 Regional Board.

Financial and Institutional Sustainability

Scottish colleges are required to comply with the Scottish Public Finance Manual and ensure that the relevant Financial Memorandum is in place in relation to their operations. The College has a detailed set of Financial Regulations that clearly set out its policies in relation to internal financial control.

The College also has a Finance & Resources Committee, whose key responsibilities in relation to financial control are as follows:

- Monitoring the financial management of the College including the review of treasury management strategy, strategic financial plans, and annual budgets;
- Assessing the effectiveness surrounding the use of College resources;

- Reviewing and recommending the Annual budget for approval to the Regional Board;
- Considering the Financial Forecast Return (FFR) and recommend the FFR for approval to the Regional Board;
- Overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the Financial Plan;
- Ensuring that application and implementation of the Financial Regulations;
- Ensuring the College's adherence to the Financial memorandum issued by the SFC; and
- Approval of procurement in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

The College's Finance & Resources Committee meets four times a year, and our attendance at the Committee as part of the BER review confirmed that its key responsibilities were being discharged appropriately.

Staff Governance

The College is required to act as a responsible employer, promoting a positive working environment that supports accountability and fair working practices.

Responsibility for staff governance also falls within the remit of the Finance & Resources Committee, which oversees implementation of the People Strategy, ensures the College operates in line with employment law, and monitors compliance with National Bargaining agreements.

Within the membership of the Regional Board, this includes a Teaching Staff member, a Professional Services Staff member, and a Teaching Union member, with the Support Staff Union member position currently vacant.

The College also has a People Strategy developed in support of its 2030 Vision. The Strategy clearly sets out five workforce-related priorities designed to support staff in delivering the College's objectives, as follows:

- Attracting and retaining great people.
- Developing exceptional people and people leaders.
- Valuing diversity and promoting wellbeing and inclusion.
- Investing in a healthy culture.
- Enabling great performance and delivery.

5.1.4 Effectiveness

The Regional Board Chair

The College's Regional Board Chair is responsible for leading the Regional Board, ensuring that the agenda is managed effectively and that members contribute actively to meetings, while promoting open communication and constructive challenge.

As part of our review, we attended meetings of the Regional Board, surveyed Regional Board members and interviewed members of the Regional Board. Overall, our findings indicated that the Chair was effective. It should be noted, however, that a low-grade action has been raised to ensure that agenda items are managed to time.

Senior Independent Member

It is a requirement for the Regional Board to appoint a Senior Independent Member to act, where necessary, as an intermediary between the Principal, other Regional Board members and the Governance Professional. We were able to confirm that the College has appointed a Senior Independent Member to the Regional Board.

Regional Board members

Regional Board members are collectively responsible for Regional Board decisions and are required to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of the College. Through our attendance at Regional Board and subcommittee meetings, we were able to confirm that Regional Board reports were subject to an appropriate level of challenge and that decisions were made clearly during meetings.

Principal and Chief Executive

The College's Principal is responsible for the operational management of the College. Through our discussions with Regional Board members and attendance at Regional Board and subcommittee meetings, we were able to confirm that the Principal is effective in discharging these duties.

Governance Professional

The College has a Governance Professional who is responsible for providing governance support to ensure compliance with the Code of Good Governance. Specifically, the Governance Professional ensures that papers are collated for Regional Board and subcommittee meetings, attends each meeting to support its effective operation, and is available to provide ad hoc advice and support. The College also has the Principal's and Vice Principal's PAs who are responsible for the administrative support of the Regional Board and its subcommittees.

Regional Board Member Appointment, Induction and Training

The College is required to ensure that Regional Board members are appointed effectively and provided with appropriate induction and training so that they are well equipped to fulfil their responsibilities.

The College has clear procedures in place for Regional Board member recruitment and has undertaken significant recruitment activity in recent years to secure the skills required by the Regional Board. The Regional Board currently comprises 18 members, including the following:

- Regional Board Chair.
- College Principal.
- Regional Board Vice Chair.
- Senior Independent Member.
- Teaching Staff Member.
- Student Union Member x2.
- Professional Services Staff Member.
- Governance Adviser/Regional Board Secretary.
- Teaching Union Member.
- Non-Executive Members x8.

On appointment, Regional Board members are provided with a Regional Board Handbook, which is a detailed document containing information on Regional Board responsibilities, key governance and strategic documents, and the College's governance structure. They also receive an induction in person with the Governance Professional.

