

The HE Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit

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In partnership with



Contents

Foreword	4
Victoria Holbrook	4
Dr Matthew Andrews	6
Introduction to the project	8
Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi MBE	8
Using the Board Diversity Toolkit	11
1. Understanding Board Diversity and Inclusion	12
1.1 Aims of this Toolkit	13
1.2 Prior Research on HE Board Diversity	16
1.3 Trends in Board diversity	22
1.4 Defining Diversity for this Toolkit	26
1.5 The Board Development Planner	28
1.6 Section Summary	29
2. Constructing an effective and inclusive Board	30
2.1 Is Your Board Ready?	31
2.2 Reflecting on Your Board	33
2.3 Getting the Best out of your Board	40
2.4 Developing an Effective and Regular Recruitment Cycle	41
2.5 Section Summary	42
3. Maximising your Recruitment Potential	44
3.1 Developing Sustainable Recruitment Networks	44
3.2 Inclusive Job Specifications for Recruiting Governors	49
3.3 Inclusive Interviewing for Recruiting Governors	55
3.4 Section Summary	57

4.	Supporting Governors: from Induction to Retention	59
4.1	Onboarding and Induction Resources	59
4.2	Developing your Governors	61
4.3	Retaining talented governors	65
4.4	Section Summary	68
5.	Conclusion	70
5.1	Developing Strategies to Get Ahead	70
5.2	Working Together to Address Change as a Sector	71
5.3	Next Steps	72
5.4	Afterword	72
6.	Resource index	73
6.1	Section 1	73
6.2	Section 2	73
6.3	Section 3	74
6.4	Section 4	74
6.5	Section 5	75
7.	References	76

Foreword

Victoria Holbrook

Assistant Director, Governance Development and Delivery, Advance HE



Advance HE is delighted to present this toolkit, the first of its kind for higher education, to assist its member institutions to improve the diversity and inclusivity of their governing bodies. We know this is a topic which many are keen to address, as they should, to ensure that the governance and strategy of institutions are informed by the richness of talent and lived experiences that exist in modern society, not least our staff and students, at a time when higher education continues to grapple with the ongoing implications of Covid-19, Brexit, and ever-changing policy. As a result, this project was funded through our membership Collaborative Development Fund and in partnership with Perrett Laver. We were delighted to appoint the University of Gloucestershire as the project team.

Advance HE has long supported higher education's efforts to improve Board diversity, producing the sector's frameworks in 2017-18 and publishing in 2020 the first full report drawing on HESA data about the makeup of governing bodies. However, our members told us that what they need is more practical tools and insights to help them deliver on this agenda in their various contexts. It is quite simply true that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to addressing the issue. And it is also true that we cannot achieve successful Board diversity without addressing what makes a governance culture and operation truly inclusive. We hope that this toolkit goes some way to helping you think through practically how to achieve Board diversity and inclusion, to secure the best possible chance of an effective strategy for your institution. We invite you to explore it thoroughly and to provide feedback.

We fully acknowledge this is challenging work to do and there is a long way to go. The production of this toolkit does not mean that our work to support this agenda is complete by any means, and it will be updated over time. Our [strategic commitments](#) mean that advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion is fundamental to everything we do. We will continue to embed inclusive governance practice into our sector support for governance effectiveness, whether that is how we design our programmes or deliver our consultancy. We will reproduce our report on the diversity of governing bodies every two years to highlight the state of the sector and use our convening power to continue to share practice from across our diverse membership and connections beyond HE. We welcome your ideas and will do everything we can to support you.

For its part Advance HE is committed to its efforts to achieve diverse and inclusive governance and leadership of the organisation. Our [Board](#) currently has 21% of its members who identify as from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background, with an overall 55% male and 45% female gender profile. Through our work towards our own internal Race Action Plan (based on the principles and practice of the [Race Equality Charter](#)), we are agreeing on targets and actions to recruit and support diverse talent throughout our organisation from entry-level staff to the Board, including our strategic advisory groups. We know this is not easy to do, but as a learning organisation, we are determined to work with our communities to create lasting change. We know that you will join us in this mission.

Dr Matthew Andrews

Secretary and Registrar – University of Gloucestershire



University governing bodies do not reflect the populations they support and lead. This is a problem, as without a fair reflection of diversity in our governing bodies we will be missing critical talent and failing the communities that these governing bodies exist to support, promote, and develop. While these issues are not new, the context in which governing bodies work continues to evolve and the problems caused by a lack of diversity have become more apparent. This has created an enlivened impetus for those charged with recruiting new governors to ensure that appointment decisions reflect not only the skills and experiences which are needed to lead bodies in the higher education sector but also the diversity of background that reflects the populations we serve.

But increasing Board diversity is hard: perhaps it should not be, but my experience is that increasing Board diversity presents challenges that have required considerable thought and effort to overcome. Even with good intentions, I have found that standard recruitment processes for new governors can result in appointments that reflect existing governors. More than once, my experience has been that even where there is a strong will to increase diversity relying on the contours of existing professional networks results in replication rather than change. Ostensibly supportive colleagues have also sometimes surprised me with underdeveloped views on diversity: the most common being a view that somehow diversity is a separate objective to getting someone with the right skills and experiences.

Overcoming the barriers to more diverse recruitment is where this new Toolkit comes in. In advising on its development, I have been keen to make sure it is something that would have helped me undertake more effective searches for new governors. The purpose of this Toolkit is therefore to provide practical and real-world advice to those who lead recruitment exercises for governing bodies. It is something I wish I had several years ago.

Based on extensive primary research, the Toolkit is designed to help Secretaries, Clerks, and other governance professionals, as well as Chairs and members of governing bodies, to approach recruitment in a way that ensures every step of the recruitment process is so constructed as to ensure the greatest chance of making the most diverse and suitable appointments. This includes every part of the recruitment journey, from ensuring a Board understands the case for diversity, through preparing recruitment materials and searching for applicants, to considerations for induction after an appointment has been made.

The Toolkit offers practical advice for every step in the journey, which is necessary because I know that only by having every link in the chain joined successfully can a Board be confident about its approach to diversity. This is important not simply because of the value of diversity but also because diversity makes good business sense. Diversity brings an increased range of perspectives, an increased variety of skills and new knowledge, and an increased ability to face the challenges of a competitive sector. It goes without saying, that these are all good things for any governing body.

