

# Governor Training Materials

## The search committee

**Further  
Education  
Funding  
Council**

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*For suggestions on how to get the most out of these self-study materials, see the section Using the materials.*

## Introduction

This module looks at the role of the search committee. It is aimed at governors who are members of the search committee, and at new or experienced governors wishing to deepen their understanding of the work of this committee.

All further education governing bodies ('corporations') are required by the statutory instrument and articles of government to establish a search committee to help the process of appointing members to the governing body.

## Aims

By the end of this module you should be able to:

- explain the terms of reference of the search committee and, where appropriate, suggest improvements for the governing body to consider
- explain the categories of members set out in the instrument of government and what discretion the governing body has to determine the composition of its membership
- outline the Nolan Committee recommendations on reappointing existing members and their implications for your governing body
- describe useful approaches to seeking new members
- identify good practice in interviewing potential members, including key questions to ask and questions to avoid, in order to make recommendations to the governing body.

## Contents

Mark the sections you want to study and tick them off as you complete them.

*To do*   *Done*

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|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Section 1 The terms of reference of the search committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Section 2 Membership of the governing body               |
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## Working on the self-study activities

These materials have been designed for flexible use, so that you can work through sections and activities in your own time and at your own pace if you would find it difficult to attend organised training sessions. Governors who have tested these materials point out how valuable it is to work on at least some of the suggested activities together with another governor or group of governors, as there is such potential to learn from each other's experience. For suggestions on how to organise this kind of support for yourself, see *Using the materials*.

## What you will need

To complete activities in this module you will need to get hold of the following information or documents from the clerk:

- your governing body's terms of reference for the search committee (these may be set out in the governing body handbook if your college has one)
- a breakdown of the categories and numbers of members in each category of your governing body
- a copy of a recent role description and/or person specification for members of your governing body (if these exist – not all governing bodies produce them).

Where you need to make notes in response to activity questions, we suggest you do this in a notebook or on separate sheets of loose-leaf paper, and store the information you compile along with the module for future reference.

## Section 1 The terms of reference of the search committee

Who sets up the search committee and what is its core purpose? The articles of government state:

The corporation shall establish a committee, to be known as the search committee, to advise on the appointment of members of the corporation and such matters relating to membership and appointments as the corporation may remit to them. The corporation shall not appoint any member of the corporation (other than the principal) unless it has first considered the advice of the search committee in relation thereto. The corporation may make rules specifying the procedures for the conduct of the search committee and a copy of any such rules, together with the remit of the search committee and its advice to the corporation, shall be available for inspection by any member of the public during normal office hours.

From this starting point the terms of reference of the search committee are determined by the governing body and their scope varies from college to college. The terms of reference of the search committee need not be a long document. The meaning can be captured in one sentence:

The committee shall be responsible for advising the corporation on the appointment of members of the corporation other than the principal/chief executive (who shall be eligible to serve on the corporation as a result of the post) having regard at all times to the provisions of the instrument of government and the policy of the corporation.

The terms of reference of some search committees are far broader than this example. In some colleges, the search committee is in reality a governance committee with responsibility for such issues as:

- skills audit of governors to identify the areas of expertise and interest of existing members and to assist in the appointment of new members (this information is invaluable to the search committee)
- governance self-assessment and the monitoring of the associated action plan
- governor training and, possibly, co-ordinating the development of governors' individual training plans.

The advantage of having broader terms of reference is that they bring together in one committee a number of related activities. The disadvantages are, firstly, that the activities may deflect attention from the committee's core purpose of

providing advice to the governing body on the appointment of new members and, secondly, that some delegated issues may properly be the responsibility of the governing body as a whole.

### **Activity** Reviewing your search committee's terms of reference

Carefully read the terms of reference of your own search committee.

Are they confined to the core purpose of providing advice on appointing new members or are they broader?

Do they include other activities that we have not mentioned?

Has the discussion so far raised any queries in your mind about your committee's terms of reference (for example, do you think they are too narrow, or too broad)? Note down any queries or issues on a separate sheet and keep them in mind as you work through the module.

