



Peterborough Regional College Case Study: Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

Summary

The forward looking board of Peterborough Regional College (PRC) was looking for ways to review their board effectiveness and improve their governance practice. Before adopting the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges they wanted to look closely at both the Code and their own practices.

PRC has two wholly-owned subsidiary companies: Anglia Professional Training, delivering full-cost accounting and law courses; and PRC Ventures, delivering catering and hospitality. In addition, it has a financial interest in an Independent Training Provider and firm plans to acquire and establish further subsidiaries during 2016.

Methodology

The board took the following statement from the Code as their starting point:

“Acknowledging the multiplicity and autonomy of the sector, boards are free to achieve the expectations of ‘must’ and ‘should’ statements in whatever manner they see fit. Where a board has adopted the Code, but for good reason does not comply with particular provisions within it, the board should explain its rationale and how its approach meets the spirit of the Code.”

A conversation with the Governance Team at the Association of Colleges confirmed this, along with the idea that the Code was intended as a guide for colleges and was not intended to be prescriptive.

The college undertook a full mapping exercise of the Code. They looked at each provision and compared it against their own practice, and for each one rated it either Fully adopted, Adopted but not yet delivered, Rationale for Alternative Approach, or Non-Compliant, along with helpful green to red colour coding to indicate where action was needed.

Findings

The board found that they complied with all but three provisions:

7.5 For all subsidiary entities, (for example separate operating companies or charitable trusts) the board should:

- **Ensure that the entity’s board possesses the attributes necessary to provide proper stewardship and control;**
- **Appoint suitably qualified directors or trustees to the entity who are not members of the board or staff/students of the college; and**



- **Ensure that the entity's board conducts business in accordance with a recognised and appropriate code of governance.**

Rationale for Alternative Approach: "The college's approach to subsidiaries is to maintain 'light touch' governance, but with a member of the college staff on the subsidiary board where that subsidiary is wholly or partly focused on the delivery of education and training so that quality and standards are visible and prioritised. The college appoints its own directors who will act in accordance with the spirit of the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges."

7.8 The board must ensure that all college policies, particularly those on safeguarding are actively implemented in the subsidiaries and partnerships.

Rationale for Alternative Approach: "Safeguarding and H&S policies are actively implemented in all subsidiaries and partnerships. However, in the case of private training providers and industrial/commercial work environments that host learners, it is not possible, appropriate, or desirable to impose college policies. The spirit of this provision is to ensure that learners are only placed in appropriate, safe environments and this is fully satisfied by the college inspection regime prior to any placement."

8.6 The board, and, where it exists, the search committee (or equivalent) should agree its own approach to equality and diversity in relation to appointing new members, and should take full regard of the implications of the college's overall equal opportunity and diversity policy, including any measurable objectives that may be relevant.

Adopted but not yet delivered: "Note: the Board will receive a report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion via the Curriculum and Quality Committee every October. The board's process for E&D in relation to appointing new members needs to be developed."

Conclusion

Terry Jones, Principal of Peterborough Regional College stated:

"From my perspective, I found the exercise of mapping each provision against our current approach useful for three reasons:

- It was reassuring because we already complied with all but three provisions.
- It was thought-provoking because it made us re-examine why we needed to be different in our subsidiaries.
- It was helpful because it alerted us to an area where we needed to develop."