Introduction to the project

Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi MBE

Associate Professor in Education and Project Lead



Welcome to the HE Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit! If you are reading this, then you are most likely already committed to the importance of a Board that is inclusive of everyone and understand its value in resulting in a Board that is representative. A representative Board results in a diverse and effective Board that does its job well.

Developed in partnership with Advance HE, Perrett Laver and the University of Gloucestershire, this Toolkit is designed with you in mind as a Secretary, Chair of Governors or Governance and Nominations Committee member. But it is also suitable for anyone interested in tackling under-representation and aiming for inclusion at the Board level in the higher education sector.

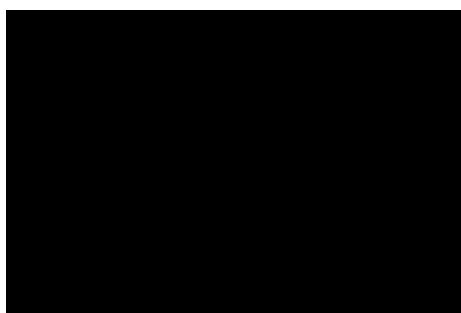
As a relatively new member of a university Board, sitting on the Governance and Nominations Committee, an academic staff member, and coming from a diverse background myself, I bring some experience and insights into the Board Diversity Practice Project that have helped me to interpret the data which is translated into the Toolkit. And this is one of the key strengths of the Project overall and the Toolkit in particular: that it is research and evidence led. As an academic, I am proud to have led the research element that underpins this Toolkit. This is because not only have we focused on ensuring academic rigour, but that we have been especially conscious to obtain data from a range of sources and methods to give us breadth and depth of understanding of the key issues, challenges and indeed opportunities.

We have sought voices from governors, Secretaries, Clerks, researchers, and executive search firms to gain deep insight from a range of perspectives to enable us to develop the Toolkit. As a result, it not only benefits from the range of these perspectives but also helps tackle a number of the challenges Boards may face in increasing diversity through tackling under-representation. These challenges are not limited to practical ones, and you will benefit even more from this Toolkit if you can join us on our commitment to the notion of ensuring

our existing Boards are ready for the opportunity and the disruption that diverse Boards bring. We urge you to view 'disruption' as a positive indicator that your diverse Board is working and doing what you intended it to. Diversity extends our thinking and the process of extending our thinking is through disruption to that thinking, so please embrace it! But to get that sort of diversity we need to be inclusive and tackle under-representation at Boards.

Welcome to the Advance HE Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit

A quick welcome to our new Toolkit with Lead Researcher, Dr Adeela Shafi



We invite you to work through this Toolkit and continue to use it to develop and enhance your inclusion and diversity. Begin with Section 1 to understand what diversity means, even if you feel you understand it well, gain a shared view of it, understand the current trends and be ready to respond. Then move on to thinking about preparing your Board in Section 2 on Structuring an Effective and Inclusive Board where we explore the importance of critical reflection of your Board, preparing Board members for what diversity brings, utilising your existing diversity better, and what senior leadership can do. Hear from experienced Secretary Dr Matthew Andrews through the associated short film and use the resources prepared, which include a Workshop you can run and use the proformas and resources to get your Board ready.

This Toolkit contains no silver bullet which will 'solve' the lack of representation and diversity, and that is because there is no silver bullet. Many of you will have tried one or more or even all of what is contained in this Toolkit at various points. However, addressing under-representation and developing true equality, diversity, and inclusion requires multi-level, multi-pronged, and proactive activity over time to see sustainable and genuine change. This takes energy and requires deep commitment. This Toolkit helps you take this holistic approach and each Section supports a different juncture of this journey.

Sections 1 and 2 are a vital part of this journey, but also the easiest ones to try and skip. However, these Sections ensure you are in a better position for Section 3 which gives you the opportunity to visit job specifications, reaching candidate pools from under-represented groups, and then interviewing them so you get the best out of what they have to offer. By then you will know the significance we place on Sections 1 and 2 and how it can help with going through Section 3 in a way that can contribute to a genuine change in how you go out to recruitment.

Section 4 of the Toolkit extends your work through into the Induction and Retention of those candidates that you have worked so hard to recruit and ensure your environment and culture within the Board continues to get the best out of its Board. You may at this point choose to revisit Section 2 of the Toolkit. The short films with governors will give you further insight into what the key needs of new governors are and what you can do to best support them.

Section 5 enables you to zoom out from your institution and to the higher education sector. In this section, our Toolkit draws upon the valuable insights from our multiple source data to understand the key issues in the sector. In doing so, we encourage you to be aware of the broader issues and challenges and to contribute to the changes requires for more diverse and therefore more effective Boards. This section also acts as a bold call to the higher education sector as a whole with regards to what we can all do beyond our institutions to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion for all so that we can all work to our best potential for our students, staff, and society.