### **Viewpoint**

The purpose of this activity and others throughout the module is to help you identify issues that your search committee may need to address, and practical steps you could take to develop the committee's effectiveness.

## Section 2 Membership of the governing body

There are variations in categories of members for different types of college. These are summarised in Table 1. The aim of these membership categories is to ensure that the governing body includes people from a range of backgrounds reflecting the communities that the college serves. For example, there should be an appropriate balance of members in terms of knowledge, skills and experience, and in terms of gender, ethnic origin, age, etc. For more information see *Module 1 Introduction, Section 4 The composition of the governing body and its committees*.

**Table 1 Membership of the governing body – modified August 1999**

Category	General FE colleges		Sixth-form colleges	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Business	4	7	4	7
Co-opted	0	3	0	3
Staff	1	3	1	3
Students	1	3	1	3
Parents	0	2	1	2
Local authority	1	3	1	3
Community	1	3	1	3
Principal	1*	1*	1*	1*

\*The principal (chief executive) can choose not to be a member of the governing body.

In addition to the categories in Table 1, modifications to the instrument of government which came into force on 11 October 1999 allow the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) to nominate up to two members to serve on a governing body.

### **Key factors to remember about the membership of your governing body**

The governing body is the appointing body (but if a governing body cannot replace members because the number of members falls below the number needed for a quorum, the Secretary of State becomes the appointing authority until a quorum is established).

The maximum size of a governing body is 20 members and the minimum is 12 members (the two FEFC members can be appointed over and above the maximum 20 members).

The number of business members is calculated on the basis of one-third of the determined membership, rounded up if appropriate – for example, if there are 12 members, four must be business members and if there are 13 members, five must be business members.

The governing body was required to determine the revised membership at the first meeting after 1 August 1999. It is possible to make a new determination at future meetings if the governing body thinks it appropriate and takes account of the provisions of the instrument of government.

The Secretary of State wishes governing bodies to move as quickly as possible to the new determined membership. However, members appointed before 1 August 1999 are not required to leave before the end of their current period of office (unless they become ineligible) and it is not necessary to redesignate existing members to reflect the changed categories. Governing bodies will move to the new membership on an incremental basis over the next year or so. It is expected that your governing body will be fully compliant by about April 2002, if not earlier.

Governors need to ensure that they are fully up to date with statutory requirements on membership. The clerk should provide the governing body with a briefing on any changes.

**Activity** Review the current membership of your governing body

In the table below, make a note of the current membership determined by your governing body and when vacancies are expected.

Category	Number of members	Dates of expected vacancies
Business		
Co-opted		
Staff		
Students		
Parents		
Local authority		
Community		
Principal		

- What was the date of the last determination? Was it after August 1999?
- Are there any issues that you think still need to be addressed – for example, is the composition appropriate in terms of gender, ethnic origin and age of members?
- In your view would it be appropriate for your governing body to make a new determination of membership?

### **Viewpoint**

Some governing bodies moved towards the new arrangements before August 1999 – for example by appointing staff and student governors where these did not exist before. On some governing bodies the number of business members came to more than one-third of the total after August 1999. Imbalances like this should be addressed as vacancies occur or existing business members reach the end of their period of office.

There are bound to be pros and cons attached to making a new determination. It could, for example, give the governing body scope to increase the number of members drawn from a particular category of the community that is under-represented at the moment. An increase in the total number of members may disproportionately increase the number of business members, given that they must equal one-third of the total membership rounded up.

## **Section 3 Seeking new members**

You may need to seek new members for various reasons – for example, when a new determination increases the number of members needed in a particular category, or a member steps down at the end of a period of office. This section discusses tools to help this process:

- role description
- person specification
- skills audit of existing members.

There are similarities between appointing members of staff and seeking members of the governing body. For a position in college you would agree a job description and person specification at the beginning of the recruitment process. A similar approach can be used for members of the governing body.