Thereafter Regional Board members will receive training via the College's Regional Board Development days, targeted training sessions, and use of resources provided via the College Development Network. During our review we identified weaknesses surrounding the provision of training and have raised a low-grade action point.

Regional Board Evaluation

On an annual basis the College will appraise Regional Board member performance, Chair performance, Principal performance, and subcommittee performance. Specific aspects covered within the self-evaluation process include individual skills and expertise, Regional Board effectiveness and the appropriateness of the Chair and the Principal within their role.

The Annual Self Evaluation was presented to the Regional Board during the October 2026 meeting. A total of 12 questionnaires were returned, giving a 71% response rate. Responses were scored on a scale of one to six, with one representing Low/Disagree and six High/Agree. Overall, results improved on the previous year, with 77% of responses at level six compared to 57% previously, and no responses at level three or below, compared to 3% the previous year. Student Engagement scored highest, with 89% of responses at level six. The most level four responses, the lowest score awarded, were in Remuneration, Sustainability, Staff Governance and Partnership Working, with four each.

The Regional Board Self Evaluation feeds directly into developing the Regional Board Development and Enhancement Plan where training needs are identified for the next academic year.

5.1.5 Relationships and Collaboration

Partnership Working

A key component of the College's Vision for 2030 is enhancing existing partnerships and developing new external relationships to grow the curriculum offer and improve the student experience. The Vision is supported by the College's Skills and Enterprise Strategy outlining the College's long-standing commitment to delivering high-quality learning experiences while also supporting businesses to equip learners with the skills, knowledge, and behaviours they need to succeed. The Strategy sets a clear direction to effectively achieve the College's strategic ambitions.

In the current financial context of budget pressures on public funding, the College is exploring the feasibility of philanthropic activity and private funding to expand the volume of opportunities for learners and additional resources to enhance the learning experience and increase student support.

5.2 Regional Board of Governors Self Evaluation

5.2.1 Individual Regional Board of Governors Members

As noted within **Section 5.1.4**, the College undertook its performance review for 2025/26 in October 2026 with the outcomes of the evaluation shaping the College's annual training programme. We identified no areas for improvement within the process and have raised a good practice point. See **Section 4** for further information.

5.2.2 The Collective Regional Board of Governors

As identified within **Section 5.1.4**, the Regional Board will collectively review their effectiveness in addition to individual assessments. No further improvements were identified.

5.3 Regional Board of Governors Member Participation in Strategic decisions

The Regional Board of Governors papers, subsequent minutes and discussions observed during this review indicates that Regional Board Members all appear to participate in decision making at the College. We identified no areas for improvement surrounding Regional Board Member involvement and as a result we have identified an area of good practice. See **Section 4** for further information.

Section 6 Recommendations, Client Comments & Action Plan

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
1.	Regional Board meetings are primarily held in person; however, some attendees join remotely where in-person attendance is not feasible. During our review, we identified scope to strengthen the engagement and inclusion of attendees joining remotely. In particular, opportunities were noted to support more consistent participation by remote members, including more active invitation to contribute during discussions. In addition, during the December 2025 meeting, a late paper was distributed to Regional Board members attending in person but was not provided to those attending remotely.	The Chair should ensure that attendees joining remotely are actively engaged throughout Regional Board meetings, including through routine invitations to contribute during agenda discussions. Where appropriate and practicable, members attending remotely should also be encouraged to enable cameras to support visibility, participation, and meeting cohesion. In addition, where late papers are issued during meetings, these should be made available to all attendees, including those joining remotely.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	The Chair accepts the recommendation regarding more active engagement with Board members attending online. The Chair and Governance Professional will more actively monitor this during Board meetings with the Governance Professional prompting the Chair as required. At the start of the new academic session in August 2026, all Board members will be reminded of the protocols regarding in person and remote attendance and the "on screen etiquette" expected of those attending remotely.	 Chair/Governance Professional Governance Professional	 Ongoing Aug 2026

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
2	The College should ensure that its programme of work distributes papers to the Regional Board evenly across meetings. During our review, we assessed the College Regional Board packs for the period October 2025 to March 2026. Our analysis identified that the volume of information reported at the December 2025 meeting was 187% higher than the average volume reported at the October 2025 and March 2026 meetings. It should be noted that a significant proportion of this material related to the statutory account's external auditor report.	The College should consider how reports can be distributed more evenly throughout the year to support effective decision-making and reduce the risk of information overload.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	Accepted – where possible amendments will be made to ensure agendas are more balanced, however, timing of a number of papers, and in particular some of those for decision are dependent on deadlines from external bodies. Generally, most meetings are full and busy. An option which will be put to Board is to make the Board Meetings longer. We will also consider if more discussion and scrutiny of items can be delegated to Committees.	Chairs/Governance Professional Chair/Governance Professional Chair/Committee Chairs/Governance Professional	Ongoing First available opportunity at Board. October meeting? Agenda planning meetings.