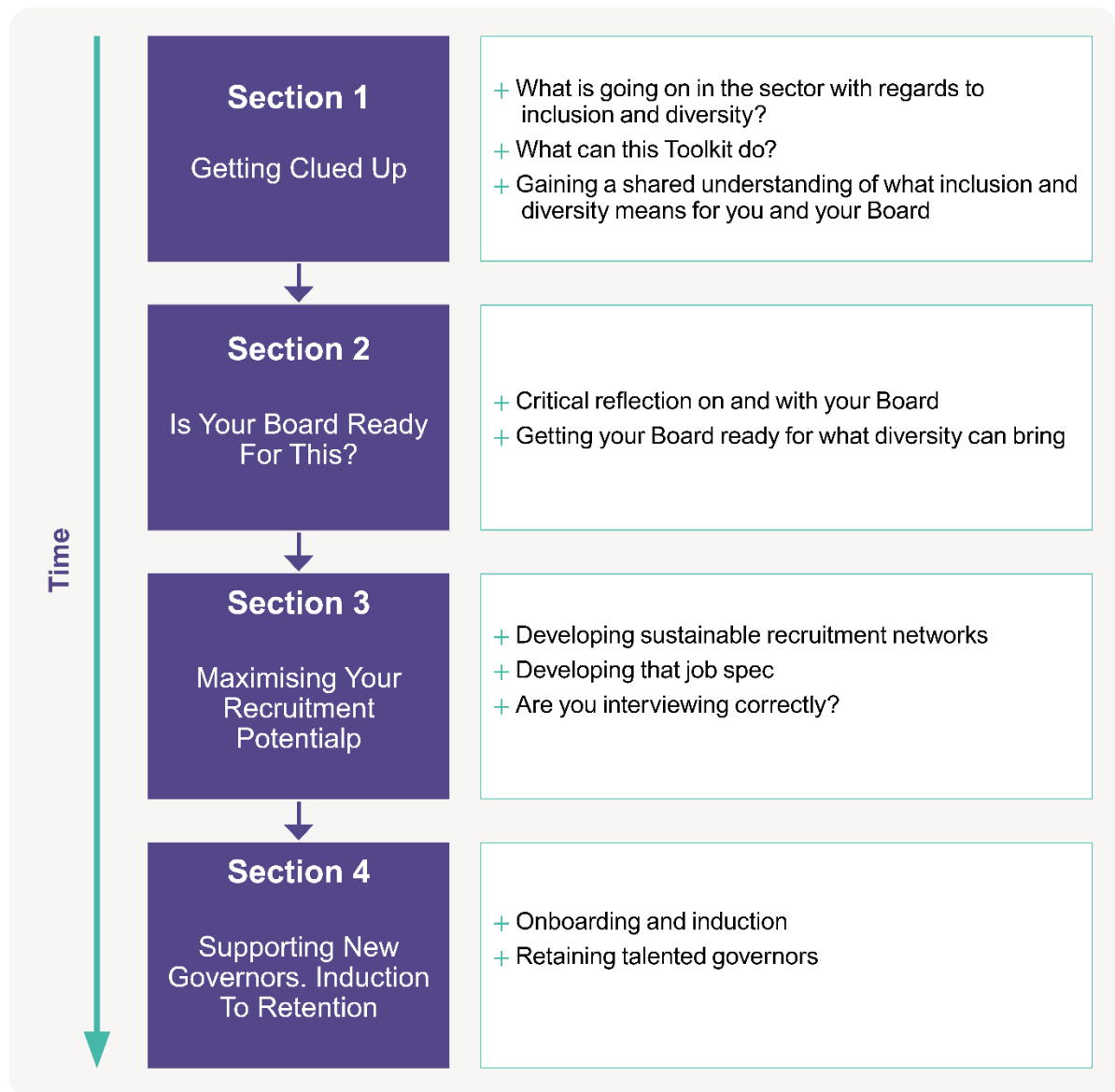
Like all good Toolkits, our final section gives you a range of useful tools and resources that we have developed or that we have found would be useful on your diversity journey. We do this by giving context on what is useful and why so you can choose what is best suited for you in your institution and your role.

On behalf of the team, I would like to wish you the best of luck in using this Toolkit and please share feedback so we can continue to improve the Toolkit.

We are all always learning.

Using the Board Diversity Toolkit

The flowchart below shows how the sections in the Toolkit work together as an integrated and holistic approach to inclusion and diversity which is multi-levelled and multi-pronged over a sustainable period.

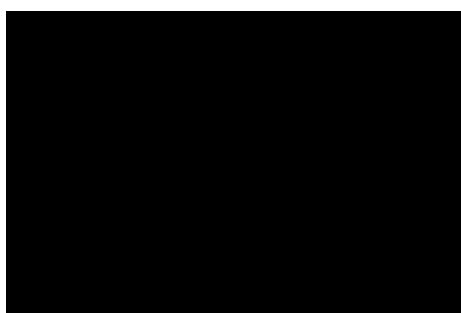


1. Understanding Board Diversity and Inclusion

Before reading the following section, consider first watching the [video](#) which accompanies this section and our [conversation with Adeela ahmed Shafi](#) (Lead Researcher and Associate Professor in Education), where we discuss the importance of wider thinking and cultural change as a critical basis for Board diversification.

Introduction to Section 1 of the Toolkit with Dr Adeela Shafi

Dr Adeela Shafi guides you through some of the key information and discussion points for use with Section 1 of the Toolkit.



This Toolkit draws on qualitative and quantitative data collected from universities for this project. The make-up of these universities was representative of most sector bodies and mission groups, with 8 out of 24 Russell Group universities (exactly one-third), 3 out of 12 University Alliance members (one-quarter), 5 out of 15 Cathedral's Group Universities (one-third). Some areas for sample improvement would be Guild HE members (10 out of 54) Million plus (4 out of 23) and UK Conservatoires (2 out of 11). We have also captured the views of several Independent HEIs and a significant number of devolved nations institutions.

There were two surveys. The first to Secretaries and Clerks of university Boards and was primarily concerned with capturing the current state of Board diversity, best practice, and the strategic needs of Board decision-makers. The second one was to HE governors to capture demographic data, lived experience and views on Board diversity. Where those who had completed the survey had agreed to an interview, 26 interviews were conducted across four different groups; University Secretaries, currently serving governors, executive search firms, and researchers on diversity and inclusion on HE Boards.

The results from the surveys and interviews have formed the basis for this Toolkit, for more information please refer to the full [Data Analysis Report](#).

1.1 Aims of this Toolkit

From our qualitative data sample of UK Boards in the HE sector, 52% said that they had begun to formulate a plan to diversify their membership. Another 36% indicated that they had a plan in place and 11% had no plans to diversify at all. In writing this Toolkit, we hope to have something useful to say to all these groups.

For those developing their plans, the Toolkit will help provide a step-by-step guide to creating a successful plan and the means to review it. For those who already have a plan, you may find something in here that you are yet to consider, a perspective or idea that may enhance what you already have. Ultimately, this Toolkit provides a holistic, multi-level and multi-pronged approach to becoming an inclusive and diverse Board and it is this that is the unique aspect of this Toolkit.

The Toolkit has two overarching aims:

- + helping to develop an inclusive culture and change institutional thinking
- + to provide practical and accessible techniques to develop Boards.

