Item 08a

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE
Good

Glasgow Kelvin College

Publicity and Communications

Internal Audit report No: 2022/03

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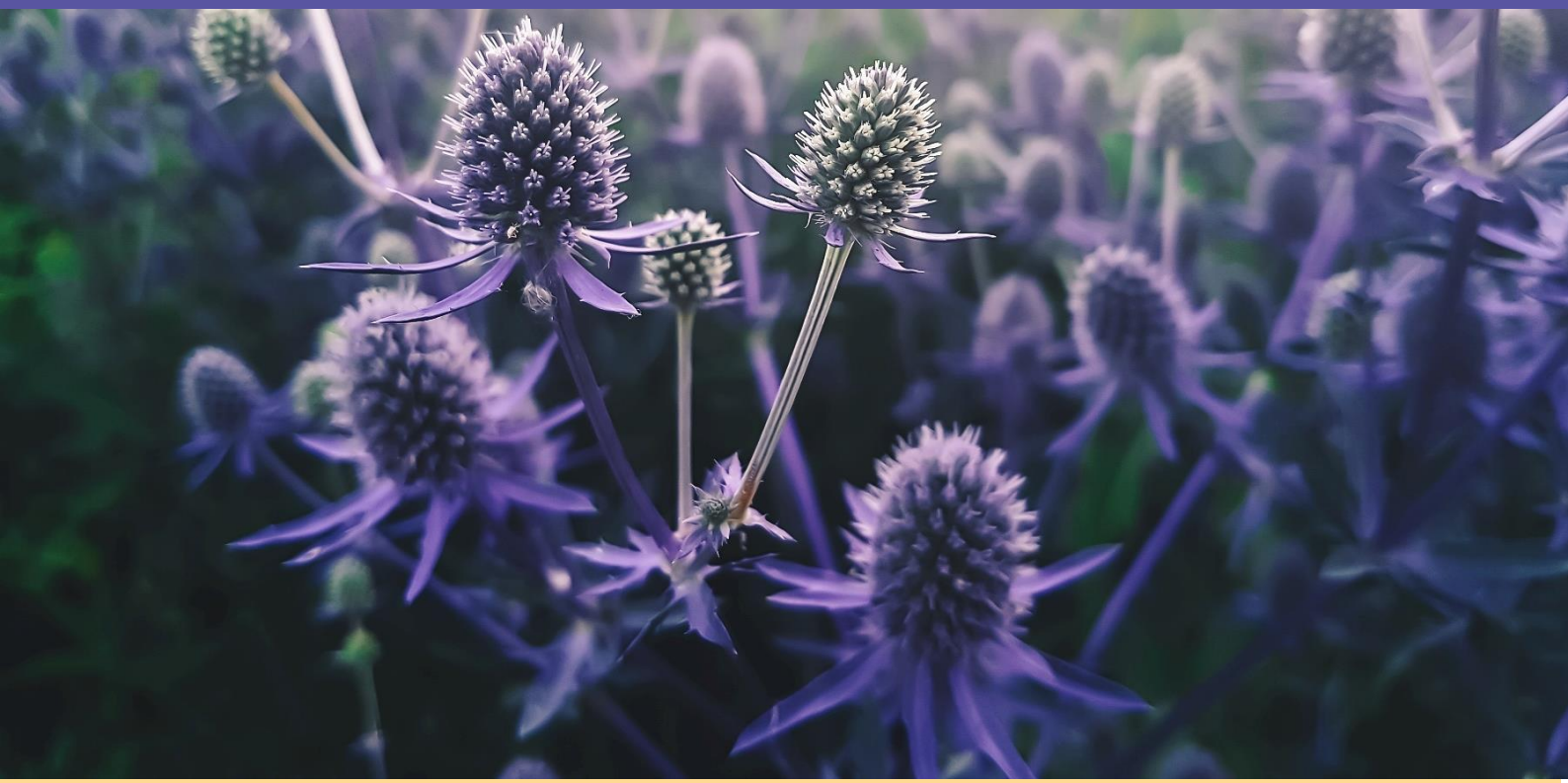

Henderson Loggie

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Level of Assurance

In addition to the grading of individual recommendations in the action plan, audit findings are assessed and graded on an overall basis to denote the level of assurance that can be taken from the report. Risk and materiality levels are considered in the assessment and grading process as well as the general quality of the procedures in place.

