

REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

WORKING GROUP: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH

1. We consider that research should be undertaken to enable us to identify best practice by learning from the experience of other sectors and from current practice in Scotland's colleges. This research would inform:

- revisions to the ASC Guide for College Board members;
- consideration of amendments to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992; and
- the development of public policy, including funding decisions.

2. A possible research project could include comparing accountability and governance models and arrangements for training and support for chief executives, clerks, board chairperson and members

- (i) for providers of further education elsewhere in the UK and internationally,
- (ii) for public services in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, including the HE sector; and
- (iii) for UK corporate and charitable bodies.

2. This work would examine among other things:

- The nature of the governing body. i.e. the extent to which it is involved in day-to-day management decisions, it holds the management team to account, provides advice to the management team and is involved in the formulation of strategic policy.
- The relationship between the board and chief executive, including whether they operate within written schemes of delegation (and if so, how these are framed).
- What activities are undertaken to help the board gel as a collegiate body.
- Whether board members have clearly articulated roles and knowledge of the contribution expected from them, including time commitment.
- How boards secure, where necessary, advice independent from the management team.

- How board member performance is assessed, including arrangements for non-attendance.
- The generic skills required of board members, their training needs and arrangements for induction and for meeting those needs.
- The arrangements for accountability, i.e. open board meetings, reporting arrangements on their activities, etc.

Also, for public sector organisations:

- How the role of accountable officer is discharged, and arrangements for training;
- Whether there are separate arrangements for (a) governance and (b) accountability and if so how this is manifested.
- Recruitment practices.

Also, for educational establishments:

- Arrangement for student participation.

3. The project would also examine the above matters in more detail in a representative sample of colleges through interviews and perhaps focus group discussions with principals, chairs of boards, staff members of boards, student members of boards and other members of boards. It would also seek views on the adequacy of existing arrangements and the current level of regulatory oversight, including how any difficulties could be overcome.

4. The project would further analyse the current composition of all college boards, including the skills available to them, and the number of members and chairs who are:

- female;
- from a minority ethnic background;
- with disabilities.

5. It would examine whether former *ex-officio* board members, e.g. former staff members, are appointed as members after they left office. It would also establish whether any members are former students of the college concerned.

6. In addition the Executive could provide an overview of the broader regulatory landscape in which colleges operate, and the potential overlap of jurisdictions.

7. The Executive could also explore the experience of others in the organisation of the 'Arts & Business Scotland' initiative (<http://www.aandb.org.uk/scotland/>) to attract and develop board members.

Reviews Team
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