CORPORATION BOARD GOVERNANCE POLICIES

Link Governor Policy

Policy Title	Link Governor Policy
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Author (Name / Department)	Clerk & Governance Advisor
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In consultation with	NRG
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a framework for Governors to link up with Faculties and Business areas across the college. It includes Designated Governors for key areas such as Safeguarding. The Link Governors and Designated Governors will be responsible for liaising with the relevant Senior Manager, ensuring the Governing Body is informed.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to the College, but Governors are the primary audience. Each link area remains the collective responsibility of the whole Board: the purpose of this Policy is to encourage Governors to sustain an informed watching brief of an area. With Designated Governors, the duties lie with the Corporation as a whole and cannot be delegated – there will not be any additional liabilities placed on the Governor.

This policy is not for:

- Governor involvement in management or operational activity
- Staff to lobby governors on behalf of a particular area of college activity
- Governors' actions to be seen as "inspection" or as an expert
- Complaints and concerns to be handled
- Governors to express personal opinions, which may appear to give a commitment on behalf of the College
- Reports on any individual
- Creating a mentor relationship

3. Definitions

A link governor is a member of the governing body who is assigned oversight of a specific area of the college's work (such as safeguarding, SEND, or equality) in order to support the governing body's assurance and monitoring functions.

The role involves developing an informed understanding of the designated area, engaging with college leaders, and reporting back to the governing body. Link governors do not have executive or decision-making authority and remain part of the governing body's collective responsibility.

A designated governor is a member of the governing body who is formally assigned specific oversight of a statutory or high-priority area, such as safeguarding, SEND, or equality. The role supports the governing body in meeting its legal and regulatory responsibilities by ensuring that appropriate policies, systems, and assurances are in place and effective.

A designated governor does not take operational responsibility for the area and does not become involved in individual cases. The role remains part of the governing body's collective accountability.

Link governors are broader good practice. Designated governors are used where there is a specific statutory or regulatory expectation for oversight (e.g. safeguarding)

4. Legislative Framework

Further education corporations are established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which provides governing bodies with responsibility for the strategic oversight of colleges and the power to regulate their own proceedings. The Instrument and Articles of Government enable corporations to determine their internal governance arrangements, including the establishment of link governor roles.

Link governors are not a statutory requirement, but are a recognised element of good governance practice, supporting the governing body in discharging its duties effectively while maintaining collective responsibility.

A link Governor scheme was initially adopted by the Board in December 2014 with twelve Link Governors agreed and developed into this policy. The scheme was put in place as the Ofsted Inspection Framework placed even greater emphasis on Governance and the Link Governor scheme would realise greater benefits and value to both governors and staff.

At the October 2015 Board Meeting, it was agreed there would be Designated Governors for the two key areas of Safeguarding, and Health & Safety. Since the creation of the original Designated Governor roles, there have been requests for ‘Careers’, ‘Mental Health’ and ‘Risk Management’ although these were not progressed. Whilst there is no legislation that *requires* the College to have Designated Governors, it can be seen as good practice in key areas.

In September 2022, the two areas of Link Governors and Designated Governors were reviewed and combined into this one policy.

5. Our Policy Statements

1. We will assign Link Governors to a Faculty and/or Business Area for a minimum 2-year 'term.'. Some of the Link Governors will also be a Designated Governor role. We will review the role as part of the Annual Appraisal process of Governors with the Chair of the Board.

2. Visits will ideally take place termly and advance preparation on both sides is key to get the most from the Link Meetings.

3. The programme will commence in October each year and the following framework is suggested, to ensure that priorities are focused upon and follows the academic timetable through the year.

Timing	**Suggested scope and content of the meeting**
Autumn – Term one	We will discuss: - the Faculty or Business 'plan' - what the area does and what it covers - the SWOT analysis - key issues targets and outcomes
Spring – Term two	We will: - undertake a review of progress - *conduct a **Learning walk*** and interaction with staff & students in Faculties or attend a relevant Business Support area activity with staff and/or stakeholders.
Summer – Term three (as late as practicable)	We will: - carry out observations and interaction with staff & students - review progress and end of year projections.

