

## **COURT OF GOVERNORS EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2013-14**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **STATEMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS**

Having considered the outcomes of the effectiveness review and taking note of agreed recommendations for enhancements, the Court of Governors are broadly satisfied that the elements necessary for effective governance identified in the questionnaire are in place.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The current Governance Code of Practice and General Principles from the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) require a governing body to keep its effectiveness under regular review, with an undertaking to complete a formal and rigorous evaluation of its own effectiveness, and that of its committees, not less than every five years. The University of Westminster's Court of Governors has agreed to undertake such a review every three years and completed the previous effectiveness review in 2010-11. In addition to the periodic effectiveness review the Court of Governors and its committees review their terms of reference at the start of each academic year.

#### **REVIEW METHOD**

The 2013-14 review commenced in February 2014 with the circulation of questionnaires to members and attendees of the Court of Governors and a reduced set of questions to members and attendees of the relevant committees. As in 2010-11, the questionnaires were based on the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education effectiveness survey. An initial summary of the responses and discussion prompts were considered at a meeting of each committee during March and April 2014 and at the May 2014 meeting of the Court of Governors. The Clerk to the Court reviewed the questionnaire responses, additional feedback from Court and committee discussions, and feedback gathered at exit interviews with retiring governors. A commentary report with recommendations for enhancements was considered and agreed by the Court of Governors in September 2014. The agreed recommendations will be implemented from 2014-15.

#### **RESPONSE RATES**

Seventeen of a potential twenty-seven respondents completed the Court of Governors effectiveness questionnaire (63% response rate). Fourteen of these were independent or co-opted independent members and the remaining three were ex officio members, staff governors or regular attendees. The questionnaire was re-opened after the initial deadline of 25 April 2014 to allow for additional responses to be made and closed for the final time on 13 June 2014.

Response rates for the shorter questionnaire circulated to committee members are noted below:

Committee	Responses	Response rate
Audit Committee	4 out of 5 (3 independent)	80%
Finance and Property Committee	6 out of 9 (3 independent)	67%
HR Committee	7 out of 9 (4 independent)	78%
Nominations Committee	4 out of 7 (3 independent)	57%
Remuneration Committee	5 out of 6 (3 independent)	83%

## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERED FOR ENHANCEMENT

Responses showed that a significant majority of respondents agreed or partially agreed that the elements necessary for effective governance identified in the questionnaire were in place. The review did however identify a few areas where there were differing views and where enhancements to processes or information provided to the Court and its committees may therefore be beneficial.

Areas explored in the commentary report include:

- Determination of educational character and relationship with the Academic Council
- Performance reviews
- Engagement and communication between Court members, staff, students, key stakeholder bodies and the public
- Clarity of decision-making structures and delegation
- Support for committee chairs
- Information presented to committees
- Governor attendance, motivation and effective use of skills

## RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS

The following enhancements to support effective governance will be implemented in 2014-15. The Court will be invited to reflect on the enhancements, and to identify additional action where necessary, at the meeting of the Court of Governors in September 2015.

1. In order to enhance engagement between the Academic Council and the Court, it is recommended that:
  - the Academic Registrar is invited to a future Court meeting to give a presentation on the role and work of the Academic Council;
  - the Clerk to the Court and Academic Registrar should agree a format to report to Court on the business undertaken by Academic Council;
  - Deans are invited to attend Court as attendees; and
  - educational character is agreed as a theme for the two governor strategy meetings in 2015-16, with specific discussion topics to be identified by the Vice-Chancellor (Chair of Academic Council).
2. In order to enhance effective governing body membership, it is recommended that the contribution of all members (including the Chair) is reviewed at each meeting of the Nominations Committee.
3. In order to enhance governor awareness of procedures for effective strategic development and performance measurement, it is recommended that the Remuneration Committee note for the record any arrangements that are in place to review the performance of the Vice-Chancellor.
4. In order to improve reporting to the Court on decisions taken by committees, it is recommended that the receipt of minutes from each committee by the Court is supplemented by a summary report of decisions and agreed actions.

5. To provide additional support for experienced, new and aspiring Chairs and Deputy Chairs, it is recommended that the University initiates a development session on chairing meetings.

## **PUBLICATION OF THE REVIEW OUTCOMES**

This Executive Summary is available to download from the University of Westminster website at <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/court-of-governors>.

A reference to the Executive Summary will be included in the University's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2014 – available from <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/annual-reporting>.

The full commentary report is available on request from the Clerk to the Court of Governors by email at [e.mcmillan@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:e.mcmillan@westminster.ac.uk) or by phone on 020 7911 5000 ext. 69167.

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