

THE FURTHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The Governance Professionals' Competency Framework has been developed by Education Training Foundation (ETF) with the sector's support and aims to help to address the Department for Education's (DfE) identified need to strengthen further education (FE) governance as set out in the Skills for Jobs white paper.

The objectives with the Framework are to create resources that allow for the identification of the behaviours and skills that drive successful governance outcomes, generate a common language and basis for benchmarking that stakeholders can use across the sector when reflecting on effective practice.

Development of the FE Governance Professionals' Competency Framework relied heavily on the contribution of the FE Governance Frameworks' Steering Group, numerous other governors and governance professionals and other stakeholders who oversaw the process and provided the necessary scrutiny, challenge, and support. The document draws extensively from:

- the Department for Education's (DfE) Further Education Corporations and Sixth-form College Corporations: Governance Guide
- the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges
- the Charity Governance Code
- the Financial Reporting Council's (FRC) UK Corporate Governance Code.

It has also been informed by a range of governing documents, including:

- instruments and articles of government from many further education (FE) and sixth-form college corporations
- a range of governance professional role descriptions that are currently in use, including that developed by AoC's National Governance Professionals' Group (NGPG).

This framework may supplement but is not a replacement for the range of other useful resources that support the effective practice of governance professionals. While there has been an effort to reflect the skills needed currently as well as some of those likely to be needed as college governance changes, going forward, the ETF will continue to maintain and publish this framework to ensure that it is as practical and relevant to the sector as possible.



Purpose of the Competency Framework

This Competency Framework can be used to support a wide range of activities:

Formal qualifications:

The Competency Framework will underpin a qualifications programme that is being developed in partnership with the Institute of Directors (IoD). There are three qualifications (Award, Certificate and Diploma) with equivalence to Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Levels 5, 6 and 7¹.

Training and continuing professional development (CPD):

The Competency Framework will inform the training and development activities offered by the DfE and the ETF. The training offered to governance professionals will be mapped against areas of the Framework allowing individuals to identify which programme best meets their needs.

Recruitment:

Boards may use the framework as a basis for the governance professional's annual appraisal. Alternatively, governance professionals may use it to self-reflect on their performance and to identify areas for development.

