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REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

Subject: Board Self-evaluation 2018/19	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☒ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☐
Prepared by: James Ayling/Hazel Robertson	**Date:** 20 November 2019

Purpose:

To present for approval the results of the Board self-evaluation questionnaire previously distributed to Members and to note the current position regarding a review of the Code of Good Governance and the position regarding an external review of compliance.

Linked to Strategic Goal 3: Provide a high quality College experience.

Executive Summary:

This paper deals with 3 matters relating to the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (the Code):

- Board Self Evaluation 2018/19
- Requirement for external review of the Board's compliance with the Code.
- Revisions currently being considered to the Code.

1. <u>Board Self–evaluation 2018/19</u>

Appendix 1 contains an analysis of the results from the questionnaire issued earlier this year which was designed to provide the Board with a self-evaluation of its performance against the terms of the Code. As well as providing a review of how the Board feels it is performing, the results will also be used in drawing up the next Board development plan. Some matters are already being addressed.

The analysis of the answers is quite detailed. The analysis also incorporates Members' comments that are very useful.

Members were asked to rank their agreement with the Board's compliance with each statement from the Code on a scale from 1 to 6 with 6 being the highest level of agreement.

The high level of responses made at either level 5 or 6 would indicate that Members are in the main confident that the Board is meeting its obligations under the Code.

A number of areas for possible development were identified and it is important that these are reviewed by the Board and if necessary development/

enhancement actions put in place. In compiling the following, some matters are highlighted where members appear to share similar views or questions on aspects of compliance with the Code.

Vision & Strategy
Consideration of additional scenario planning /reviews of strategy and performance against aims.

Corporate Social Responsibility
No stand out issues.

Student Engagement
Consider further Board engagement with students in addition to BCSA office holders.

Learning and Teaching/Student Support
Consideration of procedure for setting student success targets.
How to extend student experience in Board decision making.

Accountability & Delegation; Risk and Reward
Continued consideration of risk management is required.
Publication of a high quality annual report received a lowest score of 1 from one member together with a comment that the quality of reporting could be enhanced.

Remuneration. Sustainability, Staff Governance.
The results and comments would suggest that the Board's role in the fair and effective management of staff and remuneration needs to be clarified as part its duty to prioritise the fair and effective management of staff.

Post Holder Effectiveness
Continue to develop team working within the Board and eliciting all views.

Board Member Development and Evaluation
Further induction/training/team building opportunities should be considered.

Members will recall that the questionnaire which we used followed a very similar questionnaire to that used by Glasgow College and we have obtained a copy of their results .Whilst the Glasgow results are not a benchmark against which to judge our results and are based on different colleges in different markets it was considered useful to review them. Overall the results were similar.

Members are requested to consider the results of the questionnaire and approve the production of a single Board Development Plan, incorporating the findings of this review and the Board Chair review (as considered at the October Board), based on matters highlighted by the questionnaires, and any related points that members may raise.

A separate paper on the production of a Board Development Plan is being submitted to Members.

2. Requirement for external review of Board effectiveness

The Board Secretary's Group has proposed a revision to the current requirement for an external review of a college's governance to be carried out every three years. The proposal is that the timeline may be extended to not less than every five years to bring the College sector in line with the University sector. This would provide a more flexible and staggered approach with more flexibility for local circumstances.

Discussions with Scottish Government and the SFC have resulted in an agreement that as the sector has only conducted one external review, the three year period should remain the standard at the moment. However in order to have some more flexibility in the overall approach it is being proposed that all external reviews should be completed by the end of 2020,

If this proposal is approved, it means that the Borders review process can be extended by up to nine months. The proposal is that the external review is taken forward by the new Board Secretary after the new Chair is in post.

3. Code of Good Governance

For information Members should note that the Code is currently being reviewed by the Good Governance Steering Group. This is considered to be a light touch review. This 2019 review follows the outcome of the Scottish Government Consultation on College Good Governance and the Ministerial announcement made in February 2019. The review therefore includes addition of references to the inclusion of trade union members on Boards, and the process of nomination of said members. The move to a 3-5 year period for external reviews of Board effectiveness is being discussed, as noted above.

The Code is due for finalisation in January 2020, to allow time for completion of discussions in relation to the nomination and appointment process for Trade Union members.

Recommendation:
That the Board:
a) note and approve the results of the questionnaire
b) request the preparation of a Board Development Plan to deal with required enhancements from this and the Board Chair Review and
c) note the current position regarding external review and the review of the Code.

