

The effective college board

Keeping fit for purpose

Facilitators' notes



These tools were piloted before they were launched, and the following is a summary of tips and helpful hints when using them as part of a board development session. This is useful whether using them internally or if you are an external facilitator working with a board.

Planning the session

With so many tools to choose from it is important to identify the priority for the board through a discussion with the chair/clerk/principal and reviewing the governance improvement plan / governance self-assessment report. This enables the choice of tool to be put in context when being introduced.

At this stage you have the opportunity to review the questions to check they are relevant to the situation, and to add or amend.

The minimum amount of time needed for a tool is an hour. This enables group work and feedback with clear action planning. It is preferable to allow more time if possible.

For example:

| | |
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| 10 minutes | Introduction, setting the context, linking to the current governance improvement. Explaining the activity |
| 20 minutes | In small groups using the tool as a basis for discussion |
| 20 minutes | Each group feedback the result of the discussion and potential actions |
| 10 minutes | Facilitator summarises actions and offers further support and help. It is helpful here to put up the front pages of the AoC online governance resources library and the Excellence Gateway |

If you have longer, then consider using the activity with the tool, or extending the action planning stage.

Introducing the tools in the session

It is important to stress there are no right answers and the outcomes will be what is appropriate for the college and board – they are reflective questions to enable a developmental discussion.

It is helpful to set some ground rules to get them focused on being forward thinking, what they **can** do moving forward, not what they have been doing or haven't been doing. This isn't a judgement about how well they have been doing it, but an opportunity to improve it.

It is helpful to have senior managers involved in the exercise. If they are mixed within the groups it is important they understand their role is to be part of the discussion, not to lead it. Alternatively, managers can be organised in a group on their own.

Examples of how the tools have been used

- A board wanted to review how well it engaged with learners and staff and **used tool 7 – understanding the views of staff**, and **tool 16 – learner voice**. The board divided into two, focusing on one tool each and fed back suggestions that became the topic of whole board discussion and agreed actions moving forward.
- A college recently graded as inadequate used **tool 10 – board structures and processes** and **activity 2** at the Search and Governance committee, to prepare a proposal for the full board.
- In the desire to improve teaching and learning outcomes, the board wanted to better understand what outstanding teaching looked like. They used **tool 1 – teaching, learning and assessment** and the activity to help them explore this topic. They came up with a number of recommendations designed to help governors have a more informed knowledge of what outstanding teaching actually looked like and how it was assessed.

The tools and activities are very flexible.

Tips and advice:

Trust the tools to work. You cannot predict the nature of the discussion, or the outcomes, so your role is to:

- ensure everyone participates;
- keep the discussion focused on the topic;
- manage timekeeping;
- balance the strong and quiet voices;
- manage any emotion in the room; and
- summarising outcomes for action.

Experience shows that in the time, groups manage different amounts of questions, depending on the quality of debate. Don't feel compelled to push them through the questions in the time allowed. They can always come back to them. Just one question can harvest a lot of valuable debate and ideas.