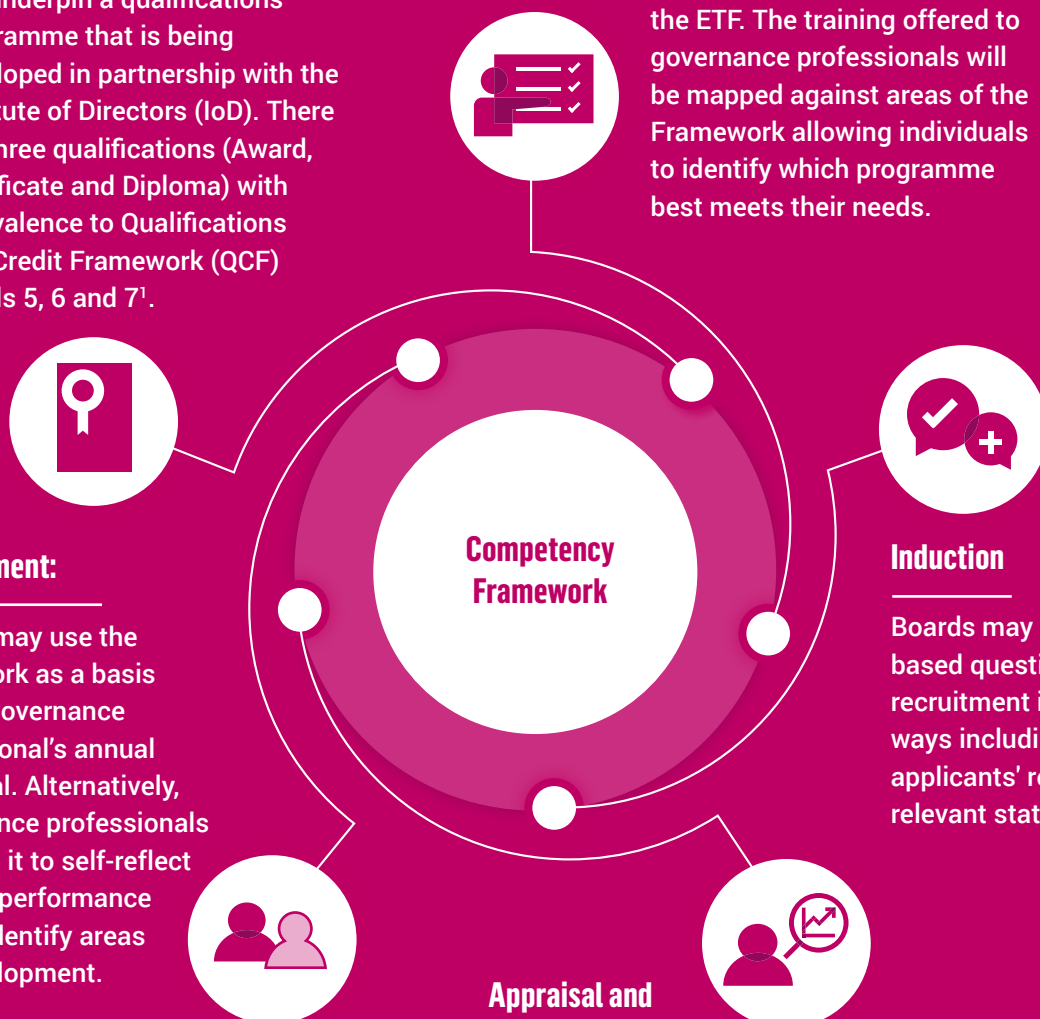
Induction

Boards may use competency-based questions in recruitment in a number of ways including to evaluate applicants' responses against relevant statements.

Appraisal and self-reflection:

Boards may use the framework as a basis for the governance professional's annual appraisal. Alternatively, governance professionals may use it to self-reflect on their performance and to identify areas for development.

¹Please note: the Competency Framework is also divided into three levels, but these do not directly correspond to the three qualifications.



2 Glossary

This Competency Framework may be used by a range of FE providers in the UK who wish to measure and develop the competence of their GPs. These providers have different structures and use a variety of terminology.

Rather than create competency descriptors that are complex with a range of alternatives, the following terminology has been applied throughout:

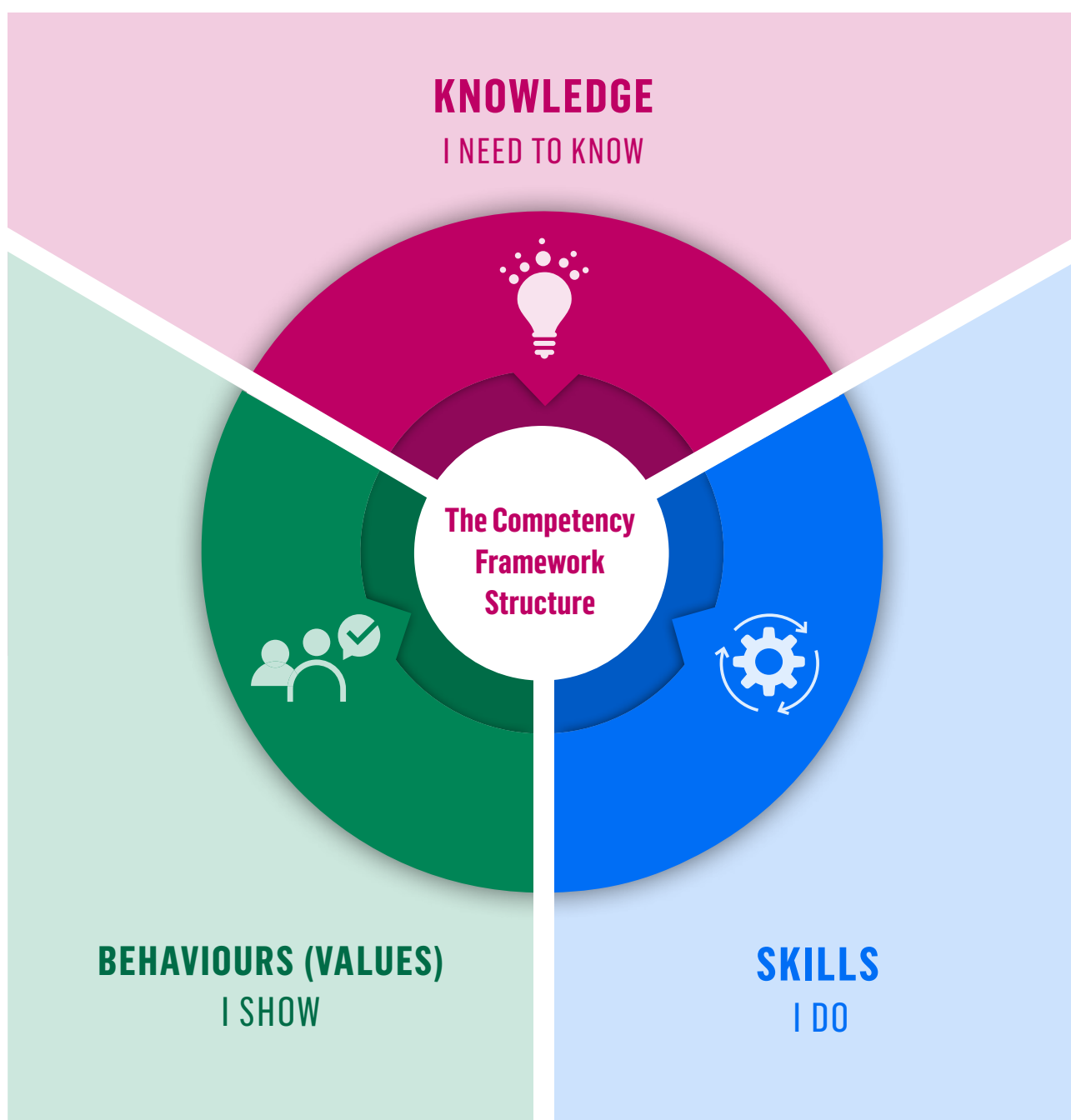
Term	Summary
Accounting officer	The accounting officer is normally the Principal/CEO of the college. The accounting officer is personally accountable to ESFA and Parliament for regularity, propriety and value for money.
Funders and regulators	Institutions which act to fund, regulate and/or support FE colleges. These include organisations such as the Office for Students, the FE Commissioner's Team and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
College	The legal entities that are FE corporations, sixth-form college corporations and designated institutions.
Senior colleagues	The board chair, board members, the accounting officer and the senior leadership team.
Senior leadership team	The senior team that leads and manage the delivery of all aspects of operations in the college.



3 The Competency Framework

a The competencies

Competencies are made up of three elements – values-based behaviours, skills and underpinning knowledge – that combine within an overall framework to define the standards of performance expected in a role:



The **behavioural** competencies are grouped under a set of four values and will outline how the GP will demonstrate that they are living those values:

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Independence
- ✓ Self-awareness
- ✓ Inclusiveness.

The **skills** competencies are grouped under a set of four outcomes and will demonstrate what the GP will need to be able to do to meet those outcomes:

- ✓ Delivering Effective Governance
- ✓ Building Consensus
- ✓ Anticipating and Solving Problems
- ✓ Advising and Enabling.

The **knowledge** competencies are grouped under a set of four broad subject areas and will demonstrate that the GP has the appropriate level of underpinning knowledge to apply the skills competencies effectively:

- ✓ FE Governance Context
- ✓ The External Context
- ✓ Strategic and Operational Management
- ✓ Finance and Risk.

The Competency Framework does not include an exhaustive or definitive list of all the knowledge and skills that might be required by a GP. It is based on a broad consensus among sector governance experts around the values-based behaviours, core skills and knowledge that all GPs should be able to meet in order to be effective in their role.