Previous Committee Approvals:
n/a

For publication ☒	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

APPENDIX 1 Regional Board Self Evaluation 2018/19

1. Background and Introduction

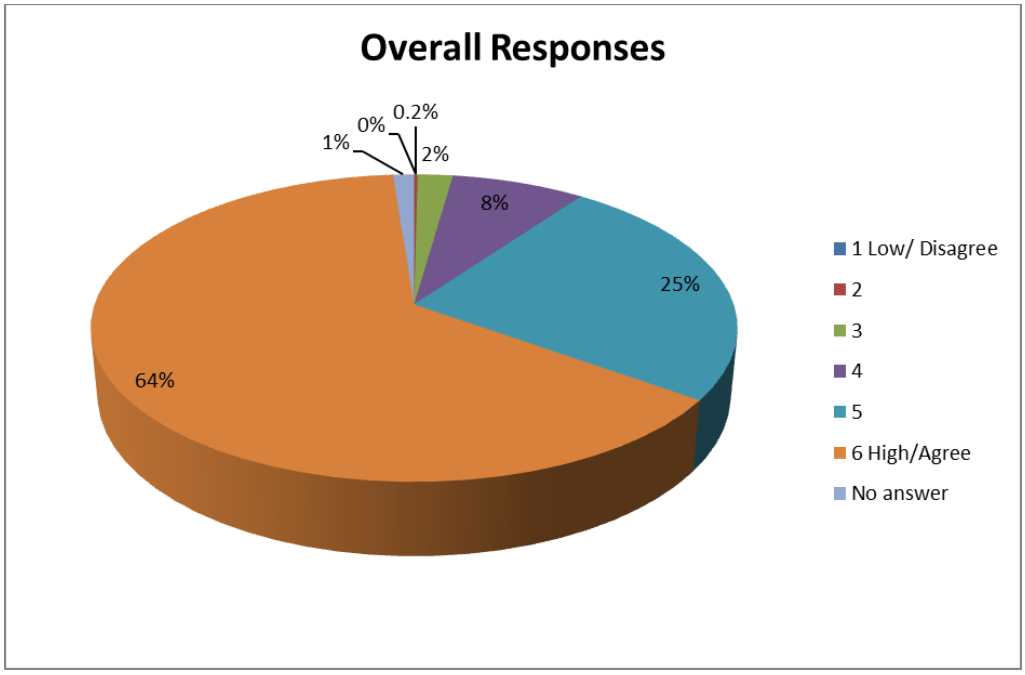
The *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges*[1] *("the Code")* has been developed and is owned by the college sector. The Code establishes standards of good governance practice for all boards, and provides the essential foundations for compliance within the legislative framework. The Board must also comply with all other statutory requirements.

The Code requires that Boards "have in place a robust self-evaluation process" which should comprise an annual internal review and an externally facilitated effectiveness review every three years. Borders College Regional Board undertook an external review in March 2017 followed by a detailed self-evaluation for 2017/18 and it now requires to conduct a further self-evaluation for the period July 2018 to June 2019.

The following is an analysis of the results of the self-evaluation questionnaires returned in 2018/19. In total there were 14 returned questionnaires with 35 questions. The analysis is broken down into nine sections depending on their grouping.

The questionnaire answers were ranked from one to six with one Low/Disagree and 6 High/Agree.

The overall responses were positive with 64% of responses being the highest ranking, only 2% of responses were at three with one response below this. 1% of statement responses did not have an answer.



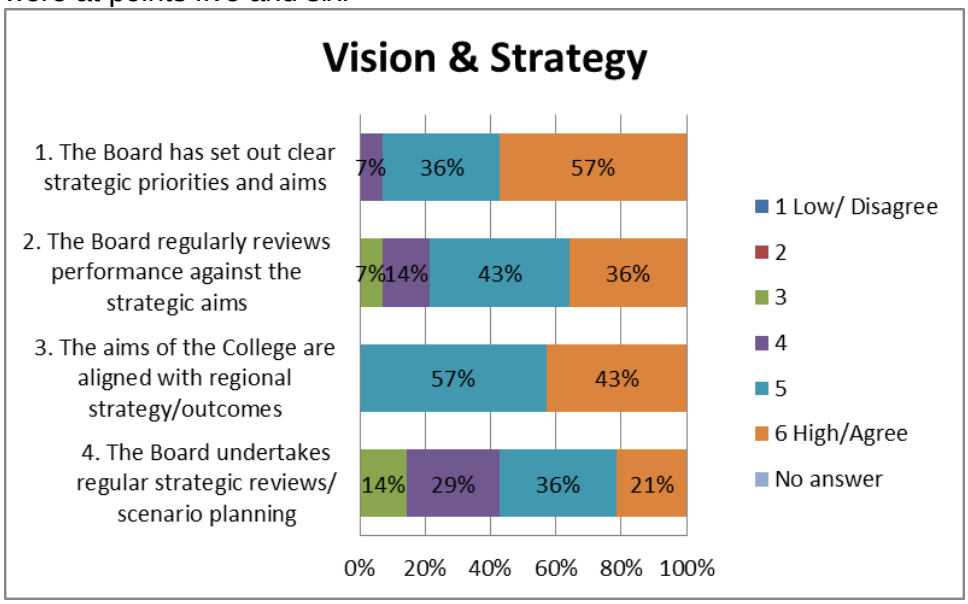
[1] Code-of-Good-Governance-for-Scotland's-Colleges-August-2016.pdf

