Guidance for School Boards Chairs

Part 1 Central Governance
Version: 2023/24

Introduction

This guidance has been developed to support Chairs of School Boards, and the Professional Services staff who provide the secretariat to the School Board, in the effective and efficient running of School Board activity.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the University's Governance Handbook which provides more information on wider University governance structures, tools to support the efficient management of committee and groups, templates, definitions, and relevant policies.

Role of School Boards:

School Boards enable staff to have a voice in the governance of their areas within the University of Manchester. The Faculties of the University consist of a number of Schools, each organising, managing and delivering the work of the academic disciplines assigned to it. In accordance with our statutes, each School has a Board.

Boards are able to discuss and express opinions on any matter impinging on the work of the School. They offer a forum for all staff to play a major role in the School's executive management and strategic development.

Remit and focus of School Boards:

School Boards are formally defined as having 'the power to discuss and declare an opinion on any matter relating to or impinging on the work of the School and to report such opinion to the Head of School, the Dean of Faculty, the Senate and/or the Board through the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer.'

School Boards are advisory bodies, which can advise the Head of School on a number of matters, and also advise the Dean on the appointment of Head of School. The School Board can therefore play an important role within the School to offer advice and feedback to School

leadership on key matters, and ensure the academic voice is heard. School Boards may also advise their respective Faculty Committee.

Each School Board determines its own modus operandi, and an effective School Board can play a valuable role in informing University, Faculty and School strategic direction and policy, as well as engaging with our academic community in the strategic direction of the School.

Matters that School Board may advise on include:

- the research profile and activities of the School;
- the content and operation of the programmes of study assigned in whole or in part to the School including the regulatory framework pertaining thereto;
- the recruitment, selection, admission, welfare, academic progress and conduct of the students with whom it is concerned;
- the allocation and management of the physical and financial resources assigned to the School;
- the allocation of duties and arrangements for leave of absence, amongst the academic and research staff assigned to the School;
- the allocation of duties amongst the academic-related and other staff assigned to the School;
- the strategic development of the School.

Membership of School Boards:

The core membership of each board is made up by the body of permanent academic and professional services staff within the School – with 'permanent' defined as full-time or part-time staff with appointments of a year or longer.

Other members of the School, either as individuals, or categories of individuals (or their representatives) may be proposed for membership. Examples include research, teaching and academic staff on shorter-term appointments.

The core membership proposes these appointments, which are then subject to approval by Senate.

This approach enables the membership of a School Board to be as inclusive as possible, and fully representative of the diversity of academic and professional services staff within the School.

School Boards should endeavour to ensure that the student voice is considered at its meetings.

Note: Each School should separately ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for establishing staff-student consultative fora, with a view to discussing, and reporting to the School Board on any matter which might affect the relationship between the School and its students.

Roles and responsibilities

Full information on the roles and responsibilities of committee members can be found in the University's Governance Handbook.

Role of Chair: The School Board Chair has overall responsibility for the committee's business. In particular, the Chair should have knowledge of the Terms of Reference of the committee, including a full understanding of its remit and limits of its business and powers. More information on the role of Chair can be found here.

There is support and training available via Learning and Organisational Development unit for those who may new to Chairing a meeting:

- Chairing meetings - Managing virtual meetings - LinkedIn Learning course
- Chairing meetings - Minutes, meetings and agendas - LinkedIn Learning Collection
- Chairing meetings - Chairing meetings that deliver results - LinkedIn Learning Collection

Role of Secretary: The School Board Secretary has responsibility for supporting the committee by planning meetings and ensuring that all follow-up work is undertaken. The Secretary should have knowledge of the business of the Committee, including a full understanding of its remit, membership and schedule of its meetings.

The Head of School Operations acts as the Secretary for the meeting and holds overall accountability for ensuring operational support is provided to the Chair for the effective running of meetings, but may delegate some of these tasks eg. minute-taking, to a colleague. More information on the role of Secretary can be found here.

Role of Members: members enable the School Board to discharge its responsibilities, including appropriately engaging in discussions, supporting constructive debate, and accepting collective responsibility for discussions. More information on the role of Members can be found here.

Administration of School Boards

Frequency of School Board meetings:

School Board should meet at least three times a year. Chairs and Secretaries should ensure that the dates for future meetings are agreed and circulated with staff at the start of the academic year, in order to ensure the maximum number of people are able to attend. It is also recommended to schedule meetings on different days of the week to be as inclusive as possible for part-time staff.

Ideally School Boards should take place a few weeks before Faculty Committee (FC) meetings in order that any items raised have the opportunity to feed into the upcoming FC agenda. FC meetings are timed ahead of Senate meetings in order to encourage this upward flow of information through the organisation.

Format of meetings:

As agreed by the School Board Chair, School Boards may take place either during in-person meetings on campus, or virtually. In either case, School Board Chairs should consider how best to support as many colleagues as possible to attend and engage with the School Board.

Agenda setting process for School Boards:

The process for suggesting agenda items for School Board is recommended as follows. This process should be overseen by the Chair of the School Board, in collaboration with the School Board Secretary.

