

Review of Effectiveness of Court 2016

It is good practice, and an expectation of the Code of Good HE Governance, that the Court to review its own effectiveness on an annual basis. Court's review of its own effectiveness has been reviewed during the current academic year primarily through completion of self-assessment questionnaires and subsequent dialogue between the Chair and members and also through a questionnaire inviting members to reflect on the overall effectiveness of the Court.

The outcome of the self-assessment and dialogue with chair identified the following:

- Court members were clear about the distinction between executive management and corporate governance
- There was a strong focus within the Court on the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and the value of KPIs as tools in maintaining this focus
- The diversity within Court membership from a broad range of sectors is an identified strength
- That enhancements could be made to papers provided to Court to make them more concise with sufficient context in the covering paper addressing risks and opportunities in proposals presented by the executive, with full details provided as an appendix
- That greater visibility might be given on the progress of people issues in the Corporate Strategy
- That consideration might be given to a template for absent members to submit comments on papers in advance of a meeting of Court they are unable to attend.
- That further opportunities could be sought to improve the connectivity between Court and students and staff
- That given Court meets quarterly, opportunities for Court members to meet each other and with Executive in addition to formal Court meetings might be considered
- WebEx is embedding as a useful tool for Court members who are unable to attend meetings and technological support for such mechanisms is welcomed and increasingly important in the multi-campus environment
- That briefing notes/communications on key issues on the Court website could help Court members to
 - Be better prepared for some court discussions
 - Be able to promote UWS in other arenas

The outcome of the recent Court effectiveness questionnaires indicated that:

- The Statement of Responsibilities of Court are being satisfied
- There is clarity on the roles of the officers of the Court

- Court members view the induction and ongoing briefing of Court members as being appropriate but could be improved, for example the buddy system for new Court members be refreshed
- There is alignment with the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance
- Arrangements for Court meetings are satisfactory and the pilot of alternate times of day for meetings has been valuable and should be continued
- The Court Handbook and associated website are useful and comprehensive
- One to one sessions between the Chair and members were useful and should continue
- The current structure of Court sub-Committees is appropriate but there is scope for improvement eg the establishment of a separate committee to facilitate detailed scrutiny and oversight of major capital asset projects
- Court would welcome more opportunities to network with each other and to meet students and staff
- Court members are sufficiently briefed on institutional vision, culture and values; and the academic offer at UWS but would welcome a fuller understanding of the profile of students and the expertise, specialisms, research and achievements of staff.

Actions

In addition, now that the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 has completed its parliamentary process, the Court Office will commence a review of the Standing orders, ensuring these are appropriate for current needs and practice and to enhance the scheme of delegation if required.

Meantime, the schedule of Court meetings for 2016-17 will retain the variety in times of day for meetings and a new catch-up slot will be scheduled before each Court meeting where members can catch up with each other and where Executive colleagues will be available to Court members. Additional opportunities for more in depth dialogue with Court on substantial strategic issues will also be considered.

Attention will be given to the feedback on Court papers in terms of conciseness, balanced with sufficient context.

Consideration will be given to the establishment of briefing notes/communication for Court in addition to the existing newsletter format.

A “National Contribution” Highlight paper will be provided to Court to assist in ambassadorial conversations.

Consideration will be given to refreshing the induction buddying system.

Donna McMillan
Secretary to Court
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