2. Vision & Strategy

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No response
0%	0.2%	5%	13%	43%	39%	0%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.

Overall this area had the lowest percentage in point 6, although overall 82% of responses were at points five and six.



The statement that received the highest percentage at point six was statement three with 100% of the returns being made in the top two places on the scale. Statement four received the lowest ranking with 43% of the returns being at points three and four of the scale. There were eight comments made on this set of statements and scenario planning was highlighted in four comments as an area for improvement.

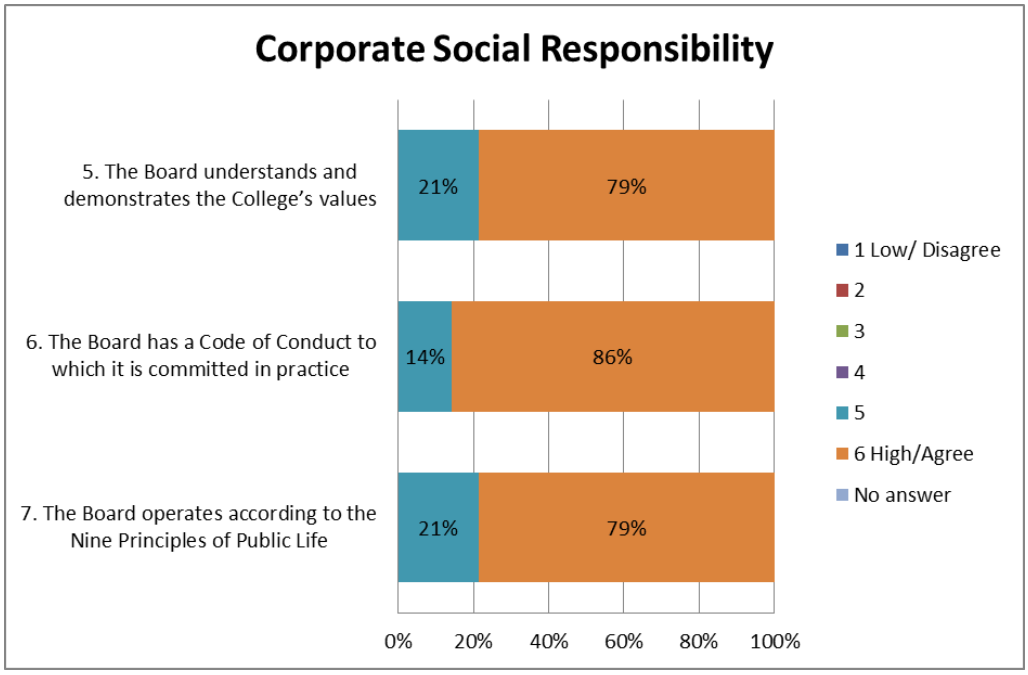
Comments

Longer sessions i.e. through strategic planning days to engage in scenario planning would be useful especially with so much future economic uncertainty for the Region and Sector.
As far as is practicable.
Strategic aims and priorities are clearly identified and stated. However the annual strategy meeting is normally the only dedicated opportunity to review/refresh the strategy and to engage in scenario planning. Given the pace and magnitude of change this should be given further thought. A systematic approach to scenario planning could add value to the strategic planning process and in particular the consideration of strategic choices.
Regular opportunities for Board to think about strategic direction. Also opportunities for Board to think at South of Scotland level, the wider strategic context.
Strategic aims are priority to board values
Whilst we review almost all decisions against the College's Strategic Plan, I feel we do not carry out scenario planning as much as we should, eg on Brexit or on the Lecturer's pay claim where a range of possible outcomes have not been tabled with accompanying implications examined
Generally good at setting vision and strategy, but scenario planning has been identified as an area for improvement.
I've missed the away day previously because of diary constraints so have had fewer insights into our strategic planning process.

3. Corporate Social Responsibility

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	0	0	19%	81%	

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



This was the highest ranking section with all three statements receiving 100% of responses at points five and six on the scale with 81% in the highest ranking. There were three comments made regarding these statements all positive.