These aims are ambitious in the complex and ever changing world of tackling under-representation at the Board level and they intersect at several different points within the guidance. However, for our purposes, they serve as useful pillars representing two, equally important, processes of Board development: the thinking and the doing.

To do this we have utilised prior research, some of which is sector-specific and some that highlights relevant best practices in other sectors. This section is dedicated to understanding the current thinking on HE Board diversity and inclusion by looking at the wider context it sits within.

Glossary

Boards:

HE governance is complex and often multi-layered, however for the purpose of this Toolkit, all forms of HE governing body will be referred to as Boards. Every institution is different and there are several names for the Governing Body used interchangeably across the sector, often determined by the age and legal constitution of the institution. Some use “Governing Body, some use “Board of Directors/Trustees/Governors” and some others have “Councils”. Where distinctions between structures are appropriate, they will be highlighted in the relevant section of the Toolkit itself.

1.1.1 Culture and Institutional Thinking

Developing and maintaining a Board is a human process that requires careful thought that leads to tangible action. There is evidence of a perception of a conflict at the heart of this process, which refers to balancing the skills profile of the Board, and the need to ensure we have Boards that are representative of society and the communities we serve. Our data shows that this belief tends to shape culture and institutional thinking and hinder progress towards genuine diversity.

Much of the guidance in this Toolkit thus leans towards challenging this perceived 'skills vs diversity' debate to one of mutual benefit as opposed to mutual exclusivity. The Toolkit poses challenging questions around leadership and transparency on an institutional level and highlights wider trends on a sector level. This will help Board decision-makers to critically assess their current thinking and to help them get to where they want to be.

1.1.2 Providing practical and accessible techniques to develop Boards

Boards can help to improve inclusivity by addressing under-representation. This results in genuine diversity, with governors with broad experiences and skills sets from all walks of life. This Toolkit will support you in how that can be achieved with a focus on overcoming some of the biggest obstacles which include:

- + envisioning and planning a Board strategy that is rooted in inclusion
- + recruiting the talented people, you need with inclusion competency as a Board aim
- + developing candidates into productive and insightful governors for whom inclusion is a competency
- + reviewing and adapting your future recruitment cycles so inclusion is located at its heart.

Techniques to achieve this range from easily implemented planning and process adjustments to high impact strategies that require institutions to invest greater time for sustainable change.

The impetus for the techniques we propose to effectively diversify HE Boards is rooted in prior research and our primary data collection. Many of the techniques and suggestions may not necessarily be new but the scope and the approach to how to utilise them is the fresh perspective we hope to bring with this Toolkit.

Glossary

Equality:

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their talents and the most of their life. It is also the belief that no one should have fewer opportunities because of where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics such as race, disability, sex, and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination and that this discrimination should be challenged in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021) (Equality Act 2010, 2010)

Diversity:

Diversity is any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. It is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin. It extends to political, social class, linguistic and other categories of identity which might be sources of social inequality. These differences lend themselves to the generation of critical perspectives and points of view, and a diverse group of people will have a wide range of skills and experience. Beyond accepting and tolerating difference, diversity means celebrating the added value that these differences bring. (Global Diversity Practice, 2021)

Inclusion:

Inclusive practice ensures that exploration of these differences is conducted in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment free of discrimination. It means understanding one another by surpassing simple tolerance to ensure people truly value their differences. This allows us both to embrace and to celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual and place positive value on diversity in the community and in the workforce. Everyone in an organisation brings with them a diverse set of perspectives, work, and life experiences, as well as religious and cultural differences. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels valued, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential. The power of diversity can only be unleashed, and its benefits reaped when we recognise these differences and learn to respect and value each individual irrelevant of their background (Global Diversity Practice, 2021).

1.2 Prior Research on HE Board Diversity

Equality, inclusion, and diversity is a field that is extensively researched and therefore changes rapidly. To understand the context in which this resource sits, it is important to first understand the existing research and thinking on HE Board diversity. Much of the data in this report has come from our quantitative and qualitative research, however, it also builds on vital earlier work. [The Advance HE Diversity of Governors in Higher Education Report](#) (2020) is the first report published on HE Board Diversity and are an important step in understanding the context of this work. The report draws on HESA data and outlines the most significant trends in HE Board Diversity. The document is useful to refer to when engaging with this Toolkit.

1.2.1 Playing Catch-up

A report published earlier this year looking at UK wide Board diversity highlighted the lack of inclusion in Boards, manifesting in under-representation, which results in a lack of diversity. Figures from this report showed that 47% of UK companies polled stated that while there is some diversity, more could be done to improve this, and only 6% felt that diversity and inclusion were very well represented across their Board (Odgers Berndtson and BoardEx, 2021). This historic and societal problem, which has been prevalent over the past century, according to research by Shattock (2017), is currently ongoing. The education sector is not alone in the lack of inclusion of diverse members on Boards and there is a willingness for more inclusion (Fredette and Bernstein, 2019; Inclusive Boards, 2018; Shattock, 2017).

“I would say over the last 10 years, which is sort of my, my experience, there's been a real acceleration of change.”

Equality, diversity and inclusion Professional

While this may feel like something of a reprieve, in terms of the fact all Boards are together in this, it is not an opportunity to sit back and do nothing (Fredette and Bernstein, 2019; Shattock, 2017). The lack of diversity and inclusion that extends into the higher education sector means that the education sector is stalling alongside other sectors in terms of diversity. However, the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) suggests that education by its very nature must be at the cutting edge of innovation in ideas and thinking. Yet, the education sector is, in some areas, playing catch up and not at the forefront of change as the OECD suggests it should be (OECD, 2016), even for gender equality.

“Even gender parity on Boards is not going to be completely there until 2030”

Executive Search Firm

In comparison to the education sector, the charities sector seems to be ahead in terms of inclusion on their Boards. Since 2016 the charity sector has developed a set of guidelines on how to obtain and retain inclusive Boards (Kasumu, 2015; Charity Governance code, 2017). This guidance was implemented in 2018 by the Charities Commission, who have provided the resource to enable inclusive practices in Board recruitment and retention (Gov.uk, 2018). Hence, arguably the education sector is playing catch-up in terms even in terms of embarking on this project through a toolkit, three years after the charity sector released a similar set of guidelines.

