

**At Glasgow and within the Ledger
Recital Room of the Royal
Conservatoire of Scotland on
Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 10:45am
being a meeting of the Board of
Governors**

PRESENT

Dr Jo Buckley (JB)	Ruth McGowan (RM)
Andrew Butcher (AB)	Dorothy Miell (DXM)
Morag Campbell (MC)	Ed Monaghan (EM)
Professor Stuart Cross (SC)	Professor Mark O'Thomas (MOT)
Ken Fairbrother (KF) (SU VP)	Agnes Robson (AR)
Dr Lois Fitch (LF) (Deputy Principal)	Philip Rodney (PR)
Dr David Hare (DH)	Jean Sangster (JS)
Elizabeth Jenkinson (EJ)	Professor Jeffrey Sharkey (PJS) (Principal)
	Dr John Taylor (JT)

IN ATTENDANCE

Stephen Broad (SB)	(Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange)
Lydia Demaison (LD)	(Director of Human Resources)
Vicky Gunn (VG)	(Academic Registrar and Secretary)
Janette Harkess(JXH)	(Director of External Relations)
Helen McVey (HM)	(Director of Business Development and Interim Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film)
Gordon Munro (GM)	(Director of Music)
Alan Smith (AS)	(Director of Finance and Estates)

IN THE CHAIR

Nick Kuenssberg (NK) (Chair)

The Chair welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance and their participation in the Conservatoire's AGM which had been held earlier that morning.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Matthew Rooke, Caroline Roxburgh, Sharon Mair, Carol Main, Professor Donald MacRae and Professor Nacim Pak-Shiraz.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting **were approved** as an accurate record. All actions agreed at the last meeting had been actioned or were in hand.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTE NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The Chair updated the Board on the following matters:

a. With regards to the RCS' Sustainability Committee it had been suggested that

given the importance of this agenda, the committee should report directly to the Board of Governors rather than through the Academic Board to the Board of Governors. The Principal agreed to take this suggestion to both the Sustainability Committee and the Academic Board.

- b. The Chair and the Principal were taking forward discussions with the Scottish Government regarding the negative impact that BREXIT and the loss of EU fee funding and its impact on EU student numbers was having on RCS funding.
- c. Good progress was being made in terms of the promotion and development of the RCS Innovation Studio.
- d. The RCS was to welcome Christopher Wynn as the new Strategic Director of Principal Gifts in January 2022.
- e. The RCS was to welcome Gemma Bodinetz as the incoming Director of DDPF in January 2022
- f. Action was being taken with respect to the Reserved Minute regarding the Remuneration Committee item.
- g. Following the next full Board of Governors' strategy day on 21st April – Lay Governors were inviting the CSMT in its totality to dinner in gratitude and acknowledgement of the extraordinary performance by the team in last 20 months.

5. LONG TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING

This Board had been convened specifically to consider RCS's approach to strategic planning. The Chair invited the Principal and Deputy Principal to update the Board on progress made to date and the prospective timetable.

The Principal noted that the challenges facing the RCS were serious. To remain sustainable, and move forward as a future leaning, internationally relevant, education provider, he highlighted four significant areas:

- a. The relationship between SFC funding per student, RUK funding per student, and the uplift that the world class Conservatoires received in England that would leave the RCS at a competitive disadvantage. Resolving this was critical.
- b. RCS's curriculum review a decade ago had placed the RCS at the forefront of innovation in conservatoire curriculum design; however other institutions had now adapted in a similar way and the Academic Framework established by RCS at that time had experienced curricular drift and over-loading in the intervening years. Reviewing and resetting this is viewed as essential with pace, space and embrace of a better analogue-digital balance forming a central part of the discussion.
- c. The future of music provision and the need to recruit staff who could draw from international pipelines was paramount. RCS would be exploring the possibility of engaging visiting fellows using the newfound confidence in building such relationships through virtual means.
- d. Physical space for ensemble learning needed to be reconsidered in conjunction with a review of the size and scope of the RCS including the balance of UG to PG numbers.

All of the strategic planning was to be underpinned with a limited series of focused SMART KPIs.

The Deputy Principal then introduced Strategic Plan 2030. She noted that the text, timeline and accompanying papers were the start in an iterative process which would begin from certain explicit operational priorities. The Deputy Principal acknowledged that the strategic objectives currently established were more prosaic than inspirational but were deliberately designed to be honed whilst pinning down the key strategic areas that should not be avoided. A key strategic area driving all the strategic objectives was curriculum excellence to ensure that any review did not compromise standards. Within this driver, the RCS would seek to identify the preferred graduate profile as well as size and scope.

Outcomes would be achieved through:

- a. Building financial headroom by raising income as well as appropriate contingencies relating to activity planning around duplication and administration activities;
- b. capturing local civic impacts as well as international ones;
- c. unpacking potential in RCS research and knowledge exchange space;
- d. effectively mainstreaming equalities and inclusion through their coherent suffusion through the curriculum and the demography of the RCS.