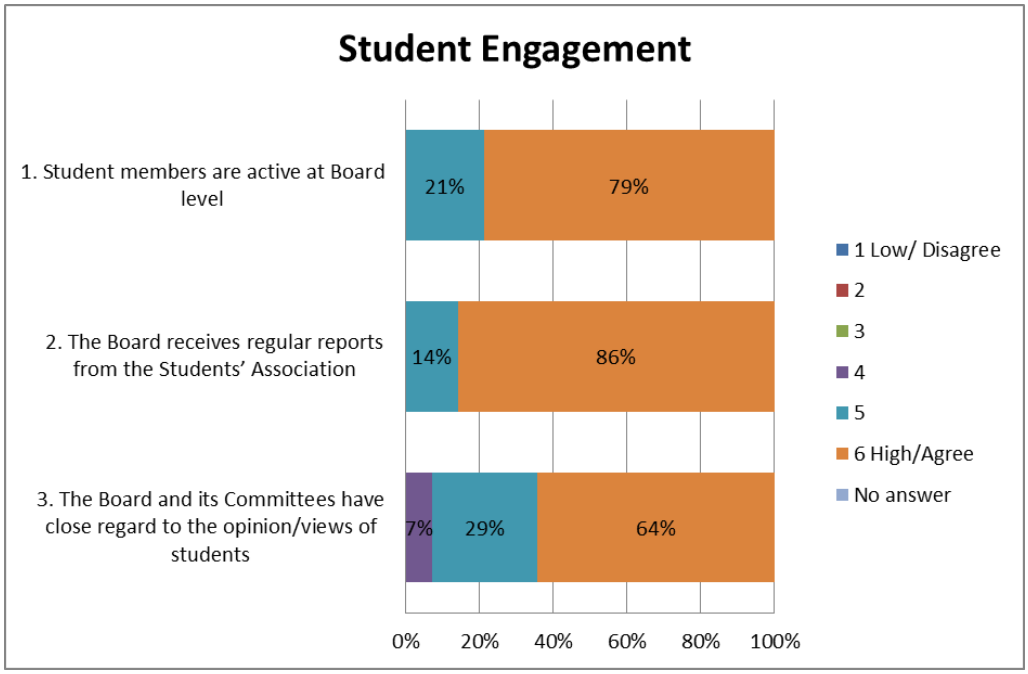
Comments

The NUS/ Colleges Scotland inductions were very informative on the Principles of Public Life
I believe that the Board are very good on CSR
The nine principles are challenging to operate within, but the Board manages this.

4. Student Engagement

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	0	2%	21%	76%	

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



Student Engagement is another area that received positive responses with 97% of responses at points five and six on the scale. Statement two received the highest percentage in the top scale with the lowest being statement three. The value placed on the student members' engagement is highlighted with the answers above and also with three of the comments below mentioning this. Two comments reflected the desire to engage with other students and not just the President and Vice President.

