Applicant Information pack for appointment of the Chair of Ayrshire College

The Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education is seeking to appoint a Chair to the board of Ayrshire College. The Minister values highly the benefits of having different points of view on college boards and welcomes applications from people from all walks of life.

The appointments process for this vacancy follows the Code of Practice for Public Appointments and is regulated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner. Chairs are also being appointed to the boards of Fife College, Glasgow Kelvin College and New College Lanarkshire. Each college has its own advert and applicant pack.

Key dates for this appointment round

Closing date	12:00 (noon) on Tuesday 5 January 2027 The Public Appointments Team will have limited availability from 25 December 2026 to 4 January 2027 and will not be available on public holidays. If you have a technical problem with your application, please email Public.appointments@gov.scot. The team will look to respond at the earliest opportunity from Tuesday 5 January.
Online information session	Ayrshire College will hold an online information session on MS Teams on Wednesday 9 December 2026, from

	17:00 to 18:00. You can hear from the College about the College, its Board and the role of the Chair, and ask questions. To register, please sign up through Eventbrite: Chair of Ayrshire College - Online Information Session You will receive the joining details and a calendar invitation as soon as you sign up.
Sift of applications	Monday 11 January 2027
Date applicants will hear about the outcome of their application	By Tuesday 12 January 2027
Interviews	Wednesday 20, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 January 2027. Interviews will be held in person at the Scottish Government, Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow. **We are not able to offer alternative interview dates. If you are shortlisted, you must be available on one of these dates. If you cannot attend in person, you can ask to be interviewed online using MS Teams on one of these dates. Interview slots are allocated through our online self-service system, where you will be invited to select from the available dates and times.**
Ministerial decision	Mid February 2027
Start date	As soon as possible after appointment and pre-appointment checks.

Welcome letter

Dear applicant,

Thank you for your interest in applying to become Chair of one of Scotland's colleges. I am currently seeking to appoint Chairs to the boards of Ayrshire College, Fife College, Glasgow Kelvin College and New College Lanarkshire.

Scotland's colleges play a vital role in supporting individuals, employers and communities across the country. They help learners develop the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to succeed, while working closely with industry to meet current and future workforce needs. As the sector navigates a period of significant change, including financial pressures, evolving skills demands and wider public service reform, strong board leadership is more important than ever.

I am looking for individuals who can provide effective leadership to a governing board, foster productive relationships within their region and beyond, and work constructively with their Principal to help deliver positive outcomes for learners, employers and local communities. Experience in the education sector is not essential. Leadership, strategic oversight and experience of guiding organisations through change, whether in the public, private or third sector, are equally valuable.

I strongly believe that boards are most effective when they reflect a broad range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. I therefore particularly encourage applications from groups currently under-represented on Scotland's public boards, including women, disabled people, people from minority ethnic communities and younger people.

If you would like to learn more about these opportunities, the college has provided a contact within this information pack, and you are also welcome to attend one of the online information events. I hope you will consider applying.

Yours sincerely,

Alyn Smith MSP

Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education

Information about the role

Remuneration	£265 per day (non-pensionable) and reasonable expenses.
Time commitment	It is anticipated that you will devote up to two days per week to the role, up to a maximum of 104 days per year.
Length of appointment term	The appointment will be made for a term of up to four years. This appointment is being made during a period of Public Service Reform in Scotland. During this period, and depending on the implementation of future reforms, appointments may end earlier than anticipated or may be extended, subject to Ministerial decisions and legislative requirements. The successful candidate will, of course, be kept informed of any likely or actual changes to the term length as a result of the changing landscape. Applicants should be aware that this position is held at the discretion of Scottish Ministers and do not constitute a contract of employment. Applicants who have previously served on this public body should refer to the Q&A section on previous service and term limits.
Location of meetings	Board and committee meetings take place at the College's campuses, with some meetings held online. The role involves travel across the College's region, and occasionally beyond.
Disqualifications	A member of the Scottish Parliament cannot also hold a public appointment for public bodies listed in the Schedule to

	the Scottish Parliament (Disqualification) Order 2025. Former Ministers and senior civil servants (Director General level and above) should ensure they comply with any applicable business appointment rules. Colleges in Scotland are registered charities and the Chair is a charity trustee. The Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023 came into force on 31 August 2025, and the updated automatic disqualification criteria for charity trustees will apply. Should you have any questions about this disqualification section, you can seek advice by emailing the Public Appointments Team, Public.Appointments@gov.scot