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
3	Forward-looking reports are important because they support effective governance by enabling the Regional Board to anticipate risks, consider opportunities, and make informed strategic decisions about future priorities and performance. During our review, we analysed the number of reports presented to the Regional Board during the period October 2025 to March 2026 that were forward-looking. Our analysis identified that, on average, 30% of papers presented were forward-looking, whereas the College should aim for more than 50% of reports to have a forward-looking focus.	The College should consider increasing the number of forward-looking reports presented to the Regional Board. This should include consideration of whether forward-looking elements can be incorporated into historical data reports and reports presented for information.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	Efforts have been made over the past 2-3 years to ensure that the business of the Board is forward looking. The feedback that there is still work to be done on this is helpful and will be reflected in our future practice. The Chair, Principal and Governance Professional will monitor all Board papers going forward with the aim of achieving the optimal balance [50:50] between forward looking papers and those where the Board gets assurance or reassurance from the successful completion of past activities/actions.	Chair/ Principal/ Governance Professional	Ongoing

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
4	It is important that the College Chair ensures discussions remain relevant to agenda items in order to support effective decision-making and collaboration. During our review and attendance at Regional Board and Subcommittee meetings, we identified one occasion on which discussion moved away from the agenda items, specifically in relation to the feasibility of private funding.	The College should ensure that discussions remain relevant and focused on agenda items, with any additional matters being raised under the *Any Other Business* section of the agenda.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	This action was the subject of a helpful informal discussion prior to the submission of this report. The ethos of the College Board is to encourage discussion and participation, and if, on occasion, discussion is perceived to veer 'off topic' this is generally because the discussion is still relevant, interesting and informative. There will be no immediate change in Board practice in response to this recommendation. The Chair will however consult with the Principal, Governance Professional and Sub Committee Chairs at the end of each meeting to test the relevance of the discussion under each Board agenda item.	Chair	Ongoing

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
5	The College uses the College Development Network to provide Regional Board member training outwith scheduled sessions. Responsibility for completing training rests with each Regional Board member, with the Governance Professional identifying the required courses and Regional Board members notifying the Governance Professional once training has been completed. Following discussions with the Governance Professional, it was identified that completion of training varied across Regional Board members.	We recommend that the College formalise its approach to training. It may also be beneficial to invest in a system that allows for more effective monitoring of training completion.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	CDN do not currently have the capability of collating the information about who completed training but can tell who has looked at/started the training. The College operates on the premise of trusting Board members to undertake the training they need or self-certifying that they do not need to undertake any training currently. If they do undertake training, we trust and expect them to advise the Governance Professional accordingly. The Chair does however recognise that this methodology could benefit from more rigour. Going forward the Chair will specifically ask each Board member at their annual review what training they	Chair	Ongoing

				have undertaken in the past 12 months, even it was not an agreed action at their last annual review. Furthermore, where there is a shared training need identified between Board members the College will facilitate a training session prior to the start of a Board meeting and will extend the duration of the Board meeting to accommodate this training.		

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
6	The College has a robust Code of Conduct for Regional Board members that clearly outlines expected standards of conduct, responsibilities, and the principles with which Regional Board members are expected to comply. During our review, we identified that the Code of Conduct has not been formally reviewed since 2022, whereas good practice would suggest that a high-level review should take place annually and a full review every three years.	We recommend that the College review its Code of Conduct and ensure that it is thereafter reviewed on a cyclical basis in line with this recommendation.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	Accepted. The exemplar Code of Conduct was circulated to Colleges in 2022 and, at the time, if a college chose to deviate from that they were required to inform Scottish Government of their intention to deviate away from it and in what manner. It is accepted that new Board Members may bring a new perspective to the current Code and it will be discussed at the October 2026 Board Meeting.	Board Secretary	October 2026 Board Meeting.

