Item 06a

Telephone
+44 (0)141 630 5000
Fax
+44 (0)141 630 5001
Email
info@glasgowkelvin.ac.uk

www.glasgowkelvin.ac.uk

Glasgow Kelvin College
Springburn Campus
123 Flemington Street
Glasgow G21 4TD

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IP/AMcK: 0120920

1 September 2020

Janie McCusker
Chair, Glasgow Colleges Regional Board
(Sent by email: janie.mccusker@gcrb.ac.uk)

Dear Janie

At last night's Board of Management meeting the allocation of additional funding to support the provision of ICT equipment to tackle digital poverty was discussed. The outcome of the meeting is that I have been instructed to write to you to express the extreme disappointment of the Board of Management of Glasgow Kelvin College at the way in which the allocation has been done by GCRB to the clear and obvious disadvantage of Glasgow Kelvin College.

Let me say at the outset that there was no suggestion that GCRB had acted in any way improperly in the allocation of the funding but our Board's view is that they have not acted in the best interests of Glasgow Kelvin College and more importantly its students.

As you well know Glasgow Kelvin College has by far the highest proportion of students from SIMD 10 and SIMD 20 postcodes of any college in Scotland and therefore its students are proportionally more likely to suffer from digital poverty than students from any other college in Scotland.

Our Board heard the case put at the recent GCRB P & R Committee by our Principal where he outlined the perceived shortcomings in the methodology used by SFC to distribute this funding and I understand that the Chair of the P & R acknowledged that SFC's methodology has not favoured Glasgow.

I have raised my concerns with Martin Boyle over the methodology used by GCRB to distribute the funding within Glasgow. It was interesting that Alastair Milloy independently raised the same concerns. Martin indicated that GCRB had no flexibility to use a different methodology from that used by SFC to distribute the funding and also indicated that there was no time to come up with a regional solution. I am afraid that my Board beg to differ on both counts.

Firstly, the funding allocation was in two parts, FE and HE, and the guidance to individual colleges was that their total funding allocation could be used to support digital poverty as the colleges best saw fit ie. some of the HE allocation could be spent on FE learners. Secondly, our understanding is that GCRB is not bound by the 2013 Act to distribute funding in any particular way. Therefore there was clearly scope for GCRB to use a different methodology.

As for the time constraint, you will recall that in June of this year GCRB distributed £95K to the three Colleges to address digital poverty. In that case a different methodology was used and it is not a huge exercise to come up with a methodology which better reflects poverty. After this distribution I wrote to Martin Boyle expressing my concern that, using the number of core credits as a basis to distribute these funds rather than SIMD 10 and 20 data, which is a measure of poverty, was detrimental to the College and not in accordance with the aims of the distribution. At that point Martin agreed to consider my concerns at similar funding allocations in the future. This clearly has not happened.

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My calculations indicate that just over 28% of SIMD 10 or just under 25% of SIMD 20 of Full Time equivalent (FTE) students who attend College in Glasgow attend Glasgow Kelvin College. Given that a considerable number of students from deprived neighbourhoods attend on a part-time basis the headcount figure rises to 39% for SIMD 20. In stark contrast the College received only just over 18% of Glasgow's share of this funding allocation. This is a matter of great concern to my Board.

GCRB, SFC and indeed the Scottish Government are quick to praise the work done by Colleges and in particular Glasgow Kelvin College in offering educational opportunities to those from the most deprived backgrounds. The Board of Management of Glasgow Kelvin College are concerned that these nice words are not backed up by appropriate action in terms of funding.

In conclusion the Board of Glasgow Kelvin College are, to say the least, extremely unhappy at this treatment of the College and would request that GCRB give early consideration as to how to adapt their methodologies used to allocate funding to better meet the needs of students from deprived neighbourhoods.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Regards

[redacted]

Ian Patrick
Chair, Board of Management
Glasgow Kelvin College

c.c. David Linden MP
Bob Doris MSP
All Board Members of Glasgow Kelvin College

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