About Ayrshire College

Scotland's colleges give people of all ages the skills, qualifications and confidence to succeed, and work closely with employers, schools, universities and communities. Each college is a registered charity governed by its board, which sets the college's strategic direction and holds the Principal and Executive Team to account. The Chair leads the board and is appointed by Scottish Ministers.

Ayrshire College is an ambitious regional college with a clear mission: Empowering People for a Changing World. Supporting more than 13,000 students and employing over 800 staff, the College has a significant role in the economic and social wellbeing of Ayrshire. Through high-quality learning, strong employer partnerships and close connections with communities, the College helps people develop the skills, confidence and opportunities to succeed, while supporting employers to build the workforce they need for the future.

The Board of Management provides strategic leadership, effective oversight and assurance. Working in partnership with the Principal and Executive Team, it sets the College's strategic direction and provides constructive challenge and strong governance on performance, financial sustainability, risk, organisational effectiveness and the College's legal and regulatory responsibilities.

The Chair will bring together a diverse Board around a shared ambition for the College, develop a strong and effective relationship with the Principal while maintaining the independence needed for scrutiny, and be an influential ambassador for the College with employers, communities, public bodies and strategic partners.

For more information about the Board, please contact Angela Scoular, Executive Assistant to the Principal and Chief Executive: Angela.Scoular@ayrshire.ac.uk

The role of a college Chair

The Chair leads the board. The main responsibilities are set out below.

Governance and accountability

- Secure assurance on financial rigour across the organisation.
- Lead the board in its oversight of risk, and make sure the board receives the assurance it needs on the college's performance and delivery.
- Lead the annual appraisal and development of board members and the board's self-evaluation.
- Champion a high-quality learning and teaching experience, with accessible and flexible pathways for students.

Strategic leadership

- Lead the board in shaping the college's strategic vision, purpose and goals, and communicate these to learners, employers, other education providers, public bodies, Ministers and the Scottish Parliament.
- Support and constructively challenge the Principal and senior team in delivering the college's strategic aims.
- Appoint the Principal when necessary, and carry out the annual appraisal of the Principal and Board Secretary.
- Lead the board and college through a period of change.

Working collectively and collaboratively

- Build strong networks across the region with employers, schools, local authorities, universities and the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Work with the Scottish Funding Council, other college Chairs and Principals and partners to develop effective collaboration.

Understanding the economic and learning environment

- Ensure the college's strategy and financial sustainability support the needs of the regional economy.
- Help the college understand and respond to significant policy developments.

The selection panel

Chair	Adam Reid, Deputy Director, Skills Division, Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills, Scottish Government
Independent panel member	Kate Lander, Board Member, Scottish Funding Council
Representative from the Ethical Standards Commissioner	Kay Hampton, Public Appointments Adviser
Panel member	Sue Cook, Chair, Board of Governors, West Lothian College

Please note that applicants will be asked to declare if they know any members of the selection panel or other people conducting part of the assessment who are named in this pack. The panel will also declare if they know any applicants. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be managed in line with the Ethical Standards Commissioners Code of Practice for Public Appointments.

Person specification

The Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education is looking for a Chair who can lead the board through a period of significant change. The same criteria apply to each of the four college Chair posts being advertised at this time. You do not need to have worked in further education: we want to hear from people with board leadership experience gained in any sector.

The table below sets out the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes that we are seeking and explains how the criteria will be tested. You may have gained your experience through work, by being active in your community, in a voluntary capacity or through your own lived experience. For each criterion, the panel is looking for specific examples: what you did, how you did it, and the outcome and impact of your actions. A general description of your experience will not be enough.

