

COURT OF GOVERNORS EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT 2016-17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Statement of effectiveness

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

B. Background

The Higher Education Code of Governance ('the Code') states "*governing bodies must conduct a regular, full and robust review of their effectiveness and that of their committees, the starting point for which should be an assessment against this Code and the statutory responsibilities alongside those which it has assumed and articulated independently...*" (Element 7, HE Code of Governance, December 2014)

The University of Westminster's Court of Governors ('the Court') has agreed to undertake such a review every three years.

C. Review method

The 2016-17 review commenced in January 2017 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. For the first time, Academic Council - a sub-committee of the Court prescribed in the Articles of Association – was included in the review. As in the two previous reviews (2010-11 and 2013-14), 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 between March and May 2017. The Court participated in a reflective session on 'Good governance' at the Court away day in September 2017.

In addition to the survey responses, the data considered in preparing this report includes:

- an assessment of the University's application of the Code;
- governance self-assessment including compliance with statutory responsibilities;
- views from committee discussions, the Court away day, and ad hoc comments from governors;
- views gathered from exit interviews with retired governors; and
- questions raised by new governors during the induction period.

A commentary report with recommendations for enhancements was considered and agreed by the Court in June 2018. The agreed recommendations will be implemented from September 2018.

D. Response rates

Response rates for each questionnaire circulated to members are provided below:

Group	Responses	Response rate
Court of Governors	17 out of 26 (14 governors)	65%
Academic Council	16 out of 29	55%
Audit Committee	7 out of 10 (4 independent members)	70%
Finance and Property Committee	7 out of 11 (5 independent members)	63%
HR Committee	6 out of 8 (2 independent and 1 ex-officio member)	75%
Nominations Committee	6 out of 7 (3 independent members)	86%
Remuneration Committee	6 out of 8 (3 independent members)	75%

E. Areas for development and enhancement

Responses showed that a 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 for development – the outcomes achieved by the governing body. Additionally, there were areas of governance about which governor views differed and where enhancements to processes or information provided to the Court and its committees may therefore be beneficial:

- Engagement between Court members and key stakeholders
- Court and committee membership
- Academic Council: Outcomes achieved, performance review and continuous improvement
- Information presented to committees
- Finance and Property Committee: Scope of the terms of reference

F. Recommendations

The following enhancements to support effective governance will be implemented from September 2018. The Court will be invited to reflect on the enhancements, and to identify additional action where necessary, at the Court away day in 2019-20.

- 1) In order to improve the quality and quantity of information provided to the Court and its committees, it is recommended that the Clerk to the Court works with the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer to support and, where necessary, challenge authors of Court and committee papers to ensure they accord with the published guidelines.
- 2) In order to support development of the University strategy and stronger working relationships between governors and the UEB members, it is recommended that the Court away day in September 2018 includes a collaborative session with UEB members.
- 3) In order to improve engagement between governors and key stakeholders, it is recommended that:
 - (a) the Chair to the Court nominates individual governors to link to specific areas of the University; and
 - (b) the Court considers hosting an annual forum where they meet with senior staff, Academic Council members, and student representatives.
- 4) In order to ensure governors are supported fully and their skills and experience are used effectively, it is recommended that:
 - (a) the Chair to the Court meets individually with each governor once a year; and
 - (b) the Court encourages the executive to consider how they might engage the skills and expertise of the Court to the benefit of the institution.
- 5) In order to promote a focus for Academic Council on its responsibility for strategic oversight of all academic provision on behalf of the Court, it is recommended that members review the delegation of authority to sub-committees.
- 6) In order to ensure that non-governor committee members are kept informed about the context in which the committee is making decisions, it is recommended that they receive a copy of the most recent Vice-Chancellor's report to the Court.

G. 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 signpost to this area of the website will be included in the University's report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2018 – available from <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/annual-reporting>.