

**Meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee
to be held on Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 4.00pm
by Hybrid Attendance at Kilmarnock Campus and via Microsoft Teams**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest
 2. Apologies
 3. Minute of the meeting held on 10 December 2024 Paper 1 (C/P)
Paper 1A (P)
 - ARC Action & Decision Tracker
 4. Matters arising
- Part A – For discussion, decision and approval**
5. Annual Review of the Effectiveness of External Auditor (6) Paper 2 (P) ARi
 6. Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Auditor (5/13) Paper 3 (P) ARi
 7. Internal Audit Service Contract Extension (5/6/13) Paper 4 (P) ARi
 8. Internal Audit Reports (2/10) Paper 5 (P) SP
 - a. Staff Recruitment
 - b. Student Recruitment
 9. Draft 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan (2/5/14) Paper 6 (P) ARi
 10. Assurance Mapping Present. (P) ARi
- Part B – Regular Reporting/Monitoring**
11. Rolling Audit Action Plan (7) Paper 7 (R) LW
- Part C – Risk Management**
12. Strategic Risk Register (15) Paper 8 (R) ARi
- Part E – For information/AOB**
13. AOB

Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 10 June 2025 at 4.00pm

(C/P) Confirmed minutes will be published;

(P) Papers will be published on the College website;

(R) Papers will not be published for reasons of commercial sensitivity or for reasons of personal data confidentiality

**Minute of the Audit and Risk Committee
Held by Hybrid Attendance at Ayr Campus
Thursday 10 December 2024**

(Paper 01)

Present:

Sharon Morrow	Chair
Jane Grant	Vice – Chair
Gillian Longmuir	Non-Executive Board Member
Jason Currie	Non-Executive Board Member
Chris Boyce	Elected EIS-FELA Staff Member

In attendance:

Anne Campbell	Vice Principal, Skills and Enterprise
David Davidson	Vice Principal, People, Performance and Transformation
Hilary Denholm	Board Governance Advisor & Minutes
Brad Johnstone	Director of Digital Infrastructure
Alan Ritchie	Vice Principal, Finance & Infrastructure
Liz Walker	Chief Financial Controller
Stephen Pringle	Wbg – Internal Auditors
Andy Reid	Azets – External Auditors

Private Meeting between the Committee and Auditors prior to the Committee Meeting

In accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the Committee held a meeting with Internal and External Auditors without management in attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to provide Auditors with the opportunity to present their views on the organisation and management.

External and Internal Audit both advised that there were no material issues or concerns raised in this regard, and that good collaborative working and quality information had helped achieve the audit plan completion.

The Chair and the Committee members thanked the Auditors for their contribution and welcomed both the positive feedback put forward and level of assurance provided.

1. Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Sharon Morrow, welcomed all present to the meeting,

There were no Declarations of Interest presented.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate.

2. Apologies

No Apologies were received.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 24 September 2024 (Paper 1) C/P

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Jane Grant **Seconded:** Chris Boyce

ARC Action & Decision Tracker (Paper 1A) (P)

The Committee noted all previous decisions and actions completed.

4. Matters Arising

There were no other outstanding matters arising from the minutes.

6. National Fraud Initiative (Paper 2) (P)

The College continues to participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) as part of the wider assurance / compliance work undertaken by the organisation. L Walker highlighted key points to the Committee, particularly the two additional 2024 checklist questions highlighted in red. Committee members confirmed agreement with the answers to these additional questions.

The Committee noted the update and approved the report.

Decision: ARC46-D01 The Committee approved the National Fraud Initiative report.

8. 2023-24 Freedom of Information Annual Report (Paper 4) (P)

A Campbell introduced Paper 4 as presented which is provided as part of the overall assurance framework and is a “first line” of defence assurance document. The report forms part of the annual suite of reports considered by the Senior Leadership Team and is published externally. The SLT review the report and assess whether there are any areas of concern or work that requires to be undertaken to address areas of concern.

The Committee noted:

- The number of requests received has slightly increased since 2022-23 with an additional 5 EIRs being received. These EIRs were in relation to RAAC being present in our buildings, emissions for business travel, litter volumes and management, and fly tipping incidents and management.
- The College responded to 95% of all requests within the required timescale. Two requests were responded to after the due date, one due to being unable to trace the original request being received, however, was responded to within 1 working day once chaser received and one due to the delay gathering the information for the request.
- The types of requests received do not indicate any emerging risks that require to be addressed.

- The report highlights to the Committee that the College complies with its legislative requirements and does not highlight any issues that require to be addressed.
- There were no appeals received from the Scottish Information Commissioner.

The Committee were requested to note the content of the report and consider whether the Internal Audit Plan required to be reviewed.

Decision: ARC46-D02 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Freedom of Information Annual Report and agreed that the Internal Audit Plan does not require to be reviewed.

9. 2023-24 Complaints Annual Report (Paper 5) (P)

A Campbell introduced Paper 5 as presented which provided an overview of:

- a) Number and nature of complaints received. Complaints increased by 6% from 2022-23
- b) 99% of complaints (2022-23: 97%) were dealt within the required or extended timescale
- c) Top 5 complaints:
 - a. Staff conduct (2023-24: 49 / 2022-23: 55)
 - b. Assessment and exams (2023-24: 13 / 2022-23: 16)
 - c. Application, admissions (2023-24: 12 / 2022-23: 11)
 - d. Student conduct (2023-24: 8 / 2022-23: 6)
 - e. Providing learning support (2023-24: 7 / 2022-23: 1)
- d) A summary of the actions undertaken following complaints (75 actions of which 67 were completed during the reporting period – 89%). The College continues to monitor and complete the outstanding actions.

There was discussion around the increase in complaints could likely be linked to more students now being on campus and awareness raising of the requirement to record any dissatisfaction as a complaint.

The Committee noted:

- The College management team receives quarterly update reports throughout the year allowing it to take effective remedial action where required.
- The report highlights that the College complies with its legislative requirements and does not highlight any issues that require to be addressed.

The Committee were requested to note the content of the report and consider whether the Internal Audit Plan required to be reviewed.

Decision: ARC46-D03 The Committee noted the 2023-24 Complaints Annual Report and agreed that the Internal Audit Plan does not require to be reviewed.

10. Internal Audit (Paper 6) (P)

S Pringle presented three internal audit reports that were part of the 2023-24 year end audit reporting suite.

a) Mandatory review of the SFC Credit (student activity) return

The Committee noted:

- The College has reasonable procedures and controls over the collection of data for the credits return and assurance can be taken that the credits count for the College is not materially mis-stated.
- The systems used by the College are satisfactory.
- The 1 recommendation raised for 2022/23 has been implemented.
- The College's credit target for the academic year 2023/24, agreed between the SFC and the College, was 111,480. The Credits claimed for the year was 111,600, this was over the target.

b) Mandatory review of the awarding and payment of Educational Maintenance Allowance

The Committee noted:

- The Auditors reported that the information set out in the forms tested is in agreement with the underlying records.
- The College used the EMA funds in accordance with the SFC's conditions and the principles of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) programme.
- The Auditors were satisfied that the systems and controls of the administration and disbursement of these funds are adequate.
- There were no recommendations carried forward from 2022-23 and no further recommendations were made in relation to the 2023-24 EMA payments.

c) Mandatory review of the awarding and payment of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) student support funds

The Committee noted:

- The Auditors reported that the information set out in the forms tested was in agreement with the underlying records.
- The College used these funds in accordance with the guidance issued
- There were no recommendations carried forward from 2022-23 and no further recommendations were made in relation to the 2023-24 either SFC or SAAS payments.