The priority criterion is weighted over the essential criteria, and the candidates who provide the strongest evidence against the priority criterion will be considered most able to fulfil the role. In the event that candidates provide evidence of equal merit against the priority criterion, the panel will then take into account the strength of the evidence presented against the essential criteria in determining the candidate(s) most able to fulfil the role.

You must provide evidence against the priority criterion (Section A) and essential criteria 1, 2 and 3 (Section B) in your application. Essential criteria 4 and 5 will be assessed at interview only. All of the criteria may be explored further at interview.
The priority criterion is not limited to people who have chaired a board. It includes, for example, experience as a Chair, Vice Chair, committee chair or senior independent director; as a chief executive or senior executive who has led a board or senior leadership team; or chairing a partnership, trust or charity board, in any sector.

Criterion	Example indicators	How this will be assessed
A. Priority		
1. Board leadership	• Has chaired, or held a leadership role on, a board, committee or governing body (for example as Chair, Vice Chair, committee chair or senior independent director), has led a board or senior leadership team as a chief executive or senior executive, or has chaired a partnership, trust or charity board, in any sector. • Has helped to build a culture, on a board or in a leadership team, in which members contribute their expertise, challenge constructively and reach decisions together. • Has improved how a board, governing body or leadership team works, for example through development, evaluation or succession planning.	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview. **In your online application: please demonstrate how you meet this criterion. Your response should be no more than 250 words.**
B. Essential		
1. Strategic leadership through change	• Has set or shaped the strategic direction of an organisation or major function and seen it through. • Has led or overseen significant change to a business model, finances, services or partnerships in a complex, resource-constrained setting. • Understands the realities of public funding and the stewardship of public money.	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview. **In your online application: please demonstrate how you meet this criterion. Your response should be no more than 250 words.**
2. Influence and partnership	• Builds and maintains credible relationships with senior leaders across public	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview.

	bodies, employers, education and community partners. • Represents an organisation with credibility, including in a political environment. • Uses partnerships and alliances to achieve shared outcomes.	**In your online application: please demonstrate how you meet this criterion. Your response should be no more than 250 words.**
3. Understanding of the operating context	• Analyses the economic, skills and public sector reform context in which the college and its region operate. • Understands the needs of learners, employers and communities in the region the college serves, and the role of the college in meeting them. • Applies this understanding to the board's priorities and decisions. (You do not need to live or work in the region.)	This will be assessed at application stage and at interview, including through the exercise. **In your online application: please demonstrate how you meet this criterion. Your response should be no more than 250 words.**
4. Governance, risk and judgement	• Understands what good governance, accountability and assurance look like in a public or charitable body. • Makes sound, evidence-based judgements on financial sustainability, performance and risk. • Leads a board to clear decisions when the way forward is uncertain.	This will be assessed at interview only, including through the exercise.
5. Working with people	• Builds an inclusive, respectful and cohesive board and develops its collective capability. • Maintains a supportive but appropriately challenging relationship with the Principal.	This will be assessed at interview only.

	• Communicates clearly, listens to diverse views, including those of students and staff, and is committed to the college's values.	

Finally, you should upload a tailored CV of no more than one A4 page (minimum font size 11) showing how the roles you have held, and activities you have undertaken, are relevant to this role. There is no separate supporting statement. Please check the 'How to apply' section for details of how to upload it.

How to apply online

1. Download and save this applicant information pack to refer to.
2. Read the ‘person specification’ section in this pack and prepare your evidence for the priority criterion and essential criteria 1, 2 and 3, noting the 250 word limit for each.
3. Save your tailored CV (no more than one A4 page) to your device as one PDF document ready for upload.
4. Navigate back to the job advert and click ‘apply’.
5. Complete the personal information and conflict of interest questions.
6. Attach your one PDF document. Your PDF should be uploaded using the ‘Drop Resume Here’ box that appears on the Supporting Documents and URLs section, or you can use the link function.
7. When prompted, provide evidence in the boxes for the priority criterion and essential criteria 1, 2 and 3. Each response must not exceed 250 words.
8. Submit your online application by 12:00 (noon) on Tuesday 5 January 2027.
9. **Please Note:** you do not have the option to edit your application once you click ‘submit’. You must have all your information and attachments to hand before submitting your application.