Using the framework will require local contextualisation. If a GP needs some additional knowledge to operate effectively in their college, they should add this to their evaluation of competency.



b The levels used in the Competency Framework

The level of each competency displayed by a GP will vary depending on their background, experience and personal development. For instance a new GP may operate at a lower level than someone with several years' experience in FE Governance and not all GPs will have had practical experience of all areas in the framework.

To reflect progression and development, the Competency Framework has three levels – Essential, Extending and Excelling:

- ✓ At the **Essential level**, the GP will be experienced in many elements of the Competency Framework, but they will still be developing others. They will usually be able to operate without day-to-day support, but they will rely on regular support and/or guidance from others when dealing with the more complex and unusual issues.
- ✓ At the **Extending level**, the GP will be able to manage more complex and unusual issues independently and will have strengths across many of the essential skills. They will be able to independently and competently carry out many of these complex duties without needing support and guidance from others but may still require support for very complex governance matters.
- ✓ At the **Excelling level**, the GP will independently and competently carry out complex or specialised governance tasks. They will possess the professional networks and resources to quickly recognise and address the areas with which they are less familiar. They will be recognised as an expert by others and will demonstrate this expertise in multiple governance contexts over an extended period.

The above levels will enable benchmarking and a general standard of expectations around performance.

For each competency, the GP – in discussion with the board chair and often with the support of others who have human resources expertise – will determine what level they are currently at. They will identify how they can develop to reach the next level or, if they are Excelling, how they can maintain that level and continue to improve.

The Competency Framework is not designed to determine the overall level at which a GP operates. GPs may not perform all their duties at one level. They could find themselves performing some of their role at the Essential level and other elements at the Extending level. This could be influenced by how their role is structured, or they may have developed some competencies quicker than others.

At every level in the framework, the knowledge and skills required will evolve over time. Even where the GP and the board chair agree that they have reached an appropriate level for their role, they should still undertake regular CPD.



Behaviours (Values)



BEHAVIOURS (VALUES) (I SHOW)

INTEGRITY

*I maintain integrity,
I respect confidentiality
and I demonstrate
sound ethics.*

INDEPENDENCE

*I act with an independent
mindset to serve the best
interests of the board,
providing appropriate
support to the senior
leadership team and
managing conflict
appropriately.*

ESSENTIAL

I show integrity by:

- acting with diplomacy at all times while keeping confidences
- striking a sound balance between discretion and transparency
- advising the board chair and providing support to board members so they appreciate the implications that trustee duties and the Nolan Principles will have on their roles in the college
- highlighting potential conflicts of interest to the board chair and the board.

I show independence by:

- speaking truth to power whenever required
- being an independent advisor to the board, even if my role also requires me to work elsewhere in my college at other times
- maintaining an appropriate balance in the triumvirate relationship between myself, the board chair and the accounting officer
- showing resilience in the face of challenges.

EXTENDING

I show integrity by:

- acting as the moral conscience of my college and the guardian of integrity, operating in a fair, transparent and authentic manner at all times
- monitoring board behaviours and the dynamics between senior colleagues to ensure the appropriate focus on meeting their duties as trustees and adherence to the Nolan Principles is always maintained
- proactively challenging any situation where behaviours in the board do not reflect the values of my college.

I show independence by:

- having courage in my convictions and respectfully standing my ground when engaging with powerful personalities
- remaining calm, objective and self-assured in the face of adversity
- recognising the value of win-win and of helping others to understand and accept alternative views during difficult conversations and times of disagreement.

EXCELLING

I show integrity by:

- being trusted and highly respected by all who interact with me as a governance professional
- taking a leading role in implementing actions from evaluations of how trustee duties and the Nolan Principles are implemented in the board room
- emphasising the impact of positive behaviours and constructive relationships on the board's performance.