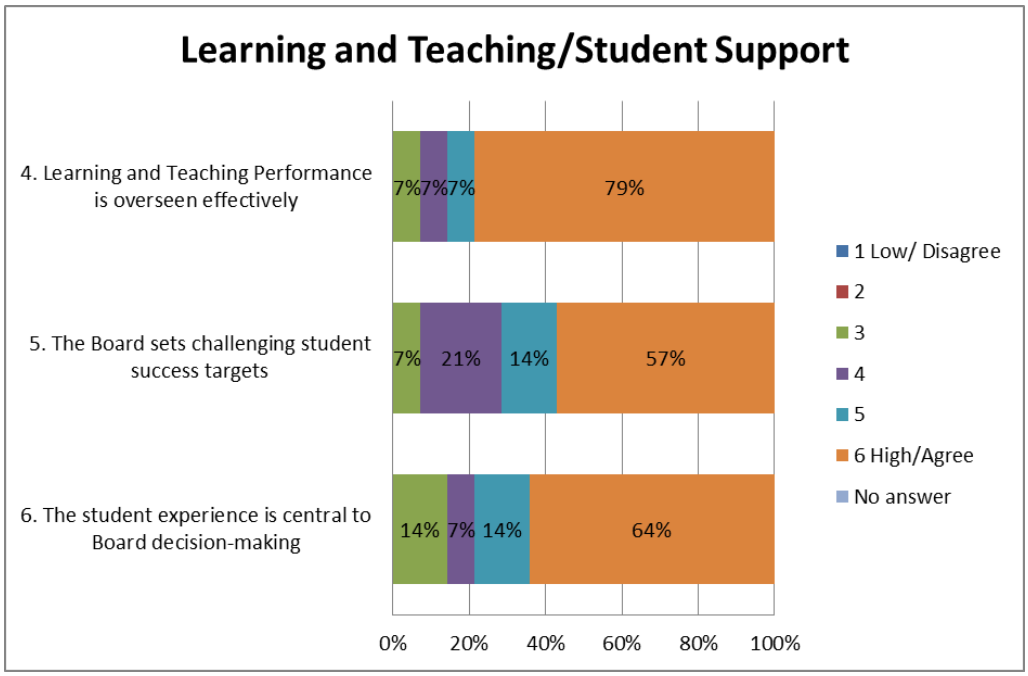
Comments

Little opportunity to meet students, other than SA President & Vice President
This area has improved substantially over the last few years.
Student members make a valuable contribution to the Board meetings and Committees.
The relation between BCSA and the Board is great at the moment and we appreciate how our opinion is valued and heard at Board.
It has been great this year to see a BCSA report as a standing Item. The board could progress their engagement by working directly with students as well as with the students' association e.g. by attending a focus pizza session.
I believe that the voice of the students is heard via the Student Association presence at Board meetings but also through the Learning for Leading visits undertaken by Board Members
Student members are extremely active at Board level with effective contributions.

5. Learning and Teaching/Student Support

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	0	2%	21%	76%	

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



86% of responses to statement four were returned at points five and six showing it is strongly felt that learning and teaching performance is overseen effectively. Statement five returned the lowest with 28% of responses at points three and four.

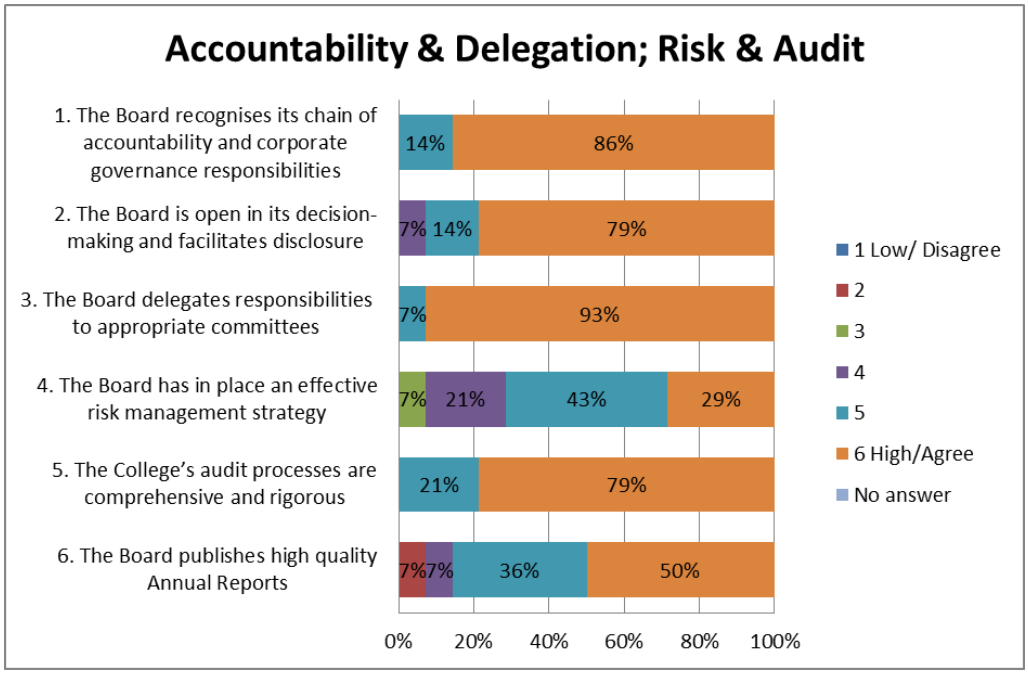
Comments

For future surveys, suggest there might be a question around student performance.
The targets set in the ALF were far too high and were out of proportion, as suggested at CQC it should be up to this committee to set these targets not the SLT.
Gauging the level of challenge in targets is made difficult by the availability of statistics, both internal and from national agencies to make comparisons. The Dir. Of Business Improvement has been a huge help in this regard, they have explained and interrogated the data to make it useful to the board.
I am not sure that the Board are directly involved in setting student success targets, I feel we rather ratify the SMT set targets, questioning where necessary.

6. Accountability & Delegation; Risk & Audit

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0%	1%	1%	6%	23%	69%	0%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



Statements one, three and five all returned 100% of responses at points five and six with the highest percentage at point six in statement three, the Board delegates responsibilities to appropriate committees. There was a 7% response at point two for statement six although there were 86% of responses at points five and six. In the comments the risk register /risk management were mentioned in four out of six comments and the statement relating to risk management (four) also had the lowest percentage of responses at point six (29%).

