

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT



**Tuesday 9 December in Room A-IS-113, Arbroath
Campus and Hybrid on Teams**

Draft confirmed by Chair.

PRESENT:

Laurie O'Donnell (Chair)	Robert Young
Jenna Lawrence	Simon Hewitt
Adele Lawrence	Helen Honeyman
Brian Lawrie	Carri Cussick
Ged Bell	Connor Pithie
Colin Smith	Richard Gordon
Steve Oakley	Kirstin Marsh
Brian Mooney	

IN ATTENDANCE: Julie Grace (Vice Principal Curriculum and Partnerships)
Steve Taylor (Vice Principal Support Services and Operations)
Nicky Anderson (Director of Finance)
Megan MacQueen (Executive Coordinator)

1. WELCOME

L O'Donnell welcomed everyone to the Board of Management Meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Neil Lowden, Kelly McIntosh, Donald MacKenzie, Derek Smith

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OR CONNECTION

There were no declarations of interest or connection.

4. MINUTE OF LAST MEETING – 30 September 2025

The minute of the Board of Management meeting held on 30 September 2025 was approved as an accurate record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

One item remains open regarding Board Secretary arrangements. All other matters arising were complete or on the agenda.

6. NATIONAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

L O'Donnell provided a verbal update highlighting that the profile of the sector has gone up in the recent months, with S Hewitt being involved in media interviews regarding the financial cuts affecting the College and sector. It was noted that the Scottish Government budget will be announced on 13th January 2026, the College are hoping it includes an announcement on infrastructure funding.

S Hewitt noted it's been positive to see a sector uniting together on the funding cuts and going to the Government together.

R Gordon noted that not all college's timelines have been the same and it was likely that there would be further savings plans and cuts across the sector.

C Cussick asked if any funding flexibilities had been given by the Scottish government. S Hewitt said that Principals have called for further guidance on how to use funding more flexibly but nothing had been confirmed yet. S Hewitt noted that more money isn't just enough, flexibility also needs to be given with the extra funding if there is any.

L O'Donnell noted that the sector is currently more hopeful of a positive outcome from the Scottish Government budget than it has been for some time. The next challenge may be around any conditions attached to additional funding and securing a model that puts us on the path to longer term financial sustainability. C Cussick noted well done to the team.

R Young asked if it is likely to see roll out of the budget strategy in the period of time between the budget in January and election in May. S Hewitt noted no, the budget will be for AY 2026/27

7. INFRASTRUCTURE VISION UPDATE

S Hewitt summarised the update paper and noted that a lot of work has been done over a short period of time. The infrastructure vision is progressing, and things are in place but they need a steer in January one way or another after the budget announcement.

B Mooney asked what the crucial decision is from the Scottish Government. S Hewitt added that there is a small chance of a revenue model and private investors are working towards a lease model but need the underpinning revenue every year from Scottish Government. Each model had different balance sheet treatments.

S Hewitt noted that the first phase, at Gardyne Campus, could be through a lease model with the costs then being rolled into a future MIM or similar model alongside the other phases.

L O'Donnell noted that it was hoped to bring more information to the board at the next strategy day and noted that this would be moved from January to March to support this and to allow more focussed discussion on the infrastructure project. This was welcomed and a revised date would be sought.

8. FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE ITEMS

8.1 Financial Sustainability

S Hewitt provided a summary of the current financial situation noting that the College have had to save 2.5 million this academic year. S Hewitt highlighted that the savings timeline is tight and that future actions would depend upon the budget announcements. Significant progress had been made against the savings target, with c £400k of savings remaining. VSS has now closed and discussions are still ongoing with certain departments, emphasising that there was still a lot of work to be done over coming weeks.

The majority of savings are staff costs and the College has managed to avoid compulsory redundancies and is working with unions to ensure this continues.

The budget announcement in January will be critical to see if the College will need to continue with further savings after Christmas. S Oakley asked about our ability to model future finances and N Anderson stated that she has a model that covers the next 11 years depending on the funding available for the College and credit / activity levels. The detailed budgets for the next two years were now being worked on.

R Young asked if the £400k savings is for next year. S Hewitt confirmed that this c£400k was what was needed to finalise the current savings plan for 2025/26. Any further savings would be additional.

S Hewitt stated that he was aware that a further seven Colleges were likely to announce savings plans in January. G Bell asked (should transformation funds become available) if there will be fairness for all colleges - as some colleges have already started savings plans. S Hewitt stated that this has been raised as a concern with the government. B Lawrie noted concern that the College have taken this action, and others haven't if they get a bail out.

N Anderson noted the deficit for 2025/26 is likely to remain at the £2.5million level as savings made would be offset by the one-off VSS costs.

G Bell noted his thanks to the whole team for getting through this process so far whilst remaining business as usual.