Gradings are defined as follows:

Good	System meets control objectives.
Satisfactory	System meets control objectives with some weaknesses present.
Requires improvement	System has weaknesses that could prevent it achieving control objectives.
Unacceptable	System cannot meet control objectives.

Action Grades

Priority 1	Issue subjecting the organisation to material risk and which requires to be brought to the attention of management and the Audit and Risk Committee.
Priority 2	Issue subjecting the organisation to significant risk and which should be addressed by management.
Priority 3	Matters subjecting the organisation to minor risk or which, if addressed, will enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Management Summary

Overall Level of Assurance

Good	System meets control objectives.

Risk Assessment

This review focused on the controls in place to mitigate the following risks on the Glasgow Kelvin College ('the College') Risk Register:

- Poor public relations image and perception of College due to negative media coverage having an adverse impact on the ability of the College to recruit appropriate learners, work with partners and employers and secure grant income. (risk rating: undesirable);

Background

As part of the Internal Audit programme at the College for 2021/22 we carried out a review of the systems and procedures in place for managing publicity and communications. Our Audit Needs Assessment identified this as an area where risk can arise and where Internal Audit can assist in providing assurances to the Principal and the Audit and Risk Committee that the related control environment is operating effectively, ensuring risk is maintained at an acceptable level.

Management of the College's public image is an important factor to ensure that prospective and current students view the College as an attractive place to study. Producing positive publicity aimed at target audiences, as well as mitigating the effects of any negative publicity, is a key part of ensuring the College has a positive image.

Internal communication is important to ensure that staff and students are informed of changes and are given sufficient opportunities to make their opinions and ideas known. It is also valuable in creating a shared ethos and identity within the College.

Scope, Objectives and Overall Findings

The audit focussed on the systems in place within the College for the management of positive and negative publicity externally, and internal communication.

The table below notes each separate objective for this review and records the results:

Objective	Findings				
The specific objectives of this audit were to obtain reasonable assurance that:		**1**	**2**	**3**	**Actions in Progress**
		No. of Agreed Actions			
1. Policies, procedures and systems in place assist the College to maximise the benefits from positive publicity and effectively manage negative publicity, reducing the potential risk of damage to the College's reputation.	**Good**	0	0	0	✓
2. Appropriate strategies, procedures, ICT and other systems are in place to assist and encourage internal communication and joint working between campuses and Academic Faculties / Support Services.	**Good**	0	0	1	✓
Overall Level of Assurance	**Good**	**0**	**0**	**1**	
		System meets control objectives.			

Audit Approach

We interviewed the senior managers who oversee marketing and communications activity within the College, and a sample of other College managers and staff, to determine current working practices.

The College's internal and external communication strategies, policies and procedures were reviewed, and their content benchmarked against good practice, identifying any areas requiring improvement.

The results of recent staff surveys relevant to internal communication were reviewed to ensure that issues raised are being addressed where appropriate.

Summary of Main Findings

Strengths

- An External Communications Strategy and a separate Internal Communications Strategy are in place which cover both positive and negative publicity. Both strategies are now being reviewed and will be aligned under a new framework which is linked to the recently refreshed College Strategic Plan;
- Responsible staff are assigned to undertake internal and external key communications activities;
- Social Media Guidelines have been developed to provide staff with a detailed framework in relation to digital activity (both in and out of the workplace);
- A range of internal and external communication channels are being utilised by the College including emails, external mailings; face-to-face presentations, social media; video displays; Microsoft Teams, the College intranet and website, and the MyKelvin application for student communications;
- The College is actively involved in a range of events aimed at promoting a positive image. This includes participating at locally organised events, attending networking events, organising campus and departmental open days and hosting industry and employer engagement events, although opportunities for such events have been limited during the Covid pandemic.
- An internal Communications Forum has been established within the College which provides a mechanism for identifying and sharing positive news stories, and a range of activities are undertaken to support internal communications and to support joint working between campuses and between curriculum teams and support departments;
- In recent years there has been increased collaboration across the Glasgow Region in relation to communications, through the formation of the Marketing and Communications Steering Group, which is led by the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board.