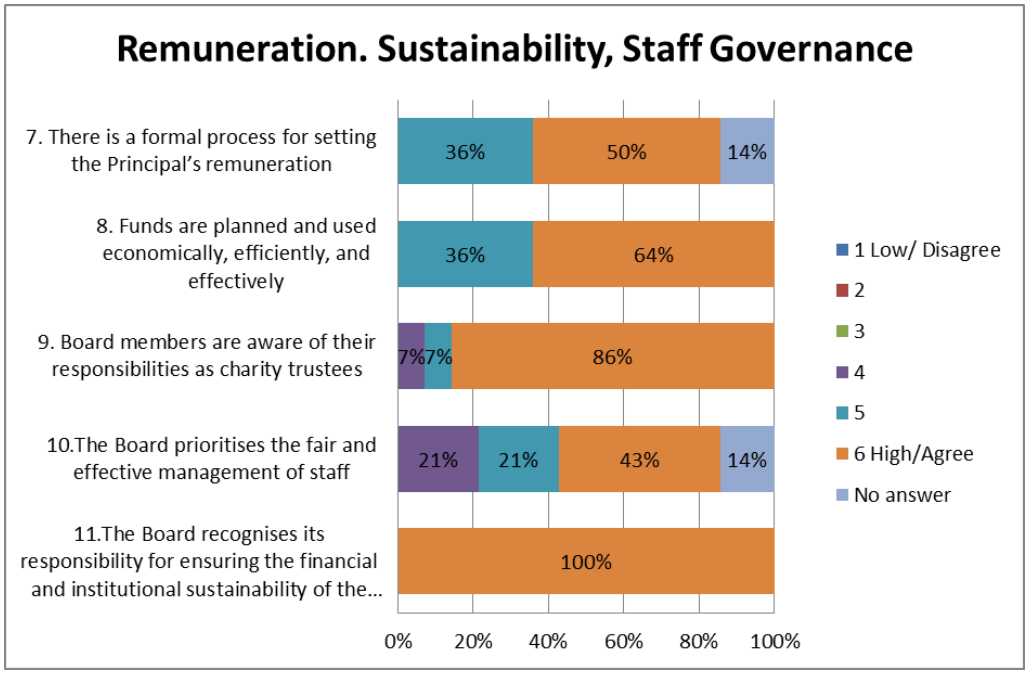
Comments

4 – Under review; also risk register
The quality of reporting could, in some areas, be enhanced with greater emphasis on context, structure and purpose.
Reports to a very good standard
The risk register has been identified as not working as well as it could and is already being redesigned in another format. Hopefully this will make it more useful to the board
I believe that Risk Management is an ever moving target and so, by definition, cannot be totally effective as it is largely reactive
I hope that the proposed session explaining the structure and purpose of the risk register will improve my understanding of this.

7. Remuneration, Sustainability, Staff Governance

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	0	6%	20%	69%	6%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



Statement eleven was the only statement in the self-evaluation to have 100% of the responses at point six, statement eight had 100% of responses at points five and six. Where there are no answers recorded for statements seven and ten some of the reasons for this can be explained by the comments.

