

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

5 FEBRUARY 2021

Governors: Ms Muriel Gray (Chair), Ms Kristen Bennie (from item 2021.37.2), Ms Polly Christie, Ms Ann Faulds, Professor John French (until item 2021.37.2), Mr Thomas Greenough, Dr Marty Herbert (except item 2021.37.4), Dr Kate Lampitt Adey, Mr Alessandro Marini, Professor Penny Macbeth, Mr Michael McAuley, Mr Habib Motani (until item 2021.37.4), Mr Harry Rich, Mr James Sanderson, Professor Sarah Smith, Mr Andrew Sutherland, Ms Lesley Thomson and Mr Tsz Wu.

Attendees: Mr Allan Atlee (Item 2021.36 onwards), Ms Lesley Coyle (Item 2021.37.4 and 5), Mr Alan Horn (Item 2021.37.4 and 5), Ms Eleanor Magennis (Item 2021.36), Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam (Item 2021.36 onwards), Mr Andrew Menzies (Item 2021.36 onwards).

Governance Office: Dr Craig Williamson (Registrar and Secretary), Ms Lisa Davidson (Assistant Secretary to the Board).

[This meeting was held via video-conference.]

2021.33 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, in particular Mr Spike Wright to his first meeting of the Board. Apologies were noted from Ms Kathy Molloy.

2021.34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following professional relationships were referenced: CMS (Mr McAuley, Ms Faulds), Graven (Dr Herbert, Mr Sutherland, Ms Thomson), GSASA (Mr Marini and Mr Wright), Page\Park (Mr Sutherland), Scottish Futures Trust (Ms Faulds).

2021.35 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CHAIR'S EFFECTIVENESS: FEEDBACK FROM THE BOARD INTERMEDIARY

The Board Intermediary confirmed that she had engaged with all members of the Board of Governors in January 2021 regarding the Annual Review of Chair's Effectiveness exercise and had held a series of one-to-one meetings with Governors, all of which were positive.

The Board Intermediary reported that there was clear support for the Chair and the way she conducted the Board of Governors meetings. The Chair's evident positive commitment to the institution had been commented upon by many Governors and there had been praise for the way she ran meetings which invariably had, particularly in the recent period, sizable agendas. Members had also commented on the benefits of the oral updates from committee convenors in that they better enabled the Board to have a fuller insight into the work of the Board committees and the detailed consideration provided in advance of proposals being brought forward for Board approval. Members had also appreciated the opportunity provided during the Member Contribution exercise in November 2020 to meet with the Chair on a one-to-one basis.

Members had acknowledged that holding meetings via video conferencing in the past session (as a consequence of COVID 19) had held some challenges, however Board meetings had been

well run and the business had been addressed effectively. The Board Intermediary noted that several Governors had expressed the view that they had found it easier to contribute via the Zoom meetings rather than the more conventional face-to-face occasions, though most Governors had indicated that they were looking forward to the time when in-person Board of Governors meetings could resume. Until such time, Governors were keen that further opportunities for them to engage with the life of GSA were explored, even during periods where the institution was operating under the social distancing regulations.

The Board Intermediary confirmed that the detailed feedback from her meetings with Board members had been provided to the Chair and a copy of the summary report had been lodged with GSA's Registrar and Secretary.

2021.36 ESTATES MATTERS

.1 Reid Building Reinstatement Works [Paper B]

The Director of Estates provided an overview of Paper B, which had been considered and recommended to the Board of Governors for approval by the Business and Estates Committee meeting of 19 January 2021.

Following discussion, the Board **approved**:

- the like-for-like cladding and glazed screen replacement at a total project cost of [REDACTED] (including VAT) of which approval of [REDACTED] (including VAT) was requested at this stage to take the project to RIBA Stage 4.
- that the Business and Estates Committee was granted delegated authority to approve the technical elements of the cladding selections (i.e. sample panel and glazed screen) that had no cost implications. It was recognised that this may require single item Business and Estates Committee meetings, should programme timings necessitate this.

The Board noted the potential risk detailed in the paper to the overall timeline should the chosen glass panel supplier be unable to achieve an acceptable match during the project design phase, and the measures GSA proposed to put in place to mitigate this risk.

