

North Highland College

Internal Audit 2022/23
Annual Report

+ July 2023





Table of Contents



Section	Page number
1. Introduction	3
2. Executive Summary	4
3. Audit Findings	6
4. Benchmarking	8
5. Key Performance Indicators	10
Appendices:	
A. Grading Structure	11

The prime responsibility of the Internal Audit Service (IAS) is to provide the Board, the Accounting Officer and other Senior Management of the College, with an objective assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of management's internal control systems.

We conduct our activity within the overarching framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors, Definition of Internal Auditing, Code of Ethics and International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, together with the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, first introduced in April 2013.

In line with these Standards, we have developed a robust quality assurance process to ensure that each of our activities and reports are of a high and consistent standard. Quality assurance activity includes interim reviews during the internal audit process and an extensive final review before reports are issued to clients and other stakeholders. We actively seek to improve the services we deliver through a programme of CPD, training, networking and engagement with internal peers, as well as by piloting new ways of working.

We had an extensive external assessment undertaken against these standards in November 2021. The assessment was undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors who concluded:

"We are pleased to report that the Wylie and Bisset LLP Internal Audit Department conforms with the Standards, as well as the Definition of Internal Auditing, Core Principles and the Code of Ethics, which form the mandatory elements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Institute of Internal Auditors' International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), the globally recognised standard of quality in Internal Auditing.

The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors also highlighted our compliance with all 64 standards of the IPPF".

This Annual Report should be considered by the Audit and Risk Management Committee prior to the Committee submitting their annual report to the Board.

A copy of this report requires to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council not later than 31 December following the financial year end to which it relates.

Overall Opinion

We are satisfied that sufficient internal audit work has been undertaken to allow us to draw a conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's risk management, control and governance processes.

In our opinion North Highland College did have adequate and effective risk management, control and governance processes to manage its achievement of the College's objectives at the time of our audit work. In our opinion, the College has proper arrangements to promote and secure value for money. We would however highlight that we provided 'weak' assurance for the Estates Management review. During this review, we raised a high grade recommendation on overdue statutory obligations.

Our fieldwork was carried out between September 2022 and April 2023, and we have not undertaken any further internal audit assignments at the time of this report.

The overall findings and conclusion of each report are highlighted in Section 3. As can be seen from the summary in Section 3 all areas included in the Operational Plan for 2022/23 have been completed.

In forming our opinion, we have carried out the following work:

- + A review and appraisal of financial and other controls operated by the College;
- + A review of the established policies and procedures adopted by the College;
- + An assessment of whether or not the internal controls are reliable as a basis for producing the financial accounts;
- + A review of accounting and other information provided to management for decision making;
- + Compliance and substantive audit testing where appropriate;
- + A review of the College's procedures in place to promote and secure value for money.

The analysis of performance indicators for the internal audit work carried out in the year is included at section 5.

Basis of Opinion

As the Head of Internal Audit at North Highland College we are required to provide the Audit and Risk Management Committee with an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the College's risk management, control and governance processes.

In giving our opinion it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that we can provide to the Audit and Risk Management Committee is reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the College's risk management, control and governance processes.

In assessing the level of assurance given, we have considered:

- + All audits undertaken during the year ended 31 July 2023;
- + Any follow-up action taken in respect of audits from previous periods;
- + Any significant recommendations not accepted by management and the consequent risks;
- + The effects of any significant changes in the College's objectives or systems;
- + Matters arising from previous reports to the Audit and Risk Management Committee;
- + Any limitations which may have been placed on the scope of internal audit;
- + The extent to which resource constraints may impinge on the Head of Internal Audit's ability to meet the full audit needs of the College;
- + What proportion of the College's audit need has been covered to date; and
- + The outcomes of our quality assurance processes.

3. Audit Findings



Summary of Work Undertaken

The following table summarises the audit work undertaken in 2022/23. The grading structure used in our reports can be found in Appendix A.