### **Role description**

‘Job description’ is not really appropriate for governors. We suggest the term ‘role description’ instead. Members of governing bodies have collective



responsibility for their actions and therefore it is possible to identify a common role. This applies to all members of the governing body regardless of their category or how they are appointed. (For more information on the collective role and responsibilities of governors see *Module 1 Introduction, Section 3 The powers of the governing body.*)

Role descriptions vary, and yours should meet the particular needs of your governing body. But a good role description should include certain core elements. Here is an example.

### **Sample role description – core elements**

- 1 To comply with the provisions of the following documents as they apply to the role of members of the governing body:
  - instrument and articles of government
  - FEFC financial memorandum
  - governing body code of conduct
  - seven principles of public life drawn up by the Nolan Committee
  - college financial regulations and financial procedures.
- 2 To act in the best interests of the governing body.
- 3 To support decisions of the governing body and the committees of the governing body once they have been reached on the basis of collective responsibility even though you may have spoken against a proposal during the debate at a meeting.
- 4 To give due priority to attending meetings of the governing body and the appropriate committees of the governing body.
- 5 To attend college events (such as student prize-giving) so as to gain an understanding and appreciation of the work of the college, and to meet students and staff.
- 6 To participate in training which enhances your contribution to the governing body.
- 7 To understand that individual members of the governing body have no specific powers. This means, for example, that statements may only be made on behalf of the governing body by those authorised to do so.

Note that some governing bodies set a performance indicator for attendance which is monitored on behalf of the governing body by the clerk (e.g. 'All members should attend at least 75% of meetings in one year'.) However, governors need to balance the value of an individual's contribution against his/her attendance record.

### **Activity** Review your governing body's role description

If you have a role description for members of your governing body, compare it with the example above. On your own document:

- tick the statements that are similar to those in the example
- underline any major differences
- put a question mark beside any statements that are unclear.

If your governing body or search committee does not have a role description, decide which elements of the example you might want to adopt or adapt, and what other elements you would like to add in order to develop one.

### **Viewpoint**

This activity may have helped you identify ways in which your governing body's role description could be clarified or improved. If so, decide how you will follow this up. (An alternative approach which some governing bodies have adopted is to include relevant issues in the code of conduct, which is then signed by individual members.)

If no role description exists, consider whether you wish to propose one. Note this as a query to raise with the clerk. Your governing body might also consider adding sections on the specific roles of the chair and vice-chair.

### **Person specification**

The person specification complements the role description by identifying the sort of person who will be able to carry out the responsibilities of a member of your governing body. It is likely to include several general characteristics which apply to all members and one or two specific characteristics which apply to the particular vacancy that the search committee is dealing with. Look at the example below.

## Sample person specification

### General characteristics

- To be committed to lifelong learning and the role of .....College in improving the nation's skills base. (This statement is based on the college's mission statement\*.)
- To be willing and able to promote the equal opportunities policy adopted by the governing body.
- To be able to attend meetings of the governing body and appropriate committees given that these usually start at 6.30 p.m.

### Specific characteristics

*(Examples; these will vary according to the governing body's needs)*

- To be an accountant and willing to serve on the governing body's audit committee
- To have detailed knowledge of the African-Caribbean community served by the college
- To have legal training

\* For more information about the mission statement see *Module 2 Strategy and educational character, Section 1 Introduction to strategy and educational character.*

### Activity What should the person specification include?

What characteristics need to be included in the person specification for a member of your governing body? If you have a recent person specification, compare it with our example, or use the example to help you write your own notes on a separate sheet.

### Viewpoint

In the example the first statement is adapted from the college's mission statement. Your search committee could incorporate your college's mission statement within any role description or person specification it produces.

If you ask for a commitment to attend meetings, when was the last time that your governing body reviewed the start times of meetings? It could be that a different time may be more convenient for members. We return to this below.

The phrasing of statements like ‘To have legal training’ needs careful thought. If it has been agreed that the governing body would benefit from a member with a legal background, the search committee needs to be clear whether this means specifically a solicitor or barrister, or whether people with other experience in dealing with legal matters – such as a company secretary – would also be suitable.

