

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNORS OF FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

1 Introduction

College leaders, funders and regulators are all interested in developing a clearer picture of effective governance. Many in the sector are keen to develop tools and resources that will support key stakeholders to better understand the efficacy of current arrangements for the stewardship of college corporations¹.

The further education (FE) competency framework for governors, together with the complementary FE competency framework for chairs, outlines and defines a range of competencies that are required to perform effectively as a member of a further education college board.

The frameworks were developed in consultation with FE governance practitioners and several governance experts between 2020 and 2022. The frameworks are also underpinned by the implementation of a rigorous methodology of competency modelling found in prominent academic research on the area². Finally, there has been engagement with FE standards development experts, the wider education sector and beyond.

The framework developed here is structured around highlighting the 'Leadership,' 'Values' and specialist or 'Technical' competencies that contribute to good governance, as outlined in the sector's codes, regulations and guidance.



¹ The framework was developed by and primarily for General Further Education, Sixth Form and designated College Corporations. However, other types of educational institutions may find this framework useful for their governors.

² Winterton et al, 2006; Soderquist et al, 2010; Campion et al, 2011; Stevens, 2012; Shippmann et al, 2000.

WHY ARE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS NEEDED?

As discussed with the chairs, governors, governance professionals and standards experts on the Further Education Governance Framework Steering Group, and evidenced in academic research³, competency frameworks that are well designed and implemented can be beneficial in numerous ways. They may:

1. help to generate an understanding of (and disseminate) the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for good governance – and this, in turn, could enable organisations to identify and encourage effective behaviours;
2. be linked to and may enhance the strategic objectives of the sector since embedding effective practice in individual colleges will benefit the entire system;
3. facilitate the development of a common language around governance competencies across the sector.
4. allow for increased reflection on individual and collective board performance and impact.

In addition to the above, the framework aims to support the attraction, appointment and development of college governors and offers guidance on best-practice expectations for their roles.

Finally, it is the intent of the framework to aid in embedding a learning culture where all board members model inclusivity and a commitment to development – both individually and collectively.



³Winterton et al, 2006; Soderquist et al, 2010; Campion et al, 2011; Stevens, 2012; Shippmann et al, 2000.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Each college will require a different balance of skills, values and knowledge in the governor's role. Depending on the college's size, structure and local context, some competencies and responsibilities will be more critical for effective governance than others. This framework:

- ✓ provides a general guide to some of the behaviours and attributes that lead to effective governance, not a prescription of the required skills and behaviours
- ✓ focuses on competencies for effective governance in the sector generally and is not a tool for an exhaustive audit of the skills and competencies necessary in any single context
- ✓ will inform or complement but is not a replacement for other resources that encourage effective governance, such as governance codes, effectiveness reviews and annual governance self assessments
- ✓ will form the basis for a range of different Education and Training Foundation (ETF) training and development programmes, including the Chairs' Leadership Programme, the Governance Development Programme and a series of networks for governors and chairs
- ✓ is intended to clarify areas of knowledge and/or skills that may be improved through learning and development interventions. This, in turn, should help colleges, the ETF and other stakeholders to get a better understanding of the impact of learning and development.



4 COMPETENCY LEVELS

The framework uses two levels: **Proficient** and **Excelling**.

It is assumed that effective governors would be **Proficient** in some or most of the competencies outlined in this framework. However, a governor need not be **Excelling** in all the competencies to perform their role effectively. Also, it is possible to be effective with competencies that have not been covered here.

As noted above, while this framework aims to capture some of the key competencies for effectively governing college boards, the context of the college will be critical. Boards should decide on required levels of competency for their governors.

Levels

At a **Proficient** Level of a competency, a governor is expected to carry out the related governance responsibilities with confidence. Their application of that competency will be consistent, and they will only need limited guidance and advice. However, support (mentorship, coaching, training or expert guidance) is likely to be required in more complex or non-standard governance contexts.

At an **Excelling** level of a competency, a governor will be widely recognised by internal colleagues and external peers as an authority in areas of governance requiring that competency. They will have demonstrated excellence through their application of the competency in their role over a significant period of time.



LEADERSHIP



COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Strategic Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes in a way that reflects a broad and future-oriented perspective. • Anticipates potential threats or opportunities in determining objectives and setting priorities. • Proposes ideas, options and plans that take advantage of available opportunities. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Ethical Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models the 'Nolan principles' in all college-related activities. • Oversees the integration of ethical standards, inclusivity and high standards of behaviour throughout the organisation. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Stakeholder Relationship Oversight and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands and values constructive relationships with the key individuals and organisations that impact and are impacted by the work of the college locally and nationally. • Effectively monitors and scrutinises the progress of relationships with key stakeholders. • Understands and employs strategies for effective stakeholder and engagement management. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional and Social Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises their own and others' feelings and emotions and uses this information to relate effectively and constructively. • Manages creative tensions between board members and distinguishes between those that lead to effective challenge and those that might be detrimental to the board. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates effectively, tailoring modes and channels of communication to audience needs to work successfully with others and meet objectives. • Listens carefully to others and gives due consideration to other perspectives. • Demonstrates openness and candour in communicating with board members and other stakeholders. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>

VALUES / BEHAVIOURS



COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects ideas from different information sources. • Applies previous experience and knowledge to problem-solving. • Seeks out other points of view, triangulates evidence and asks questions to clarify ideas and check their validity. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively employs strategies to include the full range of perspectives from members to inform decision-making and effective collaboration. • Oversees processes for maintaining an inclusive culture throughout the organisation. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates with openness, clarity and honesty and encourages these principles in all college activities. • Ensures the board's decision-making rationale is clear, considered and in line with college values and objectives. • Ensures avenues for and welcomes feedback from learners and other stakeholders. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilises and energises others to create a common vision to solve problems and achieve college objectives. • Facilitates the work of others and can tap into the array of skills held by members to achieve the board's agreed objectives. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Performance Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets challenging but achievable goals and standards for personal performance and the performance of others. • Focuses on achieving the board's priorities and seeks to maximise the college's business advantage. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>



TECHNICAL

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Oversight of Educational Experience and Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the appropriate mechanisms required for effective oversight of the quality and inclusivity of the learning experience for all learners. • Understands relevant regulations and can provide effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements. • Values the learner voice and ensures it is factored into decision-making processes. • Understands the quality expectations of accountability bodies and, where there are weaknesses, monitors the implementation of a rigorous improvement plan. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainable Estate Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows how the strategic and operational management of the estate supports the college's educational priorities. • Understands and can oversee key functions including estates- related risk analysis; effective procurement strategy; waste reduction and efficient resource usage; and business continuity arrangements. • Uses knowledge and networks to develop a strategy to influence and achieve change for a sustainable future at the college.. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Human Resources Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possesses in-depth knowledge of developing strategies for the management of the human resources function of an organisation. • Is able to interrogate the efficacy of human resources (HR) strategies and whether they will enable the college to meet its objectives. • Is able to support the establishment of effective succession planning and compensation principles and policies. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Analysis and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows the principles, methods and tools used for risk identification, assessment and mitigation. • Identifies and assesses credible risks and their impact and develops and oversees appropriate risk control measures. 	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>





continued

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Financial Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knows the principles, methods and techniques of financial analysis.• Interprets financial information and uses it effectively to inform decisions.• Effectively assesses the college's financial position and monitors and steers its financial performance to stay solvent and develop sustainable plans.	Proficient <input type="checkbox"/> Excelling <input type="checkbox"/>

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