

<b>Title:</b>	School Governor Skills Survey Report
<b>Authors/Enquiries:</b>	Stephanie Lee, Head of Widening Participation and Outreach Alison Gregory, Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Officer
<b>Date/version:</b>	November 2019
<b>Description:</b>	This report provides a summary of the skills survey undertaken by staff at The University of Manchester who are members of the University of Manchester School Governor Initiative (UMSGI) Network.

## Executive Summary

Firstly, my thanks to all those who took the time to complete the online survey circulated in July 2019. It has been a fascinating read this year and has really provided a great insight into the skills governors are using and developing in their role. What has been really pleasing to see is the number of governors who feel that their role in The University of Manchester is significant in being able to provide the required skills and more strikingly that so many of you acknowledge that the skills you are developing on the governing board are helping you in your academic or professional services role.

Just under a third of governors stated that they have been able to demonstrate new skills to others in either a P&DR, a job application or an interview for promotion. We are hoping that with increased use of the learning log in future, it will lead to a higher proportion of governors being able to demonstrate their skills in this way and over a third of you plan to do this already.

We welcome your feedback on the UMSGI network and in particular the conferences, meetings and listserv information. Whilst the significance of these activities might not be as high for some governors as it could be, it is extremely pleasing to read that for the majority, these services are extremely useful and well received.

We will continue to work hard to support all of our governors and always welcome any ideas for meetings, conferences and other events.

A new question for 2019 was on the skills gap on governing boards and governors were asked to state which skills were lacking. Whilst gaps do indeed exist, it was pleasing to see that a high number of governors said that their boards has recently undertaken a skills audit to try and close the gap.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2019, members of the UMSGI Network were invited to undertake a survey linked to their role as school governors. The aim of this survey was to:

- Understand the range of skills used as a governor
- Understand the range of skills developed as a governor
- Understand how UMSGI can further support the development of governors

1.2 The survey is the third survey of its kind, previous survey reports are on our SharePoint site <https://org.manchester.ac.uk/sites/GovernorResources/SitePages/Home.aspx>

### 2. Survey overview – Schools and governor background

2.1 The survey was completed by 55 staff which represents 24% of our UMSGI Network. 39 (71%) of respondents are Professional Services (PS) staff and 14 (25%) are academic staff. 2 (4%) respondents were in the “other” category. Currently in the Network 57% are PS and 43% are academic staff.

- 2.2 49% of respondents govern in Manchester, 9% in Stockport and Cheshire East, 7% in Tameside, 5% in Trafford, 4% in Rochdale and Salford, 2% in Oldham, Bury, Bolton and Derbyshire.
- 2.3 27% of respondents are in outstanding schools with 62% in good schools and 7% in schools which require improvement. These are the judgements from the most recent Ofsted inspection at a governor's school.
- 2.4 44% of respondents are co-opted governors, 16% are local authority governors and 11% are parent governors. 18% are foundation governors and 11% are in the other category.
- 2.5 Respondents were asked about their role on their Board of Governors and of the 55 staff who answered the question, 6 are Chairs, 7 are Vice-Chairs and 9 are Committee Chairs.
- 2.6 The survey was completed by new and experienced governors with 31% having been a governor for more than 5 years. 22% of respondents are in their first year of governing.
- 3. Contribution of Skills. Respondents were asked which of your skills are most useful on the governing board.**
- 3.1 Communication skills were the most useful followed by data analysis and finance skills.
- 3.2 In terms of soft skills, the most useful were time management skills. Problem solving, commitment and commenting on documentation were also stated as very useful.
- 3.3 A full list of skills which were deemed as most useful on a governing board are in appendix 1, tables 1.1 and 1.2
- 4. Skills Development**
- 4.1 Governors were asked what transferable skills they had gained or developed and the results are provided in appendix 1, table 2. 62% of respondents had gained or developed new transferable skills.
- 4.2 The most prominent skills developed on the governing board were financial acumen/budgeting skills, followed closely by understanding and analysing data.
- 5. Application of new skills/knowledge in the workplace**
- 5.1 80% of governors agreed that their work at the University is significant in helping them be effective governors.
- 5.2 Respondents were asked whether they had been able to apply any of the new skills/knowledge to their role at The University of Manchester. 64% said yes, 13% said no and 15% weren't sure. 8% did not respond.
- 5.3 Some of the skills being used in the workplace as a result of being a governor are leadership skills, chairing meetings, improved financial management skills, better questioning skills and improved decision making skills and these are provided in appendix 1, table 3.
- 6. Skills Gap Analysis**
- 6.1 Governors were asked which skills they felt were lacking on their governing board. The main gaps are in finance and legal skills. Table 4 in appendix 1 shows the gaps governors felt existed on their governing boards.
- 7. Support from the University**
- 7.1 Respondents were asked about the support they received from the University.

