**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

**Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 5.00pm in Room A-IS-103 Arbroath Campus and Microsoft Teams**

***Draft confirmed by Chair***

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| **PRESENT:** | Laurie O’Donnell (Chair) | Margo Williamson |
|  | Derek Smith | Simon Hewitt |
|  | Adele Lawrence | Neil Lowden |
|  | Brian Lawrie | Robert Young |
|  | Ged Bell | Kara Ramsay |
|  | Carri Cusick | Kelly McIntosh |
|  | Matthew Beattie | Stephen Oakley |
|  | Richard Gordon |  |

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| **IN ATTENDANCE:** | Julie Grace (Vice Principal Curriculum and Partnerships) |
|  | Steve Taylor (Vice Principal Support Services and Operations) |
|  | Nicky Anderson (Director of Finance) |
|  | Penny Muir (Board Administrator) |

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|  | **WELCOME**  L O’Donnell welcomed everyone to the Board of Management Meeting and acknowledged that this would be M Williamson’s and D Fordyce’s final Board meeting. |
|  | **APOLOGIES**  Apologies were received from Donald Mackenzie, Donna Fordyce, Helen Honeyman, and Jackie Buchanan. |
|  | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR CONNECTION**  There were no declarations of interest or connection. |
|  | **MINUTE OF LAST MEETING**  The minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 13 December 2024 was approved as an accurate record. |
|  | **MATTERS ARISING**  All matters arising had been progressed, with one scheduled for June 2025. The DASA action for the ‘Freaky Friday’ event remains to be organised and would be confirmed as soon as practicable. |
|  | **NATIONAL ACTIVITY UPDATE**  L O’Donnell provided a verbal update, highlighting that public finances remain a significant challenge.  It was noted that Dundee University is facing financial difficulties, with a £35 million funding gap. As a result, over 600 staff members-equating to c20% of the workforce-have been identified for potential job cuts. It was anticipated that this will have implications for the courses on offer in the city, the broader regional economy and scrutiny of university and college finances. S Hewitt stated that discussions are ongoing with educational leaders to ensure that provisions remain in place within the city rather than being lost.  With Scottish elections taking place next year, it was noted that there was a potential risk of growing delay in decision-making the closer it gets to the election. This could present difficulties for the College infrastructure project.  It was noted that the Colleges Scotland structure was under review to become more streamlined and better equipped to navigate political dynamics and advocate for the role of college’s role in society.  The potential impact of the issues at Dundee University on future recruitment was discussed. B Lawrie also highlighted the importance of precise budget-setting, stressing the need to avoid deficits by building the budget on a realistic starting position and enhancing robust financial monitoring. N Anderson confirmed that work was continuing to improve and enhance the quality of budget-setting and monitoring within a challenging financial environment.  S Oakley queried whether discussions around future articulation opportunities being maintained were happening and S Hewitt confirmed that discussions are taking place in this regard.  The national update and potential impacts for D&A were noted. |
|  | **INFRASTRUCTURE VISION UPDATE**  S Hewitt provided an update, noting that significant progress has been made since the meeting in December 2024.  Discussions with private investors in January had resulted in two in principle offers to fund the project, with a willingness to collaborate with the Scottish Government around the funding model that would be needed. Further discussions are required to facilitate access to this funding. The focus has shifted from making the initial case for the project to refining the financial model and ensuring its viability.  Work will progress to the Outline Business Case (OBC) development stage through the Scape framework with a mini-tender exercise progressing over the next few weeks. The OBC development process is estimated to take between three to six months, at which point a decision will be made on whether to proceed to the Full Business Case (FBC).  Given that no capital funding is available, the project must be financed through revenue. This presents a challenge, requiring creative solutions to address financial constraints and other associated issues.  S Oakley enquired whether there was an existing financial model, either within Scotland or internationally. S Hewitt referenced the Mutual Investment Model used in Wales, which has been approved in Scotland since 2019 but not used. Investigations into this approach are ongoing, but the key challenge remains how the investment is accounted for and funded over a number of years.  R Young asked about the OBC work being conducted. S Hewitt confirmed that the OBC will be to RIBA Stage 2, with a focus on additional information to underpin the next stages for the Green Skills hub. R Young offered his support, noting that it was important that the right expertise is in place to inform developments and mitigate risk.  S Hewitt welcomed this offer and noted that specialist support was being provided and that the project team is working on a phased approach to mitigate risks by breaking it down into smaller, manageable components.  L O’Donnell emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum and noted that there would be a need to create a governance board for the project. S Hewitt responded that this was being considered and transition to the project board would depend on timelines for funding availability.  L O’Donnell thanked S Hewitt for the update. |