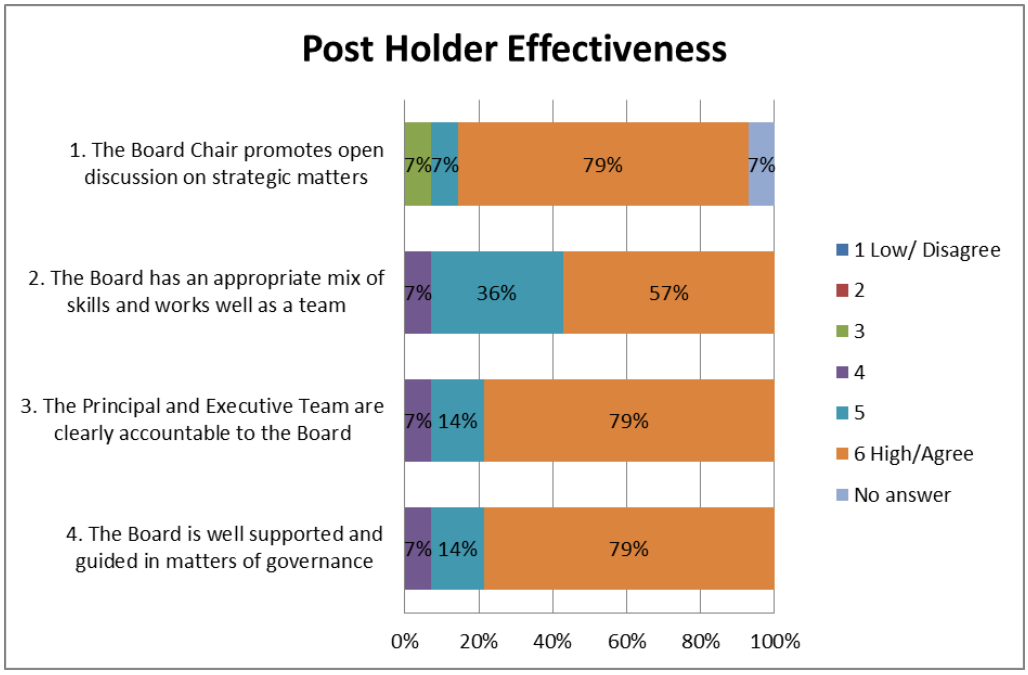
Comments

On reflection not sure what number 10 means. If it is to agree our HR strategy and organisational values and behaviours that we operate by then yes but it is the Principal and SPH responsibility to manage staff are appropriate.
10 – Evidence within Principal's report, though not exactly under this heading, suggest this 'fair' & 'effective' phrase is utilised to provide evidence and comfort the Board.
I cannot comment on the process for the Principals remuneration, as it is something I have ever had anything to do with or know nothing about. Question number 10 I think relates to an HR matter and should only be brought to Board if it was of a serious enough nature.
7. although I know there is a remuneration committee that decides senior staff pay I do not know anything about their process.
No-one can be in any doubt that the Board have financial stability and sustainability at their core as we have already dealt with significant budget restraints and more are to come

8. Post Holder Effectiveness

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	2%	5%	18%	73%	2%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



The percentage of responses in point six are the same 79% for all statements in this area bar statement two where the percentage is 57% although when looking at points five and six statements two, three and four are consistent with 93% of responses in these points. Statement one has a lower response at point three and one no answer.

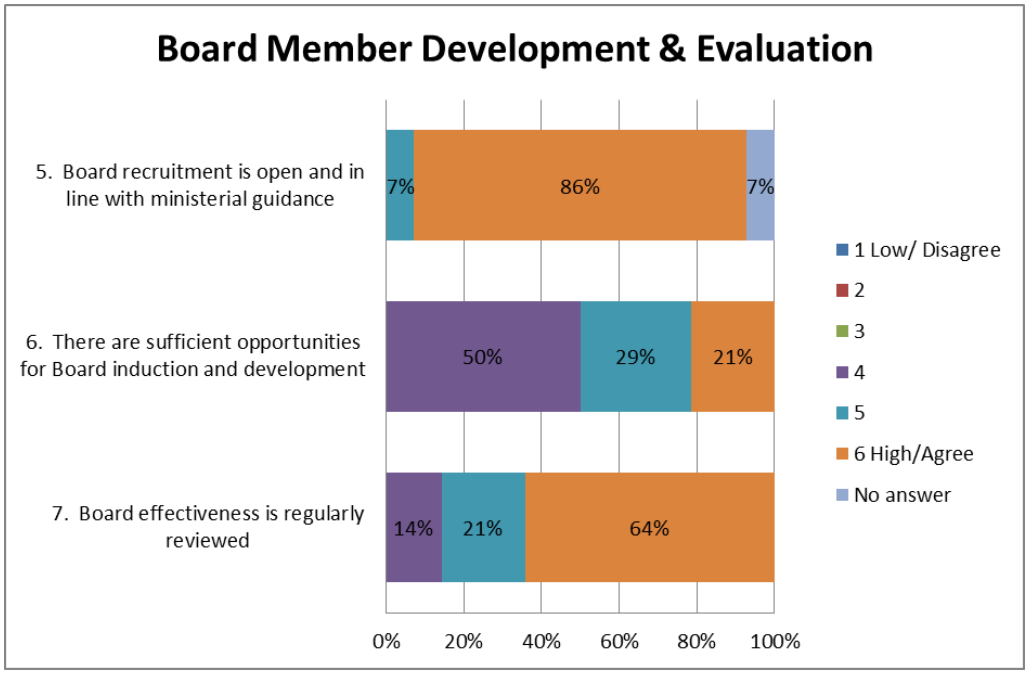
Comments

9. Still short of financial expertise!
The Board Member's input is constantly encouraged by the Chair. Strategic issues are aired regularly, with constant horizon scanning effectively in place. The Secretary is very effective in his governance role.
1. I feel the chair sometimes moves on from an issue too quickly, he could instead ask members who have not contributed to the discussion what their opinions are.
Board has a number of new members which will take time to get to know each other and gel as a team.