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
7	The College's Regional Board receives reports designated as Items for Decision, Items for Discussion, and Items for Information. During our review, we assessed all management reports provided to the Regional Board for the period October 2025 to March 2026. Our analysis identified that some reports may have been more appropriately designated as Items for Information rather than Items for Discussion. One example was the reflective report presented in relation to the Regional Board Development Day.	The College should consider which reports require discussion and which should be noted for information. This may help to alleviate reporting fatigue during busy meetings.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	The Board previously adopted the recommended practice of having items for decision, discussion and information, in that agenda order. Prior evaluations and feedback from Board members indicated that items for discussion often became time pressed later in the meeting. Our current protocol is to sequence agenda items in our analysis of their order of importance and what merits the most attention from Board members. This practice was agreed to be piloted for one year and will be reviewed in October 2026.	Chair/Board Secretary	Ongoing

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
8	The increased use of graphics and dashboard reporting would improve the accessibility and clarity of Regional Board papers, reduce reliance on narrative, highlight key trends and exceptions more effectively, and better support strategic discussion and scrutiny by Regional Board members. During our review of the Regional Board papers for the period October 2025 to March 2026, we noted that a significant number of papers were heavily narrative in nature.	The College should consider incorporating more graphics and dashboard reporting within Regional Board reports to improve accessibility, support information absorption, and enhance discussion.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	Accepted. Authors of papers will be encouraged to diversify the presentation of their papers to include more graphics and/or dashboard reporting where possible.	Chair/Board Secretary	Ongoing

	Finding	Recommendation	Grading	Client Comments	Agreed Actions & Responsibility	Timeline
9	The College should ensure that members of each Regional Board sign the Code of Conduct on an annual basis. During our review, we found that members do not sign the Code of Conduct annually, with the Code currently being provided to all members at sign-up as part of the induction process.	We recommend that the College ensure that Regional Board members are issued with the Code of Conduct on an annual basis and that signed copies are returned to the College in line with good practice.	**Priority 3 (Low)**	Going forward Board members will be asked to formally update in writing their current Register of Interests or to confirm there is no changes to their current Register of Interests (and at the same time) confirm they have read and agree to the Board's Code of Conduct	Governance Professional	Aug/Sept 2026

Section 6.1 Observations

The following is a list of observations from our review	
1.	We were able to confirm that, overall, the management reports included within the Regional Board packs were presented in a consistent manner. It should be noted, however, that there were a small number of outliers which included information that would have been more appropriately presented as an appendix to the main narrative of the report. To support consistent reporting, the College should ensure that policies, procedures, external reports, strategies, and action plans are included as appendices to the cover report where appropriate. Some of these papers may have come from the Student Association and in such a case the Board is content that they present the papers in a manner they find works for them. For all other papers being prepared by the Executive Team or members of the Senior Leadership Team, they will be reminded of the need to adhere to the agreed format for writing Board reports.
2.	Good practice suggests that items for decision should be taken earlier in the agenda to reduce the risk of meeting fatigue affecting areas where Regional Board decisions are required. At present, both items for discussion and items for decision are considered throughout the Regional Board agenda rather than in a designated sequence. Following discussions with the Chair and the Governance Professional, it was noted that previous meetings had adopted a format in which Items for Decision were taken first, followed by Items for Discussion, as evidenced in the October 2025 Regional Board meeting. However, a conscious decision was later made to reorder the agenda so that items requiring the greatest level of discussion, whether for decision or discussion, were considered earlier, while items requiring less discussion were scheduled later, for example where matters had already been scrutinised by a Subcommittee or related to a general policy or document update. We understand the rationale for this change in agenda format and consider that it has supported effective discussion and decision-making during meetings. This section helpfully reflects our informal conversation prior to the completion of this report and is also confirmed in the comments for action number 7 in the points for action section outlined above.

The following is a list of observations from our review	
3.	The College has a robust Scheme of Delegation that is aligned with the Code of Good Governance and clearly sets out the delegated responsibilities of the Regional Board, Subcommittees, Chair of the Regional Board, Principal, and Governance Professional. It should be noted that the Scheme of Delegation was due for review in March 2026. The Scheme of Delegation is due to be presented to the next Regional Board meeting for approval. Chair and Board Secretary have agreed that June Board is a full and busy meeting, and in order to spread items out across the year more this will be discussed at October Board.