|  | **STRATEGIC ITEMS**   * 1. **2030 Strategy Development Update**   S Hewitt provided an update on ongoing discussions. In February, the draft was shared with staff, generating a wide range of feedback from over 200 staff. The draft would now be shared for engagement with students, with the final version to be completed by June 2025.  S Hewitt will continue to progress this work and it was noted that staff engagement has been positive, and the strategy well-received. There was appreciation for the fact that observations and comments had been reflected in the document, contributing to an exciting and well-developed strategy.  L O’Donnell thanked S Hewitt for his contribution.   * 1. **Strategic Projects Update**   J Grace presented the paper for noting, confirming that the Tay Cities Deal projects remain on track and are achieving their targets.  J Grace reported that the Sustainable Construction Skills Project has been approved at the initial stage and the submission will proceed to the next stage of governance.  Regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Multi-Year and Decarbonisation Funds are set to conclude in March 2025. These initiatives have exceeded their targets and have been highly beneficial to both the College. Further bids have been submitted for additional business support plans, with positive feedback received.  L O’Donnell commended J Grace and the team on their progress and achievements. |
|  | **STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION REPORT**  K Ramsay presented the Student’s Association Report stating that the election season has begun, leading to increased interest. Class representatives are actively encouraging nominations for staff across various categories. Additionally, "Feedback Friday" is being developed, with different focus areas planned for each month.  A Lawrence provided an update on student engagement activities, noting that the Breakfast Club continues to be well attended three days a week. The Christmas Box Appeal was a great success, and the Thrive event featured a showcase of everything D&A has to offer.  The Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme, a four-year initiative aimed at enhancing activities within a chosen topic, has already successfully completed three events.  Efforts are ongoing with the "Make It Happen" fund, working alongside Geoff Leask to empower young people from D&A to use their voices within their local communities.  Additionally, the Peer Listening Exchange Programme has been introduced to develop essential listening and communication skills whilst also fostering a sense of community. Plans are also in place for the "Freaky Friday - Board of Management Edition" event.  Arrangements around the consideration of student feedback were discussed and J Grace explained that the three curriculum directors engage directly with students and work closely with the Students' Association through monthly meetings. While the feedback process is informal, actions are taken within the year, leading to rapid and visible improvements. Consideration is being given to ways of promoting these changes more effectively.  S Oakley further questioned how feedback is communicated back to those who provided it. A Lawrence noted that this had been recently discussed, with ideas such as using TikTok to make the process more engaging and ensuring that students are informed of the actions taken in response to their input.  L O’Donnell acknowledged the efforts being made and expressed appreciation for the work being done. |
|  | **PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**  S Hewitt presented the paper for noting.  He stated The Traditional Skills event was successfully held for the second consecutive year, with attendance from the Angus Provost and the Minister. Their presence was well received, and the event was noted as a positive experience.  Additionally, the Lego League event was highly successful, with outstanding energy and enthusiasm from the participating school children. Shona Robison was also on campus that day, and it was encouraging to see her engagement.  S Hewitt highlighted several awards the College has won since the last meeting, recognising these as significant achievements.  L O’Donnell commended the efforts of all involved, acknowledging the substantial work put into the report and congratulating the team on their success. |
|  | **NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE**  S Taylor reported that the information covered in this report is more positive than recently. The settlements for staff has facilitated discussions and contributed to progress in this area.  Lessons learned are being reviewed, and work has been planned to clarify expectations and behaviours regarding national bargaining.  Discussions are ongoing regarding the national COVID circular but it is hoped that resolution can be achieved on this nationally.  S Taylor also highlighted progress in national bargaining, stating the support staff pay demand has been submitted and discussions on this were progressing.  He further noted the ongoing developments at a national level, particularly regarding changes within the Unison FE branch. Despite these national issues, local relationships remain positive, with a strong focus on collaboration to support both students and staff within the college.  S Taylor noted that nationally several Unison representatives have resigned and joined GMB. A recognition agreement is already in place at D&A with GMB, and it was noted that this change will not have a significant impact, as the College will continue to work positively with both unions at the local level.  L O’Donnell acknowledged the considerable work involved and thanked everyone for their efforts. |
