

# Sector Features



This is the ideal platform for disseminating your work to thousands of professionals throughout the sector. It is an opportunity for sharing good practice, provides an outlet for discussion and allows staff to air professional views as well as views on behalf of their organisation. TQAL, knowledge transfer and governance and are just some of the topics covered in this issue.

If you would like to contribute an article to this section in the future please e-mail: [joanne.buchan@sfeu.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.buchan@sfeu.scotlandscolleges.ac.uk) or telephone 01786 892012.

## A Governance Support Programme for Boards of Management

*‘Training for Boards of Management ... surely not!?’*



Brian Keegan has over 30 years' experience of further education and training in a variety of roles. In 2001 he became General Manager and Education Adviser for PLATO Learning in Scotland before starting his own Education and Management Consultancy in 2004. He is currently working on a number of projects for public and private bodies. Brian is also Chair of the Board of Management at Langside College and Chair of the Governance Steering Group.

The Governance Support Programme got off to a really great start with 35 Board of Management representatives from 18 of Scotland's colleges attending the first workshop event titled 'Corporate Governance' at Cardonald College on Wednesday 24 September 2008. The evaluations of those who attended were extremely positive. One of the main aims of the day's programme was 'to provide members of college Boards the opportunity to explore techniques and good practice ideas for improving board effectiveness' – 86% rated their level of satisfaction in achieving this aim as Very Good or Good.

Yes, we're off to a good start with demand for places outstripping the planned workshop supply. A good situation to have in many ways, certainly justifying the time and effort of Scotland's Colleges and the Institute of Directors in putting the programme together and the Scottish Funding Council for the finance.

Despite such a positive beginning it is nevertheless a fact that not all Chairs of Board and their Board members see a need for a centralised support programme and several Principals (also Board

members, of course) have expressed concerns. Ensuring all these views are heard and that we develop and deliver an appropriate programme in partnership with stakeholders is a key challenge for the Governance Steering Group which I chair.

So several questions need answered:

- Why do we need a Governance Support programme?
- What will the programme aims, objectives and content look like?
- How do we monitor the programme and respond to feedback?

### Why do we need a Governance Support programme?

In the Autumn 2007 edition of *Broadcast*, Neil Cuthbert of ASC, contributed to an article about the Review of Scotland's Colleges highlighting the issue of Corporate Governance and the recommendation from the Review for an integrated development programme for board members. This was based mainly on the

DTZ research report, which concluded that in general the standard of accountability and governance in Scotland's colleges is good but there were several areas that could be improved including: succession planning, in-depth induction and the quality of information presented to Boards. They pointed out that more than 50% of Chairs identified there was scope for improvement in 'the provision of on-going training and development support'. The support programme is partly a response to those needs and of course to the difficulties experienced by several colleges in recent years in terms of accountability and stewardship.

The essence of the DTZ research on behalf of the Accountability and Governance Working Group was benchmarking standards of governance in Scotland's colleges against those of the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services: **Good Governance Standard for Public Services**. These standards of governance critically underpin the Governance Support Programme and provide an excellent checklist against which we can judge this comprehensive and inclusive programme. To remind yourself of these standards check the following link: [http://www.opm.co.uk/our\\_work/ICGGPS.shtml](http://www.opm.co.uk/our_work/ICGGPS.shtml)

## What will the programme aims, objectives and content look like?

This Programme of support generally will:

- Enhance the strategic capacity of each participating Board and its members.
- Promote the Board of Management as a learning Board.
- Encourage Board compliance with the Instruments and Articles of Government, audit and legislation.
- Promote a climate of continuous improvement in Board performance and an understanding of public value.
- Create and foster relationships within and across Board membership leading to the dissemination of good practice and a future platform for recruitment and succession planning.
- The Programme led by Scotland's Colleges will specifically encourage Board members to evaluate their role and will help distinguish what the differences are between governance, leadership and management.

The three-year Support Programme was launched at Cumbernauld College on 15 May 2008 with around 65 attendees from more than 30 colleges. It has three strands:

1. National workshops.
2. In-house Board of Management workshops.
3. Resource base.

### Strand One: National workshops

These workshops are being devised through a partnership of Scotland's Colleges and the Institute of Directors (IoD) with a plan to deliver these across Scotland with regional workshops in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness. The detailed content of each workshop will be developed in consultation with the Governance Steering Group which is made up of four Chairs of Board, four Board members, a Board secretary and representatives from Scotland's Colleges (ASC/SFEU). The Group will extend its membership to include Principal, staff and student members. The Group will play a major role in monitoring the programme and responding to feedback. Indicative content of the workshops is outlined below but this will be subject to change depending on the Steering Group's views and evaluations from those attending events. It is absolutely critical that we listen to our audience, are seen to be listening and deliver an effective and appropriate range of workshops which will improve Governance in Scotland's colleges.

The support programme is partly a response to those needs and of course to the difficulties experienced by several colleges in recent years in terms of accountability and stewardship.

### Workshop 1 – Corporate Governance

This workshop will cover roles and responsibilities of Board members; effective relationships between the governing body and the senior management team; the added value board members provide; what constitutes a high performing board.

### Workshop 2 – Strategic Leadership

This workshop will focus on the nature of non-executive Board Leadership; the role of the Board in providing direction and innovation; overseeing change through delivering outcomes in partnership; communication - engaging and aligning with stakeholders and the community.

### Workshop 3 – Continual Improvement

This workshop will provide tools and techniques to encourage a supportive but challenging culture of continuous improvement. Topics will include Board dynamics; staff relations; reviewing quality and standards; induction and succession planning; performance monitoring.

## Strand Two: In-house workshops

It is proposed that this strand offers in-house workshops delivered by appropriate staff from Scotland's Colleges (ASC/SFEU) to arrange support in Governance and Environmental Scanning giving participants:

- a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of governance (both as individuals and as boards), within the context of the college sector and wider post-compulsory learning and skills sector
- an environmental scan relevant to Scotland's colleges also covering, for example, leadership issues and public value.

The content of these sessions will be agreed between the Chair, College Principal/SMT, and Scotland's Colleges and they could precede a scheduled Board of Management meeting within the college. These sessions will help to create and foster relationships both within the Board and to improve external engagement with significant others relevant to the sector.

## Strand Three: Resource base

In recognising that many Board members may be unable to attend regional support events due to their own work and family commitments it is critical that a web-enabled support mechanism is developed that will allow more flexible access to support materials and advice.

This web-enabled Resource Base will be available as an authoritative source of support for Chairs, members of Boards, Secretaries of Boards and Principals. A recurring message from the Scotland's Colleges is the need for consistent, accessible and sustainable information on governance issues, linked to practical support on key governance themes.

This is an exciting programme which will complement provision within each board and which should enhance Governance across Scotland's colleges. It is of necessity a partnership approach – let's make it work!