We strongly recommend that you draft your answers in a word document and check that you are happy with them before copying and pasting your answers in the relevant sections of the online application.

Please note that any content exceeding the stated word limits will not be considered by the selection panel.

Late applications will not be accepted by the selection panel.

The online system has been extensively tested for compatibility with a range of assistive technologies. However, should you experience any difficulties accessing or using the system, please contact the Public Appointments Team at: Public.appointments@gov.scot

Application Advice

The selection panel will not make assumptions – for example from a job title – as to the skills, knowledge, experience and attributes you have gained. The Panel will review the evidence provided and invite to the second and final assessment stage those applicants who most closely meet the criteria being tested at this first stage of assessment. By the end of the selection process, you must have demonstrated that you have met the essential criteria to the satisfaction of the selection panel to be considered for appointment.

You should provide clear and succinct information about yourself and how you meet the criteria that are being tested at this application stage. When being asked to demonstrate knowledge, understanding or experience, you should describe how you gained this, the breadth and depth of this knowledge, understanding or experience and any situations where you have used this.

Please use specific evidence to support your answers that is relevant to the requirements being tested. Draw on evidence from your working and/or personal life, or through your participation with a private, public, voluntary, charity or community organisation. Please note that there are word limits at each of the sections.

Suggested preparation

- Take time to think about each of the criteria and think about the situations you have recently been involved in.
- Think how your actions and experiences led to results that demonstrate the criteria.
- Prepare your answers.

Your evidence

- Please be clear and succinct. You may be asked to expand on your answers at interview.

- Draw on evidence which best demonstrates your skills, knowledge or abilities in that area.

In providing your evidence, it would be helpful if you could explain your personal contribution, what you did and how you did it – use "I" not "we." Give the outcome – what happened? How effective was the result? How influential were your role, actions and interventions? What impact did you have?

Using the STARR method

When providing evidence against the criteria, you may find it helpful to structure your responses using the STARR method. This helps you present clear, concise, and relevant evidence and allows the selection panel to understand your individual contribution and impact.

- **Situation** – Briefly describe the context or background.
- **Task** – Explain your specific role or responsibility.
- **Action** – Describe what you did (use "I", not "we"), including how and why you took those actions.
- **Result** – Set out the outcome of your actions and what was achieved.
- **Reflection** – Where appropriate, reflect on what you learned, what you would do differently, or how this experience is relevant to the role of a Non-Executive Public body Member.

Using this approach will help you demonstrate not only what you did, but how you applied your skills, judgement, and values, and the impact of your contribution.

The assessment process

The assessment process will happen as follows:

1. The selection panel will assess all applications against the criteria for appointment (see the person specification). Those who demonstrate evidence that most closely meet the criteria tested at this stage will be shortlisted for interview.
2. The selection panel will interview candidates. The questions will relate directly to the criteria for appointment and will not be shared in advance. The interview will include an exercise. Before your interview you will be given a question about the college you have applied for and 30 minutes to prepare. You will begin the interview with a short presentation to the panel, followed by questions. You do

not need to prepare anything in advance. Full details will be sent to shortlisted candidates.

3. The selection panel will also ask questions relevant to the fit and proper person test (see below) which will include questions about the Principles of Public life in Scotland.
4. The selection panel will review the evidence provided and agree on which candidates have most closely met the criteria for selection and should be recommended to the appointing Minister.
5. The appointing Minister will make a decision about whom to appoint based on evidence from the selection panel. The appointing Minister may request to meet with candidates before making a final decision.
6. Appointees will be asked to complete pre-appointment checks which will include a Disclosure Check (there is no charge for this). Appointment is conditional on satisfactory completion of these. This will also include Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme Membership which is a requirement for this role. Appointees cannot start in the role until this is received.