### **Skills audit of members of the governing body**

A regular skills audit of existing members can help the search committee to identify potential new members whose skills and experience complement those of the existing membership. Members are likely to gain new areas of interest or expertise (e.g. from changing job or becoming involved in a voluntary organisation) so the skills audit should be updated at least once a year.

An ideal time for carrying out the audit is during the annual self-assessment of governance. Once governors are satisfied with the approach to the skills audit the annual update need not take long to complete.

Your governing body may already have in place satisfactory arrangements for carrying out the annual skills audit of members. For those who have not yet adopted a structure or wish to review the existing arrangements, one possible approach is described here.

- Set out the skills audit on one side of A4 with a list of names on one axis and the skills/interests on the other.
- Decide whether you simply need ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers or some idea of members’ level of knowledge. This can be shown by using terms such as ‘expertise’ and ‘interest’.

An example is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Example of a skills audit matrix 1–12 = Governor name**  
**I = Interest E = Expertise**

Topic area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Further education and training	I	E	E	I	I	E	E	I	E	I	I	I
Equal opportunities in further education and training	I	E	E	E	E	I	I	I	E	I	I	E
Knowledge of minority ethnic communities served by college	I	I	I	E	E			I				
Audit	I	E	I			I	I			E		
Accountancy			I							E	I	
Art & design					I							
Catering							I				I	
Computing/IT	I	I	I	I	I		I	I		I		E
Engineering/manufacturing			E			I		E			E	
Estates management			I								E	
Financial management	I	I	I	E	I			I		I	I	
Hospitality industries			I			I						
Legal services	I	I		E							I	
Marketing	I	I	I	I						I	I	I
Personnel	I	I	I				E		I			
Training provider/staff development			I		E		I		I		I	

Other topic areas could be included in the audit, depending on the local needs that your governing body (or search committee) identifies. As a separate but related exercise, you might find it helpful to map the composition of your governing body in terms of age, gender, ethnic background, where people live, etc.

If the skills audit identifies deficiencies in particular areas, the governing body may need to consider whether it operates in ways which tend to discourage members with the qualities needed. For example, the times of meetings may make it difficult for certain kinds of people to attend.

**Activity** Has the governing body carried out a skills audit?

If your governing body (or search committee) has carried out a recent skills audit, did it reveal any gaps in expertise?

How have the results of the audit been acted upon?

On a separate sheet, make a note of the areas of expertise and interest that you think should be taken into account next time there is a vacancy on the governing body.

**Viewpoint**

Your response will depend on your college's approach to the skills audit, and your governing body's specific membership, so we will comment on this activity with a typical example.

An audit might identify several members with an 'interest' in financial management because of their role at work, but no members with 'expertise' in this area.

The governing body may decide it needs to supplement 'interest' with 'expertise' when it next appoints a new member – perhaps by including 'experienced accountant' in the person specification.

**Reappointing existing members**

The search committee and governing body should bear in mind the recommendations of the Nolan Committee when considering whether to reappoint an existing member.

**Nolan Committee recommendations**

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (originally the Nolan Committee and now the Neill Committee) published a report in May 1996 which addressed a number of issues for further education, including the appointment of governing body members. (For information about the seven principles of public life identified by the Nolan Committee and their implications for governors, see *Module 1 Introduction, Section 5 Integrity in working practices.*)

The Nolan Committee noted the arrangements already in place for the appointment and reappointment of members, including search committees. The search committee has since become a statutory requirement.

The Nolan Committee noted that in Scotland a limit of 12 years in office was laid down for members of governing bodies but that in England and Wales there was no such time limit. The Committee therefore recommended that appointments to further education governing bodies in England and Wales for a third or subsequent term should become the exception rather than the rule – in other words, eight years or two terms should become the normal limit.

