

Independent Chair of the Board of Trustees

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the collective voice for the college sector, and as the membership body, represents the 24 colleges in Scotland, which deliver both further education and around 20% of the provision of all higher education in Scotland.

The 24 colleges operate in 13 regions across Scotland, allowing them to plan nationally and regionally, as well as deliver locally.

Colleges Scotland's primary role is to support colleges and the regional strategic body in achieving their aims and objectives, and to cultivate the strength of the college sector in Scotland. This is achieved through advocating and campaigning on behalf of the college sector, co-ordinating sector-wide engagement on major issues, policy development, and maintaining strong and proactive relationships with government, sector agencies and industry bodies. Colleges Scotland is driving new business development opportunities to increase benefits to its members.

College Employers Scotland is a committee of the Colleges Scotland board and has delegated decision making responsibilities on all matters related to National Bargaining.



Role Description and Person Specification

1. The Role of the Chair

The Chair provides inclusive leadership to the Board of Trustees, ensuring the effective governance of the charity and that Colleges Scotland is accountable to its members.

The Chair will also support and, where appropriate, challenge the Chief Executive Officer and ensure that the Board functions effectively as a unit and works closely with the entire Executive of the charity to achieve agreed objectives.

In addition to having the same role, duties, rights and responsibilities as other Trustees under sections 2 and 3 below, the Chair has additionally the following responsibilities:

1.1 Provide effective leadership of the Board of Trustees and governance

- Provide visionary and strategic thinking to support the growth of Colleges Scotland as an organisation.
- Ensure that the Board of Trustees operates within its charitable objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for the charity.
- Ensure that the Board of Trustees fulfils its duties to ensure sound financial health of the charity, with systems in place to monitor financial performance and sustainability.

- Ensure that the Board of Trustees is able to effectively review major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfy itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities, and manage and mitigate the risks.
- Chair and ensure that the Board of Trustees meetings proceed efficiently and effectively, with appropriate emphasis on its strategic and monitoring role ensuring it operates within excellent governance.
- Promote a culture of openness and debate and constructive challenge by facilitating the effective contribution of Trustees and ensuring constructive relations between them and the executive and staff.
- Review effectiveness of, and develop, the Board of Trustees, maximising their diverse range of expertise, experience and interests.



1.2 Effective working relationship with Chief Executive Officer

- Maintain an effective working relationship with the Chief Executive Officer and management team, providing guidance, advice and support; being a critical friend in offering constructive challenges; and ensuring the proper separation between governance and executive leadership/operational management.
- Hold regular meetings with the Chief Executive Officer, ensuring timely communication and resolution on key issues and challenges, and embedding a 'no-surprises' relationship.
- Set results-focused and SMART Individual Performance Objectives with Chief Executive Officer, with associated Development Plan and conducting annual performance reviews.
- Work with the Chief Executive Officer in the development of a dynamic Board of Trustees.

2. The Role of the Trustee

As a Trustee, you will be responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and effective operation of Colleges Scotland as an organisation, rather than matters related to the college sector more broadly, and ensuring that we meet our charitable objectives and comply with our legal obligations. As a member of the Board of Colleges Scotland, and a charity trustee, you will be collectively responsible with other board members for the following areas:

2.1 Provide strategic leadership:

- Set and maintain the vision, mission and values of the organisation.
- Develop, approve and scrutinise the strategy, business and financial plans of the charity.
- Oversee effective systems for reporting and monitoring.

2.2 Ensure effective resource management:

- Ensure the organisation has effective structures and resources for its work.
- Establish and oversee policies and procedures to govern organisational activity, including guidance for trustees and staff.

2.3 Ensure sound governance:

- Manage and seek assurance in relation to risk and compliance, and ensure accountability to external regulators and legal requirements (including charity law).

- Ensure that the financial affairs of the organisation are conducted properly and are accurately reported.

2.4 Act as an advocate:

- Advocate and champion the contribution of tertiary education in Scottish civic society and the economy.
- Act as an ambassador for Colleges Scotland as the membership organisation for colleges and associate members.
- Advocate and champion the role of colleges as anchor institutions in delivering further and higher education for the public benefit.

3. Trustee Duties, Rights and Responsibilities

Colleges Scotland is a registered Scottish charity. As a board member and charity trustee, you will be expected to perform and discharge the duties of a charity trustee, including:

- Acting in good faith in the interest of Colleges Scotland.
- Ensuring Colleges Scotland operates in a manner consistent with its charitable purposes and its governing document.
- Acting with due care and diligence.
- Ensuring Colleges Scotland complies with the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, and other relevant legislation.

Trustees are expected to keep up-to-date with developments in education, in particular tertiary education in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

4. Person Specification

You should be able to demonstrate that you have the following skills, knowledge, experience and qualities.

As the Independent Chair of the Board of Trustees, you should not be currently employed by a member of Colleges Scotland. College Board members who serve in a voluntary, non-remunerated capacity are welcome to apply.

4.1 Essential

Qualities:

- A passion and commitment to the value and essential role of colleges as anchor institutions in delivering further and higher education for the public benefit.
- Support for the vision and mission of Colleges Scotland as a membership body for colleges and associate members.
- A successful record of high personal achievement.

Skills:

- Extensive experience with significant strategic leadership at Board/Senior Executive level.
- Demonstrable experience in working within sound governance and compliance with legislation.
- Significant experience at chairing high level meetings involving diverse group of stakeholders.
- Ability to think strategically and creatively, and to respond proactively to the needs of the organisation.



- Ability to analyse complex material and to reach sound conclusions.
- Ability to question constructively within a team environment.
- Ability to communicate effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders and build effective networks.
- Ability to form positive and productive relationships with fellow trustees, the staff team, and wider stakeholders, as required.

Knowledge:

- Understanding of corporate governance in public, private or charity sectors and of risk management (prior Board experience is not required).

4.2 Desirable

- Knowledge and/or experience of one of business development and raising income.
- Experience of charity governance and working with or as part of a Board of Trustees.
- An understanding of the needs of the economy, employers, communities, and learners, and the challenges of a political environment, at a national and regional level.
- Understanding of the Scottish Government's policy ambitions for public services in general and post-16 education in particular; and the challenges and opportunities facing the college sector.
- Knowledge or experience of working in the education sector.

Remuneration and Recruitment Process

Remuneration

Unremunerated.

Recruitment Process

To apply for this role, please submit your CV along with a covering letter that highlights your relevant knowledge and experience in relation to the job description and person specification to Charles.Dundas@collegesscotland.ac.uk by **5pm on Monday 30 March 2026**.

Applicants invited to an interview will be asked to prepare a 10 minute presentation to the panel.

Recruitment Timetable

Closing date for applications:	Monday 30 March 2026
Interviews:	Tuesday 21 April 2026
Board of Trustees meeting:	Thursday 25 June 2026

info@collegesscotland.ac.uk

www.collegesscotland.ac.uk

[@CollegesScot](#)

Argyll Court, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TY

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