Section 7 Annexe's

Annex i)

Regional Board of Governors Interviewee List

Interviewee & Role	Method	Location
Ray McCowan – Chair of the Regional Board	1-2-1	MS Teams
Ingrid Earp – Governance Professional to the Regional Board	1-2-1	MS Teams
Pete Smith – Principal	1-2-1	MS Teams
Ugo Mbaezue – Regional Board Member and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee	1-2-1	MS Teams
Dave Roberts – Vice Chair of the Regional Board and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee	1-2-1	MS Teams
Paul Cathrow – Regional Board Member and Chair of the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee	1-2-1	MS Teams

Annex ii) Questionnaire Summary

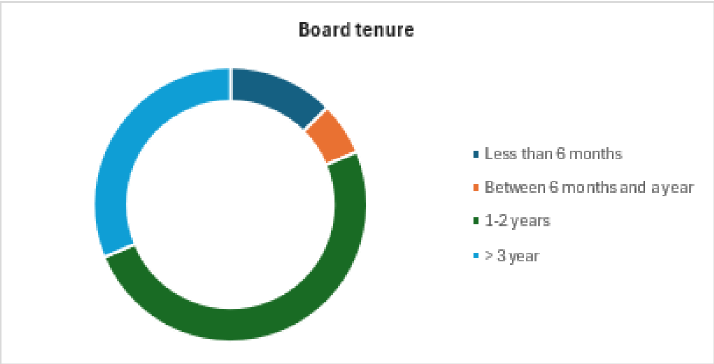
High level overview:

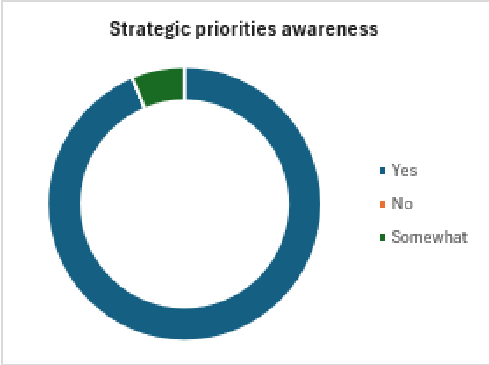
Borders College Regional Board Survey

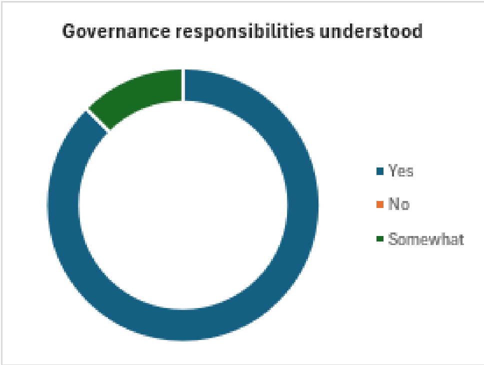
We surveyed the Borders College Regional Board members as part of our Board Effectiveness review to gather their feedback.

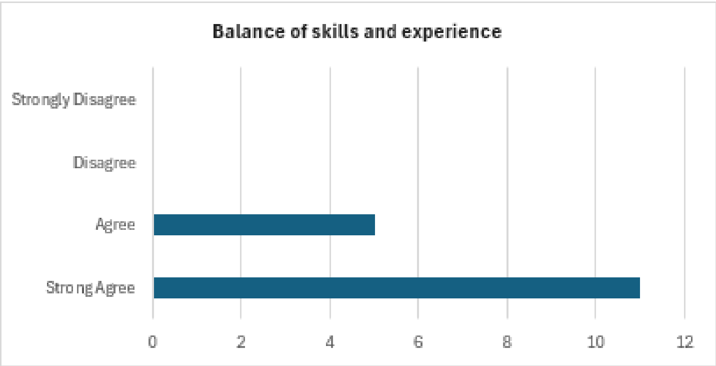
Responses	Strategic awareness	Role knowledge	Chair support	Training avg.
16	94%	100%	100%	8.5

