

Mentoring Policy and Guidelines for New Governors

Policy and Purpose

Newly appointed Governors will be offered the opportunity to be paired with an experienced Governor.

The aim is to ease the introduction of the new Governor to the Corporation by providing:

- a known and friendly face at their first meeting;
- someone who can help navigate through what may be a mass of new jargon, terminology, structures and processes.

Procedure

On appointment of a new Governor, the Corporation will identify a 'mentor'.

As Mentor he / she will:

- offer to meet with the new Governor when they are appointed or prior to his / her first Board meeting to go through the agenda
- sit with the new Governor at his / her first Board meeting
- be available thereafter, as a sounding board and someone to whom the new Governor can refer to for help and advice
- to continue the relationship for a suggested twelve months, (unless otherwise agreed between the Mentor and new Governor).
- be a good listener and to encourage the new governor to identify approaches to adopt in certain situations. The mentor is not required to train the new governor or to provide explicit instructions on how to behave or act in particular circumstances.

The role of the Mentor will supplement the advice and support given by the Chair of Governors, Chairs of Committees, Principal and / or Governance Executive.

(In the event that the Mentor will not be at the first meeting attended by the new Governor, the Chair of Governors / Chair of the Committee will make contact with the new Governor in advance of the meeting.)

Practice

New Governors are allocated a volunteer Mentor from amongst the more experienced Governors, agreed by the Principal and Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Governing Body and with the agreement of the proposed Mentor. The Clerk would provide contact details for the two individuals who would then enter into an informal support arrangement.

It is anticipated that such an arrangement would last for about 12 months, or for as long as each partner felt it was needed. If during this time, the experienced Governor's participation ceased for whatever reason, then another could be nominated if required. Exactly how much the new Governor would require a Mentor would vary in individual cases, and would largely depend upon their prior knowledge of the College and /or the Further and Higher Education sector.

The mentoring arrangements will remain informal and will continue so long as each partner is willing. Should, at any time, either party not wish to continue the arrangement, this should be agreed between the Mentor and the new Governor. Should the new Governor wish to seek the support of another Mentor, they should contact the Clerk to the Corporation in the first instance, who will then, in consultation with the Chair, seek to appoint a new Mentor, if appropriate.

The mentoring arrangements may also include support sessions on the practical application of -

- F.E. governance good practice, general Governor duties and expected levels of conduct;
- the I&A's, Standing Orders, Code of Conduct;
- College specific information:

The Role of the Mentor

The essence of the Mentoring relationship is that an experienced Governor would make him/herself available to assist a new colleague to quickly develop the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to effectively fulfil the role, and together agree some clear objectives. The Mentor needs to be a friendly face and provide personal support to help the Mentee navigate through the terminology in the board papers.

The Mentor should contact the new Governor when the board papers are published in order to go through the pack, answer questions and if necessary draw attention to key issues and background. It is important that the Mentee understands they do not have to master all the detail in the pack but use the summary sheets to identify what the paper is about and the key recommendations. If possible it is recommended that the Mentor and Mentee meet, prior to the board meeting and sit together at the meeting.

The Mentor would not be required to “train” the new Governor or to provide explicit instructions on how to behave in specific circumstances; rather s/he would be a “good listener”, able to informally encourage their Mentee and help them to comprehend the context of the organisation as well as the College itself. It would be entirely appropriate for the Mentor to answer factual questions and to direct the new Governor to other valuable sources of information for example the Clerk or a member of the Senior Leadership team.

The Mentor would also ensure a new Governor was introduced, where possible, to their colleagues on the board, outside the formal committee structure and with the Clerk, check they know when they are required to attend meetings/functions etc and generally provide an appropriate level of support.

During the first 6 months it is important that the Mentor actively seeks to identify issues where the new Governor needs further clarification, information and training. Some of these issues may be addressed by the Mentor and others referred to the Clerk.

Effective mentoring makes an important contribution to a new Governor’s capability to contribute to the work of the Governing Body and to enjoy the role.

Monitoring and Review:

The Clerk will oversee the Mentoring arrangements, and the policy will be reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee every three years in line with other College policies.

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