

Northern Ireland



CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

NORTHERN IRELAND MEDICAL AND DENTAL TRAINING AGENCY

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR BOARD MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

1. The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency was established under the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (Establishment and Constitution) Order (NI) 2003. The Order provides for the establishment and constitution of a special health and social services agency for the purposes of carrying out functions as directed by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). The Agency came into operation on 1 April 2004 and replaced the former Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education.
2. The Board of the Agency comprises a non-executive Chairman and four non-executive members (two lay members, one medical practitioner and one dental practitioner). The Board normally meets for to five times a year and is supported by the Audit and Remuneration Committees. The day to day management of the Agency is through the senior management Committee.

THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY

3. The Agency is responsible for funding, managing and supporting postgraduate medical and dental education within the Northern Ireland Deanery. It provides a wide range of functions in the organisation, development and quality management of postgraduate medical and dental education and in the delivery and quality assurance of continuing professional development for general, medical and dental practitioners.

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN

4. The Chairman has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership on matters such as:
 - formulating the Board's strategy for discharging its statutory duties;
 - encouraging high standards of propriety and promoting the efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout the Agency;
 - ensuring that the Board, in reaching decisions, takes proper account of guidance provided by the Minister or the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS);

- representing the views of the Board to the general public; and
 - providing an assessment of the performance of individual Board members, on request, when they are being considered for re-appointment to the Board or for appointment to the Board of some other public body.
5. The Chairman should ensure that the Board meets at regular intervals throughout the year and that the minutes of meetings accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Board members.
 6. Communications between the Board and the Minister will normally be through the Chairman except where the Board has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf. Nevertheless, an individual member has the right of access to the Minister on any matter which he/she believes raises important issues relating to his/her duties as a member of the Board. In such cases the agreement of the rest of the Board should normally be sought. The main point of contact between the Agency and the DHSSPS on day-to-day matters will normally be the Chief Executive or another member of staff who is authorised to act on behalf of the Agency.
 7. The Chairman should ensure that all members of the Board, when taking up office, are fully briefed on the terms of their appointment and on their duties, rights and responsibilities. The Chairman and members of the Board should each have a copy of the Code of Conduct and other relevant background material. The Chairman should encourage new Board members to attend an induction course on the duties of Board members of public bodies.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BOARD MEMBERS

8. Members of the Board have a corporate responsibility for ensuring that the Agency complies with its statutory requirements, and with the instructions or directions issued by DHSSPS. Board members are also responsible for:
 - ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times;
 - establishing the overall strategic direction of the organisation within the policy and resources framework agreed;
 - overseeing the delivery of planned results by monitoring performance against agreed strategic objectives and targets;
 - ensuring that the Board operates within the limits of its statutory authority and any delegated authority agreed with the DHSSPS,

and in accordance with any other conditions relating to the use of public funds;

- ensuring that, in reaching decisions, the Board has taken into account any guidance issued by the DHSSPS.

DELEGATION

9. The Board may decide to delegate responsibility for specified matters to individual members or committees of the Agency or to its administrative or professional advisory staff. Decisions taken by individual members or committees of the Agency should be recorded in written minutes available to the Agency as a whole.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS

10. Board members must:

- undertake on appointment to comply at all times with the Agency's code of conduct and with rules relating to the use of public funds;
- act in good faith and in the best interests of the Agency;
- not misuse information gained by virtue of their position for personal gain or for political purposes, or seek to promote their private interests.

11. Board members are expected not to occupy paid party political posts or hold particularly sensitive or high profile unpaid roles in a political party. They should not make political speeches or engage in other political activities which may affect their work as a member of the Board.

HANDLING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

12. Board members should declare any personal or business interests which may conflict with their responsibilities as Board members. Such disclosure shall immediately be recorded in the minutes of the Board. Where the Chairman considers it appropriate, such person shall neither take any part in any deliberation or decision relating to that business nor vote thereon. The Chairman should report any appropriate matters in relation to himself or others to the DHSSPS.