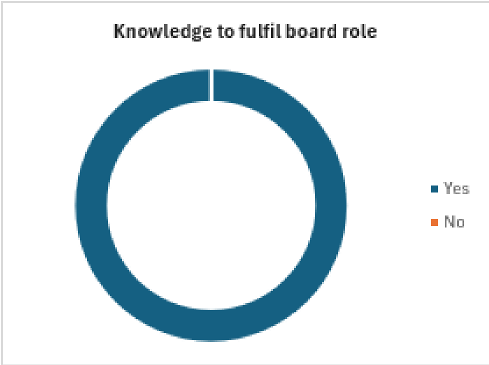
1) Governance, role and capability

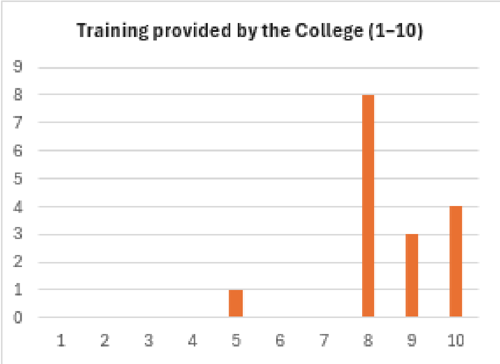




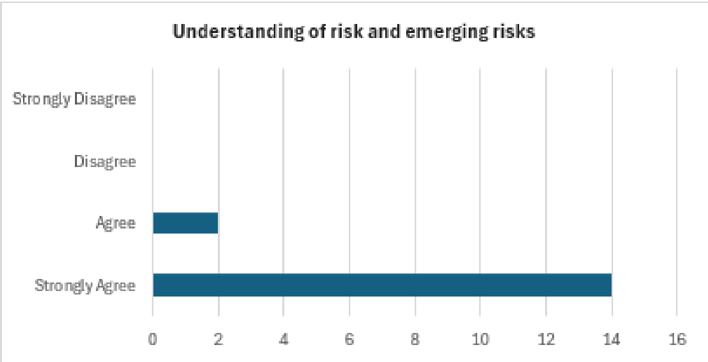


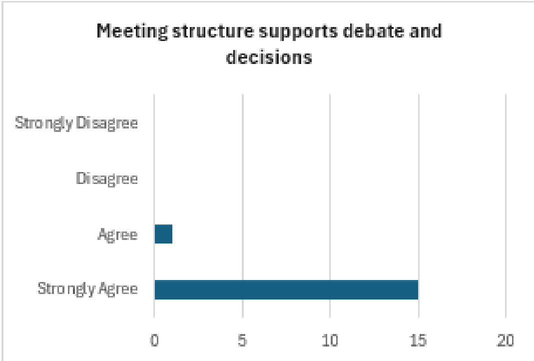


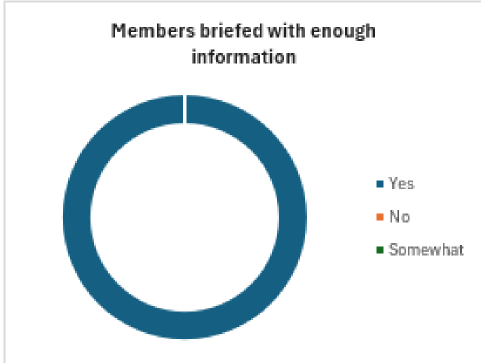


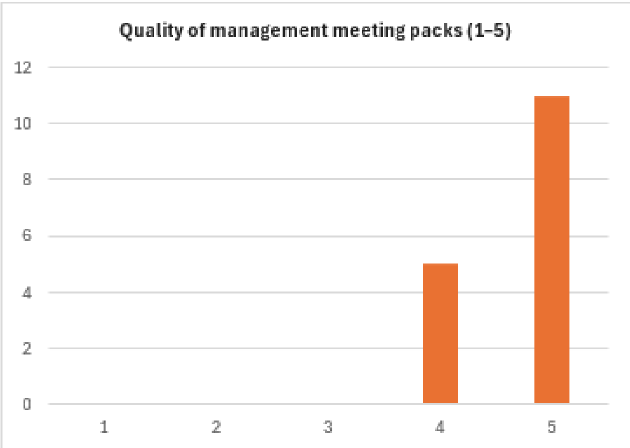


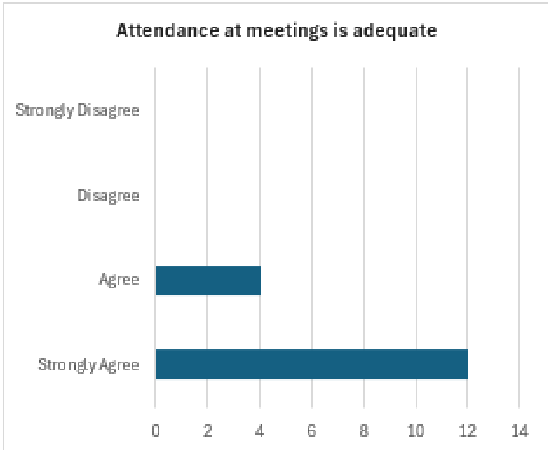
2) Meetings, information and attendance

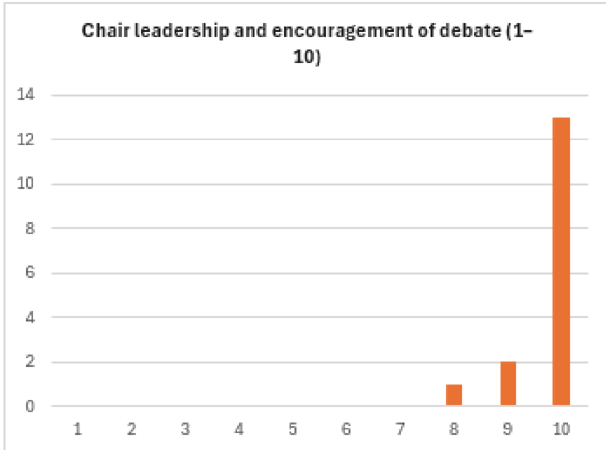




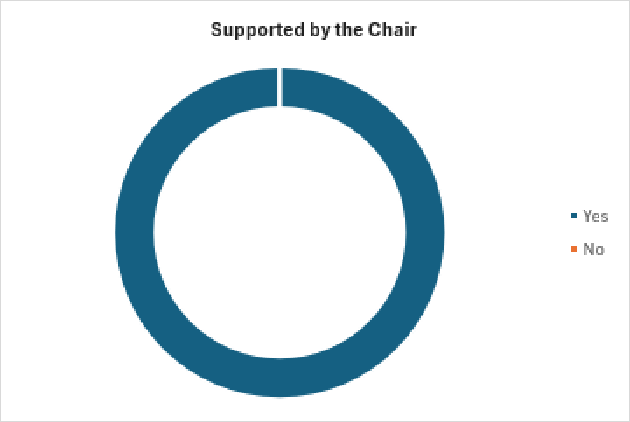