To ensure that staff and students were fully engaged in the process, the method for developing the strategic plan would be project based, whilst ensuring that the overlaps of projects aligned to sub-strategies of the plan were clearly articulated. The Deputy Principal continued by explaining the KPIs that had been suggested as the meta level of success with each of the sub-strategies have their own KPIs feeding into these meta level ones.

The Board of Governors acknowledged the amount of work that lay behind and had gone into the strategic plan and curriculum review documentation and welcomed the direction of travel established. They offered the following reflections:

- a. Understanding how to improve recruitment was important at the same time as understanding what the market suggested about the direction of travel, especially in terms of the relevant creative industries that RCS aspired to moving into e.g. Streaming and Games networks.

ACTION: RCS to consider commissioning appropriate market intelligence relevant to size and aspiration of the Conservatoire as part of the strategic planning process

- b. Several members of the Board queried the current lack of a vision statement in the paperwork, though they acknowledged that much of the aspirational had been outlined by both the Principal and Deputy Principal in the AGM which immediately preceded the Board meeting. Nonetheless, members noted that moving from the prosaic to the vision and ambition needed to be managed to ensure that the pragmatic did not limit the aspirational. It was asserted that to create a stronger strategic plan there was a need to articulate the artistic and creative vision that the RCS wished to embody e.g. specific reference to a vision focused on creating opportunities for students to expand and evolve their own artistic ambitions, with each sub-strategy helping articulate what this would look like in actuality.
- c. It was noted that managing the sub-strategies so that they operated as an interlinking, coherent whole rather than competing with each other could prove difficult. One possible mitigation of this would be to have a single over-arching strategy with strategic action plans beneath it.

Action: The Deputy Principal to consider rearticulating the strategic plan / curriculum review paperwork using the rubric of strategy and strategic action plans and update the Board at the April meeting, the overall vision to be derived from the strategic plans.

- d. It was also suggested that a clear visualisation of the interlinking sub-strategies be provided to the Board by its next strategy day on 21st April.

Action: The Deputy Principal to produce a visualisation of the sub-strategy interlinkages for the Board at the April meeting.

The Deputy Principal reiterated the importance of ensuring that what RCS needed to do (including the very real obstacles it was faced with as it underwent a major culture shift) was stated up front within the initial stages of the process. The approach of project-based sub-strategy development would provide fora for this upfront statement to be refined whilst a collective vision could emerge more fully. She emphasised that

the curriculum review process was also designed in such a way as to intersect with the pragmatic scaffolds provided via the principles or enablers.

- e. It was also noted that the documentation implied a split between the widening aspirations around collaboration for DDPF whilst managing the more delineated needs within the music curriculum. A suggestion was made that more be said about how the review would manage the balance of cross-institutional reinvigoration and the areas of renewal that were specific to music as well as drawing out the widening ambitions in the short courses and micro-credentials spaces.
- f. Additionally, it was commented that such a review would allow scrutiny around the perceived and actual differences of access to digital infrastructure between different programmes within the RCS.
- g. DXM noted that there was a lack of reference to climate change and the environment in the paperwork as it stood.
- h. The Board spent some time discussing the KPIs, emphasising the importance of being able to measure excellence and successes as well as using the KPIs to demonstrate what was valued as success by the RCS.

Action: Deputy Principal to consider articulating additional qualitative metrics that capture the spirit of RCS' understanding of success as well as the current metrics based KPIs.

The SUVP Music (KF) noted that students welcomed the curriculum change but questioned how the student voice would be listened to in the process and noted the importance of managing the experience of students on the current iteration of programmes in the face of optimistic discussion regarding a renewed curricular offer.

Action: CSMT to undertake market survey by engaging with students who had opted not to come to RCS to find out why they chose to go elsewhere and relevance of relative attractions of other UK conservatoires for both UG and PG courses.

The Deputy Principal summed up by referring back to the Principal's AGM speech, emphasising that there was a need for RCS to answer some operational questions before it could think at the higher level of ambition, recognising that in order to do the "blue sky", there were some bland but fundamental things to overcome. Additionally she reiterated that within the immediate experience of the pandemic as it affected the day-to-day life of the RCS it was at times difficult to see and feel the spirit of ambition because of the obstacles needed to be overcome immediately.

- 6. **Governance update** – The nominated convenor (AR) of the Board's Appointing Committee introduced the remit and membership of the Committee and noted the proposition received from NUROLE to assist with the recruitment of suitable candidates for Chair. Authority to progress was **approved** by the BOG.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Board:

28 January 2022
21 April 2022 Strategy Day
22 April 2022
24 June 2022

Graduations:

Thursday 7 July 2022 [Potential additional 'catch up' graduation dates from lockdown cohorts – Tues, 5th & Weds 6th July]
Thursday 27 October 2022

8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

7.1 Committee meeting dates for AY2022/23

Members agreed that Board of Governor meetings would take place in-person in AY2022-23, subject to limits placed on the RCS by the Scottish Government relating to the COVID pandemic. The Sub-Committees would predominantly continue online with perhaps one meeting per academic year held in person as circumstances allow at the discretion of the relevant convenor.

A full set of Board and Committee meeting dates would be circulated in the January papers.