CASUAL GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

13. Agency members should not accept gifts, inducements or inappropriate hospitality, although inexpensive gifts of a seasonal nature such as diaries, calendars or small tokens of gratitude (eg boxes of chocolates) may be accepted. Modest hospitality provided it is normal and reasonable in the circumstances, eg lunches/dinners in the course of

working visits may be acceptable. Members should always ensure that acceptance of hospitality of any scale does not compromise their integrity.

PERSONAL LIABILITY OF BOARD MEMBERS

14. Individual Board members who have acted honestly, reasonably, in good faith and without negligence will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in execution or purported execution of their Agency functions. Where liability is accepted or proven members will be covered by the indemnity arrangements which exist for the Agency.

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

15. The Agency must ensure that it includes a full statement of the use of public funds in its Annual Report and Accounts. The Accounts should be prepared in accordance with the Accounts Direction issued by the DHSSPS.
16. The Annual Report and Accounts should provide a full description of the Agency's activities; state the extent to which key strategic objectives and agreed financial and other performance targets have been met; list the names of the current members of the Board and senior staff; and provide details of remuneration of the Agency and senior staff in accordance with Treasury guidelines.

THE ROLE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

17. The Chief Executive of the Agency has responsibility under the Agency for the overall organisation, management and staffing of the Agency and for its procedures in financial and other matters, including conduct and discipline. This involves the promotion by leadership and example of the values embodied in the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life. Agency members should support the Chief Executive in undertaking this responsibility
18. The Chief Executive of the Agency is designated as the accounting officer and, as such, is personally responsible for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Agency is answerable; for the keeping of proper accounts; for prudent and economical administration; for the avoidance of waste and extravagance; and for the efficient and effective use of all the resources in his charge. The accounting officer has a responsibility to see that appropriate advice is tendered to the Agency on all these matters.
19. The Chief Executive of the Agency is answerable to the Permanent Secretary, DHSSPS for the use of the money allocated by the Department. As the accounting officer he/she may be required to attend the Public Accounts Committee with the Permanent Secretary.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

20. The Audit Committee should comprise of at least three members of the Agency. Neither the Chairman of the Agency or the Chief Executive should be a member of the Audit Committee but may be invited to attend. The Finance Manager, the Chief Internal Auditor and the External Auditor will attend as required.

THE AGENCY AS EMPLOYER

21. The Board should ensure that:

- it complies with all relevant legislation and that it employs suitably qualified staff who will discharge their responsibilities in accordance with the high standards expected of staff employed by such bodies. All staff should be familiar with the Agency's aims and objectives.
- the Agency adopts management practices which use resources in the most economical and efficient manner
- the Agency's rules for the recruitment and management of staff provide for appointment and advancement on merit on the basis of equal opportunity for all applicants and staff. In filling senior staff appointments, the Board should satisfy itself that an adequate field of qualified candidates is considered and should always consider the merits of full open competition.
- that its staff and Board's own members have appropriate access to expert advice and training opportunities in order to enable them to exercise their responsibilities effectively.
- there is a Code of Conduct for members of staff, which covers the arrangements enabling members of staff to raise concerns about propriety.

22. The Board has a responsibility to monitor the performance of the Chief Executive and other senior members of staff. Where the terms and conditions of employment of the Chief Executive and other senior staff include an entitlement to be considered for performance-related pay, and where such payments are assessed by Board members, the Board should ensure that it has access to the information and advice required to make the necessary judgements.

Policy Proforma

Subject of Document: Code of Practice for Board Members

Producer: Margot Roberts

Date Agreed: November 2007

Approved by the Board: 23rd November 2009

Date of Next Review: November 2011

Copy Obtainable: CETIS and F Drive

Amendment Form

Version	Date	Pages	Comments	Actioned
1.0	November 2007		Document produced and Agreed	Margot Roberts
1.0	8 th November 2007		Approved by Agency Board	Board
1.0	23 rd November 2009		Reviewed and presented to Agency Board for re-approval	
1.1	23 rd Novemner 2009		Approved by Agency Board subject to minor change to point 20.	