Guaranteed interviews

This appointment round will provide guaranteed interviews for disabled people who meet the criteria for the role being tested at the application stage. The selection panel will not know which applicants have requested a guaranteed interview until the shortlisting is complete.

Fit and proper person checks

In the context of public appointments, a fit and proper person is someone who is suitable because they meet the requirements of the role, and their past or present activities and behaviour means they are suitable. Tests are built into different stages of the appointment process to ensure that:

- Conduct to date has been compatible with the public appointment
- Membership is not barred by the body's constitution e.g., criminal record or bankruptcy (see disqualifications)
- There are no unmanageable conflicts of interest
- Political activity is declared
- There is agreement to abide by the Principles of Public life in Scotland
- There is confirmation that the time commitment required for the role can be met.

Media checks for candidates invited to interview

The selection panel may consider publicly available information about candidates, including posts on social media platforms. Any findings that the selection panel agree are pertinent to the role or that may call into question suitability for the appointment, credibility of the appointments process or the public body will be discussed with candidates at interview. Consideration of any issues will take place openly and transparently to establish the facts. Candidates will be given an opportunity to respond to any concerns. This information will be handled in line with the Privacy Notice for public appointments.

Gender Representation on Public Body Boards (Scotland) Act 2018
The Gender Representation on Public Body Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 sets a gender representation objective that 50% of non-executive members of public body boards should be women.

Where two or more candidates are assessed as equally qualified for appointment, and at least one candidate is a woman and one is not, section 4(3) of the Act requires the appointing Minister to appoint the woman where this would help the public body achieve, or make progress towards achieving, the gender representation objective*.

Once you apply, the Scottish Government will write to you to collect the required information regarding your sex.

*To note, under section 4(4) of the Act, the appointing Minister may instead appoint a candidate who is not a woman where another characteristic or circumstance appropriately justifies doing so.

Common questions and answers

Who can I contact to speak about this role?	For information about the College and its Board, please contact the College contact named in the 'About Ayrshire College' section of this pack. For information about the role and the appointment, please contact the sponsor team at the Scottish Government: Mark Hughes, College Governance and Workforce Engagement, Mark.Hughes@gov.scot

I see there are also adverts for the Chairs of Fife College, Glasgow Kelvin College and New College Lanarkshire. Can I apply for more than one college?	Yes. Each college has its own advert and applicant pack. To apply for more than one post, please submit an application under each advert. You can use the same evidence in each application, but please make sure your evidence of understanding the operating context is specific to each college. If you are shortlisted for more than one college you will have one interview. You will be given extra time to prepare for the exercise, and your presentation will need to cover each college. You can be appointed as Chair of only one college.
Is there any flexibility on interview dates?	Interviews will take place on Wednesday 20, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 January 2027. We are not able to offer alternative dates. If you are shortlisted and cannot attend in person on one of these dates, you can ask to be interviewed online.
Will there be an information session?	Yes. Ayrshire College will hold an online information session on MS Teams on Wednesday 9 December 2026, from 17:00 to 18:00. To register, please sign up through Eventbrite: Chair of Ayrshire College - Online Information Session. You will receive the joining details as soon as you sign up. Attending is optional and does not form part of the assessment. Questions and answers from the session will be published alongside the advert.
Who can I speak to about a disability related reasonable adjustment?	Please contact the Public Appointments Team Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot Deaf, deafblind and BSL users can contact the team via contactSCOTLAND-BSL
I am having a problem with the application process who can I speak with?	Please contact the Public Appointments Team (see contact details above).
Do you have any advice for candidates attending interviews?	Yes. More information is provided here: Introduction - Public appointments: guide - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