1.2.2 “Skills vs Diversity”

As an introduction to this session, please consider watching our [conversation with Adeela ahmed Shafi](#) about the relationship between diversity and skills available in the Toolkit Section 1 resources.

How HE Boards attempt to address under-representation and achieve diversity can be a challenge and there is the perception of a disparity between Board members with relevant skills, and those with protected characteristics. However, research undertaken in the United States by Taylor and De Lourdes (2008) exhorts the value of diversity in HE Boards. Their research suggests that often non-diverse publicly appointed Board members may have industry experience but no higher education experience and so these Board members may also not serve the interest of the institution. In contrast publicly appointed Board members from a variety of different backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics, are more representative of not only the higher education institution but also of the student body itself (Fredette, Bradshaw and Kreuse, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Taylor and De Lourdes, 2008).

“Finding people from diverse backgrounds, who have the right skills to sit on a Board, are not as readily applying, as perhaps the classic Board look of white men over the age of 60”

Executive Search Firm

Research has shown that care needs to be taken when recruiting governors in order not to fall into a trap of tokenism or positive discrimination (Fredette et al, 2016). However, what has become apparent is that to achieve diversity, Boards need to walk a fine line between overcompensating or not doing enough (Fredette et al, 2016; Taylor and De Lourdes, 2008). There is a tendency to assume that HE Boards are seen as old fashioned or traditional, and contain mostly older career males reaching the end of their careers. Unfortunately, in some cases, this is the reality of HE Boards, which then discourages those with protected characteristics to apply (Wheaton, 2019; Shattock, 2017).

“Our Board was not diverse, it was mostly middle-aged white people who could attend meetings when they were scheduled”

Equality, diversity and inclusion Professional

Yet, it is not only the way Boards are viewed and considered to be made up of a certain demographic, which hinders those with protected characteristics to apply, but further exacerbations occur within the Board itself. Often, those on the recruitment and interview panel unconsciously seek to recruit similarly minded members to themselves (Wheaton, 2019). Additional difficulties can arise if an institution is located within a certain community, that may lack individuals with protected characteristics (Fredette, Bradshaw and Kreuse, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Taylor and De Lourdes, 2008).

“We do suffer because of just the makeup of our society”

University Secretary



However, a dearth of Board candidates with potential protected characteristics is not the only issue faced by those looking to recruit more diverse candidates onto their Board. Diversity is thought to be complicated according to Fredette et al (2015), especially when it comes to the issue of skills and diversity. An issue that frequently arises is the fact that candidates with protected characteristics are not perceived to have the requisite skills for the role.

“We will get a very, very small number of applicants from the BAME community, Black, Asian, minority ethnic community. And more often than not, they do not have the experience and the skills and experience that we are looking for.”

University Secretary

The literature relating to inclusion and diversity on HE Boards suggests that this is quite a prevalent situation across the board.

“So just being really inclusive and open-minded in terms of some of the questions that we're asking that we have shortlisted, you know, again, we'll try and challenge unconscious bias and encourage the panel and think about the diversity of the people they're taking through as a source of a collective whole.”

Executive Search Firm

Those with protected characteristics on HE Boards provide a different outlook, which may reflect those within the student body and wider community. In terms of diversity versus skills, it has to be recognised that the debate contains a false dichotomy because through improving Boards generally and widening views you get more forward-thinking HE Boards (NGA, 2020; Creary, McDonnell, Ghai and Scuggs, 2019). This is where the Toolkit can be a guide and provide support in recruiting Board members with protected characteristics, while making sure that tokenism is avoided and there are steps in place to nurture candidates to develop relevant skills if they do not have them (Fredette et al, 2016; Taylor and De Lourdes, 2008).

1.2.3 Increasing Social Responsibility

In recent years, the push for diverse Boards has led to greater discussions around the subject, and the argument that higher education institutions need to more greatly prioritise social responsibility over financial gain (Fredette et al, 2016; Rao and Tilt, 2015). In 2014 a pilot scheme, led by Charlotte Valeur, invited Boards to recruit a diverse member as an “observer” of Board business. The scheme, lasting a year, was successful from both Board members and the observer’s perspectives, and consequently led to a Board apprentice scheme. This pilot scheme has highlighted the value of diverse Board members as bringing a plethora of different qualities, experiences, and outlooks (Wilson, 2016; Valuer, 2014; Bourne, 2009). Further research by Pimblott (2019), considers that by “decolonising the curriculum” those from diverse backgrounds can add a critical voice on Boards and ensure that all individuals are represented at an institutional level.

“The call to decolonise the university is not new and has roots in a number of earlier social and cultural movements whose participants shared in a determination to confront the ideological apparatus of white supremacy and colonialism.”

Equality, diversity and inclusion Professional

This is important to consider more widely, as lived experience and diverse backgrounds are necessary on Boards because students are pushing not just to decolonise the curriculum, but universities themselves.

“The contemporary debate in UK higher education about the need to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ stems in large part from the pressure applied by a sustained student-led movement whose grievances reach into and beyond the classroom.”

Pimblott (2019, 210-211)

In addition to the will of the students, this increased appreciation for lived experience extends into the business itself. Research by Hakovirta, Denuwara, Bharathi *et al* has shown that greater racial diversity not only increases social responsibility but also Board performance and innovation. Racial diversity contributes significantly to diversity in thought and decision-making in the forward-thinking bioeconomy sector, where the most innovative companies are considered to be 27% more ethnically diverse than their competitors. (Hakovirta, Denuwara, Bharathi *et al*, 2020)

1.2.4 A Call to Greater Action

To enable the recruitment of diverse Board members in universities it is necessary to consider how the process will be incorporated into the structure of university Boards (Pimblott, 2019; Fredette *et al*, 2016). As Taylor and De Lourdes (2008) stated, it is essential to have a university Board that is representative of the student and staff community, which must be reflected in the university mission statement. Through proper definition and execution, and embedding plans for diversification of university governing boards, changes can be made (Fredette *et al*, 2016; Taylor and De Lourdes, 2008). This is, however, not a straightforward process as Pimblott (2019, 211) states:

“The call to decolonise the university is not new and has roots in a number of earlier social and cultural movements whose participants shared in a determination to confront the ideological apparatus of white supremacy and colonialism.”