- 7.2 60% of governors agreed that the UMSGI network is significant in supporting them to be effective governors. 25% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 7.3 66% of respondents had attended a network meeting
- 7.4 60% of respondents had attended an UMSGI conference
- 7.5 60% of respondents found the network events useful, 40% were neutral
- 7.6 69% of respondents said they found the online information via listserv useful and 31% were neutral.
- 7.7 Table 5 in appendix 1 details suggestions for further support from the University.

## **8. Summary - changes for 2019**

- 8.1 The UMSGI Skills and Experience Survey 2019 has revealed some very positive results which reflects the qualitative feedback received during the courses of the 7 years that the UMSGI network has been operating.
- 8.2 As the UMSGI network membership has now reached 230 members of staff, it is satisfying to have strong evidence which suggests that staff are not only sharing their skills as we would have hoped but are also acquiring and developing new skills, experience and confidence and becoming more aware of their skills by undertaking this challenging and important role. In addition it is encouraging to see that those skills and experiences are having a tangible impact on their work and professional development at The University of Manchester.
- 8.3 As a co-ordinating team, we are also extremely satisfied that the survey reveals that the support offered by the University and the network is valued and effective. As well as appreciating the time off to perform the governor role, governors also highly rate the conference, network meetings and listserv notifications.
- 8.4 Further to this, the report demonstrates that schools and colleges are benefiting from an enhanced service from their school governor by means of additional activities offered by The University of Manchester. School governors working at the University are able to signpost schools to events and activities which schools may not otherwise have been made aware of or have been inclined to pursue.

## **9. Recommendations**

- a) Further promotion of the learning log to governors
- b) Increase communication to managers in Academic Schools and Faculties to encourage staff who are governors to discuss their skills and development as a governor.
- c) Make governing an integral part of the P&DR form and review meeting.
- d) UMSGI to increase their focus on offering training to governors not just information sharing.
- e) Reach out to the schools which lie outside of Greater Manchester and make sure they are included in our wider university activities as some governors felt that their schools were not taking advantage of these activities.
- f) Provide a range of network support particularly for smaller peer groups to come together to share best practice.
- g) Promote governor opportunities to staff who can close existing skills gaps or offer training to existing governors to help narrow the gap.

Table 1: Responses to the question ‘What skills are most useful on a governing body?’

## 1.1 Most useful Hard Skills

	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Good communication</b>	24
<b>Critical thinking</b>	2
<b>Challenge and questioning</b>	7
<b>data analysis</b>	20
<b>financial analysis</b>	10
<b>strategic thinking/planning</b>	3
<b>HR/performance management</b>	8
<b>Chairing meetings/meeting management</b>	3
<b>Leadership</b>	1
<b>Knowledge of education &amp; curriculum</b>	5

## 1.2 Most useful Soft Skills

	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Effective time management</b>	3
<b>Absorbing and commenting on documentation</b>	2
<b>Empathy and passion for education</b>	1
<b>Problem solving</b>	2
<b>Attention to detail</b>	1
<b>Supportive</b>	1
<b>Negotiation</b>	1
<b>Commitment</b>	2

Table 2 – Skills gained/developed as a Governor

	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Financial Acumen/Budgeting Skills</b>	10
<b>Understanding &amp; Analysing Data</b>	9
<b>Management &amp; Leadership</b>	6
<b>Chairing skills</b>	6
<b>HR knowledge</b>	5
<b>Critical questioning skills</b>	5
<b>Communication skills</b>	5
<b>Confidence</b>	4
<b>Negotiation</b>	2
<b>Strategic thinking</b>	2

In addition there was mention of listening skills, analytical skills, networking, organisation skills, influencing, empathy, interview and presentation skills being developed.

Table 3 – New skills gained which are enhancing governors’ roles in the workplace

Leadership skills
Enhanced management skills
Chairing skills to make meetings more efficient
Confidence has improved
Improved decision making skills
Better challenging and questioning skills
More patience
Improved personal effectiveness
Increased knowledge of the education system and the curriculum
Better financial management skills
Increased knowledge of the local community
Skills and knowledge have been used as part of promotion application at work.

Table 4: Skills Gap

	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Financial Acumen/Budgeting Skills</b>	16
<b>Legal Skills</b>	10
<b>HR</b>	3
<b>Managing large scale estates projects</b>	2
<b>Strategic thinking</b>	2
<b>Leadership</b>	2
<b>Data processing</b>	2

Confidence to challenge, knowledge of special educational needs, knowledge of health & wellbeing and commitment were also identified as gaps on the board.

Table 5: Further Support

	<b>Responses</b>
<b>More training rather than information sharing</b>	4
<b>Sub networks for MAT governors/chairs</b>	2
<b>Meet other governors to exchange best practice</b>	1
<b>Incentives and recognition in promotions</b>	2
<b>Specific information for governors</b>	1
<b>More time for chairs</b>	1
<b>Support around skills and what training to take</b>	1