



*“The importance and significance of outstanding governance has never been greater. The role of governing boards in defining and implementing strategy whilst holding the leaders to account has to be the foundation upon which a world class education system is built. Governors who are able to work as a team, who are able to bring their skills and experience to the role and who blend challenge and support to hold [management] to account, will improve standards”*

Extract taken from DfE’s: A Competency Framework for Governance Jan 2017

### **Skills Audit:**

A skills audit is a useful way of assessing the skills, knowledge and experience of the Corporation and in particular helps identify any skills gaps needed to deliver effective governance. Governance is a ‘thinking’ not a ‘doing’ role – the skills and knowledge sought are those which enable governors to ask the right questions, analyse data and have focussed discussions which create robust accountability for college leaders.

It is recognised that no individual governor is going to have all the skills, attributes and experience listed in the audit. The Corporation is a team, and the purpose of the audit is to ensure that each of the skills cited are covered by at least one governor.

The intention behind the skills audit is to enable all members of the Corporation to set out their skills and experience whatever their backgrounds. The skills audit clearly draws upon the essential and desirable skills for governance which can be acquired through a range of life experiences. As such, the experience and skills required may come from either governors’ professional or personal lives.

A skills matrix collates all governors’ responses for consideration by the Search & Governance Committee. Any gaps identified will inform recruitment and succession planning strategies as well as CPD training programmes.

### *The role of Governors at HNC:*

#### Main Objective:

To be able to devote time to attend Corporation and Committee meetings on a regular basis and to undertake training and induction sessions. To deliver effective governance by providing strategic direction, creating robust accountability, oversight and assurance for the college’s educational and financial performance and being ambitious for all learners to achieve the very best outcomes.

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

As a part of their shared corporate responsibility Members are expected to play their part in ensuring that:

- The educational character and mission of the College reflect the needs of the community which is served by the College and are within Government Policies.

- public funds are used in accordance with the requirements of the funding bodies and to the maximum benefit of the community
- appropriate staffing arrangements are in place, particularly regarding the appointment of holders of senior posts and the framework for pay and conditions for all staff.
- The College acts at all times in line with its Statutory Instrument and Articles of Government and all other legal and funding requirements.

Members have an individual responsibility to:

- a personal commitment to the seven principles of Public Life as set out in Lord Nolan's Report on Standards in Public Life i.e.
  - selflessness
  - integrity
  - objectivity
  - accountability
  - openness
  - honesty
  - leadership
- attend and contribute to meetings of the Corporation and its Committees as appropriate
- apply specialist knowledge and expertise in contributing to the decision making processes of the Corporation
- act as an ambassador for the College
- participate in the annual review of the performance of the Corporation
- take part where practicable in any relevant training and development events or opportunities as arranged from time to time for the benefit of Members
- give any additional assistance as may be reasonably requested by the Chair of the Corporation.
- familiarise themselves with and be committed to the relevant Committee's terms of reference and the College's Instrument and Articles of Government.
- act fairly and impartially maintaining confidentiality
- use independent judgement and declare any relationship internal or external which could interfere with impartial decision-making and the principles of public life.
- accept collective responsibility for Corporation decisions.

The annual skills audit is therefore to identify skills and knowledge gaps in governors' personal attributes, professional talents and relevant experience which underpin effective governance.

### Skills Audit:

The Corporation's skills audit builds upon the DfE's competency framework for governance (Jan 2017). This framework is made up of competencies grouped under the headings of 6 features of effective governance: strategic leadership; accountability; people; structures; compliance and evaluation

## 1. Strategic leadership

Effective boards provide confident, strategic leadership to their organisations; they lead by example and 'set the tone from the top'. These competencies relate to the core function of boards to set vision, ethos and strategic direction.

## 2. Accountability for educational standards and financial performance

These are the competencies that the board needs in order to deliver its core functions of holding executive leaders to account for the educational and financial performance of the organisation.

## 3. People (Principles and personal attributes )

The principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the board are as important as their skills and knowledge. These qualities enable board members to use their skills and knowledge to function well as part of a team and make an active contribution to effective governance.

All those elected or appointed to boards should fulfil their duties in line with the seven principles of public life (the Nolan principles). They should also be mindful of their responsibilities under equality legislation, recognising and encouraging diversity and inclusion. They should understand the impact of effective governance on the quality of education and on outcomes for all students.

## 4. Structures

Understanding and designing the structures through which governance takes place is vital to avoid unclear and overlapping responsibilities that can lead to dysfunctional or ineffective governance arrangements.

## 5. Compliance

To ensure all those involved in governance understand the legal frameworks and context in which the organisation operates and all of the requirements with which it must comply.

## 6. Evaluation

Monitoring the board's effectiveness is a key element of good governance. Individuals should also reflect on their own contribution helping to create a stronger and more motivated board.

### **Governance Self-Assessment Review:**

The Corporation recognises the need for a detailed and effective self-assessment process that can then inform plans, actions and improvement in College Governance and core business performance.

Building upon the 'Evaluation feature' of the competency framework – a formal opportunity for self-assessment of Governance follows the skills audit in order to maximise on Governors' reflection of skills, knowledge and experience . Existing governors only will therefore be asked to draw upon the following:

- What contribution do you feel you have made to the governing board over the past year?
- Please give brief details of CPD opportunities that you have undertaken in the past year

- What overall impact has the governing body had on the experience of the learner?
- What are the Corporation's strengths?
- What are the key areas for board development going forward ? (including Governor training)
- What's your overall assessment of the College Governance arrangements?

### Other approaches to assess Governance Effectiveness:

HNC's approach towards Governance Self-Assessment & Skills Audit is only one tool to review Governance effectiveness and monitor Key Performance Indicators. Other evaluative tools to support Governors in determining appropriate improvement and development plans in sustaining outstanding governance are:

- Annual compliance checks of all corporate structures and governance performance against the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges to support the corporation's published statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control as part of its annual report and accounts.
- Annual review of all Committees i) terms of reference and ii) operation, duties and compliance with its terms of reference
- Internal Audit / External Audit services provide the Corporation with independent assurance on governance performance
- Opportunity to extend to full review every four years on Governance Enablers and Outcomes. This process could be externally led should the corporation require additional external support, guidance and advice.

#### *Enablers:*

- Effective leadership and corporation dynamics
- Effective governance structure and processes
- Effective corporation membership
- Commitment to College's vision, culture and values
- Effective performance monitoring and measurement]effective information and communication

#### *Outcomes:*

- Monitoring progress of the Strategic Plan
- Monitoring financial health
- Confidence in accountability and regulatory compliance
- Confidence in quality of academic provision
- Effectively assessing risk and supporting innovation
- Enhancing institutional reputation and competitiveness
- Providing confidence in governance
- Supporting and challenging the Senior Leadership Team

<u>Document History</u>					
Version	Date	Author	Comments	Authorised by	Date
1	June 2017	Claire Coupland	Introduction of formal policy	S&G	June 2017

2	May 2018	Claire Coupland	No amendments	S&G	June 2018
3	May 2019	Claire Coupland	No amendments	S&G	May 2019
4	May 2020	Claire Coupland	No amendments	S&G	May 2020
5	May 2021	Claire Coupland	No amendments. To note however that DfE are currently undertaking review of competency framework for Governance.	S&G	May 2021