- All School Board members will be solicited for agenda items at least **two weeks** in advance of the meeting. The preferred routes for requesting items should be agreed by each school, but could include:
  - Message issued via School Listserve email address;
  - Inclusion in School newsletters;
  - Requests/reminders issued to Heads of Department and School SLT members to add to team meeting agendas;
  - Via relevant social media spaces, such as Yammer groups, Teams, and School intranet pages.

- The Chair will consider all agenda items proposed and set the final agenda (**See appendix 1**); the agenda will be circulated **one week** before the meeting;

- Where relevant, agenda items will include the name of its proposer (**See appendix 1**);

- Agenda items will include a short description of 1 to 2 sentences for context with a clear call to action for the School Board to consider (**See appendix 1**);

- Where possible, any supporting papers to be circulated prior to the meeting;

- The Agenda should be added to the School's intranet site (or agreed space, such as Teams or Sharepoint) for ease of access, and for future record;

There is more information about agenda development and scheduling in the University Governance Handbook.

Recording School Board meetings:

In instances where School Boards are recorded, staff should follow the principles and guidance outlined here. This includes seeking the relevant permissions prior to recording the meeting, and ensuring the recordings are stored and deleted appropriately.

Reporting outcomes and consultation

Matters recommended by the School Board should be escalated to the relevant and/or identified individual or committee by the Secretary. The outcome/response should be reported to the School Board.

Recommending items to the Faculty Committee:

If an item requires further consideration, it should normally be recommended to the Faculty Committee for discussion in the first instance. It is the School Board Chair's responsibility to forward the relevant item to the Director of Faculty Operations (Faculty Committee Secretary) for inclusion at the next Faculty Committee meeting. Upcoming dates of the Faculty Committee can be found on the relevant faculty pages of StaffNet (see Part 2 The Faculty Guidance to School Boards).

Items should include:

- 2-3 sentences outlining the context of the item;
- Details of when the item was discussed at the School Board, and what was the recommended outcome;
- Any supporting papers.

It is recommended that any items that require recommendation to the Faculty Committee are done so as soon as possible after the School Board meeting in order to ensure the item is considered in a timely manner.

The Faculty Committee will then advise where the item should be next referred to (if required), be this Senate or an appropriate management group.

The School Board Chair should also ensure an appropriate representative of the Faculty Committee is prepared to introduce the item and ensure feedback is shared with School Board Chair. A list of Faculty Committee members is available in Part 2 The Faculty Guidance to School Boards.

Recommending items to Senate:

It is helpful if items which require further consultation or consideration by Senate are presented to Faculty Committee prior to Senate.

However, this may not always be possible due to timescales, and School Boards are therefore advised that if a School Board has recommended an item for consideration by Senate, without prior consideration by the Faculty Committee, the School Board Chair should notify the Chair of the Faculty Committee of this action.

If an item requires consideration at Senate, it is the School Board Chair's responsibility to submit this item for inclusion at the next Senate meeting to the Governance Office together with a draft minute extract regarding the item.

Details of Senate dates and how to submit an item (including the required cover page) can be found on the Senate website.

University governance structure

A diagram of the University's governance and central management committees is available as a PowerPoint presentation to download from the website. To explore the diagram, run the slides as a slide show. You'll then be able to click on each section to reveal more information.

School Board Chair nomination/ election

As laid down in Ordinance XII, the Head of School is responsible for ensuring that action is taken to elect a Chair of the School Board from the academic membership of the School and that the views of the Dean of the relevant Faculty are communicated to the School Board as part of that process.

Since 1 February 2023, School Board Chairs are also considered to be elected members of Senate.

Arrangements for the designation of the Secretary of a School Board shall be made by the Head of Administration in the School concerned.

Eligibility to nominate, vote and stand for election as School Board Chair

Those entitled to nominate, vote and stand as a candidate in the election in each of the Schools shall be the members of the academic or research staff, full-time or part-time, who hold paid appointments of a year or longer assigned to the School. Such staff will be eligible to nominate, vote or stand for election to the School Board Chair (SBC) role to which their post is assigned.

School Board members who are Professional Services members and research, teaching and academic staff members who hold paid appointments of less than a year, are eligible to vote in elections, but are not eligible to stand for election.

Those members holding senior management positions in which there could be a conflict of interests would not normally be eligible to stand for election to the role.

Candidates elected to SBC shall normally serve a three year term, subject to their continuing to hold a paid academic or research appointment assigned to the School. SBCs are eligible for re-election after the three year term.

The individual elected as Chair will need to have excellent communication skills, be able to conduct meetings efficiently, and be able to recognise the various views held by colleagues.

Nominations

Once the invitation for expressions of interest has been sent out by the Head of School, any academic member of staff that wishes to stand for election for the position of SBC should send an email, including the names of two colleagues supporting their nomination (proposer and a seconder), to their School Operations Manager.

Elections

If there is more than one candidate following close of nominations, an election will be held within the School. Each candidate will then be requested to submit a brief manifesto, which will be circulated with the details of the election procedure. This short statement will need to include details about their relevant experience (maximum 150 words) and what they would bring to the role of Chair of the School Board.

