Edinburgh College

Annual Audit Plan year ending 31 July 2023

Contents

Our reports are prepared in accordance with Terms of Appointment Letter from Audit Scotland dated 18 May 2022 through which the Accounts Commission has appointed us as external auditor of Edinburgh College (the College) for financial years 2022/23 to 2026/27. We undertake our audit in accordance with Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992; and our responsibilities as set out within Audit Scotland's Code of Audit Practice 2021.

Mazars LLP
Capital Square
58 Morrison Street
Edinburgh
EH3 8BP

The Board of Management
Edinburgh College
Sighthill Campus
Bankhead Avenue
Edinburgh
EH11 4DE

16 May 2023

Dear Members,

Annual Audit Plan – Year ending 31 July 2023

We are pleased to present our Annual Audit Plan for Edinburgh College for the year ending 31 July 2023.

The purpose of this document is to summarise our audit approach, highlight significant audit risks and areas of key judgements and provide you with the details of our audit team. As it is a fundamental requirement that an auditor is, and is seen to be, independent of its clients, Section 7 of this document also summarises our considerations and conclusions on our independence as auditors.

We consider two-way communication with you to be key to a successful audit and important in:

- reaching a mutual understanding of the scope of the audit and the responsibilities of each of us;
- sharing information to assist each of us to fulfil our respective responsibilities;
- providing you with constructive observations arising from the audit process; and
- ensuring that we, as external auditors, gain an understanding of your attitude and views in respect of the internal and external operational, financial, compliance and other risks facing Edinburgh College which may affect the audit, including the likelihood of those risks materialising and how they are monitored and managed.

This document, which has been prepared following our initial planning discussions with management, is the basis for discussion of our audit approach, and any questions or input you may have on our approach or role as auditor.

Client service is extremely important to us and we strive to continuously provide technical excellence with the highest level of service quality, together with continuous improvement to exceed your expectations so, if you have any concerns or comments about this document or audit approach, please contact me on 07881 283571.

Yours Faithfully,

Michael Speight

1) Engagement and responsibilities summary

We are appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland to perform the external audit of Edinburgh College for the year to 31 July 2023. This is our first year of appointment.

Responsibilities

Our responsibilities, principally derived from the Code of Audit Practice (the Code) issued by Audit Scotland, are outlined below.

Area	Responsibility
Audit opinion	We are responsible for forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements. The Audit and Risk Committee is responsible for the assessment of the College's ability to continue as a going concern. As auditors, we are required to consider the appropriateness of the use of the going concern assumption in the preparation of the financial statements and the adequacy of the disclosures made.
Regularity opinion	We are required to form and express an opinion on whether the College has, in all material respects, incurred expenditure and income in accordance with any applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.
Opinion on other matters	We are required to express an opinion on whether the audited part of the Remuneration and Staff Report, and the Governance Report have been properly prepared in line with relevant legislation and directions. We also express an opinion on whether the Performance Report is consistent with the audited financial statements.
Wider scope work	The Code requires us to conclude and make a judgement on the four dimensions of wider scope work. The four dimensions are Financial Sustainability, Financial Management, Governance and Transparency, and Value for Money.

Our audit does not relieve the Board of Management, as those charged with governance, or management of their responsibilities. The responsibility for safeguarding assets and for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and non-compliance with law or regulations rests with both those charged with governance and management. In accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), we plan and perform our audit so as to obtain reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. However our audit should not be relied upon to identify all such misstatements.

As part of our audit procedures in relation to fraud we are required to enquire of those charged with governance as to their knowledge of instances of fraud, the risk of fraud and their views on management controls that mitigate the fraud risks.

2) Our audit engagement team

A committed and accessible team

Michael Speight

Director
michael.speight@mazars.co.uk
07881 283571

Michael is the Engagement Lead for the audit and will be the key point of contact for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. He will have overall responsibility for delivering a high quality audit to the College. Michael will be responsible for the opinions given on the financial statements and will liaise with the Director of Finance and Estate Infrastructure and the Finance Manager. He will attend Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meetings, and where appropriate, Board meetings.

To be Confirmed

Audit Manager

Your Audit Manager will manage and coordinate the audit and be the key point of contact for the Director of Finance and Estate Infrastructure and the Finance Manager, as well as liaising with Internal Audit. They will oversee completion of audit work to a high standard and attend Audit and Risk Assurance Committees as appropriate.

