

At Glasgow and via MS Teams of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland on Friday 29 January 2021 at 10:00am being a meeting of the Board of Governors

PRESENT	Andrew Butcher (AB) Morag Campbell (MC) John Craig (JC) (President SU) Stuart Cross (SC) Susan Lee Kidd (SLK) Professor Donald MacRae (DM) Sharon Mair (SM) Carol Main (CM) Professor Dorothy Miell (DXM)	Zweyla Mitchell Dos Santos (VP SU) Ed Monaghan (EM) Agnes Robson (AR) Philip Rodney (PR) Caroline Roxburgh (CR) Jean Sangster (JS) Professor Jeffrey Sharkey (PJS) (Principal) Maria Taylor (MT)
IN ATTENDANCE	Janette Harkess (JH) Jackie Russell (JR) Lindsey Shields Alan Smith (AS) Stephen Broad (SB) Helen McVey (HM) Gordon Munro (GM)	(Director of External Relations) (Director of Human Resources) (Secretary) (Director of Finance and Estates) (Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange) (Director of Business Development and Interim Director of Drama, Dance, Production and Film) (Director of Music)
IN THE CHAIR	Nick Kuenssberg (NK)	

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the Assistant Principal, Dr. Lois Fitch and the Board sent best wishes to the family.

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 9 DECEMBER 2020

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

There were no other matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda.

5. REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

The report from the Principal was received and noted. He reported specifically on:

- the pandemic longevity causing extreme stress for staff and students; the RCS had got through the initial stages of the pandemic, but this stage was more challenging;
- this next phase, keeping the thread of the arts going and the RCS alive was more important than ever and took priority;
- lobbying Scottish Government (SG), with the Association of European Conservatoires' help for a replacement to Erasmus the loss of which has been detrimental to the RCS;
- working with national and local companies, for example the National Theatre of Scotland, Red Note and Scottish Ballet was very supportive of the potential for multi-platform and hybridity in the RCS; and
- the Music for Scotland partnership and combining resources with MEPG to have a

programme for SG to use; the initial meeting with SG Ministers John Swinney and Fiona Hyslop had been positive and supportive and the RCS was seeking for this to be a SNP manifesto issue.

The Principal invited comments from HM who drew attention to:

- the particularly complex environment especially returning after the Christmas break;
- trying to jump the curve and provide more clarity in planning for the rest of the academic year in order to reassure Drama, Dance Production and Film (DDPF) students;
- trying to get the right balance in terms of the constraints and what was possible within the guidance;
- resilience levels were lower than before when working with staff and students;
- being constructive and proactive in trying to create the best experience for DDPF students;
- the interrelation between the production programme and working constructively with other disciplines;
- how open and consultative conversations in identifying the constraints had worked well with DDPF students; and
- the full planning production throughput was now in place for Terms 2, 3 and even 1 of the next academic year in the event of the continuation of formal restrictions..

There was general discussion amongst Governors around what could be learnt from this and planning for the future.

The Principal invited comments from GM who drew attention to:

- Opera was facing significant challenges in the School of Music (SoM) and, following the cancellation of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, the planned production of *Flight!* by Jonathan Dove had been cancelled. SoM was meeting its opera students to give them agency on specific decisions for the remainder of the opera programme;
- instrumental discipline: assessments in SoM were ongoing and they had carefully scoped for certain scenarios and contingencies; students were recording and doing exams live online with remote examiners;
- students studying remotely were sending recorded videos for assessment;
- the constraints on coming into the building meant ensemble classes were particularly impacted and a scoping exercise would be underway with Head of Artistic Planning to enable ensemble activities up to June;
- scoping on the end of session assessments was underway and the aim was to do these live in May with a back-up scenario should this not be possible; and
- Bachelor of Education (Music) students on teaching placements in Scottish Secondary Schools had been impacted as a result of the pandemic. Colleagues are engaging with the Scottish Council of Deans of Education and the General Teaching Council for Scotland so that students could graduate safely.

The Principal invited comments from SB, who drew attention to:

- the significant impact the pandemic has on the preparation for REF and the further contingencies on the deadline of 31 March 2021 which was challenging;
- the continued efforts to send out proactive and positive messages e.g. the RCS iHub, working on large bids for external funding, taking research to wider audiences, the presentation with Glasgow School of Art and Queen Margaret University at the OECD event using SHIFT as a well-received case study;
- signing up to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat as a UK-wide initiative,
- using all resources to support students to the fullest extent and keep them on the programme;
- the continued need to keep RCS students supported; and
- the recent publications and completed projects from RCS researchers portrayed incredible resilience.