The Committee noted the content of the reports and considered the conclusion of the reports when considering the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2024.

The Chair thanked all concerned for the hard work that went into ensuring that these audits were all completed timeously and accurately.

12. Internal Audit Reports (Paper 8) (P)

S Pringle highlighted key points to the Committee from the reports.

The Audit and Risk Committee were requested to consider and note the reports.

a. Payroll

The Committee noted:

- The Auditors provided a Strong level of assurance surrounding the processes in place to manage payroll.
- The Auditors identified 1 low grade recommendation for improvement and 1 observation for consideration.

b. GDPR/FOI

The Committee noted:

- The Auditors provided strong assurance over the controls and systems in place at the College around Data Protection and compliance with GDPR and FOI.
- The Auditors raised several good practice points and 2 observations for consideration.

13. 2023-24 Audit Report to the BOM and Auditor General (Paper 9) (R)

A Reid presented to the Committee a summary of the work conducted by the external auditors, Azets, to confirm the audit of the financial statements and other reports within the annual report and accounts, and the wider-scope audit responsibilities set out in Audit Scotland's Code of Audit Practice.

The Committee was requested to note the content of the Audit Report.

The Committee noted:

- The auditors expect to issue an unqualified opinion.
- The College had good administrative processes in place to prepare the annual accounts and the supporting working papers.
- The finance team have been proactive and provided good support to the audit team.
- The auditors have obtained adequate evidence in relation to the key audit risks identified in their audit plan.
- Treatment of PFI provision is in accordance with contract.
- Job evaluation treatment has been subject to several iterations which were out with the control of the College. The final accounting treatment which is reflected in the College accounts has been agreed upon between all parties.

- The College was required to make an accounting adjustment in regard to job evaluation after submitting accounts to the auditors. This change requires to be noted in the auditor's report.
- The treatment of SFC estate maintenance funding remains a significant risk to the financial sustainability of the College.
 - The auditors identified a material disclosure adjustment to the NPD future commitment note, which has been updated in the final set of financial statements.
 - The auditors identified no significant weaknesses in accounting and internal control systems during their audit.

The Committee noted the content of the Audit Report.

17. 2024-25 Internal Audit Plan Update (Verbal)

S Pringle gave a verbal update on internal audits, assuring the Committee that everything was on track as per the Internal Audit Plan for 2024-25.

21.AOB

There was a discussion around the volume of meeting papers presented to the Committee, the impact on members time, and possibilities of uploading papers earlier than one week prior, especially in regard to the year end papers, and/or adjusting the Committee Workplan, and potential use of AI to assist highlighting the main elements from papers.

There was also initial discussion around holding a joint meeting with the BRI Committee next year to discuss and approve the annual papers required.

It was agreed to discuss these points in more detail at a future meeting.

Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 18 March 2025, 4pm @ Kilmarnock Campus

P - Papers will be published on the College Website; R - Papers will not be published for reasons of commercial confidentiality or for reasons associated with data protection legislation; C/P - Confirmed minutes will be published on the College Website

RESERVED ITEMS ON THE NEXT PAGE

Audit & Risk Committee - Action and Decision Log
Meeting No 47 – 18 March 2025

(Paper 01(a))

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Reference	Details	Action Owner	Due Date	Action Decision	Open Complete Approved Declined
10.12.24	National Fraud Initiative	ARC46: D01	The Committee approved the National Fraud Initiative report	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	2023-24 Freedom of Information Annual Report	ARC46: D02	The Committee noted the 2023-24 Freedom of Information Annual Report and agreed that the Internal Audit Plan does not require to be reviewed.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	2023-24 Complaints Annual Report	ARC46: D03	The Committee noted the 2023-24 Complaints Annual Report and agreed that the Internal Audit Plan does not require to be reviewed.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2024	ARC46: D04	The Committee reviewed and recommended approval of the 2023-24 Board of Management Report and Financial Statements to the Board of Management, subject to some minor amendments.	NA	19.12.24	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Letter of Representation	ARC46: D05	The Committee recommended the Letter of Representation to the Board for approval.	NA	19.12.24	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	2023-24 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report	ARC46: D06	The Committee recommended the 2023-24 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board for approval.	NA	19.12.24	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Rolling Audit Action Plan	ARC46: D07	The Committee approved the removal of three recommendations following completion of the 2023-24-year end audits.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Strategic Risk Register	ARC46: D08	The Committee reviewed and approved the Strategic Risk Register for consideration and approval to the Board.	NA	19.12.24	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Auditor	ARC46: D09	The Committee approved the Annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Auditor.	NA	NA	Decision	Approved
10.12.24	Annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Auditor	ARC46: A01	Questionnaire will be sent out to Committee members early in 2025, and the overall results will be considered at March 2025 Committee along with a consideration of extending the current internal audit contract.	A Ritchie	18.03.2025	Action	Completed

Title of Meeting:	Audit and Risk Committee
Date:	18 March 2025
Title:	Annual Review of Effectiveness of External Auditor
Purpose:	This report presents the findings of the annual (2023-24) evaluation of the College external auditor, Azets Audit Services.
Recommendation:	The Audit and Risk Committee are requested to confirm it is content with the outcome of the annual effectiveness review.

1. Executive Summary

The document is a report on the annual review of the effectiveness of the College external auditor, Azets Audit Services. The report evaluates various aspects of the auditors' performance for the 2023-24 period.

Findings and Recommendations

The auditors were found to perform highly in audit quality, timeliness, compliance, cost efficiency, and received positive stakeholder feedback. Recommendations for continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, and periodic benchmarking were made.

2. Associated Risks

The associated risks with the consideration of the annual review of the effectiveness of external auditors can include independence and objectivity, quality of audit compliance with standards, communication and reporting, timeliness, stakeholder engagement, follow-up on recommendations. These risks highlight the importance of a robust and comprehensive review process to ensure the effectiveness of external auditors and to maintain the integrity of the College's financial reporting and governance processes.

The College does not consider that any of the highlighted risks require the College to review its strategic risks.

3. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EqIA)

There are no issues or recommendations contained within this paper that require an EqIA to be undertaken.

4. Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Alan Ritchie
Vice Principal, Finance and Infrastructure
18 March 2025

1. Background

The Audit and Risk Committee has a responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of the College external audit arrangements. The Audit and Risk Committee terms of reference includes the following requirement:

'Reviewing the scope and effectiveness of the work of the internal and external auditor using appropriate performance indicators.'

This report provides an evaluation of the College external auditor utilising Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other relevant benchmarks. The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall performance of the auditor in ensuring the financial integrity and compliance of the College.

2. Methodology

The evaluation was conducted based on the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks:

- a) **Audit Quality:** Measured by the accuracy and thoroughness of the audit report.
- b) **Timeliness:** Assessed by the adherence to audit timelines and deadlines.
- c) **Compliance:** Evaluated based on the auditors' ability to ensure compliance with relevant regulations and standards.
- d) **Cost Efficiency:** Analysed by comparing the cost of audit services with the value delivered.
- e) **Stakeholder Feedback:** Collected from key stakeholders including Board Committees and the Senior Leadership Team.

3. Findings

a) Audit Quality

The external auditor demonstrated a high level of accuracy and thoroughness in their audit report. The report provided comprehensive insights into the financial health of the College and identified key areas for improvement. The auditor attention to detail and adherence to auditing standards were commendable.

b) Timeliness

The auditor met the agreed-upon timelines and deadlines for audit completion. This ensured that the College's financial statements were prepared and submitted in a timely manner, facilitating effective decision-making by the management and the Board of Management.

c) Compliance

The auditor effectively ensured compliance with relevant regulations and standards, including the Scottish Funding Council, Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 and the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) requirements. Their thorough understanding of the regulatory framework contributed to the College's adherence to legal and financial obligations.

d) Cost Efficiency

The cost of audit services was found to be reasonable and aligned with the value delivered. The cost efficiency was further validated by benchmarking against similar institutions.

e) Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback from key stakeholders, including the Board of Management and the Audit and Risk Committee, was positive. Stakeholders appreciated the auditors' professionalism, expertise, and collaborative approach. The auditors' ability to communicate complex financial information in an understandable manner was particularly valued.

4. Conclusion

The evaluation of the College's external auditors, Azets, using KPIs and other benchmarks indicates a high level of performance and effectiveness. The auditors have consistently demonstrated audit quality, timeliness, compliance, cost efficiency, and positive stakeholder feedback. Their contributions have been instrumental in maintaining the financial integrity and compliance of the College.

5. Internal Recommendations

Following the conclusion of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the external auditor the College stakeholders will be looking to develop the following actions:

1. **Continuous Improvement:** The auditors should continue to seek opportunities for improvement in their audit processes and methodologies to enhance the quality and efficiency of their services.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Regular engagement with key stakeholders should be maintained to ensure that their feedback is continuously incorporated into the audit process.
3. **Benchmarking:** Periodic benchmarking against similar institutions should be conducted to ensure that the audit services remain competitive and aligned with industry standards.

Title of Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 March 2025

Title: **Annual review of effectiveness of Internal Auditor**

Purpose: This report presents the findings of the annual evaluation of the internal auditor, Wbg.

Recommendation: The Audit and Risk Committee are requested to:

- a. Note the findings of this review.
- b. Consider any recommendations for further enhancing the effectiveness of the internal audit function.

1. Executive Summary

This paper presents the results of the annual effectiveness review of the internal audit function at the College, based on the feedback collected from key stakeholders. The review assessed the performance of the internal audit function as effective in terms of its ability to provide independent assurance on the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes.

2. Associated Risks

The associated risks with the consideration of the annual review of the effectiveness of internal auditor can include independence and objectivity, quality of audit compliance with standards, communication and reporting, timeliness, stakeholder engagement, follow-up on recommendations. These risks highlight the importance of a robust and comprehensive review process to ensure the effectiveness of internal auditor and to maintain the integrity of the College's financial reporting and governance processes. The College does not consider that any of the highlighted risks require the College to review its strategic risks.

3. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EqIA)

There are no issues or recommendations contained within this paper that require an EqIA to be undertaken.

4. Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Alan Ritchie
Vice Principal, Finance and Infrastructure
18 March 2025

1. Methodology

- 1.1. The review was conducted through a structured questionnaire distributed to members of the Audit and Risk Committee, Senior Leadership Team, and other relevant stakeholders. The questionnaire covered various aspects of the internal audit function, including the quality of audit reports, the effectiveness of communication, the value added to the College, and the adequacy of resources.

2. Key Findings

1. Quality of Audit Reports

- The internal audit function consistently produces reports with a clear rating scale, identifying root causes and consequences of issues. The reports are delivered on a timely basis and are clear and concise.
- Feedback indicates that the reports support the Audit and Risk Committee in understanding the College's operations and identifying themes and trends.

2. Communication and Escalation

- The internal audit function has effective mechanisms in place for the escalation of issues requiring senior management or Audit and Risk Committee attention.
- Stakeholders appreciate the direct access to senior management and the Audit and Risk Committee, which facilitates timely resolution of issues.

3. Value Added to the College

- The internal audit function has added value to the College by identifying control weaknesses and providing recommendations for improvement.
- The audit findings are actioned by management on a timely basis, leading to enhanced controls and efficiencies.

4. Audit Planning and Methodology

- The internal audit function has a clearly defined audit plan for the year and over the longer term.
- The methodology is regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

5. Stakeholder Relationships

- The internal audit function is recognised by the College management team as providing quality challenge and valuable insights.
- Strong relationships have been established at the highest levels, including direct interactions with Board members and the Senior Leadership Team.

6. Resource Adequacy

- The internal audit function has sufficient resources, including a diverse talent pool with a broad mix of skills and experience, to deliver on its annual plan and handle ad hoc projects as necessary.
- Team members possess the technical knowledge and information systems auditing experience required to perform their roles effectively.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The annual effectiveness review demonstrates that the internal audit function at the College is performing effectively and adding value to the organization. The feedback from stakeholders highlights the quality of audit reports, effective communication and escalation mechanisms, and the positive impact on the College's governance framework. The internal audit function is well-resourced and recognised for its contributions to continuous improvement.

Title of Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 March 2025

Subject: **Internal Audit Service Contract Extension**

Purpose: This paper seeks approval from the Audit and Risk Committee to exercise the option to extend the internal audit contract for an additional two years, from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2027.

Recommendation: The Audit and Risk Committee is requested to approve the Wbg internal audit contract for the additional two years from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2027.

1 Executive Summary

The Audit and Risk Committee is requested to consider extending the internal audit contract with Wbg for two additional years, from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2027. The proposal is based on positive annual performance reviews of the Wbg audit services, which have consistently met or exceeded expectations. The extension aims to ensure continuity in high-quality internal audit services, supporting the College's governance and risk management efforts.

2 Associated Risks

There are no further risks required to be considered because of this report.

3 Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

An EDIA is not applicable to this paper given the subject matter.