We are in the process of determining the best fit between our managers and our new clients under the Audit Scotland contract and will confirm the details of this individual as soon as possible.

3) Audit approach, scope and timeline

Our audit approach is designed to provide an audit that complies with all professional requirements

Audit Scope

Our audit of the financial statements will be conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK), relevant ethical and professional standards, our own audit approach and in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work is focused on those aspects of your business which we consider to have a higher risk of material misstatement, such as those affected by management judgement and estimation, application of new accounting standards, changes of accounting policy, changes to operations or areas which have been found to contain material errors in the past.

Audit Approach

Our audit approach is a risk-based approach primarily driven by the risks we consider to result in a higher risk of material misstatement of the financial statements. Once we have completed our risk assessment, we develop our audit strategy and design audit procedures in response to this assessment.

If we conclude that appropriately designed controls are in place then we may plan to test and rely upon these controls. If we decide controls are not appropriately designed, or we decide it would be more efficient to do so, we may take a wholly substantive approach to our audit testing. Substantive procedures are audit procedures designed to detect material misstatements at the assertion level and comprise tests of details (of classes of transactions, account balances, and disclosures) and substantive analytical procedures. Irrespective of the assessed risks of material misstatement, which take into account our evaluation of the operating effectiveness of controls, we are required to design and perform substantive procedures for each material class of transactions, account balance, and disclosure.

Our audit will be planned and performed so as to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement and give a true and fair view. The concept of materiality and how we define a misstatement is explained in more detail in section 8.

The diagram overleaf outlines the procedures we perform at the different stages of the audit.

Audit timeline

Planning and risk assessment

Spring & Summer 2023

- Obtaining an understanding of the College
- Initial opinion and wider scope risk assessments
- Development of our audit strategy
- Review of EY's 2022 audit file
- Agreement of timetables
- Preliminary analytical procedures

Key reporting and communication outputs

- Annual Audit Plan

Interim

September 2023

- Documenting systems and controls
- Walkthrough procedures
- Controls review, including general and IT general controls (approx. 1 week's work)

Key reporting and communication outputs

- Regular update meetings with the finance team

Fieldwork

October 2023

- Review of draft annual report and accounts
- Reassessment of audit strategy
- Delivering our planned audit testing (approx. 3 weeks' work)
- Communication on emerging issues
- Clearance meeting

Key reporting and communication outputs

- Regular update meetings with the finance team

Completion

December 2023

- Final review and disclosure checklist of financial statements
- Final audit file review
- Agreeing content of Letter of Representation
- Reporting to those charged with governance
- Reviewing post balance sheet events

Key reporting and communication outputs

- Independent Auditor's Report
- Annual Audit Report

Reliance on internal audit

Where possible we will seek to utilise the work performed by internal audit to modify the nature, extent and timing of our audit procedures. We will meet with internal audit to discuss the progress and findings of their work prior to the commencement of our controls evaluation procedures.

Management's and our experts

Management makes use of experts in specific areas when preparing the College's financial statements. We also use experts to assist us to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on specific items of account.

Item of account	Management's expert	Planned audit approach
Defined benefit pension liability and associated accounting entries and disclosures required by FRS 102.	Actuary – Hymans Robertson LLP	We will consider the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made, referring to our in-house pension scheme experts.

Reporting to Audit Scotland

During the year we will continue to make returns to Audit Scotland as they collect data to establish the impact on the further education sector and feed into any national reporting as required.

National Fraud Initiative

Edinburgh College took part in the NFI exercise in 2022/23. The work that the College has undertaken will be reviewed as part of our audit procedures.

Adding value

We aim to add value to Edinburgh College through our external audit work by being constructive and forward looking, by identifying areas for improvement and be recommending and encouraging good practice. In doing so, we intend to help the College promote improved standards of governance, more effective use of resources and better management and decision making.

The 2022/23 audit will be undertaken in a hybrid approach with the appropriate mix of onsite and offsite work – in order to maximise the efficiency of both College staff and auditor time.