There are challenges to the ongoing processes of encouraging inclusion in university governing boards, yet as the research has shown, there are distinct advantages of a diverse governing board. The individuality of diverse thinkers compliments other Board members and adds further dimensions that will go beyond the auspices of the governing board and out into the university (Fredette *et al*, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Bourne, 2009; Taylor and Lourdes, 2008).

1.2.5 Moving forward

This research is situated within its own unique and important cultural context. Wider social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, are providing new insights, energy, and enthusiasm into the thinking on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Within education, efforts to decolonise the curriculum are also underway with a determined focus, but these efforts have not gone unchallenged. A recent HEPI report suggests that 31% of the public disagree on decolonising the curriculum, 33% neither agree nor disagree and only 23% of the public support it (HEPI, 2021). The debate around this issue changes however when the implications are explained properly with greater context and understanding; support for change increases from 67% approval to 4% disapproval. This highlights the importance of proper context and explanation in any meaningful work on diversity and is why they form the heart of this Toolkit.

“I feel like governing bodies are very good at talking about diversification, they are starting to diversify it, but it needs to move beyond this, perhaps slightly surface level, let's get a few people who don't look like us. Because that would be good for us into let's get a diverse Board of people and adapt our start to change our culture.”

Equality, diversity and Inclusion Professional

This Toolkit, its project parameters, and underpinning research builds on prior work conducted by Advance HE. [The Diversity Principles Framework \(2017\)](#) sought recruitment industry perspectives to motivate the HE sector to apply inclusion principles effectively. The framework has helped to provide a foundation for this work and provides a baseline for the challenging definitions, terminologies and nuances found in any meaningful discussion about diversity and inclusion.

The [Board Recruitment Framework \(2018\)](#) sets the standard for excellent Board recruitment practice, and as you will read later, many of the provisions from this publication are still relevant examples of best practice in the sector. Recommendations for job specifications and inclusive recruitment practice will concur with this 2018 framework.

1.3 Trends in Board diversity

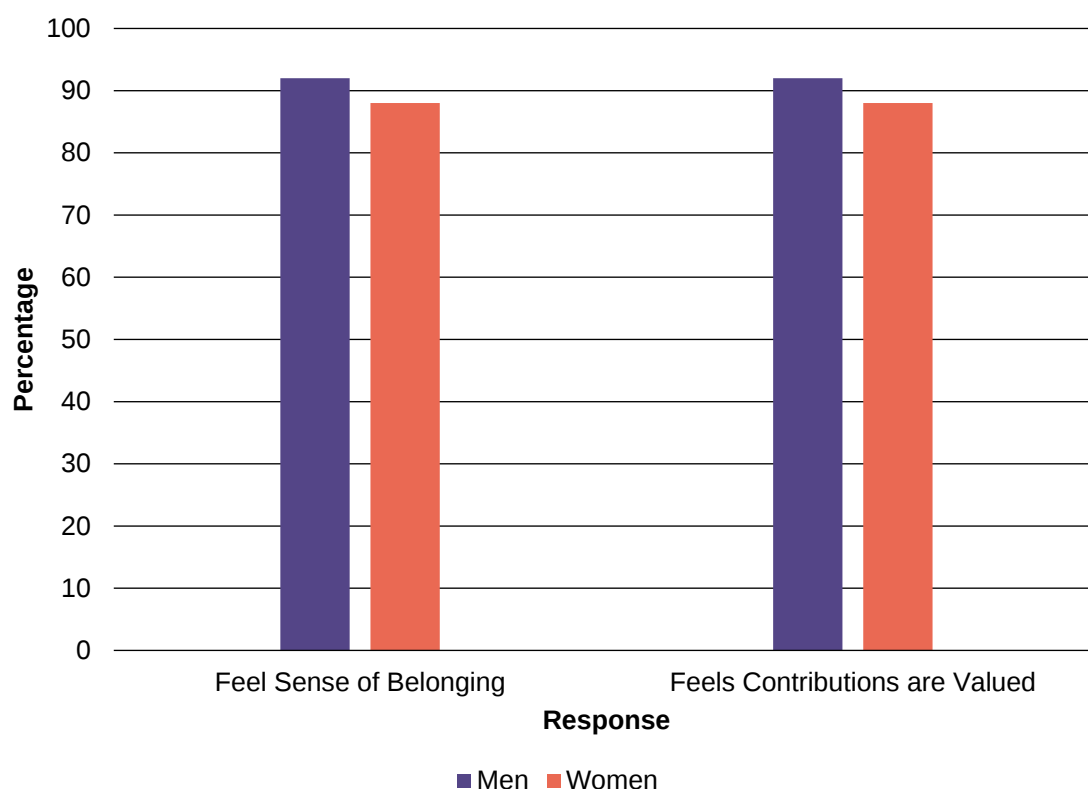
The data gathered from multiple sources as part of this project has enabled the team to cross-reference with the perceptions and experiences of experts in the field. This has resulted in several identifiable trends which are useful to know in preparation for embarking on the work in this Toolkit.

1.3.1 Gender diversity has reached a sustainable level

The qualitative research conducted as part of this project, aligned with prior research from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) data from 2018/19 and 2019/20 shows that gender representation on HE Boards is approaching 50% male, 50% female (Advance HE, 2020).

This is a success story in HE Board diversity and shows success and sincere commitment to change in this area. The data for this project has shown that gender parity extends to meeting participation and retention. But we must look beyond these headline numbers because as Figure 1 shows, there are still disparities between men and women in terms of feeling welcomed, included, and taken seriously. It demonstrates, there is still some work to be done on genuine inclusion which extends beyond recruitment itself.

Figure 1. Inclusive Feelings by Gender



“I think that gender representation on HE governing bodies reflected the broader societal push for that [representation] as well as the Davis review, and the 30% Club and all these organizations which are focused on corporate Board diversity.”

University Secretary

Much of this success has come from the HE sector following social trends and the example of the corporate sector.