4 Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Alan Ritchie
Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure
18 March 2025

1. Background

- 1.1. The internal audit function is a critical component of the College's governance framework, providing independent assurance on the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes. Wbg has been delivering internal audit services to the College since August 2022, and their performance has been subject to positive annual reviews to ensure continued effectiveness and value.

2. Performance Review

- 2.1. The College has undertaken an annual review of the effectiveness of the internal audit function, using Internal Audit Performance Indicators and feedback from Committee members and the College Senior Leadership Team. The Audit and Risk Committee has been satisfied with the progress and effectiveness of the planned 2023-24 internal audit work.
- 2.2. The most recent review was undertaken after the conclusion of the 2023-24 audit plan and considered under agenda item (6) at this meeting.
- 2.3. Previous reviews have consistently demonstrated that Wbg has met or exceeded the performance expectations set out in the contract. Key performance indicators include the timely delivery of audit reports, the quality of audit findings, and the responsiveness to management's needs.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1. The extension of the internal audit contract with Wbg will ensure continuity in the delivery of high-quality internal audit services, supporting the College's commitment to effective governance and risk management.
- 3.2. Given the positive performance reviews and the critical role of the internal audit function in maintaining the College's governance framework, it is recommended that the Audit and Risk Committee approve the extension of the internal audit contract with Wbg for an additional two year to 31 July 2027.

Title of Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 March 2025

Subject: **Internal Audit Reports**

Purpose: The paper provides an overview of the recently conducted internal audit reviews into:
a) Student Recruitment and Retention
b) Staff Recruitment

Recommendation: The Audit and Risk Committee is requested to consider and note the contents of the reports.

1 Executive Summary

Wbg have carried out the two audits as part of the Internal Audit Plan 2024-25. The table below sets out the findings.

Audit Area	Assurance Level	Recommendations
Student Recruitment and Retention	Strong	Nil
Staff Recruitment	Strong	One Low Recommendation

The full details of the audit work are included within the reports included within the papers.

2 Associated Risks

There are no further risks required to be considered because of this report.

3 Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

An EDIA is not applicable to this paper given the subject matter.

4 Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Stephen Pringle
Director of Internal Audit
Wbg

Liz Walker
Chief Financial Controller
18 March 2025



(Paper 05(a))

Ayrshire College

Internal Audit 2024-25

Staff Recruitment
February 2025

Overall Conclusion

Strong

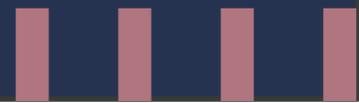


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The matters raised in this report came to our attention during the course of our audit and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made.

This report has been prepared solely for Ayrshire College’s individual use and should not be quoted in whole or in part without prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any third party.

We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal control rests with management and work performed by internal audit should not be relied upon to identify all system weaknesses that may exist. Neither should internal audit be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud or irregularity should there be any although our audit procedures are designed so that any material irregularity has a reasonable probability of discovery. Every sound system of control may not be proof against collusive fraud. Internal audit procedures are designed to focus on areas that are considered to be of greatest risk and significance.

1 Executive summary

Overview

Purpose of review

The purpose of this assignment was to review the College's recruitment arrangements. We reviewed the steps taken by the College to ensure that recruitment needs for staff are fully assessed and fulfilled.

This review formed part of our 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Plan.

Scope of review

Our objectives for this review were to assess whether:

- | The arrangements in place within the College for the recruitment of new staff are robust, fit for purpose and in line with current legislation.
- | Recruitment procedures are robust and as well as ensuring that the most suitable candidate is employed, ensure that a fair and transparent recruitment process is undertaken.
- | The relevant pre-employment checks (right to work, DBS, references etc.) have been undertaken prior to any new employee commencing their employment at the College.

Our approach to this assignment took the form of discussion with relevant staff, review of documentation and where appropriate sample testing.

Limitation of scope

There was no limitation of scope

1 Executive summary

Background

Candidate Assessment Form

All candidates are assessed using a Candidate Assessment Form, which serves as the primary method for interviewing. The Candidate Assessment Form includes a scoring system where candidates are rated from 0 to 3. During the interview, up to 8 questions are asked, all aligned with the key criteria outlined in the job description. The Candidate Assessment Form with the highest score in the form will be notified that they are successful.

Advertising

The College advertises all jobs through the main College website. The College also make use of external websites such as 'Total Jobs,' MyJobScotland' and 'LinkedIn.'

The job advert consists of four documents:

- | Job advert;
- | Job description;
- | Person specification; and
- | Applicant guidance.

Interviews

After shortlisting candidates, candidates will be invited to attend a face-to-face interview at a College campus. The interview consists of 3 panel members and the candidate themselves. The panel ask questions based on the main criteria in the job description which is then scored against the Candidate Assessment Form. Once the interview is complete the panel will send the Candidate Assessment Form to HR who will then review and begin their process of contacting the successful candidate after all candidates are interviewed. Interview invites are processed through the iTrent system that the College use.

1 Executive summary

Pre-Employment Checks

Candidates will be notified following the interview that they are the preferred candidate; from this pre-employment checks will be conducted before any formal offer is made. The pre-employment checks consist of two references, medical check, disclosure and right to work form. Once checks are satisfied the candidate will be made a formal offer.

HR System

The College utilise an HR system called iTrent system to monitor and maintain HR documentation. All personal data and interview invitations are monitored through this system.

Sample Testing

During our review, we completed sample testing of 15 new starts who joined the College from January 2024. We tested the recruitment procedure, recruitment arrangements and pre-employment checks.

Following our testing, we can confirm the following:

- | 14/15 candidates had a Recruitment Request Form in place, 1 candidate was voted in as Student President and therefore there was no requirement for a Recruitment Request, short-listing or candidate forms.
- | 13/15 candidates had a Short-listing Form, of the 2 candidates who did not have a Short-listing Form, 1 was voted in as Student President and the other candidate was recruited through an agency as the role was hard to fill.
- | 11/15 candidates had a Candidate Assessment Form, of the remaining 4, 1 candidate was voted in, 1 was appointed through an agency, 1 was appointed over 12 months ago so no data was held and lastly the Vice Principal of Skills and Enterprise did not pass one back to the HR Team but instead provided direct feedback.
- | All 15 candidates had a Contract in place.
- | Pre-employment checks had been completed for all 15 candidates before their start date.

1 Executive summary

Work Undertaken

In line with each objective, we completed the following work:

Objective 1: The arrangements in place within the College for the recruitment of new staff are robust, fit for purpose and in line with current legislation.

- | We held discussions with the Strategic People Partner and HR Advisors to gain an understanding of the recruitment processes in place at the College.
- | We selected a sample of 15 new starts, to confirm that the College had suitable arrangements in place and that the process was conducted in line with their recruitment process.

Objective 2: Recruitment procedures are robust and as well as ensuring that the most suitable candidate is employed, ensure that a fair and transparent recruitment process is undertaken.

- | We reviewed the shortlisting candidate forms, to assess whether candidates had been assessed fairly and correctly.
- | We reviewed whether new candidates had the relevant qualifications for the role required, to confirm the suitable candidate was employed.