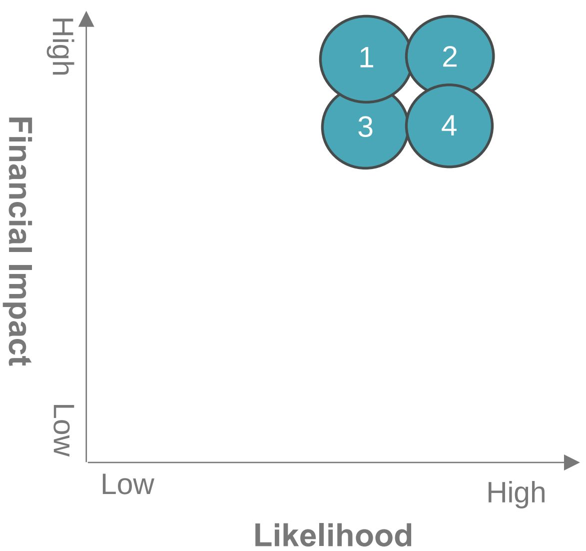
4) Significant risks and key judgement areas

Following our risk assessment approach, we have identified relevant risks to the audit of the financial statements.

The audit risks we identify are categorised as significant, enhanced or standard, as defined below:

Area	Responsibility
Significant risk	A significant risk is an identified and assessed risk of material misstatement that, in the auditor's judgment, requires special audit consideration. For any significant risk, the auditor shall obtain an understanding of the entity's controls, including control activities relevant to that risk.
Enhanced risk	An enhanced risk is an area of higher assessed risk of material misstatement at audit assertion level other than a significant risk. Enhanced risks incorporate but may not be limited to: • key areas of management judgement, including accounting estimates which are material but are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement; and • other audit assertion risks arising from significant events or transactions that occurred during the period
Standard risk	This is related to relatively routine, non-complex transactions that tend to be subject to systematic processing and require little management judgement. Although it is considered that there is a risk of material misstatement, there are no elevated or special factors related to the nature, the likely magnitude of the potential misstatements or the likelihood of the risk occurring.

The summary risk assessment, illustrated in the audit risk continuum below, highlights those risks which we deem to be significant and other enhanced risks. We have summarised our audit response to these risks on the next page.



Area
1 Management override of controls
2 Revenue recognition
3 Expenditure recognition
4 Pension assets

We provide more detail on the identified risks and our testing approach with respect to significant risks in the table below. An audit is a dynamic process, should we change our view of risk or approach to address the identified risks during the course of the Audit, we will report this to the Audit and Risk Committee.

With Edinburgh College being a new client for the July 2023 year-end, this increases the likelihood of a change as we complete our first audit with the College.

Significant risks

Description of risk	Planned response
Management override of controls Management at various levels within an organisation are in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of their ability to manipulate accounting records and prepare fraudulent financial statements by overriding controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Due to the unpredictable way in which such override could occur there is a risk of material misstatement due to fraud on all audits.	We will address this risk through performing audit work over: • Accounting estimates impacting amounts included in the financial statements; • Consideration of identified significant transactions outside the normal course of business; and • Journals recorded in the general ledger and other adjustments made in preparation of the financial statements.
Revenue recognition There is a presumption under International Standards on Auditing that there is a significant risk of fraud and error in the timing of revenue recognition leading to the material misstatement of revenue overall. This is because revenue is an area of particular focus by users of financial statements and can be subject to judgements as to when certain income streams should be recognised and if clawback conditions apply to any funding. The risk above applies only to the non-core grant income and other non-grant income generated by the College. The risk has been rebutted in relation to the core grant income received by the College, given the highly regulated nature of this income, and therefore the lower inherent and fraud risks associated with it.	We will address this risk through performing audit work over: • the design and implementation of the controls management has in place to ensure income is recognised in the correct period; • cash receipts around the year end to ensure they have been recognised in the right year; • the judgements made by management in determining when non-grant income is recognised; • for major grant income, obtaining counterparty confirmation; and • expected credit loss provisions applied to receivables at the year end, considering the appropriateness of judgements made by management.

