

South Lanarkshire College

Self-Evaluation Report 2024

## **Self-Evaluation Review**

In April 2024, South Lanarkshire College embarked on a self-evaluation exercise on its effectiveness as required by Section D24 of the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges. The format was in four parts: -

1. One to one session with the new Chairing Member.
2. An evaluation of both Chairing Members who had held office during the relevant period
3. A more formal evaluation conducted by the Governance Professional in post at that time by reference to the Code of Good Governance
4. A private dialogue between the Senior Independent Member and Board Members without the Chair, the Principal or the Governance Professional being present.

### **1. Chair's One-to-one Sessions**

The 1:1 sessions with the Chair commenced in April 2024. By the end of October 2024, 11 members of the Board had participated in their 1:1. The missing sessions are scheduled to take place in November 2024. The reasons for the missing sessions are due to work commitments of board members (2) and due to two new student representatives being appointed after the exercise was conducted.

The following feedback has been summarised from discussions and is not attributable to any individual member.

### **Areas of Strength:**

- Overall positive experience of board members, with effective committee structures and high-quality papers.
- Paul Hutchison was noted as a strong chair, and the new chair's updates have been well-received.
- Board members appreciate the focus on governance improvement, with training and development days viewed as important initiatives.
- The governance improvement plan has been well-executed, and members feel personal growth in their roles.
- Members express satisfaction with the college's direction, particularly its progress in transformational strategy and governance training.
- Entrepreneurial activities and innovation are seen as valuable areas of future growth.
- Efforts to increase diversity and encourage board engagement are acknowledged as positive steps.

## **Areas for Improvement: An evaluation**

- Historical issues have slowed the board's focus on strategic development. There is a desire to prioritise future-oriented strategic discussions.
- Legal matters, including the employment tribunal, have been a source of stress for the board and staff.
- Relationships between board members and staff, as well as staff engagement, require attention and improvement.
- Board members need more support and opportunities to engage productively, particularly at college events and in terms of fostering collaboration.
- There is a perceived need for greater support to student association members, ensuring they are well-prepared for their board roles.
- Environmental sustainability has been identified as an area requiring greater focus, alongside financial sustainability, student satisfaction, and growth.
- The articulation and understanding of risk and risk appetite need further development.

## **Future Ambitions:**

- The board aims to increase its focus on financial sustainability, student satisfaction, and innovation and growth.
- Members are keen to work through College Development Network training and establish a staff-board member buddy program.
- There is a desire to be more agile in decision-making, push boundaries, and explore new opportunities for growth and transformation.
- A focus on improving diversity on the board beyond gender is highlighted as a priority.
- The board is looking to enhance its focus on strategy, particularly transformational strategy, and improve articulation of risk to align with its evolving risk appetite.

## **2. Chair's Evaluation**

In the relevant period there have been two Chairing members, at the time of the evaluation there were 17 Board members. Both chairing members abstained from making a return as did the Senior Independent member who is responsible for vetting the returns. One of the two new Trade Union Members also abstained having only been recently appointed and did not feel qualified to venture an opinion. Appendix 1 contains a note of the questions asked of members.

**Summary:** The overall feedback on both Chair's effectiveness was positive with no questions receiving a negative response. The majority of the responses were "1"s and "2"s (strongly agree/agree) with a smattering of "3"s. Board members believed that they are encouraged to participate in discussion and their views are considered with most members scoring 'Positive'. Similarly, Board members were happy with the way decisions are taken.

### **3. Survey facilitated by the Governance Professional**

Board members are required to make a return direct to the Governance Professional by way of a standard graded format.

A copy of that graded format, as analysed independently by the Governance Professional is attached as Appendix B.

The membership of the Board has changed since the last return and so self-perception has changed with the current Board seeking to be much more visible to staff and students

### **4. Senior Independent Member**

The Senior Independent Member has commented that the opinions in the Chair's evaluation squared with the feedback she had received from members.

## Appendix 1

Key Questions	Please indicate your view by circling the relevant number					
Members are asked to comment on: The Chair and his/her leadership	Positive				Negative	Prefer not to comment
Are members encouraged to participate in discussion and are their views taken into account?	1	2	3	4	5	X
Are members happy with the way decisions are taken?	1	2	3	4	5	X
Is the Board forward-looking/visionary?	1	2	3	4	5	X
How well do you feel the Board addresses strategic challenges facing the college?	1	2	3	4	5	X
Is information advised to the Board effectively?	1	2	3	4	5	X

1. What do you think has been the most significant contribution of the Chair?
2. What do you feel was the least effective contribution of the Chair and how might that contribution have been improved?