Objective 3: The relevant pre-employment checks (right to work, DBS, references etc.) have been undertaken prior to any new employee commencing their employment at the College.

- | We selected a sample of 15 new starts and confirmed whether pre-employment checks were conducted and that they were satisfactory.

1 Executive summary

Conclusion

Overall conclusion

Overall Conclusion: Strong

Following our review, we can provide the College with a strong level of assurance surrounding the recruitment arrangements in place. We have raised several good practice points and 1 low grade recommendation for improvement.

Summary of recommendations

Grading of recommendations

	High	Medium	Low	Total
Staff Recruitment	0	0	1	1

As can be seen from the above table there were no recommendations raised which we have given a grading of high.

1 Executive summary

Areas of good practice

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.

1.	From our testing we can confirm that all 15 sampled new starters have successfully completed pre-employment checks prior to their official start date.
2.	The College use a short-listing template that clearly details how candidates are scored and against what factors they are scored. Additionally, the application form captures detailed and relevant candidate information that is used in the short-listing process.
3.	Ayrshire College uses various websites to advertise their job vacancies. We reviewed four websites and confirmed that all job postings are live and up to date.
4.	Applicant information is anonymised prior to the selection of candidates for interviews to enable a fairer recruitment process.
5.	The College has a dedicated `work for us` section on their website that provides potential applicants with guidance on the application process.

2 Benchmarking

We include for your reference comparative benchmarking data of the number and ranking of recommendations made for audits of a similar nature in the most recently finished internal audit year.

Staff Recruitment

Benchmarking				
	High	Medium	Low	Total
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	0	2	2	4
Number of recommendations at Ayrshire College	0	0	1	1

From the table above it can be seen that the College has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

3 Detailed recommendations

Recruitment and Selection Policy			
Ref.	Finding and Risk	Grade	Recommendation
1.	<p>An updated Recruitment & Selection Policy will allow the College to recruit whilst ensuring compliance, fairness, hiring efficiency and perceived bias.</p> <p>Our review found that the College does not currently have a Recruitment & Selection Policy in place. We acknowledge that this is currently in development.</p> <p>There is a risk that staff may not be fully aware of the Recruitment and Selection process, which may lead to mistakes or inaccuracies.</p>	Low	<p>We recommend that the College look to implement the Recruitment Policy as soon as possible to ensure staff are fully aware of the process involved.</p>

3 Detailed recommendations

Management response	Responsibility and implementation date
The College will implement the Recruitment and Selection Policy which is currently being developed.	<i>Responsible Officer:</i> Strategic People Partner <i>Implementation Date:</i> 31 May 2025

4 Audit arrangements

The table below details the actual dates for our fieldwork and the reporting on the audit area under review. The timescales set out below will enable us to present our final report at the next Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

Audit stage	Date
Fieldwork start	27 January 2025
Closing meeting	31 January 2025
Draft report issued	10 February 2025
Receipt of management responses	20 February 2025
Final report issued	21 February 2025
Audit & Risk Committee	18 March 2025
Number of audit days	5

5 Key Personnel

We detail below our staff who undertook the review together with the College staff we spoke to during our review.

Wbg			
Partner	Graham Gillespie	Partner	gg@wbg.co.uk
Director	Stephen Pringle	Director of Internal Audit	sp@wbg.co.uk
Senior	Colin McNeill	Internal Audit Senior	cmn@wbg.co.uk
Auditor	Shaan Ahmed	Internal Auditor	sna@wbg.co.uk

Ayrshire College			
Key Contact	Gillian Brown	Strategic People Partner	gillian.e.brown@ayrshire.ac.uk
Wbg appreciates the time provided by all the individuals involved in this review and would like to thank them for their assistance and co-operation.			

A Grading structure

For each area of review, we assign a level of assurance in accordance with the following classification:

Assurance Classification	
Strong	Controls satisfactory, no major weaknesses found, no or only minor recommendations identified.
Substantial	Controls largely satisfactory although some weaknesses identified, recommendations for improvement made.
Weak	Controls unsatisfactory and major systems weaknesses identified that require to be addressed immediately.
No	No or very limited controls in place leaving the system open to significant error or abuse, recommendations made require to be implemented immediately.

A Grading structure

For each recommendation, we assign a grading either as High, Medium, or Low priority depending on the degree of risk assessed as outlined below:

Grading	Classification
High	Major weakness that we consider needs to be brought to the attention of the Audit & Risk Committee and addressed by Senior Management of the College as a matter of urgency.
Medium	Significant issue or weakness which should be addressed by the College as soon as possible.
Low	Minor issue or weakness reported where management may wish to consider our recommendation.

Purpose of review

The purpose of this assignment is to review the College's recruitment arrangements. We will review the steps taken by the College to ensure that recruitment needs for staff are fully assessed and fulfilled.

This review forms part of our 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Plan.

Scope of review

Our objectives for this review are to assess whether:

- | The arrangements in place within the College for the recruitment of new staff are robust, fit for purpose and in line with current legislation.
- | Recruitment procedures are robust and as well as ensuring that the most suitable candidate is employed, ensure that a fair and transparent recruitment process is undertaken.
- | The relevant pre-employment checks (right to work, DBS, references etc.) have been undertaken prior to any new employee commencing their employment at the College.

Our approach to this assignment took the form of discussion with relevant staff, review of documentation and where appropriate sample testing.

Limitation of scope

There is no limitation of scope

Audit approach

Our approach to the review will be:



- | Discussion with key personnel to establish the current staff recruitment arrangements within the College.
- | A review of documents used in the recruitment process and assessment of these for adequacy.
- | Establishing who is involved with the recruitment process and enquire if any training has been given to those involved in the process.
- | Evaluating whether recruitment processes are carried out appropriately and in a consistent manner.
- | Ensuring that the Recruitment and Selection Policy (or equivalent) promotes a fair and transparent recruitment process.
- | For a sample of new employees, we shall ensure that all relevant pre-employment checks have been carried out prior to the individual commencing their employment at the College.
- | For a sample of new employees, we shall obtain the recruitment records and the personnel files for these and ensure that all contain evidence that they are kept up to date and that these include all necessary documentation.
- | Discuss with staff to ascertain how posts are advertised.

Potential key risks

The potential key risks associated with the area under review are:

- | The College's staff recruitment arrangements are not robust, fit for purpose and/or are not in line with current legislation which could lead to inappropriate staff being employed by the College.
- | In the absent of a fair and transparent recruitment process, the College may be open to legal challenge.
- | Where the relevant pre-employment checks have not been performed, the College may be in breach of its statutory requirements and/or may recruit an individual not suitable for employment at the College.



(Paper 05(b))

Ayrshire College

Internal Audit 2024-25

Student Recruitment
February 2025

Overall Conclusion

Strong



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The matters raised in this report came to our attention during the course of our audit and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all weaknesses that exist or all improvements that might be made.