I can't attend the interview in person, can I attend remotely?	Yes. Interviews will be held in person in Glasgow. If you cannot attend in person, you can ask to attend using MS Teams. Please contact the Public Appointments Team. Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot
Will you reimburse expenses for attending an interview?	Yes. You can claim reasonable expenses. A claim form will be issued with your invitation to interview, along with instructions.
What does 'appointed on merit' mean?	Appointed on merit means that the people who are appointed most closely meet the criteria that is sought for the public body vacancy at a point in time. People are assessed on the evidence that they present in the appointments process and the findings of the fit and proper person test.
What role does the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) have in the appointments process?	The ESC regulate and monitor the public appointments process. The Commissioner plays a role in ensuring appointments are made on merit and use fair methods. More information about the Commissioner's role is provided here: Public appointments Information leaflet | Ethical Standards Commissioner
Can I apply if I am not a British citizen?	Yes. You can apply if you are not a British citizen. However you must be legally entitled to work in the UK.
Would remuneration for a public appointment impact on my benefits?	Possibly. Taking up a remunerated public appointment may affect benefits payments. This will depend on individual circumstances and you should seek advice from your benefits provider. More information is provided here: Public appointments and welfare benefits: information - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
Do the selection panel see information from the diversity monitoring form?	No. Diversity monitoring information provided by applicants is not shared with the selection panel. If applicants opt for a guaranteed interview this information will be shared with the selection panel. Information about a reasonable adjustment may be shared with the selection panel to ensure that

	requirements are met (e.g. if a BSL interpreter is required).
Do I need to provide an email address and contact details at application stage?	Yes. You must provide your contact details, including an email address, when submitting your application. This information is required so that we can contact you regarding your application and, if you are successful, to support the appointment process. As part of the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) requirements, the Scottish Government may need to verify the identity and credentials of candidates who are recommended for appointment. Contact details are also needed by the public body to arrange induction, and will be shared with them if you are appointed. Applications submitted without the required contact information will be rejected.
How will my personal information be handled?	All personal information will be handled with great care and in line with UK GDPR and data protection requirements. Further information can be found in the Privacy Notice.
Can I get feedback on my application or interview?	Yes. You can request feedback. Candidates have 20 working days from the date of notification of the outcome of their application to make the request in writing to Public.Appointments@gov.scot.
Is any training provided if I am offered and take up an appointment?	Yes. Each public body has their own induction process and training offer, they will make contact directly should you be appointed. New appointees are also invited to attend an induction day hosted by the Public Bodies Support Unit of the Scottish Government.
Can I apply for a role on a regulated public body if I have previously served on that public body?	Yes. Previous service on a public body does not prevent you from applying for a new appointment. Time served as a Member, Trustee or Commissioner and time served as Chair are treated separately. Each role is normally subject to a maximum of eight years' service. **If you have previously held the**

	same role on the public body, any earlier periods of service will count towards the eight-year limit, even if there has been a break between appointments.
Is it possible to hold more than one public appointment?	Yes. It is possible to have more than one public appointment. **However, please check the disqualification section in this pack for further details related to this specific public body.** You should also check that you can make the time commitment for an additional appointment and that there are no unmanageable conflicts of interest.
Are public appointments announced?	Yes. Every appointment is announced here: Public appointments: news releases - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) The public body may also announce new appointments on their own website and social media platforms. Information published will include a biography and details of any political activity within the last 5 years.
What standards are expected of public body members?	The conduct expected of public body members of Scottish public bodies is set out here: Members of devolved public bodies: model code of conduct - December 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)(this includes the Principles of Public Life)
How can I complain about the public appointments process?	Further information about the complaints process for public appointments can be found here: How to apply - Public appointments: guide - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Anyone concerned about public appointments can raise a complaint and have it independently investigated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner. Investigation process public appointments | Ethical Standards Commissioner

For further information

Please contact the Public Appointments Team, Scottish Government

Email: Public.appointments@gov.scot

Deaf, deafblind and BSL users can contact the team via contactSCOTLAND-BSL

For information about the College and its Board, please contact:
Angela Scoular, Executive Assistant to the Principal and Chief Executive,
Angela.Scoular@ayrshire.ac.uk