The search committee and governing body should bear in mind this recommendation when considering whether to reappoint a member for more than two periods of office. The same rigour should be given to the reappointment of a member as to the original appointment. Given the search committee's knowledge of existing members, they can arguably be scrutinised more closely than a potential new member. The key issues to take into account are:

- attendance records (of governing body and committees)
- commitment to the college over and above attendance at formal meetings (e.g. attendance at student prize-givings, etc.)
- quality of contribution to discussions at meetings
- the value of the member's expertise/interests to the work of the governing body.

### **Activity** Will the search committee reappoint for a third term?

Is your search committee likely to consider the reappointment of a member for a third term of office? If so, are you satisfied that the committee can demonstrate sound reasons for doing this?

### **Viewpoint**

There are a number of good reasons for appointing a person to serve on the governing body for a third (or further) term of office. These include:

- the governor's commitment to the college and the work of the governing body
- the value of the expertise that they bring to the governing body
- the difficulty in finding other suitable people to serve.

The reasons for reappointment need to be carefully considered to ensure that the decision is justified. Are you sure that the governing body has not become a 'closed' or inward-looking organisation? To avoid such an allegation, the procedure for reappointments should be clearly set out in, for example, the standing orders of the governing body or search committee.

If this is an issue for your search committee, note down how you plan to follow it up.

## Section 4 Encouraging potential new members

You now have a role description, person specification and the outcome of the skills audit for members. What comes next? This depends on the category of membership. Apart from the principal (who is a member of the governing body unless he/she chooses not to be) the categories can be divided into two groups:

- governors nominated by others (staff, student, parent, local authority and community categories)
- governors directly selected by the governing body (business and co-opted categories).

### Nominated governors

General advice from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) on nominations from other bodies is that, although the governing body is the appointing body, it has no power to reject a nomination unless the person is ineligible to serve. (People are not eligible to serve on the governing body if they are bankrupt or have received a prison sentence of more than three months without the option of a fine. See the statutory instrument of government for the exact wording of excluding conditions.)

The governing body has the power to remove *existing* members who are 'unfit' but the DfEE advises that this power cannot be used to reject nominations.

DfEE advice is evolving, however, and your clerk should regularly update the governing body and search committee on the most recent developments in the Department's approach to nominated governors.

Because nominations received cannot be rejected, careful preparation for seeking nominations and identifying potential business and co-opted members is invaluable.

It is reasonable to provide a potential nominating body with advice about the needs of the governing body – for example the expertise and interests sought, and the required balance of gender or ethnic origin in the membership. Consider who is in the best position to lead this discussion on behalf of the governing body or search committee. Arrangements vary but typically this task is delegated to the clerk or chair, once the search committee has agreed a person specification for the vacancy.



## Business and co-opted governors

The governing body has full discretion in appointing governors in the business and co-opted categories, so the search committee has more scope for action here when seeking potential members.

- Contacts within the local community are important. Over the years many valued governors are likely to have been identified through the college's network of contacts. But this approach has drawbacks. For example, there may be a perception in the wider community that the only way to become a governor of the college is to 'know the right people'.
- Advertisements in the local press and targeted mail-shots are valuable not only in terms of the number of responses but also in making contact with a wider range of people who believe that they can make a contribution to their local college by becoming a governor. The closing date for applications should allow people sufficient time to respond.
- The advertisement should be carefully worded to explain briefly the role of the governing body and to make it clear that members do not receive payment.
- In some colleges the clerk produces a brief information pack which is sent out with targeted mail-shots (for example, to all accountancy firms in the area if that is an identified need) or in response to enquiries from press advertisements.

### Information pack for potential new governors

Three or four sides of A4 paper with brief information on:

- the role and responsibilities of the governing body (this can expand information included in the advertisement)
- the time commitment needed to be a governor
- arrangements for induction and ongoing training
- insurance position for members (responsibility for the solvency of the institution may put off some potential members)
- the composition of the governing body.

Include the name and contact details of the clerk and invite potential members to ask for further information or a discussion if they wish.

**Activity** How does your search committee encourage potential new members?

Think back to when you joined the governing body:

- How did you hear of the vacancy?
- What weaknesses did you experience in the appointment process?