9. Board Member Development and Evaluation

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	0%	21%	19%	57%	2%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



Statement five has the highest percentage of returns at point five and six with 93%, with one response not returned. Statement six which has 50% returns at point four could indicate that Induction could be improved, the comments below indicate there have been improvements in this area.

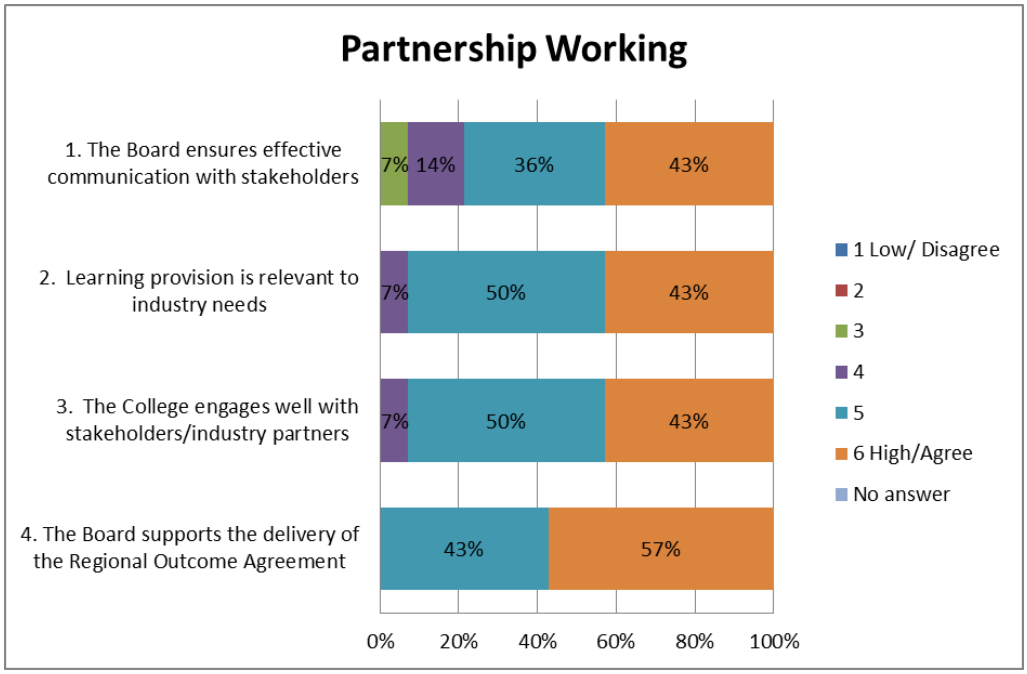
Comments

6. Internal staff presentations at Board meetings useful, as are Principal's and Chair's briefings to inform members of signifigant updates. With several new members some team building would be useful to allow Board members to work together.
Board induction and development has improved over the last few years however it is recognised that there is still scope for further enhancement particularly in the provision of training and mentoring for new members.
New board members made very welcome and have a pleasant induction process.
6. Board induction could give more information e,g, acronym sheet, and also summaries of different board programs. I was not aware of learning for leading for several months.
Development of Board Members could possibly be improved and recorded. Rather than being up to the individual, perhaps it should be a Board requirement that each member undertakes one improvement course each year?
Missing the away day has limited my opportunities to see team based review. I think induction has developed since I joined the board and have recently made additional suggestions based on the CDN event 5 board members attended in April.

10. Partnership Working

1 Low/Disagree	2	3	4	5	6 High/Agree	No Response
0	0	2%	7%	45%	46%	0%

Table of statements combined percentages for all statements.



Statement four has the highest percentage in points five and six at 100%, where statement one has the lowest at 79% at points five and six and 7% at point three.

Comments

Being relevant to industry needs is by definition reactive and so there can be a lag in terms of identification of need and provision of relevant learning. Engagement with stakeholders relies on them wanting to engage so is slightly out of the College's control
1. I am unsure of how well the board communicates with students. Communication with BCSA is excellent but they should not be relied upon as the sole conduit of information from board to students.
The College faces a challenge in supporting local businesses to understand what their future skills needs are. There is a key partner role from SDS and others to help support the College in this task.
Board awareness/contribution to stakeholder engagement and communication has improved in recent years however it is recognised that this has become an area of increasing strategic importance for the Board and therefore should be developed further.
Partnership working has improved hugely due to Principal's external relations focus. This is an ongoing and increasingly important aspect of College activity. Is the Board aware of the time for both Angela and others who have an ambassadorial role? Can the Board members assist to 'open doors'?
Learning provision is largely relevant to industry needs but capacity limits us. Not sure where Boards role fits into the Partnership working. This activity is by college staff.
Again for number 4 the Board approves the ROA but doesn't support the delivery?