I show independence by:

- being the lone voice when required to speak up and challenge on governance matters, displaying authority and assuredness
- tactfully and objectively managing disagreements, understanding multiple perspectives and complexities and seeking common ground to find solutions in complex situations
- respecting the distinction between robust, productive challenge and disruptive behaviour.



continued

BEHAVIOURS (VALUES) (I SHOW)

SELF-AWARENESS

I am self-aware, applying my emotional intelligence to develop trust and confidence with internal and external stakeholders, resulting in strong working relationships and partnerships.

INCLUSIVENESS

I am committed to making governance excellence inclusive by promoting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

ESSENTIAL

I show self-awareness by:

- engaging with a wide range of audiences, showing empathy and building others' trust and confidence in me
- demonstrating a commitment to reflecting and learning by experience and asking for opportunities to stretch and develop my skills
- using coaching and mentoring conversations to both develop myself and support and develop others.

I show inclusiveness by:

- promoting equity in all I do
- reflecting on and accepting different ideas and diverse opinions
- treating everyone with respect, recognising where conscious and unconscious bias can arise and taking every appropriate step to mitigate them.

EXTENDING

I show self-awareness by:

- recognising the effect of actions, moods, emotions and perceptions in a professional environment
- striving to understand my own and others' strengths and weaknesses to manage and develop myself accordingly
- providing support to senior colleagues in identifying and seeking solutions where the wellbeing of others may be overlooked.

I show inclusiveness by:

- modelling inclusive behaviour
- advocating diverse perspectives when engaging with others
- keeping the golden thread of EDI running through all governance activities.

EXCELLING

I show self-awareness by:

- reading a room and reacting to what is unsaid or implied as well as what is said by others
- being highly reflective, continuously reflecting on my own behaviours and development needs and seeking out opportunities to progress these.

I show inclusiveness by:

- promoting diverse thinking and advising others on creating a psychologically safe space where everyone feels able to share views, regardless of their background or perspective
- contributing to strategic discussions on building an inclusive culture while supporting senior colleagues to promote and progress EDI in all they do.

Skills (Expertise)



SKILLS (EXPERTISE) (I DO)

DELIVERING EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

I plan, organise and document governance activities within challenging deadlines, maintaining good attention to detail and keeping records methodically and meticulously.

ESSENTIAL

When delivering effective governance, I:

- take responsibility for advising the board chair and accounting officer on the development of the governance annual work plan, ensuring key management workstreams/projects are incorporated
- effectively communicate all agreed governance plans to the board and the senior leadership team
- drive the timely delivery of the governance plan using effective key performance indicators and milestones to track and report on progress
- advise the senior leadership team on the quality of information and reporting to the board and how it could be improved
- provide accurate, timely and objective minutes with precise actions that are monitored
- establish effective processes for information flows between committees, the board and the senior leadership team.

EXTENDING

When delivering effective governance, I:

- look ahead to identify where momentum might be lost in the delivery of an agreed governance plan and take action accordingly
- anticipate required alterations and adaptations to governance activities to take account of sector or statutory requirements and communicate these effectively to others
- engage in governance activities that widen my perspectives beyond my immediate horizons
- ensure that all records and reporting requirements relating to the board and its work (including the website) are precise records that reflect the strategic objectives, are balanced and fair, and provide a clear and accurate organisational memory.

EXCELLING

When delivering effective governance, I:

- engage with others internally and externally to set the longer-term plans and strategy for governance, enabling a positive impact on college performance
- drive a culture of continuous improvement by ensuring that known and emerging trends, opportunities and challenges that impact on governance are factored into longer-term plans and strategies
- facilitate effective internal and external decision-making by ensuring that executive reports are diplomatic, clear and precise records that can be understood, audited and scrutinised by all.



continued

SKILLS (EXPERTISE) (I DO)

BUILDING CONSENSUS

I build consensus through strong communication and interpersonal skills in order to facilitate effective decision-making and good governance.

ANTICIPATING AND SOLVING PROBLEMS

I use analytical and problem-solving abilities to manage complicated situations in a proactive way.

ESSENTIAL

When building consensus, I:

- use a variety of forms of communication to establish and support my networks internally and externally to share good practice
- build others' trust and confidence in me through my actions..