Description of risk	Planned response
Expenditure recognition For public sector organisations, the same risk in relation to fraud and error in respect of the timing of recording of transactions can apply to the recognition of non-payroll related expenditure and contractual obligations. The pressure to manage expenditure to ensure that budgeted outcomes are achieved increases the risk surrounding fraudulent reporting of expenditure.	We will address the risk through performing audit work over: • the design and implementation of the controls management has in place; • testing of non-payroll expenditure around the year end to ensure transactions are recognised in the correct year; • testing material year end payables, accruals and provisions; and • reviewing judgements about whether the criteria for recognising provisions are satisfied.
Defined benefit pension scheme assets There is a significant asset value used in calculating the Lothian Pension Fund (LPF) position as at 31st July 2023 and due to the nature of the pension scheme there is significant complexity in identifying the College's share of the assets. The complexity is created by factors such as: • The types of assets held by the pension scheme and their valuation bases; and • The calculation of the College's share of the overall Scheme assets requiring the rolling forward of quarter-end valuations.	We will address this risk by obtaining confirmation from the pension fund of the total value submitted to the actuary and details of how the College's share of assets has been calculated. We will then review this confirmation and consider if the information provided is sufficient and challenge any inconsistencies noted.

Key areas of management judgement and estimation

Key areas of management judgement include accounting estimates which are material but are not considered to give rise to a significant risk of material misstatement. These areas of management judgement represent other areas of audit emphasis.

Description of judgement or estimate	Planned response
Defined benefit pension scheme assumptions The College makes contributions to two pension schemes – the Scottish Teachers Superannuation Scheme (STSS) and the Lothian Pension Fund (LPF). While both are defined benefit schemes, it is not possible to identify the College's share of the underlying assets and liabilities in the STSS scheme and it is therefore accounted for as a defined contribution scheme. The College's share of the LPF's underlying assets and liabilities is identifiable and the net position is recognised in the accounts. There are significant assumptions used in calculating the value of the liability element of the year-end position of the LPF.	We will consider the actuarial assumptions used by the actuary when calculating the liability element of the year-end position of the LPF. We will utilise our internal Actuarial Valuations team in order to assess the validity of these assumptions, both individually and in combination with each other. We will seek from management information to support the membership numbers included in the Actuarial report and understand how management have gained comfort that the data is correct.
Valuation of land and buildings The College held land and buildings with a net book value of £171m as at 31 July 2022. In line with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual, the College has adopted a formal revaluation policy of an external valuation every five years, with a desktop, interim valuation performed during the five year period. For the 2021 and 2022 year-ends an indexation factor has been applied as advised by the external valuers, Avison Young. For the 2023 year-end Avison Young will provide the College with an interim valuation which will be used to update the carrying values. The College policy meets the requirement of the FE SORP that assets are valued sufficiently regularly so that the carrying value of the asset is not materially different from its fair value. Given the significance of the value of fixed assets held, a misstatement in the valuation could be material to the financial statements.	We will undertake a range of substantive procedures including: • review of management's assessment as to whether the interim valuation sufficiently takes account of changes to land and buildings since the most recent full valuation undertaken at July 2020; • review of the reconciliation between the College's asset register and general ledger; and • consider the College's impairment review process for land and buildings.

5) Wider scope work

The Code requires us to conclude and make a judgement on the four dimensions of wider scope work:

- **Financial sustainability**
- **Financial management**
- **Governance and transparency**
- **Value for money**

We set out below the work that we intend to perform to reach these judgements:

Dimension	Description	Our planned approach
Financial management	Financial management is concerned with financial capacity, sound budgetary processes and whether the control environment and internal controls are operating effectively.	We intend to consider: • the monitoring of the effectiveness of internal control arrangements; • whether the College's budgetary control system is timely and accurate; and • whether and how the College has assessed their financial capacity and skills.
Financial sustainability	Extending our work on the going concern assumption in the financial statements looking forward two to five years from the reporting date, reviewing and assessing the College's arrangements for financial planning and affordable and sustainable service delivery.	We intend to consider: • the financial planning system in place for short, medium and long term periods; • the adequacy and accuracy of financial reporting arrangements; • the reasonableness of affordability assumptions made in financial planning; and • the extent to which the financial planning assumptions have been updated and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Governance and transparency	The Governance Statement sets out the internal control arrangements and governance framework in place for the year under review.	We intend to consider: • the effectiveness of internal control arrangements; • the appropriateness of disclosures made in the Governance Statement; and • whether the disclosure requirements of the Accounts Direction and the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges have been met.