2021.37 STRATEGIC PLANNING

.1 Strategic Planning Objectives

The Chair set the parameters for the strategic planning session and shared her reflections on the responsibilities of the Board to guide and approve the future strategic direction of GSA. Members were encouraged to share their insights, concerns and views throughout the course of the session.

.2 GSA: 2020 Highlights

The Director delivered a presentation which focussed on GSA's many successes, including those of its staff, students and alumni, over the past calendar year. The Director also highlighted events such as the digital Winter School held in January 2021 and the well-received PhD Digital Showcase in December 2020, with the latter providing a platform to display GSA's high quality research outputs. The presentation was warmly welcomed by members, and it was suggested that the Director continued to provide similar presentations, albeit on a smaller scale, as part of her report to standard Board meetings. When in-person meetings were able to resume,

members were also keen to participate in events and tours which would enable them to meet staff and students, and deepen their understanding and knowledge of GSA.

It was agreed that the slides would be circulated after the meeting to enable members to access the digital content.

[Action: **Assistant Secretary to the Board**]

Members discussed the opportunities that GSA could explore in greater detail, which ranged from collaborations with Glasgow City Council in harnessing GSA's potential as a key driver of Glasgow's creative economy, to prospective partnerships with innovation, business and Europe-based HEIs. In terms of the latter, GSA would explore the potential of the newly established Turing Scheme, and other developments in this sphere, following the cessation of the UK's access to the Erasmus Scheme.

The Board recognised the opportunities that the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) offered GSA to make a positive impact in a variety of activities. The Director highlighted that these ranged from GSA being a hub for Scotland-wide student involvement, to a timely showcase for the institution's ambitious plans for the sustainability of the Mackintosh Building. GSA was also giving careful consideration to partnership opportunities. Members were keen to learn about GSA's detailed plans in this regard and suggested that the Director set these out more fully at future Board meetings.

On a related point, members were in agreement that it would be timely for the Board to consider in detail a sustainability action plan, which would articulate the many elements of good practice already in existence and set ambitious yet achievable targets.

[**Secretary's note:** It was subsequently agreed that Professor French and the President of the Students' Association would submit a paper on draft principles for sustainability to the March 2021 Board meeting.]

.3 Context Setting, Opportunities and Challenges

The Director shared insights regarding her first eight months at GSA, highlighting the many positive aspects of the institution, in particular its passionate, committed staff and talented students. The Senior Leadership Group had been strengthened recently by several appointments. The Director was considering how this could be further enhanced.

It was important for GSA to understand its place in the sector, how it measured up to its peers, and be able to articulate clearly its strengths to its internal and external stakeholders. GSA's graduates were potentially its greatest advocates and the Creative Network offered a wide variety of opportunities for collaboration for GSA and its alumni. In terms of the Mackintosh Building project, once work on the reconstruction was underway, GSA's convening power would be further enhanced, and it offered opportunities for GSA to demonstrate, not only its ability to manage an estates project of historic significance but also to showcase how this additionally benefitted GSA's research and learning and teaching activities.

The Director set out her objective for GSA to put excellence at the centre of all endeavours and to actively seek ways of building additionality and choice into the student experience. Considerable digital expertise resided in some areas of the institution and there were diverse prospects for new markets, including the delivery of on-line programmes and potential collaborations with industry partners, highlighted by the necessary focus on digital learning in the past year. The President of the Students' Association also highlighted the potential of a Stow garden, not only as a positive focus for GSA's staff and students but also for residents of Garnethill. The Director welcomed this suggestion but noted that there was a considerable

amount of building work programmed for the Stow Building and from a practical perspective it was likely that this would need to be undertaken before plans for the development of a garden could be put into action.

The Director also noted the challenges faced by the institution and highlighted that a key initial focus would be re-building trust with staff and students through a series of careful, consistent engagements. The Director was keen to engage with staff and students regarding their experience of GSA, recognising that different groups had different priorities, and to explore how enhanced communication could democratise the running of the institution. The Deputy Director Academic was focused on addressing issues pertaining to learning and teaching and the student experience which had been raised in successive national and internal surveys.