## Appendix 2

### South Lanarkshire College Self-Evaluation 2024

Preliminary Questions	Responses
You are required to be fully conversant with the Code of Good Governance but are there any aspects where you would appreciate clarification	All were conversant and recent starts commented favourably on Induction
Are the Board Papers issued timeously issued and in an accessible format or are there areas which could be improved.	All replies positive
Is there any additional support which the College can provide help you discharge your board role	All replies satisfied and committee chairs commented favourably on Chairs Training
Are equalities issues adequately identified and addressed	YES
Are there any other comments, favourable or otherwise , which you would like brought to attention of Management or the Governance professional	No adverse comments and most commented favourably on the support of staff given to the Board

Note that one board member had resigned before the evaluation form was distributed

Key Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Members are asked to comment on:	(Strongly Agree)				(Strongly Disagree)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair and his/her leadership               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are members encouraged to participate in discussion and are their views taken into account?</li> <li>Are members happy with the way decisions are taken?</li> <li>Is the Board forward looking/visionary?</li> <li>How well do you feel the Board addresses strategic challenges facing the college?</li> <li>Is information advised to the Board effectively?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Note that as there were two Chairs during the relevant period and experiences varied a separate exercise was carried out for each chair and the responses are summarised separately elsewhere in this report				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the Board adequately addressing the question of risk and risk appetite?</li> </ul>	The scores were evenly divided between 1 and 2 but there was a minority view that the risk appetite had not been fully explored				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the Board have the required range of skills to ensure it performs effectively?</li> </ul>	This was fairly evenly split between 2 and 3 . There were felt however to be weaknesses in some areas such as Finance and HR which some members would like to see addressed in the next recruitment round				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How effectively does the Board engage with stakeholders and community partners?</li> </ul>	Fairly evenly split between 2 and 3 – areas for improvement were seen as being engagement with staff and students. A criticism was that the stakeholders letter had been discontinued – this has since been rectified and had been the result of understaffing in the marketing department.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do members feel they have sufficient knowledge to contribute meaningfully?</li> </ul>	This was universally scored as 1				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a personal development/mentoring requirement?</li> </ul>	This was primarily scored as 1 but a few members had struggled with access to the Portal albeit IT back up had been provided				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do members feel that the mechanisms for ensuring good governance are effective?</li> </ul>	Universally scored as 1.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the Board have adequate opportunity for meeting and communication with staff and students?</li> </ul>	There was a broad spread of opinion here and although the average was 3 there was a clear concern				

	that there was insufficient opportunity afforded for meeting students
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<b>What have we done well over the last 12 months?</b>	<p>Comment:</p> <p>Governance was felt to be a strength and the management responses to challenge were the subject of favourable comment</p>
<b>Development I would like to see over the next year:</b>	<p>Comment:</p> <p>The training session had identified a clear need to develop entrepreneurial activity.</p> <p>Continued progress with the response to financial challenges would be paramount</p>



## Check List of Key Points in Code of Good Governance

***Tick the box which most accurately reflects your own Training Needs***

***OR insert a key word or phrase which captures your level of knowledge***

Topic	Secure in my understanding	No major training need	A refresher would be helpful	Some training would be helpful	Further Training required
Conduct in Public Life & Nolan Principles	All secure				
Vision & Strategy in a Regional context	All secure				
Performance Measurement	All secure				
Corporate Social Responsibility	All secure				
Student Engagement & Partnership	All secure				
Relevant / High Quality Learning	All secure				
Quality Monitoring & Oversight	All secure				
Accountability & Delegation	All secure				
Risk Management & Risk Appetite	All secure				
Financial/Institutional Sustainability	All secure				
Staff Governance Standard	All secure				
The role of the Chairing Member	All secure				
Senior Independent Member role	All secure				
Members as Charity Trustees	All secure				
The Principal / Chief Executive role	All secure				
The Governance Professional role	All secure				

Appointment Induction & Training	All secure				
Board Evaluation & Assessment	All secure				
Partnership & Collaboration	All secure				

***Please bear in mind:***

- 1. Not every Bord Member can be expert in every area of governance***
- 2. If you are a new or relatively new member you may have missed a key training session***
- 3. Individual & tailored training can always be made available***
- 4. Your CPD record is also an essential identifier of experience***

***The Governance Professional needs all of this data for audit purposes and your input truly is essential***

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