Weaknesses

- No significant issues were identified during our audit.
- The College has recognised that there are opportunities to make improvements to the current arrangements for internal and external communications and a new communications framework is currently being developed in consultation with staff groups. We noted that there are no Business Development or Marketing strategies currently in place. However, it is planned that the new communications framework will incorporate guidance on how the College can maximise the benefits of business development and marketing through proactive communication with stakeholders.

Acknowledgment

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the College who helped us during the course of our audit.

Main Findings and Action Plan

Objective 1: Policies, procedures and systems in place assist the College to maximise the benefits from positive publicity and effectively manage negative publicity, reducing the potential risk of damage to the College's reputation.

The Communications & Marketing Team is responsible for the publicity, publications, design and marketing support for the College. The team is led by the Communications & Marketing Manager and covers the following roles: press and public relations; communications editorial and events promotion; and social media. We noted that there is a resource gap within the Communication & Marketing team with no dedicated digital content / marketing support within the College. This has been acknowledged by the College and solutions to address this were being explored. The team reports to the Vice Principal - Operations who is a member of the Strategic Management Team (SMT) which allows regular reporting of marketing matters at SMT meetings.

Current communication arrangements include regular meetings between the Communications & Marketing team and curriculum leads, the Business Development team and the Students' Association. There are linkages between the Communications & Marketing Team and the curriculum teams which provide opportunities to identify potential marketing options and work on these proactively as well as being responsible for obtaining information for 'SWAY', the staff bulletin which is issued fortnightly (weekly during the early stages of the Covid pandemic).

Policies and Procedures
Formal media protocols exist within the current External Communications Strategy and provide staff with detailed guidance on dealing with the media and staff have been made aware that media enquiries should be directed to the Marketing and Communications Department. Guidelines for staff involved in responding to a critical incident are included in the College's Business Continuity Plan.

Social Media procedures have been developed, which provide staff with a detailed framework setting out staff responsibilities in relation to social media activity (both in and out of the workplace). These guidelines have been shared with staff and have been published on the staff intranet so that they are readily available to all members of staff.

Objective 1: Policies, procedures and systems in place assist the College to maximise the benefits from positive publicity and effectively manage negative publicity, reducing the potential risk of damage to the College's reputation (Continued).

Positive Publicity
Positive publicity is generated largely as the result of the activities undertaken by the Communications & Marketing Team, which includes generating publicity within media outlets, where appropriate. The College is actively involved in a range of events aimed at promoting a positive image. This includes participating in locally organised events, attending networking events, organising campus and departmental open days, and hosting industry and employer engagement events (although opportunities for such events have been limited during the Covid pandemic). The College communicates with external stakeholders through a variety of channels, such as the online course offering available on the College website, leaflets, advertisements, open days, employer and industry engagement events, media releases and social media.

The College has a communications and events calendar in place, which sets out key events and communications for the College throughout the year. This assists the College to plan ahead in order to take advantage of the opportunities for positive publicity that they are aware of in advance, particularly during the critical recruitment and enrolment periods.

The College makes use of media outlets, as appropriate, when there are positive news stories to promote, such as the launch of new partnerships with community groups or new College initiatives.

It was noted that the College has many social media accounts, which are operated by curriculum teams to promote student activities and achievements, as well as communicate with students. The number of social media platforms had already been identified by the College and a review of these communication channels had been undertaken prior to the Covid-19 pandemic with detailed social media guidance issued to staff. There are protocols in place for establishing new accounts to ensure centralised oversight and mitigate security challenges.

The Student Association has its own dedicated media channels, which are managed with support from the Communications & Marketing team's Digital Content Co-ordinator.