School Board Decision Making and Voting Rights

Although School Boards are primarily advisory bodies, they may, from time to time, be required to make decisions either in meetings, or regarding the election of a new Chair of the School Board.

For decision-making in meetings, School Boards should endeavour to reach decisions by general consensus following opportunities to comment and discuss agenda items.

If a general consensus is not possible, and a formal ballot is required, then a School Board Chair may ask for a show of hands regarding items.

Should a confidential or a secret ballot be required, School Boards may find it preferable to conduct these following a meeting by appropriate electronic means. This can ensure that there is clarity regarding the wording of proposals, and mitigates the challenges that can arise when delivering such ballots within hybrid meetings.

For entirely in-person meetings, or for wholly online meetings, options for holding ballots include the use of paper ballots, and the use of polling functions within the meeting software.

If a ballot is required for the election of a new School Board Chair (e.g. if there are more than one candidate wishing to stand), School Boards are advised to use an electronic ballot system such as Mi Voice.

Academic and Professional Services members of School Boards have equal rights in terms of voting in meetings, or in a ballot for a new Chair of the School Board.

The role of Chair of the School Board should be held by an academic member of the School Board.

School Boards: Professional Services membership and voting rights

School Boards should take as broad and diverse interpretation as possible of the addition of Professional Services staff to the membership of School Boards, and any occasions when decisions need to be made by the School Board.

This allows for colleagues who for example hold technician roles, or those Professional Services staff who work in Schools but are based at Faculty level to be involved in the activity of the School Board.

A diverse membership can provide a variety of perspectives and voices to be introduced to School Board discussions, and thus reinforce the School Board's ability to discharge its responsibilities as an advisory body to the Head of School, and also to report its views to the Dean of Faculty, the Faculty Committee, and Senate.

All members – both academic and Professional Services – of a School Board should be able to participate in decision-making by the School Board. This will also apply to a School Board's decision-making authority in relation to the election of its Chair (who will also serve as an elected member of Senate). The position of the Chair should continue to be reserved to academic colleagues only, but the electorate for the position should be considered to be formed of all members (both academic and Professional Services).

In terms of School Board membership (both academic and Professional Services), in addition to membership being conferred automatically on those colleagues who hold posts of over 12 months' duration, School Boards may nominate for approval by Senate additional members or categories of members (or representatives thereof). This allows School Boards to consider appointing as members postholders of fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months duration, and for such colleagues to be actively involved in the School Board

Further Information

The Governance Office is able to answer queries or question pertaining to University governance.

Contact details for the Governance Office, and details of staff responsibilities

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Template Agenda

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University of Manchester
Faculty of <NAME>
School of <NAME> School Board
AGENDA

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Date of meeting: <DATE>

Circulation: School of <NAME>

Summary: Agenda for School Board meeting on <Insert date>

Room/TEAMS   <INSERT DETAILS>
information:
Enquiries: <Insert name of contact>

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Agenda

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	Topic	Owner	Time	document
1	**Welcome, apologies & Chair's update**	<Chair>	*Eg 15.00*	<Y/N>
2	**Minutes & actions of previous meeting**	<Chair>	*15.05*	
5	Item X	<Name>		
6	Item X	<Name>		
10	Item X	<Name>		
11	**Closing remarks**	<Chair>		

Supporting information for items nominated by School Board members

Item X	*Title of the item*	*Nominated via <name of person nominating item>*
	Include a few sentences outlining in more detail what this item is in reference to, including aims, objectives, and specific actions or question for the board to consider. Reference any supporting papers for this item.	
Item XX	*Title of the item*	*Nominated via <name of person nominating item>*
	Include a few sentences outlining in more detail what this item is in reference to, including aims, objectives, and specific actions or question for the board to consider. Reference any supporting papers for this item.	

Members:
- <Name>, Chair
- <Name>, Secretary
- All staff for School of <Insert Name>

Appendix 2: Template Action log

The below action log helps the Chair to keep track of actions from each School Board, and provides a structure to report updates at a future School Board meeting.

It is recommended the action log is circulated as a separate document alongside the agenda and unconfirmed minutes, for ease of reference.

School of <NAME>, School Board Actions Log:

Actions from meeting of 10th November 2023			
Item	**Details of Action**	**Owner**	**Notes/Status**
Actions from meeting of 5th February 2024			
Item	**Details of Action**	**Owner**	**Notes/Status**
Actions from meeting of 2nd May 2024			
Item	**Details of Action**	**Owner**	**Notes/Status**

Appendix 3: Template for writing minutes and recording actions

The University of Manchester
Faculty of [Name] – School of [Name] Board
(Un)confirmed minutes of the meeting held on [Date] [Example template]

Present:

Apologies for absence:

Item	Agenda item	Reported/noted	Actions, responsibility
1	Apologies for absence		
2	Confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting	Minutes approved	
3	Matters arising and review of actions from the previous meeting		
3.1	*Item 3.1*		
3.2	*Item 2.2*		
4	Chair's report		
5	Item 5		
6	Item 6		
7	Item 7		
8	Other matters for information only		
9	Any other business		
10	Date of next meeting		