This report has been prepared solely for Ayrshire College’s individual use and should not be quoted in whole or in part without prior written consent. No responsibility to any third party is accepted as the report has not been prepared, and is not intended, for any third party.

We emphasise that the responsibility for a sound system of internal control rests with management and work performed by internal audit should not be relied upon to identify all system weaknesses that may exist. Neither should internal audit be relied upon to identify all circumstances of fraud or irregularity should there be any although our audit procedures are designed so that any material irregularity has a reasonable probability of discovery. Every sound system of control may not be proof against collusive fraud. Internal audit procedures are designed to focus on areas that are considered to be of greatest risk and significance.

1 Executive summary

Overview

Purpose of review

We undertook a review of the arrangements in place surrounding student recruitment. Our review considered the suitability of the arrangements for gaining information in relation to courses, access to support, and course enrolment to ensure that the student experience is as positive as it can be. We reviewed the suitability of the policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.

This review formed part of our 2024/25 Annual Internal Audit Plan.

Scope of review

Our objectives for this review were to assess whether:

- | The College has robust policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.
- | The College has robust mechanisms in place with clear links between application, interview, acceptance and enrolment to ensure it manages student recruitment and enrolment in an efficient and effective manner.
- | The responsibility for student recruitment is clearly defined throughout the College.
- | The arrangements in place for gaining information in relation to courses, and access to support is well communicated and easily accessible by potential students.
- | The College has sufficient, generic as well as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of its courses, support, and facilities to potential students.

1 Executive summary

- | Methods of feedback (for both staff and students) are in place at the College regarding the recruitment process which contribute to the evaluation process.

Our approach to this assignment took the form of discussion with relevant staff, review of documentation and where appropriate sample testing.

Limitation of scope

There was no limitation of scope.

1 Executive summary

Background

Documentation

The College does not have a standalone Student Recruitment Policy. A policy was considered internally but it was felt to add little to no benefits. The lack of benefit was due to several factors, including: the admissions system being an all-encompassing, end-to-end system, the level of information on the College website and the Quality Cycle and Curriculum Development Planning Process being documented.

Recruitment Process

The student recruitment process involves the following stages, with guidance on each stage of the recruitment process being available to students via the College website:

- | Application;
- | Interview (if the course requires potential students to interview);
- | Offer (unconditional or conditional); and
- | Enrolment.

Our review tested a sample of ten students and confirmed that all ten students followed each applicable stage of the recruitment process.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of staff members involved in student recruitment are documented in their job descriptions which includes their job purpose, organisational position and their responsibilities in relation to student recruitment. Our review confirmed there are job descriptions in place for staff working in student recruitment.

1 Executive summary

Communication

Potential students can access information on courses and the recruitment process through the College website. The course section of the website allows them to view key information including entry requirements, course content and careers and further study. Students can also download the `My Ayrshire College` app, to access student information, learn about upcoming events and access support for mental health. The College also emails students each week in the 8 weeks prior to them commencing their course. Our review confirmed that the College sent seven weeks of `Keeping Warm` emails to the students joining the 2024/25 academic year.

Student Awareness

The College holds a variety of events to promote its courses and increase its awareness. The College displays these events in the events section of its website. Our review found that the following events were held by the College: UCAS discovery days, clearing days, course specific events and open days across its campuses. The Careers and Employability Team are involved in promoting the College through careers fairs, both for school pupils and for the Ayrshire public.

Feedback

Student feedback is sought in the form of an annual survey that is given to new students to assess their experience with the College, including the recruitment process. Our review tested the First Impressions Survey that was conducted in November 2024. The questions relating to the recruitment process received wholly positive responses with 98% of students agree that *`I was happy with the application process for my course`* and 93% saying *`I was happy with the communication I received from the College before I started`* .

Staff opinion is sought, via survey, following significant changes to the recruitment process with the most recent surveys being conducted in October 2021 and October 2022. Staff also have the option to share their opinion on the process through discussions with their Team and Heads of Department.

1 Executive summary

Work Undertaken

Our work undertaken for this review included the following:

Objective 1: The College has robust policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.

- | We discussed with staff and confirmed that there is no standalone student recruitment policy in place.
- | We reviewed the Online Services Overview document, to confirm that the student application process is documented.
- | We reviewed the College website, to confirm that key information on its courses is published and accessible to potential students.

Objective 2: The College has robust mechanisms in place with clear links between application, interview, acceptance and enrolment to ensure it manages student recruitment and enrolment in an efficient and effective manner.

- | We reviewed a sample of ten students, to confirm that they followed the student recruitment process.

Objective 3: The responsibility for student recruitment is clearly defined throughout the College.

- | We reviewed job descriptions, to confirm that they define staff members responsibilities.

Objective 4: The arrangements in place for gaining information in relation to courses, and access to support is well communicated and easily accessible by potential students.

- | We reviewed the College website, to confirm that information is easily accessible to potential students.
- | We reviewed a sample of `Keeping Warm` emails, to confirm that students are regularly contacted prior to starting their course.

1 Executive summary

Objective 5: The College has sufficient, generic as well as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of its courses, support, and facilities to potential students.

- | We reviewed the College website, to confirm that there were several awareness campaigns to attract potential students.
- | We discussed with staff, to confirm that they hold face to face recruitment events.

Objective 6: The College has sufficient, generic as well as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of its courses, support, and facilities to potential students.

- | We reviewed two students' surveys, to confirm that students have a positive view of the student recruitment process.
- | We discussed with staff, to confirm that staff feedback is sought on the student recruitment process.

1 Executive summary

Conclusion

Overall conclusion

Overall Conclusion: Strong

Following our review and testing, we are able to provide a strong level of assurance surrounding the Student Recruitment arrangements at the College. We have not raised any recommendations for improvement.

Summary of recommendations

Grading of recommendations

	High	Medium	Low	Total
Student Recruitment	0	0	0	0

As can be seen from the above table there were no recommendations raised.

1 Executive summary

Areas of good practice

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.	
1.	Student feedback is obtained annually through various surveys including the First Impression Survey conducted in November and December. Our review found that the most recent intake of students responded positively to the survey when questioned about their student experience.
2.	There is a clear process from students applying, to being offered a place and enrolling with the College. Information for each stage of this process is set out on the College website.
3.	For a sample of ten students, our review confirmed that their application was acknowledged, they received an interview (where applicable to the course), they were made an offer and enrolled in the College.
4.	The roles and responsibilities of staff involved in student recruitment are set out in their job descriptions.
5.	The College targets both school pupils and the wider public to increase the awareness of Ayrshire College. The College hosts career fairs, clearing days, department specific nights and tours of the College to increase its awareness.
6.	Students are provided with college related information from a variety of sources, to ensure that information is accessible. The College publishes information for prospective students on its website, via its College App, sends weekly `Keeping Warm` emails prior to commencing College to ensure students are made aware and supported.
7.	Staff feedback is also obtained through surveys, with surveys on student recruitment being conducted following periods of significant change.
8.	The College webpages use accessibility features which will adjust the text to ensure those with disabilities can view the information provided by the College.