Dimension	Description	Our planned approach
Value for money	Value for money concerns using resources effectively and continually improving services.	We intend to consider: • the College's evidence of providing value for money; and • the focus on improving value for money and the pace of change at the College.

Identified significant risks to our wider scope work

We have also considered, as part of our planning, whether there are significant risks that would impact on any of the four areas of our wider scope work that require special audit consideration. At the planning stage we have identified one significant risk, under the financial sustainability heading as detailed below. Should our assessment of risk, or our planned approach to address the risk change during the course of the audit, we will report this to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Description of significant risk	Planned response
Financial sustainability We have been made aware that the College is projecting an Adjusted Operating Position to July 2023 of a deficit of approximately £1m, which includes an estimation of the costs of a voluntary severance programme. Additionally, a cash outflow of approximately £4m is anticipated between July 2022 and July 2023. The above position combines with the expectation that recurring expenditure will experience greater inflationary pressures than increases in income received. As a result of this combination of circumstances, Edinburgh College will have to make decisions in order to appropriately balance finances – something expected to be the case across the Scottish College sector. We acknowledge that the 2023 voluntary severance programme proactively forms part of these decisions. Given the level of sector-wide uncertainties around the sufficiency of future funding and the general economic outlook, there is a risk the timing of the future funding gap could be accelerated and/or additional funding not being made available from the SFC.	We intend to consider: • the forecast financial position in the financial plans submitted to SFC; • alternative plans being considered by the College to ensure a balanced budget is achieved; • the financial reporting arrangements in place at the College; and • how management have considered the longer term implications of the COVID-19 outbreak and the combined impact of cost inflation and income levels.

6) Audit fees

Fees for audit and other services

Our fees for the audit of the financial statements and for any other services are outlined in the tables below:

Service	2022/23 proposed fee £
Auditor remuneration	52,720
Pooled costs	(7,730)
Audit support	1,360
Sectoral cap adjustment	3,180
Total fee	**49,530**

The fees outlined above are provided on the basis that we will receive a high-quality set of draft financial statements, supported by good working papers. Should we be required to perform significant levels of additional audit work, or face significant delay in our audit, we will discuss the impact of this on our proposed fee with management.

The proposed audit fee is in line with the scale fee set by Audit Scotland.

7) Our commitment to independence

We are committed to independence and are required by the Financial Reporting Council to confirm to you at least annually, in writing, that we comply with the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard

In addition, we communicate any matters or relationship which we believe may have a bearing on our independence or the objectivity of the audit team.

Based on the information provided by you and our own internal procedures to safeguard our independence as auditors, we confirm that in our professional judgement there are no relationships between us and any of our related or subsidiary entities, and you and your related entities creating any unacceptable threats to our independence within the regulatory or professional requirements governing us as your auditors.

We have policies and procedures in place which are designed to ensure that we carry out our work with integrity, objectivity and independence. These policies include:

- all partners and staff are required to complete an annual independence declaration;
- all new partners and staff are required to complete an independence confirmation and also complete computer-based ethical training;
- rotation policies covering audit engagement partners and other key members of the audit team;
- use by managers and partners of our client and engagement acceptance system which requires all non-audit services to be approved in advance by the audit engagement partner.

We confirm, as at the date of this document, that the engagement team and others in the firm as appropriate, and Mazars LLP are independent and comply with relevant ethical requirements. However, if at any time you have concerns or questions about our integrity, objectivity or independence please discuss these with Michael Speight in the first instance.

Prior to the provision of any non-audit services, Michael Speight will undertake appropriate procedures to consider and fully assess the impact that providing the service may have on our auditor independence.

Any emerging independence threats and associated identified safeguards will be communicated in our Annual Audit Report.

8) Materiality and misstatements

Materiality is an expression of the relative significance or importance of a particular matter in the context of financial statements as a whole. Misstatements in financial statements are considered to be material if they, individually or in aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

Summary of initial materiality thresholds

Level of materiality	Initial Threshold £'000
Overall materiality	1,259
Performance materiality	818
Trivial threshold for errors to be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee	37

Overall materiality

Judgements on materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances and are affected by the size and nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both. Judgements about materiality are based on consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group and not on specific individual users.