8.2 Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board

H Honeyman summarised the report and noted the College is in a good place compared to this time last year. No further actions or questions were asked by the Board.

This was noted and the report approved.

8.3 Audit Report & Annual Accounts

N Anderson highlighted the annual report from Forvis Mazars and noted it is relatively positive in comparison to last year and highlighted the key recommendations made.

H Honeyman noted that she had received an e-mail from Forvis Mazars after the joint meeting in respect of the focus of the Board on financial sustainability and the impact of this in terms of the 'going concern' statement in the accounts. It was noted that a robust reply had been provided summarising the input of the Board in these discussions and the regular updates received and monitoring in place. L O'Donnell noted that it was important that this was recorded in the meeting minutes.

R Young added thanks to N Anderson for her excellent communication to the Board and the progress made since last year.

The accounts and financial statements were approved for signature and submission by the Board of Management.

8.4 Management Accounts (for information only)

The report was noted.

9. STRATEGIC ITEMS

9.1 Board Development Day

B Mooney noted there is still work to do from the development workshop including finding ways for Board members to make better contributions using their skills and looking at skills profiling.

B Lawrie noted it was an engaging day and thanked B Mooney for facilitating the day. L O'Donnell proposed development sessions are included in a round of board meetings each quarter in addition to the Committees and Board meetings.

K Marsh noted that is a good idea and would like themes in advance so members can contribute. Possible themes include; upskilling, infrastructure, CDN, Risk and Compliance.

S Hewitt asked that the senior team also be included in these sessions and this was agreed and suitable dates would be scheduled. **M MacQueen to progress.**

It was agreed that L O'Donnell would pull together an action plan from the session.
L O'Donnell to progress.

Next session to be short and sharp and same format as board meetings – 5pm-7pm. S Hewitt asked if SLT can also join and the board approved.

9.2 Strategic Projects Update

J Grace reported that all major projects were progressing well and highlighted a range of new projects agreed or being developed.

The update was welcomed.

10. STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION REPORT

C Pithie and A Lawrence presented the Student's Association report.

He noted 280 class reps are registered and made a strong start with class rep training. Illness in the team has had an impact on class reps training, but this was being caught up on. Thirteen dept reps representing eleven departments were in place and recruitment was ongoing.

L O'Donnell noted the positivity for the Student Association from the MSPs who have visited the College recently. C Pithie noted conversations with Willie Rennie and Miles Briggs and asked them not to support anything in the Scottish budget that doesn't support students.

The update and work of DASA was welcomed.

11. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

S Hewitt presented the paper for noting and highlighted the incredible range of work and successes being progressed across the College, during a very challenging time. L O'Donnell noted the fantastic visuals around student retention campaign. J Lawrence stated that the team had worked with both DASA and Student Services on the campaign.

C Cusick noted that the images are not very diverse and J Lawrence noted this.

S Hewitt noted the open day on 17 January if any Board members wished to attend. Details would be shared with Board members. M MacQueen to progress.

S Hewitt congratulated S Oakley and the Sports Team and Animal care Team on their recent successes at the CDN Awards.

L O'Donnell noted the work happening across the College and captured in report.

12. NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE

S Taylor summarised the paper noting that the Support Staff pay deal has been agreed nationally and will be paid from January 2026.

Progress being made around the national job evaluation project, with work on a funding bid for the project being progressed

B Lawrie noted that he had heard that GMB had rejected the pay award. S Taylor noted that this was the case but that it had been approved by a significant majority of Unison and Unite members.

The update was noted.

13. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

13.1 SFC Report on Expectations of Good Governance

Paper for noting. S Taylor would draft a D&A Board response to the expectations outlined for consideration at the next meeting. **S Taylor to progress.**

13.2 Membership Update

L O'Donnell has asked B Lawrie to remain on the Board, as Board Member and chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee. This was approved and the extension request would be submitted to the Scottish Government. **S Taylor to progress.**

13.3 Board Metrics

S Taylor noted the usual range of Board metrics, highlighting the outcome of most recent student survey and maintained the 90% satisfaction. A correction to the finance metric had been made.

R Gordon asked if there will be a staff survey in 2026 and S Hewitt confirmed that this was planned around March / April.

The report was noted.

14. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Updates from the Committees were noted, and it was noted that the Joint Audit and Risk / Finance and Infrastructure Committee minutes were approved this morning. They will be uploaded to the website.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

The list of recent correspondence was noted.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17 March 2026 at 5.00pm Room A-IS-103 Arbroath Campus.

Action Point Summary

Action	Responsibility	Date
Schedule of Board development sessions to be added to the diary including SLT members	M MacQueen	30 January 2026
Board development action plan to be created	L O'Donnell	17 March 2026
D&A response on expectations of good governance to SFC to be drafted	S Taylor	17 March 2026
Extension of appointment of B Lawrie to the Board be sought	S Taylor	30 January 2026