1 Executive summary

The following is a list of areas where the College is operating effectively and following good practice.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 9. | The College works closely with Skills Development Scotland, and they are regularly in the College campuses to provide students with information on careers education. |
|----|---|

2 Benchmarking

We include for your reference comparative benchmarking data of the number and ranking of recommendations made for audits of a similar nature in the most recently finished internal audit year.

Student Recruitment

Benchmarking				
	High	Medium	Low	Total
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	0	0	1	1
Number of recommendations at Ayrshire College	0	0	0	0

From the table above it can be seen that the College has a lower number of recommendations compared to those colleges it has been benchmarked against.

3 Audit arrangements

The table below details the actual dates for our fieldwork and the reporting on the audit area under review. The timescales set out below will enable us to present our final report at the next Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

Audit stage	Date
Fieldwork start	27 January 2025
Closing meeting	30 January 2025
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Final report issued	21 February 2025
Audit & Risk Committee	18 March 2025
Number of audit days	6

4 Key personnel

We detail below our staff who undertook the review together with the College staff we spoke to during our review.

Wbg			
Partner	Graham Gillespie	Partner	gg@wbg.co.uk
Director	Stephen Pringle	Director of Internal Audit	sp@wbg.co.uk
Senior	Colin McNeill	Internal Audit Senior	cmn@wbg.co.uk

Ayrshire College			
Key Contact	Anne Campbell	Vice Principal- Skills and Enterprise	anne.campbell@ayrshire.ac.uk
	Wendy McColl	Head of Student Experience	wendy.mccoll@ayrshire.ac.uk
	Doreen Wales	Assistant Principal Student Experience and Quality Enhancement	doreen.wales@ayrshire.ac.uk
	Richard Simpson	Head of Business Intelligence	richard.simpson@ayrshire.ac.uk
	Gavin Murray	Assistant Principal Skills and Innovation	Gavin.murray@ayrshire.ac.uk

4 Key personnel

	Jennifer Anderson	Assistant Principal Skills and Innovation	jennifer.anderson@ayrshire.ac.uk
Wbg appreciates the time provided by all the individuals involved in this review and would like to thank them for their assistance and co-operation.			

A Grading structure

For each area of review, we assign a level of assurance in accordance with the following classification:

Assurance Classification	
Strong	Controls satisfactory, no major weaknesses found, no or only minor recommendations identified.
Substantial	Controls largely satisfactory although some weaknesses identified, recommendations for improvement made.
Weak	Controls unsatisfactory and major systems weaknesses identified that require to be addressed immediately.
No	No or very limited controls in place leaving the system open to significant error or abuse, recommendations made require to be implemented immediately.

A Grading structure

For each recommendation, we assign a grading either as High, Medium, or Low priority depending on the degree of risk assessed as outlined below:

Grading	Classification
High	Major weakness that we consider needs to be brought to the attention of the Audit & Risk Committee and addressed by Senior Management of the College as a matter of urgency.
Medium	Significant issue or weakness which should be addressed by the College as soon as possible.
Low	Minor issue or weakness reported where management may wish to consider our recommendation.

Purpose of review

We will undertake a review of the arrangements in place surrounding student recruitment. Our review will consider the suitability of the arrangements for gaining information in relation to courses, access to support, and course enrolment to ensure that student experience is as positive as it can be. We will review the suitability of the policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.

This review will form part of our 2024/25 Annual Internal Audit Plan.

Scope of review

Our objectives for this review are to assess whether:

- | The College has robust policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.
- | The College has robust mechanisms in place with clear links between application, interview, acceptance and enrolment to ensure it manages student recruitment and enrolment in an efficient and effective manner.
- | The responsibility for student recruitment is clearly defined throughout the College.
- | The arrangements in place for gaining information in relation to courses, and access to support is well communicated and easily accessible by potential students.
- | The College has sufficient, generic as well as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of its courses, support, and facilities to potential students.

| Methods of feedback (for both staff and students) are in place at the College regarding the recruitment process which contribute to the evaluation process.

Our approach to this assignment took the form of discussion with relevant staff, review of documentation and where appropriate sample testing.

Limitation of scope

There is no limitation of scope.

Audit approach

Our approach to the review will be:

| Obtain and review any policies and procedures in respect of the recruitment process at the College.

| Assess whether policies and procedures are robust and fit for purpose.

| Discussion with key personnel regarding the current recruitment process from application stage to enrolment and registration.

| Assess whether this is robust and fit for purpose with sufficient contact between the College and the potential student during the period.

| Discussion with key personnel regarding the monitoring process in place at the College in respect of student recruitment and retention.

| We shall obtain and evaluate the figures in relation to enquires converted to applications and applications converted to enrolments/ registration. Where possible we shall compare this with figures from the wider sector. We shall assess what action, if any, is taken by the College in relation to these figures.

| Discussion with key personnel to establish the process for reviewing and monitoring student recruitment. We shall evaluate this to ensure it is fit for purpose and being done on a timely basis.

| Discussion with key personnel surrounding the support arrangements in place for students enrolling, how these arrangements are assessed and whether feedback is gathered surrounding enrolment and the student experience.

Potential key risks

The potential key risks associated with the area under review are:

- | The College does not have robust policies and procedures in place surrounding student recruitment.
- | The College does not have robust mechanisms in place with clear links between application, interview, acceptance and enrolment to ensure it manages student recruitment and enrolment in an efficient and effective manner.
- | The College has ineffective measures in place for obtaining feedback from staff, students and student representatives. This therefore reduces the opportunity to improve the service provided by the College.
- | The responsibility for student recruitment is not clearly defined throughout the College.
- | The arrangements in place for gaining information in relation to courses, and access to support is not well communicated or easily accessible by potential students.
- | The College does not have sufficient, generic as well as targeted campaigns to raise awareness of its courses, support, and facilities to potential students.

Title of Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee

Date: 18 March 2025

Title: **2025-26 Draft Internal Audit Plan**

Purpose: The purpose of this report is to present the draft 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan. The plan has been developed to ensure comprehensive coverage of key risk areas and to provide assurance on the effectiveness of the College's internal controls, risk management, and governance processes.

Recommendation: The Audit and Risk Committee is requested to review and comment on the 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan.

1 Executive Summary

The 2025-26 Internal Audit Plan encompasses a wide range of areas, including financial systems, non-financial systems, strategy and planning, student-related audits, people, IT systems, governance, and funding. The plan is designed to address the College strategic risks, ensuring that the College's operations are efficient, effective, and compliant with relevant regulations.

As part of this review the College has developed the College Audit Needs Assessment (**Appendix 1**) which sets out the audit assignments previously undertaken against the areas which the College might undertake future audit assignments.