From the Transitions programme perspective DXM referred to the recent doctoral completion of a strategic studentship funded by the RCS over six years and would refer this to the Fair Access Committee.

There was general discussion amongst Governors as to:

- the activity of Research and Knowledge Exchange being very encouraging;
- Interface, the rise in applications from businesses wanting to work with Universities and how the mechanism does not always work well for the creative and cultural sector; and the recognition that partnership was so important for research at the RCS and the wider impact the work has; and
- Bethany Whiteside's work had been picked up by the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The Principal invited comments from JH who drew attention to:

- working closely with recruitment colleagues to offer digital recruitment, for example, on open days and Instagram sessions which had been well received;
- updating the RCS digital perspective with the realistic experience of our students during this academic year, so that the message was realistic and positive; and
- the success of the Home From Home team's collaboration and activities offered over the festive break. Home from Home 2 was coming soon.

The Principal invited comments from JR who drew attention to:

- contending with staff's concern especially with the SG conflicting guidelines;
- staff's anxiety caused with the new virus strain and the resulting health concerns;
- schools being off for a considerable time and the impact on some staff having to simultaneously home school;
- the willingness to be flexible with staff and help with managing expectations that staff and students are instantly available whilst working from home;
- the extension of the furlough scheme until April; and
- ensuring staff have support if they are coming into the building.

6. REPORT FROM THE STUDENTS' UNION

The President of the Students' Union report was received and noted. JC drew attention to his full report and highlighted the:

- weekly, collegiate meetings with RCS Directors and RCS COVID management teams, for example, to prioritise access to campus for ballet and music students;
- SUP's regular, almost daily communication to students on SG guidance but also to share positive messages;
- calendar of events and regular activities to boost students' wellbeing and health, for example free sports classes;
- SUP's continued attendance at meetings with NUS Scotland, Conservatoires UK Student Network and SG and the strong relationship with the NUS Scotland President, despite RCS being a small specialist institute;
- focus on diversity; the RCS Black Union and the SU Cultural Diversity officers have been successful in engaging with and supporting students from minority backgrounds;
- SFC funding reality and how the proportion given to the RCS to support students was not equitable; and
- concern about staff resource and support offered by staff to the Students Union, especially as the Academic Registrar was leaving the RCS in the near future.

There was general discussion amongst Governors acknowledging the SUP's true leadership and on the continuation of resource and financial support to the Students Union at a critical time. PJS and NK offered to support to the SUP for further SG funding.

7. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC BOARD

The summary report of the meeting of 13 January 2021 was received and noted. The Principal updated Governors on the RCS Korea proposal and drew attention to:

- commissioning legal counsel in Korea to advise on governance and risk;
- the sub-group including the Vice-Principal of Academic Planning and Technological Innovation at the University of Glasgow;
- the positive meeting with the key partner that morning to consider the proposal;
- the next steps and checks on risks associated in engaging with the International Free Economic Zone for the city of Incheon; and
- the potential value of an international footprint and overseas partnership for the RCS.

There was general discussion amongst Governors on the benefits and the management reach;

PJS advised of the process to manage the checks on financial, legal, risk analysis and governance.

8. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

- 8.1 The summary report of the meeting held on 15 January 2021 was received and noted. DM referred to the frequent meetings before and after this date and thanked the Principal, the Assistant Principal and the Finance team for their support, especially when working from home and dealing with the day to day implications of the pandemic. DM asked Governors to note under “general purposes”, the external review of RCS cyber security, which report would be shared with Governors.
- 8.2 The TRAC Return for 2019-2020 was received **and approved** by the Board for onward submission to the Scottish Funding Council. DM drew Governors’ attention to the margin for sustainability and investment being outwith the recommended range; given forecasts of future deficits, the resolution of this was being addressed.
- 8.3 The Management Accounts to November 2020 were received and noted. DM highlighted the following:
- (i) total income was slightly ahead of budget, total expenditure slightly lower than budget and combining these figures meant a £350,000 surplus at this point in the year;
 - (ii) for the full year, the RCS was facing a reduction in tuition fee income for short courses but there were some savings due to reduced activity;
 - (iii) despite managing to retain the cash balances it would be more challenging to do this till the year end;
 - (iv) the forecast deficit for the whole year ending July 2021 had increased to £2.29 million;
 - (iv) student numbers for this year were holding up so far but the situation remained volatile; and
 - (v) if the numbers showed the ‘normal’ pattern of behaviours, the RCS could still make this year’s budget, using the full remaining contingency built in for student numbers.