When anticipating and solving problems, I:

- prioritise my workload to ensure that well-researched and appropriate solutions to governance challenges are offered in an appropriate timeframe
- keep an open mind on the choices that could be made when developing proposals and solutions
- make the distinction between cause and effect when proposing solutions to governance challenges.

EXTENDING

When building consensus, I:

- use a wide range of communication techniques and styles to raise awareness, encourage exploration of issues and deepen understanding and insights
- influence internally and externally to strengthen relationships with all directly and indirectly involved in the governance of my college
- recognise power relationships and personal motivators in others so I can navigate difficult situations, maximise added value and enable agreement.

When anticipating and solving problems, I:

- use fresh perspectives and look ahead to identify potential governance issues and propose solutions
- work collaboratively to help others anticipate and solve problems while recognising and sharing best practice to strengthen governance processes.

EXCELLING

When building consensus, I:

- build respect as a trusted advisor who can effectively influence decision-makers to make sound choices for the benefit of my college and the wider FE governance community
- adopt innovative approaches to develop common language around good governance both in the college and other GPs.
- assess competing views and propose solutions to enable the board to move forward.

When anticipating and solving problems, I:

- always seek to find the best outcome for my college to deliver good governance even when that might not be the easiest option
- am an authoritative voice and trusted advisor within my college, facilitating effective solutions to complex problems
- use my wide experience and deeper insights (gained from horizon-scanning in the sector and beyond) to recognise emerging governance issues, assess their significance to my college and propose creative, value-adding solutions.



continued

SKILLS (EXPERTISE) (I DO)	ESSENTIAL	EXTENDING	EXCELLING
ADVISING AND ENABLING <i>I guide and support others to make choices that reflect good governance, focussing on what is good for the future and not what we always did in the past.</i>	When advising and enabling, I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactively provide accurate, well-researched governance information and proposals to senior colleagues to support decision-making manage board priorities efficiently alongside my day-to-day interactions between senior colleagues support board members to improve their questioning and challenge, including any additional support needed for learners and staff members to 'find their voice'. 	When advising and enabling, I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenge redundant legacy situations, seeking new ways to do things to support the board and college to move forward and embrace new opportunities help others reshape proposals to meet governance requirements, rather than defaulting to rejecting them work well with ambiguity and change as I guide others who are making decisions that impact on the governance of my college advise the board chair on options for making optimum use of board members' key skills and selecting the best development opportunities to enhance the overall effectiveness of the board. 	When advising and enabling, I: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> give thorough, well-researched advice which evaluates pros and cons, robustly challenging whenever required cut through complexities to enable decisions to be made support the board chair and the board to be enablers of change, evaluating the opportunities presented and being clear about the possible consequences take the lead in enabling others to work through current and/or emerging situations by providing well evidenced, expert support.

Knowledge



KNOWLEDGE (I NEED TO KNOW)

FE GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

The components of good and effective FE governance delivered through the interpretation and application of education and charity law and governance principles and codes.

ESSENTIAL

I can demonstrate understanding of:

- the impact of charity, education and company laws on the governance of my college
- good governance principles and governance codes relevant to FE
- sources of guidance on complying with legal requirements and applying good governance principles and codes
- the governance framework and committee structure in my college and my college's associated documentation
- the internal and external documented sources of authority
- the scope of my responsibilities as a governance professional while working in partnership with the board chair and accounting officer
- the processes that can be used internally and externally to review the effectiveness of college governance.

EXTENDING

I have a working knowledge which I apply to advise and guide on:

- the application and interpretation of the legal and governance framework as it relates to my college
- the identification of potential issues in the interpretation or application of the documented sources
- the completion of an internal governance self-assessment and external governance review and the implementation of recommendations
- good governance practice in other colleges and how this could be adopted in my college.