2 Associated Risks

There are no further risks required to be considered because of this report.

3 Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (EqIA)

There are no issues or recommendations contained within this paper that require an EqIA to be undertaken.

4 Publication

This report will be published on the College website.

Alan Ritchie
Vice Principal, Finance and Infrastructure
18 March 2025

1 Background

- 1.1 In June 2024, the Audit and Risk Committee approved the 2024-25 Internal Audit Plan, which also included the draft 2025-26 plan. The College Audit Needs Assessment (**Appendix 1**) indicates the audits that have been undertaken since 2020-21, the planned work for 2025-26 and has been expanded to include other areas which may be subject to future audit assignments.

2 College Audit Needs Assessment (CANA)

- 2.1 The CANA is split into sections and a commentary on the proposed internal audit assignments is noted below for consideration by the Committee. The College will as part of its presentation to the Committee indicate why these areas have been selected and what factors were considered in selecting the proposed audit assignments.

Draft 2025-26 Plan

Financial Systems

- Review of Financial Regulations
 - To examines the overall system of financial control and accountability within the College. This includes reviewing the Financial Regulations to ensure they provide practical guidance and control over the college's resources.
 - The audit will ensure that the College complies with all relevant legislation, including obligations to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

- Alternative / Non-SFC Funding Sources
 - The scope of the audit of alternative/non-SFC income would include several key areas to ensure that the College's financial practices are following relevant regulations and are effectively managed.
 - The scope will include identification and classification of income sources; compliance with regulations and policies; budgeting and forecasting, use of funds and reporting and transparency.

Non-Financial Systems

- External Communications – Website
 - The scope of the audit of external communications, including the website, would cover several key areas to ensure that the College's communication practices are effective, compliant, and aligned with strategic objectives.
 - The main aspects covered could include Communication Strategy and Policies, external communication channels, website content and management, compliance with regulations and feedback and improvement mechanisms

Strategy and Planning

- Infrastructure Strategy
 - The original plan was to review the Infrastructure Strategy, however as this Strategy was approved in December 2024 it is believe that to include it in the 2025-26 plan is too early. This work will be moved to 2027-28 to allow for the Strategy to be embedded into College operations.
- Strategic / Operational Planning
 - The scope of the audit of strategic/operational planning would cover several key areas to ensure that the College's strategic and operational plans are effectively developed, implemented, and monitored.
 - The main aspects covered will include alignment with strategic objectives, the planning processes, implementation and monitoring, communication and reporting and continuous improvement

Student

- Student Voice
 - The scope of the audit would cover whether the College has appropriate governance arrangements in place to allow for effective contribution from the student body to the operations of the institution. This may include examining the governance structures and the role of the Ayrshire College Student Association (ACSA); the constitution of the student association and assessing the effectiveness of student representation in decision-making processes.

IT Systems

- Cyber Incident Response Planning
 - The scope of the audit assignment will cover several key areas to ensure the organization is well-prepared to handle cyber incidents effectively. The scope will include aspects of a risk-based approach; cyber-awareness training; incident response procedures and monitoring and logging of events. These areas are critical to ensure that the College can effectively respond to and recover from cyber incidents, minimizing the impact on operations and protecting sensitive information.

Funding and Required

- These are set days to undertaken statutory audits and the management of the internal audit contract.

The Audit and Risk Committee are requested to review the Audit Needs Assessment considering:

- The strategic risks faced by the College.
- The overall coverage as shown in the College Audit Needs Assessment.
- The College strategic objectives

The Committee are requested to consider whether the draft 2025-26 plan is appropriate and if so the College and internal auditors will look to develop the high-level remit and timing for the implementation of the 2025-26 plan. The 2025-26 internal audit plan will be brought back to the next Committee meeting for approval.

Based on the discussion at the Committee, the College will also look to develop the plan that takes it to the end of the potential internal audit contract in 2026-27.

College Audit Needs Assessment (Paper 06(1))



Internal Control Area	Primary Strategic Risk	Residual Risk	Audit Area	Internal Audit Plan						
				2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Revised	2026-27 Planned	2027-28 Planned
Financial Systems	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Overall Financial Controls / Health Check		6	4	4		5	
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Review of Financial Regulations					5		
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Budget and Monitoring			6				
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Alternative / Non-SFC Funding Sources					5		
	Job Evaluation (2)	20	Payroll Review				5			
		20	Procurement and Tendering [†]		5					
		20	Treasury & Cash Management [‡]							
Non-Financial System	People and Culture (4)	12	Fraud Awareness		5					5
	N/a		Covid-19 Health and Safety	5						
	People and Culture (4)	12	Project Management							5
	People and Culture (4)	12	Complaints Handling	5					5	
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Marketing	5						
	People and Culture (4)	12	External Comms – Website					5		
	People and Culture (4)	12	Internal Comms - Intranet							
	N/a		Assurance Mapping							
Strategy and Planning	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Strategic / Operational Planning					5		
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Learning and Teaching Strategy						5	
	People and Culture (4)	12	People Strategy							5

Internal Control Area	Primary Strategic Risk	Residual Risk	Audit Area	Internal Audit Plan						
				2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Revised	2026-27 Planned	2027-28 Planned
	Investing in College Infrastructure (8)	9	Infrastructure Strategy / Estate Management			6		5		5
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Employer Engagement Strategy						5	
Student	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Curriculum Planning & Timetabling						5	
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Student Voice	5				5		
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Student Retention			5				
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Student Recruitment				6			
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Student Enrolment Procedures		5					
	People and Culture (4)	12	Safeguarding and Child Protection		5					
	Curriculum Offer (6)	12	Student Support	5						
People	People and Culture (4)	12	Continuing Professional Development						5	
	People and Culture (4)	12	Succession Planning							
	People and Culture (4)	12	Staff Recruitment				5			
	People and Culture (4)	12	Sickness and Absence Reporting							
IT Systems	Data Security (3)	16	IT Systems Administration				5			
	Data Security (3)	16	Cyber Incident Response Plan					5		
	Data Security (3)	16	IT Security			5				
Governance	People and Culture (4)	12	Corporate Governance			5				
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Risk Management		5					5
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery							
	People and Culture (4)	12	GDPR Compliance				3			
	People and Culture (4)	12	Freedom of Information				3			

Internal Control Area	Primary Strategic Risk	Residual Risk	Audit Area	Internal Audit Plan						
				2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Revised	2026-27 Planned	2027-28 Planned
	People and Culture (4)	12	Whistleblowing							
Funding	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	SSF	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	EMA		4	4	4	5	5	5
	Financial Sustainability (1)	20	Credits	5	6	6	6	6	6	6
Required	N/a		Follow Up	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
	N/a		Audit Management	7	6	6	6	6	6	6
			Total Days	50	50	55	55	55	55	55

ⁱ Excluded from the plan as procurement is reviewed by APUC and reported to Committee

ⁱⁱ Excluded from the plan as the College has limited influence over its cashflow and treasury management