1.3.2 Boards are focusing on single issues in terms of diversity

Interviews held with equality, diversity and inclusion experts and executive search firms have reflected that trends in HE governance often mirror corporate and societal trends. These experts, who have been researching this element of the sector for many years, explained that five years ago, the focus was firmly on gender parity on Boards as a sector aim, in 2021 however, ethnic diversity is the driving force behind attempts by Boards to diversify. Ethnic diversity is important to any Board, but by focusing on one characteristic of a potential governor, there is a risk of a candidate falling into stereotypical and tokenistic roles.

“When I ask Boards which area of diversity they are most interested in, ethnicity is typically the number one. Second, comes gender, and other forms of diversity after that.”

Executive Search Firm

Due to societal trends, there is also a desire among Boards to meet ethnic diversity targets quickly which raises concerns about the genuine intent of the process and the impact on the potential governor. This data came from industry expert interviewees as well as the governors themselves, and the lack of an in-depth discussion of this potential challenge suggests that there is some action needed in this area.

Case Study 1

Are Boards focusing on specific protected characteristics?

Social and cultural trends have increased student engagement with representation, and much of this attention in the media has focused on gender and ethnicity. Our qualitative data confirms that this has led to a focus on these elements for HE Boards. Due to recent successes in gender parity, Boards are now much more focused on increasing Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation on their Boards. This in of itself is no bad thing, but Boards also need to focus on other important areas of interest in the diversity discussion, though this is not as easy as it might appear. For example, new governors are not legally obliged to share details of their gender identity (as separate from assigned gender), sexuality, disability or religion. This is a data visibility issue as these protected characteristics rely on self-declaration, therefore, making it often difficult to know if certain protected characteristics are already represented on the Board (Interviews 1.2 and 1.4, Board Members). Therefore, a secondary reason for the focus on gender and ethnicity is that those characteristics are more openly visible.

“With the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter campaign, ethnicity has become a dominant protected characteristic, alongside the male female Board members split. We've got a diversity page that sort of outlines this, and we have partnerships with a number of organizations that promote leaders from underrepresented groups. So, for example, we partner with an organization called “WomenExecs on Boards”; we partner with a charity, an ethnic diversity organization called “Olmec”; and also, we've got a partnership with an organization called “One young world”, so they're just a few examples. We're constantly trying to promote diverse groups to recommend more people from to ensure that we counterbalance what's happened in society previously, which is where those groups haven't been represented.”

Executive Search Firm

Benchmarking your institution against those similar to or further developed than your own in terms of inclusion and diversity is a way to improve on under-representation that goes beyond targets and mere compliance. Rather the proactive efforts are based on the principles of developing a good and effective Board.

1.3.3 Representation of Staff and Students

Our data shows that Boards in the HE sector are not representative of their students, especially in terms of ethnicity, with 98% of Boards reported as having seven or more white Board members and 37% of Boards reporting no black members. This is evidence that the under-representation of ethnic minorities is still a key area that needs addressing. This is an effective motivation for change, but many still feel bound by established skills criteria and a perceived lack of the “right” candidates to achieve this. This point came through in our data, with issues of “skills matching” and local demographics making up over half of the responses to questions about the biggest barrier to increasing Board diversity.

“We have an incredibly diverse student body in terms of ethnic background and also nationalities. So, if the University has not set targets for trying to mirror the student body or even the staff body in the membership of the Court, you're just setting yourself up for failure. It is something that is at the forefront of discussions.”

University Secretary

Under-representation across HE Boards is a significant issue and this extends to all protected characteristics. Inclusion is the way to address underrepresentation, and inclusive practice will address many diversity issues that HE Boards have in representing their student populations.

1.3.4 The Challenge of Attracting Younger Candidates

The data gathered as part of this project has indicated that attracting capable young governors is one of the bigger challenges facing Boards (18% of Boards listed this as their greatest challenge). Qualitative data from Secretaries showed that attracting highly skilled, younger people (between the ages of 20 and 50) who are often mid-career and raising families due to the voluntary nature of the work is difficult. This is exacerbated by travel costs and related expenses, making it yet more difficult to attract candidates from further afield and limits the recruitment pipeline. Several barriers to resolving this trend have been identified, but the core issues seem to revolve around the remuneration of governors and the desirability of governing posts in the first place.

Remuneration, or the process of paying governors to sit, is a controversial idea, with less than 3% of Secretaries considering it to be a viable strategy to attract younger candidates. Interviews further explored this issue, and one of the key reasons given for this view is that payment may cloud a governor’s objectivity in the post. Our qualitative data suggests that Secretaries preferred a robust system of expenses payments as a way of removing some of the resource burdens for younger governors. This is not a new debate and new research continues to be developed, one of the most recent having been conducted by Colin Forrest, Ron Hill, and Chris James in 2021. Their report looks at different potential structures for remuneration and the consequences for each and presents various forms of paid, unpaid, and expense-driven structures in a balanced way (Forrest, Hill and James, 2021). The

Higher Education Policy Institute presents the argument quantitatively in its [2019 report](#), making the case that paid governorship in the HE sector is overdue (Wheaton, 2019). The research overall suggests that the argument for paying governors is growing but our qualitative data has identified that barriers (such as Board independence) still exist. These discussions are important and have had an impact on the guidance later in this Toolkit.

Governance is traditionally seen as a late-career/post-retirement vocation and recruitment specialists indicate that this view is prevailing among candidates themselves. Our quantitative data supports this, with 57% of Boards reporting having seven or more governors over the age of 56 serving on an average Board size of 18 members. This maps on to HESA data and earlier Advance HE work which sets the overall percentage as 54% of Board members in total over the age of 56 (Advance HE, 2018). No institution in our dataset had more than four governors under 35 and it is customary for institutions to have at least one student representative (internally appointed). This could indicate that institutions use their internally appointed positions to add these younger voices and leave externally co-opted roles to be filled by the traditionally older governor, the latter point having been confirmed by industry experts in our qualitative data.

1.4 Defining Diversity for this Toolkit

Contemporary thought on diversity often moves quickly and by discussing prior context first, the reader gains the benefit of a more accurate and situated understanding of the sector. Diversity means different things to different people at different times, but for the scope of this project, this Toolkit is working to the following definition.