Area	Planned Days	Actual Days	Status	Overall Conclusion	High Priority Recommendations	Medium Priority Recommendations	Low Priority Recommendations
Education Maintenance Allowance	1	1	Complete	N/A	-	-	
Credits Audit	2	2	Complete	N/A	-	-	-
Student Support Funds	2	2	Complete	N/A	-	-	-
Budgetary and Financial Reporting	4	4	Complete	Strong	-	-	2
Multi-Campus Operations	4	4	Complete	Strong	-	-	2
Estates Management	4	4	Complete	Weak	1	1	1
Follow Up Review	2	2	Complete	Strong	-	3	3
Audit Management	4	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	23	23			1	4	8

3. Audit Findings



High Priority Recommendation

The following high priority recommendation was raised during this year:

Area	Finding	Recommendation
Overdue Statutory Obligations, Estates Management, June 2023	<p>A PPM Schedule is used to ensure that estate is being monitored, checked and repaired appropriately.</p> <p>From our review, we found that the following two areas of statutory compliance are overdue for inspection in specific areas of the College:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fire equipment servicing; and 2. Emergency lighting. <p>We note that management were aware of these inspections being overdue and are actively working to resolve this. The Estate Manager advised that high priority areas of maintenance are prioritised but, in these instances, they had been incorrectly categorised and resources were not available to prioritise the investigations.</p> <p>Where maintenance is not prioritised effectively, resources can be inefficiently allocated. This may impact on the College failing to meet statutory compliance.</p>	<p>We recommend that a full review of the categorisation of inspections is undertaken. Following this they should be reviewed regularly to ensure high priority areas are correctly identified and subsequently, inspected in a timely manner.</p>
Management Response		
<p>As indicated above, there is a system in place, and both the items identified above were being worked to resolve. Further work will be progressed as part of a Merged College Estates function.</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Estates Manager</p> <p>Implementation Date: On-going</p>		

4. Benchmarking



We include for your reference comparative benchmarking data of the number and ranking of recommendations made for audits of a similar nature in the previous financial year.

Area	High	Medium	Low	Total
Education Maintenance Allowance				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	-	-	-
Recommendations at North Highland College	-	-	-	-
Credits Audit				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	-	2	2
Recommendations at North Highland College	-	-	-	-
Student Support Funds				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	1	-	1
Recommendations at North Highland College	-	-	-	-
Budgetary and Financial Reporting				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	1	2	3
Recommendations at North Highland College	-	-	2	2
Summary				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits carried forward	-	2	4	6
Recommendations at North Highland College carried forward	-	-	2	2

4. Benchmarking



We include for your reference comparative benchmarking data of the number and ranking of recommendations made for audits of a similar nature in the previous financial year.

Area	High	Medium	Low	Total
Average number of recommendations in similar audits brought forward	-	2	4	6
Recommendations at North Highland College brought forward	-	-	2	2
Multi-Campus Operations				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	1	-	1
Recommendations at North Highland College	-	-	2	2
Estates Management				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	1	1	2
Recommendations at North Highland College	1	1	1	3
Summary				
Average number of recommendations in similar audits	-	4	5	9
Recommendations at North Highland College	1	1	5	7

As highlighted above, the College has a lower number of recommendations in comparison with the colleges it has been benchmarked against. However, we have raised one high grade recommendation within the Estates Management review. This relates to:

- + Overdue Statutory Obligations.

5. Key Performance Indicators



Performance Indicator	Target	Actual
Internal audit days completed in line with agreed timetable and days allocation	100%	100%
Draft scopes provided no later than 10 working days before the internal audit start date and final scopes no later than 5 working days before each start date	100%	100%
Draft reports issued within 10 working days of exit meeting	100%	57%*
Management provide responses to draft reports within 15 working days of receipt of draft reports	100%	86%**
Final reports issued within 5 working days of receipt of management responses	100%	100%
Recommendations accepted by management	100%	100%
Draft annual internal audit report to be provided by 31 August each year	100%	100%
Attendance at Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings by a senior member of staff	100%	100%
Suitably experienced staff used on all assignments	100%	100%

* The draft reports for SSF, EMA and Credits were issued 16 working days after the exit meeting.

** management responses to the Estates report were received outwith the 15 working day target.

Appendix A

Grading Structure

For each area of review, we assign a level of assurance in accordance with the following classification:

Assurance	Classification
Strong	Controls satisfactory, no major weaknesses found, no or only minor recommendations identified
Substantial	Controls largely satisfactory although some weaknesses identified, recommendations for improvement made
Weak	Controls unsatisfactory and major systems weaknesses identified that require to be addressed immediately
No	No or very limited controls in place leaving the system open to significant error or abuse, recommendations made require to be implemented immediately

For each recommendation, we make we assign a grading either as High, Medium or Low priority depending upon the degree of risk assessed as outlined below:

Assurance	Risk	Classification
High	High risk	Major weakness that we consider needs to be brought to the attention of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and addressed by Senior Management of the College as a matter of urgency
Medium	Medium risk	Significant issue or weakness which should be addressed by the College as soon as possible
Low	Low risk	Minor issue or weakness reported where management may wish to consider our recommendation



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