4. To derive the most value and relevance, linkage will flow from a Governor's background and skill set or from a desire to learn more about what the College does.

5. To assist in these roles, Link Governors may receive appropriate training and support.

6. Link Governors will act as 'Champions' for their area during Board and Committee discussions by:
- Providing general reassurance to the Board as a whole about the effectiveness of particular areas, based on the expertise and knowledge they acquire
- Raising any issues concerning the area which the Board may need to consider
- Considering how the area they champion is likely to be affected by the discussion or decisions to be made by the Board
- Feeding back on their activity to relevant Committee or Board meetings.

7. Following the link meeting, feedback from the Governor to the relevant Manager and Clerk will be via email, confirming any follow up and agreed actions.

8. As a minimum, we will have named Designated Governors for the following key areas (and then Link Governors in addition as set out in 9):
- Safeguarding
- Health & Safety
- Careers

9. We will endeavour to have Link Governors for the faculties and business areas. Not all will be covered and will be based on Governor interest and skill set. We will set out the details of our Link Governors in Annex A.

Governors will have regard to the Protocol for Governor visits in College when they attend meetings or other activities as part of their Link role. See the Protocol in Annex B.

6. Monitoring, Review and Assurance

Governors of the College will review and update this policy every year, and as part of their annual review of Board and Committees.

Annex A Link Governors for 2026-2027

Governor	Link Area	Designated
Alan Bark	Student Engagement	
Amelia Badger	N/A (Student)	
Amanda Tilley	Oxfordshire Adult Learning	
Astrid Schloerscheidt	Higher Education	
Ben Haxton	Land Based Studies	
Clare Forder		Safeguarding
David Walker	Environmental Services and Capital Projects	Careers
Edward Collett	N/A (Staff)	
Graham Caleb	Public & Professional Industries	
Helen Brown	N/A (Staff)	
Jessie Weavers-Medina	EDI	
Neil Edwards	Business Development	
Nicolas Pages		Health and Safety
Sam Wolfe	Teaching, Learning and Assessment	

Annex B Protocol for Governor Visits in College

The purpose of Governors' visits is to develop familiarity with the workings of the College and to raise the profile of Governors with the staff and students of the College. **The visits have no connection with inspection, quality assurance or any other function of College management.**

Staff should:

a) Remember that Governors come from all different professional backgrounds and may not be fully versed in curriculum and teaching methods or about how the College is managed at departmental level,
b) Aim to explain as clearly as possible in the time available the department's aims, processes, achievements and challenges.

Governors should ensure:

a) They are aware of and follow the College's safeguarding procedures.
b) They do not intervene in College process (for example by engaging all students in a lesson) unless invited. Remember that a visit by a governor can be stressful for staff and will alter the existing dynamics.
c) They clarify any doubts or questions they may have.
d) They neither advise staff on matters of management nor offer themselves as advocates for staff with the Senior Management Team. Governors should take care in expressing personal opinions, which may appear to give a commitment on behalf of the Board. Views and opinions should not be attributable to the Corporation unless that issue has been discussed by that Body and a conclusion reached and documented.
e) They avail themselves of opportunities at Board and Committee Meetings to seek supplementary clarification informally of Senior Management Team Members.
f) During visits, it would be appropriate for governors to introduce themselves and say something briefly about their role e.g. taking an interest in the College and its activities. Governors may, with the permission of the staff member concerned, ask the students what they are doing, how they are finding the subject. Governors should avoid asking questions which could lead to students making an evaluative comment about the teacher or the teaching.
g) Governors may be approached by staff who have complaints and concerns about some aspect of the College's affairs. Governors need to listen but they also need to be aware that the primary responsibility for management rests with the CEO, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals and managers; and that staff should be directed to the most appropriate avenues to voice areas of concern

The visits should be seen as a positive experience by all involved. Whether you are a governor or a member of staff, if you have any concerns about governor visits, or this protocol, please speak, in the first instance to Jude Brown, Clerk and Governance Advisor, jude.brown@abingdon-witney.ac.uk