COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR CHAIRS OF FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE CORPORATIONS

1 Introduction

College leaders, funders and regulators are all interested in developing a clearer picture of effective governance (Skills for Jobs, 2020). 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 corporations.

The further education (FE) competency framework for chairs, together with the complementary FE competency framework for governors, 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 area. Finally, there has been engagement with standards development experts from further education (FE), 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.

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 as evidenced in academic research (such as Campion et al, 2011), 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 enhance the strategic objectives of the sector, because 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 chairs 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.

3 KEY PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Each college will require a different balance of skills, values and knowledge in the chair'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:

✔ recognises that the chair is also a governor, so the competencies identified as important for governors are incorporated — although the chair may be expected to operate at a higher level in many of these

✔ 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 chairs would be **Proficient** in most of the areas below and the associated competencies developed for governors. Nevertheless, there is a recognition in college governing documents and governance codes that chairs provide leadership of the governing body and will therefore need to apply additional competencies.

However, a chair 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 chairing college boards, the context of the college will be critical. Boards should decide on required levels of competency for their chairs.

Levels

At the **Proficient** level of a competency, a chair 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 the **Excelling** level of a competency, a chair 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
Systems Thinking	• Understands how the individual aspects of the college and the wider FE and Training sector interact with each other to form a system. • Understands how changes in one domain may have implications for other aspects of the wider system as a whole, or for specific areas of post-16 education. • Has a strong commitment to organisational learning and collating multiple diverse perspectives when looking at an issue. • Generates and contributes to solutions in the long-term interests of the college and the sector.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
Partnership Building	• Builds a culture based on collaboration and embraces the value added by collaborative working. • Acknowledges each partner's contributions to the outcome of collaborative activities. • Creates 'shared stewardship' between partners towards achieving overall objectives.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
Team Building	• Inspires and fosters team commitment, pride in the college and trust among all board members. • Motivates members with a diverse range of skills and experiences to work together to accomplish strategic board and college goals.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐

VALUES / BEHAVIOURS

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Impact and Influence	• Builds consensus through 'give and take' within and beyond the college to achieve college objectives. • Guides- executives to develop well-designed and evidenced strategies and works with them to build credibility, with stakeholders, for agreed plans. • Leverages relationships and communication skills to impact on outcomes and progress organisational goals.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
Continuous Learning	• Assesses and recognises own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of the board. • Leads the process of implementing actions/ learning from training, reflections, external reviews and other activities to positively impact the board and college..	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
Creativity and Innovation	• Develops new insights into situations and can apply those insights to effect strategic change and meet college objectives. • Questions conventional approaches and encourages members to contribute ideas and innovations from their perspectives. • Is open to new opportunities that change presents for colleges, and ensures any solutions are properly risk assessed and in line with college objectives..	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐

TECHNICAL

COMPETENCY	DESCRIPTOR	LEVEL
Corporate Leadership	• Steers the college corporation to achieve its objectives effectively and manages relationships to ensure board activities are at a strategic level. • Understands and implements governance best practice in and beyond FE, and ensures board and college activities are aligned with these principles. • Ensures roles, duties and obligations to accountability bodies, such as regulators and funders, are met.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
People and Performance Management	• Understands and employs techniques to develop and empower governors and senior post-holders, in order to facilitate personal and/or professional growth. • Understands and effectively applies methods of evaluating individual performance against agreed objectives.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐
Compliance and Accountability	• Understands the complex college accountability landscape and ensures compliance with established governance principles and regulations. • Establishes a culture of accountability by setting expectations and defining roles and responsibilities to ensure goals are met. • Holds themselves and others accountable for measurable high-quality outcomes at board and college levels.	Proficient ☐ Excelling ☐

GOVERNORS AND CHAIRS

LEADERSHIP	VALUES/BEHAVIOURS	TECHNICAL
✔ Strategic Thinking	✔ Critical Thinking	✔ Oversight of Educational Experience & Quality
✔ Ethical Leadership	✔ Inclusivity	✔ Sustainable Estate Planning
✔ Stakeholder Relationship Oversight & Management	✔ Transparency	✔ Human Resources Oversight
✔ Emotional Communication	✔ Collaborative	✔ Risk Analysis & Management
✔ Effective Communication	✔ Performance Oriented	✔ Financial Oversight

CHAIRS

LEADERSHIP	VALUES/BEHAVIOURS	TECHNICAL
✔ Systems Thinking	✔ Impact & Influence	✔ Corporate Leadership
✔ Partnership Building	✔ Continuous Learning	✔ People & Performance Management
✔ Team Building	✔ Creativity & Innovation	✔ Compliance & Accountability

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