

 **AdvanceHE**



Solent University - Governance Effectiveness Review September 2019

Summary of results

Background

- 19 responses to the survey:
 - 9 External / Lay members (47.4%)
 - 4 Executive / Senior Manager members (21.1%)
 - 2 Staff (including Senate / Academic Board) members (10.5%)
 - 1 Chair/ convenor (5.3%)
 - 1 SMT member in attendance (5.3%)
 - 1 Student member (5.3%)
 - 1 Other (5.3%) [*“Independent Governor, just retired”*]
- Overall, a positive and supportive response was received

Areas of strength

From 32 question areas, it is firstly worth noting that 15 questions were rated with 100% agreement. These included:

- **Q5) Confidence in the institutional processes for maintaining the quality and standards of teaching and learning**
- **Q6) The governing body are assured as to financial stability and value-for-money**
- **Q7) Effective processes in place to enable ethical policies and behaviours in the management of risk**
- **Q12) The governing body demonstrates an understanding of and commitment to the institution's vision, ethos and culture**
- **Q16) Reliable and up-to-date information is provided to the governing body to ensure that it is fully informed about its legal and regulatory responsibilities**
- **Q17) Effective communication to and from the governing body with key stakeholders**

Areas of strength

100% agreement - *examples continued:*

- **Q21) Meetings and business are conducted and chaired in a way which encourages the active involvement of all members in discussions and decision-making**
- **Q22) Working relationships between governing body members and the institution's executive are good**
- **Q23) A positive atmosphere exists to support effective governance**
- **Q24) The need for constructive challenge by the governing body is understood and accepted by both members and the executive**
- **Q27) Agreed standards of organisational financial health and sustainability are being achieved**
- **Q29) Defined quality levels for the student experience are being achieved**
- **Q30) Risks are well-managed and organisational reputation is protected**
- **Q31) The governing body ensures there is effective organisational leadership**

Areas of strength - Benchmarking

When comparing against the benchmark, 19 out of the 32 questions ranked 10% or more *above* the benchmark position. The top three included:

- Q14) Receives assurance that recommendations arising from performance reviews of academic departments or professional services are implemented **[31% above the benchmark]**
- Q8) There are processes in place to ensure recruitment of governing body members addresses the requirements of equality and diversity **[25% above the benchmark]**
- Q9) The recruitment of governing body membership is effectively managed **[25% above the benchmark]**

Areas of strength - Benchmarking

The remaining 16 questions ranking 10% or more above the benchmark position included:

- Q10) The succession planning for governing body membership is effectively managed [23% above the benchmark]
- Q2) Regularly reviews its own performance [22% above the benchmark]
- Q29) Defined quality levels for the student experience, including related academic and service provision, are being achieved [21% above the benchmark]
- Q32) External and internal stakeholders have a high degree of confidence in the organisation and its governance [21% above the benchmark]
- Q17) There is effective communication to and from the governing body with key stakeholders [19% above the benchmark]
- Q19) The governing body actively ensures it has assurance on the standards of the institution's: Academic awards [19% above the benchmark]
- Q13) Receives assurance that regular performance reviews of all academic departments and professional services are undertaken [19% above the benchmark]
- Q30) Risks are well-managed (including risks from collaborative activity and partnerships) and organisational reputation is protected [18% above the benchmark]

Areas of strength - Benchmarking

The remaining 16 questions ranking 10% or more above the benchmark position included (*continued...*):

- Q5) The governing body are confident in the institutional processes for maintaining the quality and standards of teaching and learning [15% above the benchmark]
- Q7) To be assured that the institution has effective processes in place to enable ethical policies and behaviours in the management of risk? [15% above the benchmark]
- Q15) Ensures that regular performance reviews of the head of institution are undertaken and reported by the Remuneration Committee [15% above the benchmark]
- Q31) The governing body ensures there is effective organisational leadership [14% above the benchmark]
- Q24) The need for constructive challenge by the governing body is understood and accepted by both members and the executive [12% above the benchmark]
- Q21) governing body meetings and business are conducted and chaired in a way which encourages the active involvement of all members in discussions and decision-making [12% above the benchmark]
- Q27) Agreed standards of organisational financial health and sustainability are being achieved [11% above the benchmark]
- Q6) The governing body to be assured as to financial stability and value-for-money [10% above the benchmark]

Areas for further discussion

It is useful to consider the range of scores received across the question set

- Out of the 32 questions asked in the survey, only two received responses of '*strongly disagree*' and one '*partially disagree*'. This may be useful in forming wider discussion and debate with a view for potential improvement.

Q1) To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a genuine and shared understanding about and commitment by both the governing body and the executive to ensure effective governance? [2 respondents '*strongly disagree*']

Q5) To what extent do you agree or disagree that mechanisms are in place: For the governing body to be confident in the institutional processes for maintaining the quality and standards of teaching and learning? [2 respondents '*strongly disagree*']

Q20) To what extent do you agree or disagree that the governing body actively ensures it has assurance on the standards of the institution's: Student experience? [1 respondent '*partially disagree*']

Areas to improve

When considering potential areas to improve, four questions can be seen to have achieved a score of less than 80%. In lowest order first, these included:

- **Q11) The contribution of all members (including the chair) is regularly reviewed using processes agreed by the governing body [58%]**
- **Q18) Reviews the extent to which its existing governance arrangements are appropriate to support the institution's long term strategic plans [68%]**
- **Q15) Ensures that regular performance reviews of the head of institution are undertaken and reported by the Remuneration Committee [79%]**
- **Q4) There are effective arrangements in place for involving staff and students in the governing body (and its committees where relevant) [79%]**

Areas to improve

However it is worth noting that when benchmarking these questions, only two fall below the benchmark

- Q11) The contribution of all members (including the chair) is regularly reviewed using processes agreed by the governing body [58%]
- **Q18) Reviews the extent to which its existing governance arrangements are appropriate to support the institution's long term strategic plans**
[Score = 68%, 3% below the benchmark]
- Q15) Ensures that regular performance reviews of the head of institution are undertaken and reported by the Remuneration Committee [79%]
- **Q4) There are effective arrangements in place for involving staff and students in the governing body (and its committees where relevant)**
[Score = 79%, 4% below the benchmark]

Areas to improve

Only one further question ranked below the benchmark, this being the lowest ranking item compared to the benchmarking scale

- **Q1) There is a genuine and shared understanding about and commitment by both the governing body and the executive to ensure effective governance?**

[Score = 84%, 5% below the benchmark]

Conclusions

- Overall, a positive and supportive response was received with almost half of the questions scoring 100% agreement
- Furthermore, when compared against the benchmark, the majority (19 out of 32 questions) ranked 10% or more above the benchmark

Conclusions

- However, a number of areas of improvement were identified. These included:
 - Relatively low scores received for four question areas:
(Q11 = 58%; Q18 = 68%; Q15 = 79%; and Q4 = 79%)
 - Three questions positioning below the benchmark:
(Q1 = -5%; Q4 = -4%; Q18 = -3%)
- **Therefore it can be argued that the top five priorities for improvement (in order of greatest priority first) could be considered as Q1, Q4, Q18, Q11, Q15**

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is a genuine and shared understanding about and commitment by both the governing body and the executive to ensure effective governance?

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that there are effective arrangements in place for involving staff and students in the governing body (and its committees where relevant)?

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the contribution of all members (including the chair) is regularly reviewed using processes agreed by the governing body?

Q15. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the governing body: Ensures that regular performance reviews of the head of institution are undertaken and reported by the Remuneration Committee?

Q18. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the governing body reviews the extent to which its existing governance arrangements are appropriate to support the institution's long term strategic plans?

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