The Director was of the view that, while certain matters may be addressed relatively quickly, there was a considerable amount of work to be undertaken including significant estates projects over and above the reconstruction of the Mackintosh Building. Therefore, following reflection on the size of the task, and the capacity of the senior team, the Director suggested it would be sensible to develop a five-year Strategic Plan, comprising a three-year stabilisation period with a pause and review point which would allow the plan to be re-positioned, if appropriate, at that stage.

Members welcome these insights from the Director.

.4 Key Performance Indicators and Metrics

The Director, together with members of the Senior Leadership Group, provided a detailed presentation, which drew attention to the top ten traits of a successful institution and offered a view on where GSA was currently positioned and proffered suggestions for potential Key Performance Indicators¹ (KPIs) which GSA could apply to the forthcoming Strategic Plan.

Members discussed the various options and offered insights regarding approaches taken in their individual organisations, and other areas in which GSA should consider setting a KPI. It would be important for GSA to ensure that when KPIs were set for the Strategic Plan, they were both realistic and measurable. Further, when setting goals for the institution, there should be a KPI in place to measure GSA's success in achieving its objective. It was also highlighted that the Institutional Risk Register should also dovetail with the agreed KPIs.

Following her presentation, the Director thanked members for their insights. It was agreed that the slides would be circulated after the meeting.

[Action: **Assistant Secretary to the Board**]

.5 Strategic Plan Workshop: Strategy, Values and Priorities

The Director provided a brief update regarding the stakeholder workshops which would shortly take place with a variety of groups, including staff, students, alumni, employers and potential applicants. The Director also provided an update relating to the revised timelines for the development of the final Strategic Plan, which had shifted slightly owing to the continuing COVID-19 situation. In addition to involving key members of the Senior Leadership Group in this important exercise, the Director and wider project steering group had also decided to engage external consultants to facilitate the stakeholder workshops.

¹ Financial, Learning and Teaching, Research, People, Sustainability and International.

An overview was provided of the workshop which would focus on GSA's forward strategy, values and priorities, and Ms Lesley Thomson, Vice Chair, provided members with a reminder of the guiding principles which were discussed and agreed at the February 2020 strategic Away-day.

Subsequent to the workshop session, the following feedback was provided:

- At the end of the next strategic planning period, GSA should be in a position to demonstrate all key traits of a strong institution by its evidential achievement of its carefully considered KPIs.
- That the organisation should continue its period of transformation, demonstrating by its open and transparent leadership approach that its staff are valued and supported, and student feedback is heard and responded to. A helpful starting point may be to explore further in conversations with staff and students the perception of GSA's formal structure and how decisions are made and communicated within the institution.
- It was important that GSA maintained its independence as a Small Specialist Institution.
- GSA as an organisation should aim to make a positive social impact, and support and encourage its staff, students and alumni individually to do the same. GSA should be an open, accessible, and inclusive place that always strives to care, share and include all people through its learning and teaching, work, community projects and exhibitions.
- GSA should, through its demonstrable commitment to sustainability, articulate how it is prioritising addressing the challenge of the climate emergency across all areas of activity and strategic decision making.
- GSA should articulate more clearly its potential to be a leader in Glasgow's creative economy.
- The Plan should reflect that while GSA is an institution firmly rooted in Glasgow, it is also an art school with global reach in terms of its influence, impact, student population and alumni network.
- That GSA's approach to all projects should always include broad exploration of potential additional opportunities that these may offer.
- Members would welcome further discussion regarding the value of the physical space in Forres and China.

The Director would reflect on feedback provided by the Board and it was anticipated that a further update on the progress of the development of the Strategic Plan would be provided to the Board in March 2021.

The Chair thanked members for their valuable contributions and honesty in sharing their insights throughout the day. The Chair also thanked the Director and members of the Senior Leadership Group for their considerable input and facilitation of the day.

2021.38 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

2021.39 FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS

Monday 29 March 2021, 11 am
Thursday 17 June 2021, 11 am.

**Ms Lisa Davidson
Assistant Secretary to the Board
4 March 2021**