Marketing is important to assist with general College brand awareness and to assist with marketing of specific courses that are under-recruiting. Marketing supports the recruitment process in various ways, including:

- involvement in arranging College and departmental open days;
- producing the online edition of the course guide;
- promoting courses through the most appropriate marketing channels, including:
  - the College website;
  - social media;
  - local press coverage; and
  - arranging attendance at careers fairs by College staff and students.

Objective 1: Policies, procedures and systems in place assist the College to maximise the benefits from positive publicity and effectively manage negative publicity, reducing the potential risk of damage to the College's reputation (Continued).

A range of advertising formats are used, with social media and the College website being key channels for marketing activity as these are considered to be economic, efficient and effective because they are often used by target marketing audiences and advertisements can be targeted within the Greater Glasgow region and directed towards specific age groups. As part of the development of the new communications framework the College intends to ensure that it is maximising the effectiveness of these channels.

Internal positive publicity is largely communicated to staff through the staff intranet, Microsoft Teams and the staff bulletin. Other internal communication is undertaken through:

- monthly staff and student updates led by the Principal;
- following on from the People & Wellbeing Working Group established under pandemic arrangements, plans are in place for a Communications Forum to be established within the College to provide a mechanism for identifying and sharing positive news stories;
- notice boards used throughout the College to highlight College and student achievements;
- student MyKelvin application; and
- video screens in campus buildings highlighting College news, awards and achievements.

External positive publicity is communicated through:

- the press;
- hospitality events both organised and attended by the College;
- industry publications which publicise the niche market courses offered at the College;
- social media; and
- the College website.

The Communications & Marketing team maintains a record of all College press releases and perform a review of all print media to identify any stories that contain reference to the College.

Objective 1: Policies, procedures and systems in place assist the College to maximise the benefits from positive publicity and effectively manage negative publicity, reducing the potential risk of damage to the College's reputation (continued).

Negative Publicity
There is a College Business Continuity Plan that identifies a range of critical functions and outlines what should be done in the event of an emergency or serious incident. This plan contains sections on communication to the media and internal and external incident communication guidance which clearly state that staff should advise the SMT of any emergencies and that an appropriate media strategy will be developed before responding to the media on any issues. Some members of the SMT have previously been provided with media training and additional training is planned for the SMT.

The Communications & Marketing Team would work closely with the appointed external PR agency to develop a media release should the need for one arise. The Communications & Marketing Manager would brief the external PR agency and they would then compile a press release based on the information provided. If this was a serious matter for the College, then approval would be sought from the College Executive Management Team.

The College monitors its social media channels, and where negative publicity is generated through the College's social media channels then the College would either give an informed reply or remove the complaint from social media, and reasons for the negative publicity would be investigated.

A Complaints Policy has been drawn up to ensure that there are robust and transparent processes in place to deal with complaints, which should reduce the chance that these complaints subsequently lead to negative publicity.

There is now increased collaboration across the Glasgow Region regarding communications. A Marketing and Communications Steering Group is now in place with representation from GCRB and all three Glasgow Colleges. The GCRB representative sets the agenda, and the three Colleges add to this as required. Also, network meetings are undertaken with the College Development Network to share intelligence and standard statements have been prepared for a range of different scenarios to achieve improved consistency in the tone and content of communications across Scottish Colleges.

Objective 2: Appropriate strategies, procedures, ICT, and other systems are in place to assist and encourage internal communication and joint working between campuses and Academic Faculties / Support Services.

Policies and Procedures
The internal communication strategy and guidelines are in place and available to staff on the College website and staff intranet. These explain the internal communications process for the College and provide staff with guidance on the available internal communication channels. Following feedback from staff, the College has identified that the staff intranet could be improved, and management have agreed to redesign the intranet with a view to making the format more intuitive and making it easier for staff to navigate to the information they require and to access policies and procedures. The updated version of the intranet will be rebranded as Our Kelvin, to align the branding of the student MyKelvin app, and is expected to be launched later in 2022. Internal Communication is covered as an integral part of the staff induction process.