|  | **FINANCE ITEMS**   * 1. **Financial Sustainability**   S Hewitt stated that financial stability continues to be a core priority, with the College in a better position than before. Looking ahead, S Hewitt noted a focus on arrangements and exploring opportunities to make efficiencies, particularly in non-core activities.  S Hewitt stated that there were uncertainties regarding the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) changes to the allocation of funding. There is potential for a reduction in funding, with estimates indicating a shift from a 5.6% reduction to a 3% increase but the impact on D&A was as yet unknown.  S Hewitt explained that the College was expecting to receive 60% of the increase in National Insurance costs but that it looked likely that this would only be c48%. Ongoing national discussions around this were taking place.  The ongoing need for efficiencies and targeted savings was noted.  L O'Donnell asked if a reduction in funding is expected, to which S Hewitt responded that this was not fully known yet, but discussions nationally were ongoing.  The update was noted.   * 1. **GTL Review**   The paper on future options for the operation of the Theatre was discussed in detail and approved.  Given the nature of the paper and input around staffing it was agreed that this item would be restricted from publication.   * 1. **Forvis Mazars Annual Audit Report**   It was noted that the Audit Report had been circulated and discussed in previous meetings. N Anderson highlighted the Annual Audit report was now finalised and signed off by auditors.  N Anderson highlighted arrangements had been progressed for a wash up and planning meeting for the 2024/25 audit arrangements.  The annual report was noted.   * 1. **Financial Statements for the year ended 31July 2024**   It was noted that the Financial Statements for 2023/2024 had been circulated and discussed in previous meetings. N Anderson highlighted the Annual Accounts had been finalised and signed off by the Chair and Principal for submission to SFC and Audit Scotland.   * 1. **Finance & Property Committee Management Accounts (for information only)**   The monitoring report was noted. |
|  | **TERTIARY SECTOR QUALITY ARRANGEMENTS**  S Taylor summarised the paper that had been considered in detail at the Learning, Teaching, Quality Committee and was presented to the Board for information and guidance on how the sector quality arrangements are changing.  Over the past two years, there has been a shift away from Education Scotland, with the introduction of a single approach covering both colleges and universities overseen by Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland) (QAA).  The paper outlines the details of the process, noting that despite significant changes, the focus remains on the quality of learning, teaching, services, and outcomes, as well as the cultural and reflective aspects of evaluation.  In the paper presented in November 2024, several areas were unclear, and these remain unresolved as feedback is still awaited on the self-evaluation action plan.  Initial work with managers across the College is underway, focusing on how to build from existing quality systems to deliver the outcomes required by the framework. This work is ongoing, and it is hoped that many staff will not notice a significant difference as these changes are embedded rather than progressed as an add on.  S Taylor outlined the different steps of the process, including the self-evaluation action plan. The STEP programme has been positive, with engagement from both staff and students over a four-year period. This process includes reviewing topics and gathering input from students.  S Taylor highlighted the full quality review for D&A had been scheduled for AY 2029/2030.  The document was praised as an excellent and well-prepared piece of work. |
|  | **GOVERNANCE ITEMS**   * 1. **Strategic Risk Register**   S Taylor reported that the Risk Register has been reviewed at the Audit and Risk (A&R) meeting.  Two key points were highlighted: first, the audit of risk management and the work on risk appetite had necessitated the clarification and adjustment of some of the scoring. This adjustment, which was made at the last A&R meeting, resulted in changes to the scores but did not impact on the underlying risks or mitigations.  Secondly, an increase in risk around infrastructure has been identified, which has risen through regular reviews. A few issues regarding infrastructure were discussed, focusing on what is required and the potential impact.  B Lawrie enquired if "cautious" is equivalent to "moderate" in the scoring. S. Taylor confirmed that the contents of the risk management policy and Risk Appetite session feedback can be shared and agreed to share it with the Board. **S Taylor to progress.**  L O' Donnell acknowledged the improvement in the process and noted satisfaction with the scoring system.  L O' Donnell asked whether the risks captured in the register reflect the board-level risks for which the College is accountable for. S Taylor confirmed that the risk register is periodically reviewed through a structured risk universe approach, led by the Internal Auditors and approved through the Audit and Risk Committee, ensuring it aligns with the College's strategic plans.   * 1. **Membership Update**   S Taylor highlighted that two sets of interviews have been conducted, with the aim of identifying three new board members when vacancies arise. Potential candidates had been identified, with arrangements now progressing through the Scottish Government arrangements.  S Taylor also noted that, as per Scott Anderson's report presented at the last meeting, it was identified that board members would welcome information on the role of the Senior Independent Member (SIM) of the Board. This was included in the paper along with an outline of the role of SIM.  The paper was noted.   * 1. **Board and Committee Meeting Calander 2025/2026**   S Taylor highlighted the 2025/26 calendar to the Board for review. L O’Donnell noted the arrangement in place for the December meeting and for planned strategic development events.  S Taylor noted that meeting invites for 2025/26 would be issued shortly and asked that any potential issues around planned dates be highlighted as soon as practicable.   * 1. **Board Metrics**   S Taylor noted the usual range of Board metrics and highlighted the improved student survey outcomes from the autumn 2024 survey. These figures were welcomed.  M Williamson thanked the Student Association for their valuable feedback from students and for their hard work. |
|  | **MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**  The committee minutes were noted. |
|  | **CORRESPONDENCE**  The list of recent correspondence was noted. |
|  | **Date of Next Meeting**  Tuesday 17 June 2025 at 5.00pm in room K-TO-605, Kingsway Campus |

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| **Action Point Summary** |  |  |
| **Action** | **Responsibility** | **Date** |
| Risk Appetite session output and Risk Management Policy to be shared with Board members | S Taylor | 31 March 2025 |