Note down any action that your search committee takes to prepare the ground and reach out to potential new members when advertising, seeking nominations or inviting applications for a vacancy.

Add any new ideas that have occurred to you from reading this section.

### **Viewpoint**

If you think there are steps your search committee could take to develop or broaden their preparations, note what ideas or action you would propose and raise these with the clerk or chair.

Once the search committee has received nominations or applications, it may decide to interview potential members before forwarding a recommendation to the governing body.

## **Section 5** Interviewing potential members

This section outlines approaches to interviewing potential members of your governing body. Bear in mind that equal opportunities and anti-discrimination law applies to the process of appointing a governor in the same way that it applies to the recruitment and selection of employees. If a person applied to be a governor but was not appointed, they could seek redress in the courts if they thought that the decision was based on race, sex or disability discrimination.

Given the legal implications and the wish to interview fairly, members of the search committee may want to give time to considering their approach and, if appropriate, undertake training on good practice in interviewing.

## Good practice in interviewing arrangements

It is helpful if all potential members complete a standard application form or submit a CV. This provides a basis for review and discussion by the search committee. (The possible exceptions are staff and student members, who are often nominated following an election within the college.)

Decide whether all potential members are to be interviewed by the search committee. The alternative is to draw up and interview a shortlist. An interview or informal meeting has clear benefits:

- the person who is invited to serve on the governing body will know at least some of the people present at their first meeting
- there is an opportunity to check that the person really does understand the level of commitment and time needed to make a worthwhile contribution to the governing body
- the role of the governor can be fully explored, emphasising that members of the governing body cannot accept a mandate from other organisations.

The search committee may decide that some categories of members need not be interviewed. For example, staff members may be assumed to have a reasonable understanding of the role of the governing body. This assumption might be incorrect. This view also needs to be balanced against the principle of treating all prospective members equally as far as is practicable.

Interviewing potential members is probably essential when filling a vacancy for a business or co-opted member. In many respects the search committee should prepare for this kind of interview in the same way as they would if they were appointing a senior member of staff. A role description, person specification and skills audit of the governing body (see Section 3) will be central to this process.

To get the most out of the interview, it is useful to give prospective members beforehand:

- a briefing paper on the role and responsibilities of the governing body
- a copy of the code of conduct
- the college prospectus
- a summary of the strategic plan, if available.

**How appropriate are these questions?**

- 1 Please tell us why you are interested in serving on the governing body.
- 2 You work for a local firm of accountants. Could you tell us about your role and if you are a qualified accountant?
- 3 Your CV states that you serve on the governing body of ..... High School. Could this lead to any conflict of interest if you were to join this governing body or would there be any benefits?
- 4 You mention that you have young children. Will you be able to arrange childcare to get to meetings?
- 5 We have introduced a link scheme so that each governor is attached to one of the college departments. Having looked at the college prospectus are you interested in being linked with a particular department?
- 6 The governing body has adopted a code of conduct which includes a commitment to enhancing equality of opportunity for students. What experience do you have of promoting equal opportunities?
- 7 The governing body and the committees meet in the evenings usually starting at 6.30 pm. Would this cause you any difficulties?
- 8 People are not eligible to serve on the governing body if they are bankrupt or have received a prison sentence of more than three months without the option of a fine. Can you confirm that you are eligible to serve on the governing body?
- 9 We see that you are in your 60s. Can you tell us when you will be 70?
- 10 You say in your CV that you are the secretary of .....voluntary organisation. Can you tell us about this group?
- 11 The college is committed to increasing the number of higher education courses. Are you a graduate?
- 12 Do you understand the information you have received and accept that members of the governing body are not representatives of any groups or bodies?
- 13 Will you want to claim travel costs for attending meetings?

## **Activity** Asking appropriate questions

The checklist above sets out examples of questions that are sometimes asked during an interview for a new business or co-opted member. Working through the questions:

- 1 tick those which you think are useful, or could usefully be adapted by your search committee
- 2 put a cross beside questions which are not appropriate.