The assessment of what is material is a matter of professional judgement and is affected by our perception of the financial information needs of the users of the financial statements. In making our assessment we assume that users:

- have a reasonable knowledge of business, economic activities and accounts;
- have a willingness to study the information in the financial statements with reasonable diligence;
- understand that financial statements are prepared, presented and audited to levels of materiality;
- recognise the uncertainties inherent in the measurement of amounts based on the use of estimates, judgement and the consideration of future events; and
- will make reasonable economic decisions on the basis of the information in the financial statements.

We consider materiality whilst planning and performing our audit based on quantitative and qualitative factors.

Whilst planning, we make judgements about the size of misstatements which we consider to be material and which provides a basis for determining the nature, timing and extent of risk assessment procedures, identifying and assessing the risk of material misstatement and determining the nature, timing and extent of further audit procedures.

The materiality determined at the planning stage does not necessarily establish an amount below which uncorrected misstatements, either individually or in aggregate, will be considered as immaterial.

We revise materiality for the financial statements as our audit progresses should we become aware of information that would have caused us to determine a different amount had we been aware of that information at the planning stage.

We consider that revenue represents the key focus of users of the financial statements and, as such, we base our materiality levels around this benchmark. We will identify a figure for materiality but identify separate levels for procedures design to detect individual errors, and also a level above which all identified errors will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.

We expect to set a materiality threshold at 1.75% of revenue (£1,259,000).

After setting initial materiality, we continue to monitor materiality throughout the audit to ensure that it is set at an appropriate level.

Performance Materiality

Our audit testing is based on a level of performance materiality, which is a percentage of overall materiality, but also dependent on the level of inherent risk assessed on the area being tested. It is the level we use to calculate our sample sizes, and drives our acceptable difference in any substantive analytical procedures. It is lower than overall materiality as it helps to reduce the risk that the total of the uncorrected or undetected misstatements does not exceed materiality for the financial statements as a whole. It is based on between 50 – 80% of overall materiality depending on the risk level. Our initial assessment of performance materiality is based on low inherent risk and takes into account this is the first year we have audited the College, meaning that we have applied 65% of overall materiality as performance materiality.

Specific Materiality

We assess specific materiality if there are particular classes of transactions, account balances or disclosures for which misstatements of lesser amounts than materiality for the financial statements as a whole could reasonably be expected to influence the users of the financial statements. Specific materiality focuses on the qualitative nature, as well as the size, of an item. It recognises that, in some circumstances, it may take a much smaller misstatement to influence the user of the financial statements.

We are required to provide an opinion as to whether the audited part of the Remuneration and Staff Report has been properly prepared. Given the sensitivity of the disclosures made in the Remuneration and Staff Report, we have assessed a specific materiality for this work at £500, being the level that would impact rounding for figures shown to the nearest £'000.

Misstatements

We aggregate misstatements identified during the audit that are other than clearly trivial. We set a level of triviality for individual errors identified (a reporting threshold) for reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee that is consistent with the level of triviality that we consider would not need to be accumulated because we expect that the accumulation of such amounts would not have a material effect on the financial statements. Based on our preliminary assessment of overall materiality, our proposed triviality threshold is £37,000 based on 3% of overall materiality.

Appendix 1 – Key communication points

ISA (UK) 260 ‘Communication with Those Charged with Governance’, ISA (UK) 265 ‘Communicating Deficiencies In Internal Control To Those Charged With Governance And Management’ and other ISAs (UK) specifically require us to communicate the following:

Required communication	Reporting
Our responsibilities in relation to the audit of the financial statements and our wider responsibilities	Annual Audit Plan
Planned scope and timing of the audit	Annual Audit Plan
Significant audit risks and areas of management judgement	Annual Audit Plan
Our commitment to independence	Annual Audit Plan Annual Audit Report
Responsibilities for preventing and detecting errors	Annual Audit Plan
Materiality and misstatements	Annual Audit Plan Annual Audit Report
Fees for audit and other services	Annual Audit Plan
Significant deficiencies in internal control	Annual Audit Report
Significant findings from the audit	Annual Audit Report
Significant matters discussed with management	Annual Audit Report
Our conclusions on the significant audit risks and areas of management judgement	Annual Audit Report
Summary of misstatements	Annual Audit Report
Management representation letter	Annual Audit Report
Our proposed draft audit report	Annual Audit Report

Contacts

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mazars