DM invited AS for comment and attention was drawn to:

- student numbers considered at the recent committee meeting were encouraging; the drop-out rate had not been unusual relative to previous years;
- there was a fair amount of contingency left as a buffer towards other headwinds such as having longer restrictions in place;
- grappling with the challenge of Opera and Musical Theatre programmes and not being at the Edinburgh International Festival for a second year running and accommodating the deferred Musical Theatre cohort;
- accommodation was a moving target with regard to potential refunds in the event of a further tightening of restrictions on RCS ability to operate a blended learning environment; and
- details were awaited on SG’s recent announcement of additional funding support for student hardship.

9. REPORT FROM THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The summary report from the meeting of 13 January 2021 was received and noted. CM emphasised the following points:

- (i) the mixed messages at the start of term and how well these were dealt with, flexibility being key;
- (ii) the RCS building and estates were safe and there were no known cases of transmission of the virus on campus;
- (iii) the Health and Safety Action Groups were all up to date;
- (iv) people in the committee working together which was a great strength; and
- (v) mental health deterioration with students and staff was an on-going issue.

10. REPORT FROM THE DEVELOPMENT AND FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

The summary report from the meetings of 23 November 2020 and 8 January 2021 was received. PR reported on:

- (i) the big project was the engagement of the More Partnership; they have produced a draft case for support which was currently with donors for edit and review. The main feedback

- was that RCS needed to focus on building long term relationships. The More Partnership would be presenting a strategy along with targets at the next committee meeting in March
- (ii) there would be time before the April Board to present a Business Plan for the Trust setting out aims, ambitions and what investment may be needed;
 - (iii) doing a lot of work to support the ambitious strategy going forward and to simplify structures;
 - (iv) being ahead of budget, thanks to Fundraising team, which was encouraging especially during a pandemic
 - (v) looking at successful corporates with interest in the arts to provide funding, for example Amazon and collaboration with Netflix;
 - (vi) strategic conversations with the International Advisory Board to make it more transparent and easier to engage with;
 - (vii) encouraging all Governors to help the committee; it was fairly small but always welcomed new initiatives and support from Governors; and
 - (viii) being in a position to report more fully at the April Board meeting.

NK referred to:

- the more detailed report, which went to the Finance & General Purposes committee, should be tabled for the Development & Fundraising Committee and circulated to all Board members;
- how important it was to have Governors' support of Company of Donors in terms of donations however small in the new RCS year; and
- the role of alumni going forward.

11. Board appraisal outcomes

The summary report was received. The Chair commented on:

- the uplifting feedback received from Governors which endorsed what good work the Principal and team, staff and students were doing;
- the Principal should continue to seek input, ideas and support from Governors;
- using Governors as mentors and buddies for new governors and staff governors; and
- the informal Board meeting focusing on a couple of key areas which would be arranged early in March.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Board

23 April 2021

25 June 2021

28 January 2022

22 April 2022

24 June 2022

Graduations

Thursday 1 July 2021 cancelled

Thursday 28 October 2021 tbc

AY 2021/22:

29 October 2021

8 December 2021* (10.45am)

AGM

Wednesday 8 December 2021

Graduations

Thursday 17 July 2022

Thursday 27 October 2021 tbc

13. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

NK referred to the Secretary's and MT's work in drafting of the rules for the election of the Chair. This would go to the Nominations Committee for consideration next week and then back to the Board for approval.

NK thanked the Secretary for her work with the Board over the last two years and wished her well.

12. PAPER FOR INFORMATION

The REF 2021 Progress Report, January 2021 paper and the Music for Scotland Manifesto papers were received and noted.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING OF 29 JANUARY 2021

Item No.	Person(s)	Action	By/when
11.	Secretary	Arrange an informal Board of Governors meeting in March	Immediately