### **Viewpoint**

Some of these questions could be useful or could be adapted, depending on the circumstances and the needs of the search committee.

Questions 4, 9, 11 and 13 could be problematic.

Question 4 about childcare arrangements is not appropriate if it is put to women but not to men. To ensure equal opportunities, all prospective members should be asked the same questions. This question could be seen as discriminatory – assuming that women with young children cannot do the work of a governor as well as men.

Question 9 is asked because there are special rules about appointing governors over the age of 70. Some people may regard these rules as discriminatory. There is no law against age discrimination, but interviewing governors should explain to older candidates that they are bound to ask this question because of legal rules, not their own whim.

Questions 11 and 13 may be inappropriate if they are used to exclude otherwise suitable people. The apparent logic in question 11 is flawed. If the college planned to build a new canteen, would the governing body look for a new member who was a builder, or a cook?

The answer to question 13 should not influence the interviewers' decision. To be genuinely inclusive, the governing body should be prepared to pay travel expenses (and meet other costs such as childcare) to members who cannot afford to pay their own. To reject a potential member because they will cost the governing body more is excluding people on low incomes from participating. Staff and student members should be able to claim reimbursement of reasonable costs if they incurred them as a result of their governing body membership.

Avoid making assumptions about potential members – for example that a woman with young children cannot give enough time; that a blind person cannot contribute as much to the governing body as a sighted person (they may have more experience and a better grasp of anti-discrimination issues than existing members); that a person employed by a local firm of accountants is necessarily an accountant or has financial expertise (they may be the IT technician or office manager). If in doubt – check it out, but make sure that questions are framed in a way that avoids discrimination.

Asking someone to talk about their own past experience in a particular area (as in the sample question about promoting equal opportunities) is a useful way of checking whether their experience and understanding is superficial or more substantial.

## Module review

This module has looked at the role of the search committee and the practical tasks it performs. If you have worked through the whole module you should be confident that you can:

- explain the terms of reference of the search committee and, where appropriate, suggest improvements for the governing body to consider
- explain the categories of members set out in the instrument of government and what discretion the governing body has to determine the composition of its membership
- outline the Nolan Committee recommendations on reappointing existing members and their implications for your governing body
- describe useful approaches to seeking new members
- identify good practice in interviewing potential members, including key questions to ask and questions to avoid, in order to make recommendations to the governing body.

If you are not sure that you have achieved a particular goal, look back at the list of contents on page 1. You may find it useful to re-read the relevant section.

## Summary of key learning points

The search committee is a statutory committee. Its core function is to advise the governing body on appointing new members. Governing bodies can add other terms of reference, so that the scope of the search committee varies from college to college.

The categories of membership for different types of college are a legal requirement set out in the instrument and articles of government. Within these rules, the governing bodies can determine the total numbers of members and vary the numbers in each category in the way that best meets the college's needs.

Search committees can use role descriptions, person specifications and skills audits of existing members to help them identify the most appropriate person to fill a vacancy on the governing body.

Advice from the Department for Education and Employment (February 2000) is that governing bodies have very limited powers to reject nominations from appropriate bodies.

Careful preparation such as clear advice to potential nominating bodies, press advertisements, targeted mail-shots and an information pack can help to attract potential new members with the qualities needed.

Interviewing potential members of the governing body benefits both parties. Care must be taken to ensure equal opportunities in this process, and to frame appropriate interview questions.

## Where next?

You have now completed work on *Module 8 The search committee*. If there are areas in which you need more guidance or information, they may be covered in other modules. Turn to *Check your current knowledge and skills*. This self-assessment questionnaire will help you to decide which modules or sections of modules may help to fill these gaps. Tick the useful sections for further study.

If you cannot find the information you need, turn to the *Action planner*. Note down what further information, support or guidance you would like. The *Action planner* gives advice on who may be able to help, and how.

## Putting it into action

We hope that working through this module has raised useful questions, increased your awareness of issues and given you ideas for practical action that you would like to follow up. The *Action planner* contains a section where you can note down any questions or action points that you want to follow up within your own college.



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