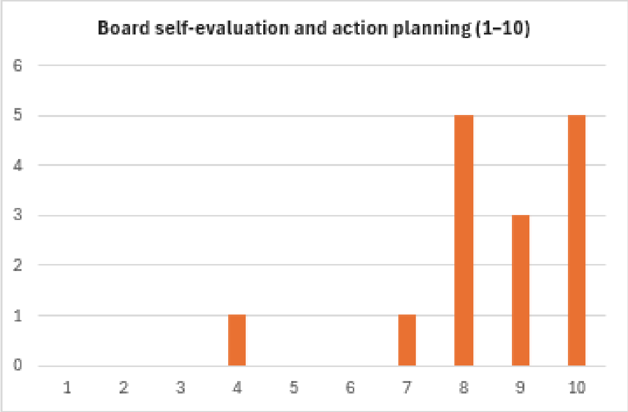


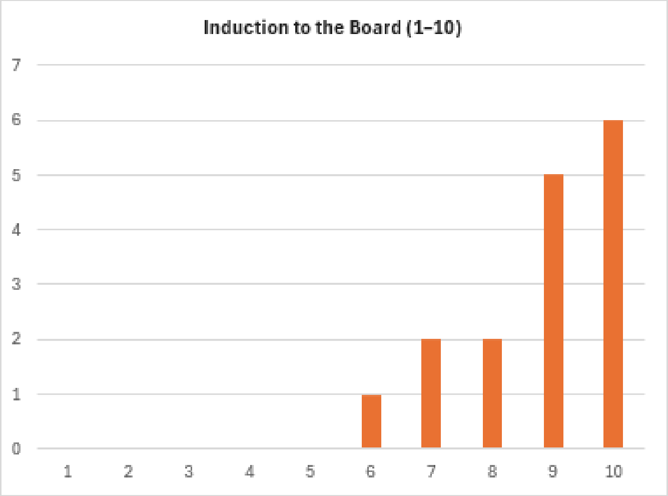




3) Chair, evaluation and induction







Annex iii)

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 Regional Board and addressed by the College.
2 (Medium)	Significant issue or weakness/improvement which should be addressed by the College as soon as possible.
3 (Low)	Minor issue or weakness/improvement reported where the College may wish to consider our recommendation.