ICT
The College is making use of various digital communication channels, such as Microsoft Teams, email, Zoom, Outlook calendar and the Intranet. The intranet is the channel used for core documentation and key information that needs to be disseminated to all staff. There is a named individual responsible for maintaining each section of the intranet which should ensure that the content published is kept up to date. There is a hierarchy of permissions in place on the intranet to ensure that staff can only update their relevant sections. As noted above, the intranet is being redesigned and rebranded with a view to making any changes and applying any enhancements in time for the start of academic year 2020/21. Visual Display Screens are also in place across the campuses.

Other Communication Mechanisms
The staff bulletin, SWAY, is now issued fortnightly, although this was being issued weekly during the earlier stages of the Covid pandemic. The bulletin provides an opportunity to highlight good news stories and draws attention to any relevant information pertinent to staff. All teams and departments are given the opportunity to contribute to the newsletter, and the People & Wellbeing Working Group core team has been the main mechanism for identifying issues for inclusion in the bulletin. Noticeboards are also in place around the College. The Principal provides monthly updates to staff and students on issues affecting the College community.

Throughout the Covid pandemic the College has maintained effective communication with staff and students on Health & Safety issues and plans and preparations for the safe return to campus building and subsequently Covid measures in place in campus buildings. The Health & Safety Officer has issued regular communications on these issues to staff and students to ensure that consistent messaging reflected the national restrictions and health care advice in place at each stage of the pandemic.

Joint Working
Due to the working patterns of those staff who regularly work across multiple campus locations (and also the internal communication channels in place) joint working between campuses, curriculum teams and support services is encouraged.

Staff Surveys
Staff surveys are undertaken every four to five years to gauge staff morale and satisfaction levels, with smaller more focused ‘pulse’ surveys undertaken in the interim period. During the Covid pandemic a pulse survey of staff wellbeing and communication was undertaken with feedback showing that staff, overall, were largely satisfied with the College’s arrangements in these areas. Feedback from staff surveys has prompted much of the work around internal communications such as the work to redesign the intranet, proposed creation of the Communications Forum, and inclusion of follow-up reporting of ‘You Said - We Did’ initiative within the SWAY staff bulletin.

Objective 2: Appropriate strategies, procedures, ICT, and other systems are in place to assist and encourage internal communication and joint working between campuses and Academic Faculties / Support Services (continued).

Observation	Risk	Recommendation	Management Response	
Projecting a positive image for prospective students can be pivotal in determining whether students choose the College as their preferred place of study. To ensure that positive publicity is effective it is best practice for there to be strategies in place to focus the efforts of the Marketing team, which are underpinned by detailed procedures and action plans. The College has in place an External Communications Strategy and a separate Internal Communications Strategy, both initially published in 2018. The College has recognised that both strategies now require to be refreshed, and at the time of our review a working group had been established, and consultations with staff and stakeholders were ongoing, to develop a new communications framework for the College. This refreshed framework will link to the aims and objectives included in the recently refreshed College Strategic Plan. The new framework will encapsulate both external and internal communications and include an action plan for each of these functions, drafted in consultation with relevant staff. The new communications framework is expected to be completed and in place for the start of the 2022/23 academic year.	Effective and coordinated communication strategies are not in place resulting in lost opportunities for cross departmental working to maximise brand identity.	**R1** The College Communications & Marketing Framework, covering both External and Internal communications functions, should be completed and published for staff ahead if the 2022/23 academic session.	The College will finalise the new Communications & Marketing Framework, covering both External and Internal communications functions, by September 2022. **To be actioned by:** Communications and Marketing Manager **No later than:** 30 September 2022	
			Grade	**3**

Henderson Loggie

Aberdeen 45 Queen's Road AB15 4ZN T: 01224 322 100 F: 01224 327 911
Dundee The Vision Building, 20 Greenmarket DD1 4QB T: 01382 200 055 F: 01382 221 240
Edinburgh Ground Floor, 11-15 Thistle Street EH2 1DF T: 0131 226 0200 F: 0131 220 3269
Glasgow 100 West George Street, G2 1PP T: 0141 471 9870

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