EXCELLING

As a governance expert, I have detailed knowledge of:

- the constitutional and legal framework of FE governance in my college and across the sector, enabling me to advise internally and nationally on emerging policy and law relating to good governance
- the law relating to charities and companies as they apply to my college
- best practice in the design of governance self-assessments and external governance reviews
- the ongoing identification of emerging good governance practice outside the FE sector and its potential application to a college governance framework.



continued

KNOWLEDGE (I NEED TO KNOW)

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT

The identification of the external context and the assessment of the current and potential impact of external factors.

ESSENTIAL

I can demonstrate understanding of:

- the external stakeholders of my college and how the board and my college take account of their expectations
- the local and national skills context and the opportunities and challenges that it presents to my college
- the obligation of the board to have oversight of my college's plan to support local skills development
- the sources of information available to maintain a current understanding of the impact of external factors and the expectations of stakeholders regarding college governance..

EXTENDING

I have a working knowledge which I apply to advise and guide on:

- the requirements, standards and expectations of funders, regulators and other stakeholders in relation to matters affecting governance
- responding to, monitoring and reporting on new and emerging policies that affect key areas of governance, such as how the college meets local needs or supports environmental sustainability
- enhancements to the delivery of effective governance partnerships for my college, based on what I have learned from my reviews of the external environment..

EXCELLING

As a governance expert, I have a detailed knowledge of:

- the right moment and focus for engagement with external stakeholders when raising matters relating to the governance agenda
- best practice when supporting the reviews of the effectiveness and impact of my board and I can lead on the implementation of a process to ensure sustained improvement
- how to continually improve my understanding of the external context through extensive horizon-scanning, networking and personal development activities.



continued

KNOWLEDGE (I NEED TO KNOW)

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The strategic contribution of good governance to the development of the college and the drive to become and remain outstanding.

ESSENTIAL

I can demonstrate understanding of:

- the overall strategy of my college and how good governance can make a positive contribution to the achievement of objectives
- the culture of my college and how to promote good governance in the most appropriate way
- how to identify the dynamics between individuals and between different groups in my college
- the framework and practices to apply in governor recruitment and selection, induction, development and succession to support the board chair to achieve a diverse board that fits the needs of my college.

EXTENDING

I have a working knowledge which I apply to advise and guide on:

- the models of culture and strategy that will enable senior colleagues to create a governance culture that aligns with the vision and values of my college
- the people management principles and practices to apply to effectively support governors as they integrate new members, so they can play their full part in board activities quickly
- techniques to apply when advising on the actions needed to secure positive outcomes relating to the board's development needs.

EXCELLING

As a governance expert, I have a detailed knowledge of:

- strategies and techniques to inspire the development of positive boardroom dynamics, in partnership with the board chair and the accounting officer
- techniques to enable partnership working with senior colleagues in support of the implementation of change initiatives that impact on the board and the governance of my college
- best practice leadership and people management principles and practices to maximise the positive impact of governors' board engagement
- best practice techniques to apply when supporting the board chair in identifying ongoing board development and succession- planning requirements.



continued

KNOWLEDGE (I NEED TO KNOW)	ESSENTIAL	EXTENDING	EXCELLING
<p>FINANCE AND RISK</p> <p><i>The principles of finance and risk as they impact on the governance of a college.</i></p>	<p>I can demonstrate understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the financial obligations and expectations for my college as set out in legislation, government requirements and codes of practice • the sources of financial information, the required content of reports and the terminology and measures used in financial documents presented to my board • the role of the internal/ external auditor and the circumstances in which I will engage with them and facilitate their work • the principles of risk management and how to identify, document, manage and monitor risk. 	<p>I have a working knowledge which I apply to advise and guide on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the impact of financial measurements and projections on the governance of my college • the boundaries of responsibility between myself, the board chair, the accounting officer, internal finance specialists and internal/ external auditors • the application of the principles and techniques of risk management in relation to assessing governance risk • the effective communication of governance risks to the board chair, the accounting officer and the senior leadership team. 	<p>As a governance expert, I have a detailed knowledge of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • best practice in communicating complex financial information to non-financial experts • evaluating my college's risk management outputs to better quantify the relationships between identified risks, their potential impact on the governance of my college and mitigations.

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