The term “diverse” relates to governors with skills, experience and backgrounds that challenge the homogeneity of traditional Board composition as outlined in our data. Much of this diversity, relates to governors with protected characteristics as laid down in UK law, however, we also include age, socioeconomic and cognitive diversity as important. Governors from diverse backgrounds offer new perspectives and skills due to the circumstances and challenges they have faced. These engender a greater sense of challenge and rigour in the governance process.

Glossary

Cognitive diversity:

A popular term that has come up through our qualitative data collection is “cognitive diversity” which refers primarily to a diversity of thinking and cognitive processing to help digest institutional issues in more rigorous and comprehensive ways. The Harvard Law School forum on Corporate Governance, suggests that by recruiting gender, racially, and ethnically diverse candidates, Boards enhance diversity on two additional levels. Firstly, by adding new professional backgrounds, skills, and experiences that help meet the company’s strategic and operating needs; and secondly, by introducing new views, perspectives, and approaches to problem solving. The rigour and challenge through cognitive diversity should not create discord or disharmony, but should promote a “virtuous cycle of respect, trust, and candour” if leadership is focused and the Board is mission-led (Sonnenfield, 2002).

Meaningful cultural change starts at the top and brings the entire Board in through transparent planning and discussion. The qualitative data gathered from equality, diversity, and inclusion professionals in HE governance and the private sector has provided some general starting thoughts to consider before embarking on the development and recruitment journey:

- + the prospective governors you want to recruit are people, not a collection of characteristics and your recruitment plans should reflect that.
- + Board diversity comes from the differing ways of thinking about and reacting to situations, thus injecting greater scrutiny and perspective into institutional practices. This definition takes us far beyond protected characteristics and moves the sector conversation forward.
- + inclusion is the product; diversity and representative practices are the means, and therefore a useful area to focus on. If a Board is diverse and representative, it will more naturally contain members with protected characteristics and therefore be inclusive.
- + consider methods to improve data visibility, encourage governors to share a wider range of unseen protected characteristics (including sexual orientation, disability, religious believe etc.) to improve our understanding of inclusion and underrepresentation.
- + diversity is not a balancing act with skills on the other end. The people that offer a diversity of experience and thinking possess vital skills to any HE Board and by searching for and valuing the skills associated with diverse thinking and inclusive practice your Board will become more effective.

In Section 2, we explore how this change in thinking can translate into clear actions and better Boards.

1.5 The Board Development Planner

In our resources accompanying Section 1, you will find the Board Development Planner document. This is a step-by-step guide through the “action” phases of implementing changes to Board culture and practices. The diagnostic approach set out in Section 1 should allow you to get initial discussions underway and begin the move towards the actions outlined in Section 2. This includes feedback on workshop activities, the themes of a skills audit (without individual data), any proposals for changes to Board structure or language and finally a roadmap for recruiting new members.

Board members can offer suggestions for changes to the proposals and raise points for further changes beyond the document before reaching consensus (or by vote if that is how your Board reaches decisions).

Transparency is an active process and there are several points of the process where it may be helpful to consult your Board members and receive feedback.

Here is a list of milestones (including those already discussed) where a clear and transparent outline to your Board may capture useful feedback:

- + at the start of the Board development cycle ([Section 2.2.1](#))
- + after the collation of the skills audit ([Section 2.2](#))
- + after distribution of the Board Development Plan ([Section 2.4](#))
- + to consult for changes to job specifications and interview format ([Section 3.2](#))
- + to formulate and approve induction process and supporting materials ([Section 4.1](#))
- + to feedback on the entire process at the end of the cycle.

The guidance so far has been designed to take your Board down the first steps to a diverse and sustainable Board. The journey never ends, however, and to keep up with the changing needs of the sector, Boards must be able to continue to change and develop going forward.

1.5.1 Conversation with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi

In this conversation, Adeela discusses the importance of wider thinking and cultural change as a critical basis for Board diversification and why universities ought to be leading the way for change.

A conversation on trends in HE Board Diversity Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi

Our conversation with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi, Lead Researcher and Associate Professor in Education at the University of Gloucestershire, where we discuss the importance of wider thinking and cultural change as a critical basis for Board diversification.



1.6 Section Summary

This section should have enabled you to get a good grasp of what this Toolkit can help you to do and understand the Sector and current trends. Importantly, it should have enabled you to gain a deeper understanding of key terms and how embarking on this journey involves a level of commitment and time investment that will help deliver sustainable change that begins with your Board, but vitally filter through to other parts of your institution.

1.6.1 Section 1 Useful Links and Resources

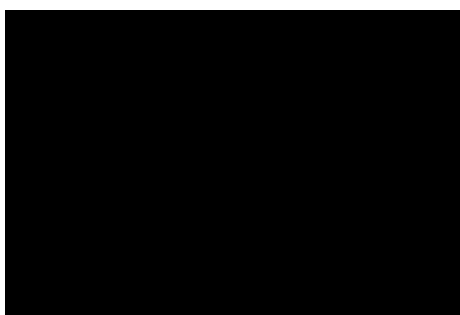
- + [Introductory Video with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi](#)
- + [Conversation with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi](#)
- + [Board Diversity Principles Flowchart](#)
- + [Board Development Planner](#)
- + [The Board Diversity Practice Project – Data Analysis Report](#)
- + [Board Recruitment Framework \(2018\)](#)
- + [The Diversity Principles Framework \(2017\)](#)
- + [HEPI Debate on Remuneration](#)

2. Constructing an effective and inclusive Board

Before reading the following section, do watch the introductory video, which accompanies this section and our in-depth [conversation with Dr Matthew Andrews](#) (University Secretary and Registrar) where we discuss the, potentially challenging, the process of reflecting on diversity as a full Board.

Introduction to Section 2 of the Toolkit with Dr Matthew Andrews

Dr Matthew Andrews guides you through some of the key information and discussion points for use with Section 2 of the Toolkit.



This section contains guidance and resources to help Board decision-makers plan for upcoming recruitment cycles from the ground up.

The section draws on the data from current researchers at Advance HE, private sector professionals in equality, diversity and Inclusion, executive search firms who specialise in Board diversity and HE Board Secretaries themselves to ensure that advice in this section is research-led and works in practice. This section also contains resources that help you to assess whether your Board is ready; creating a plan for your institution; being transparent and using your existing Board well; overcoming barriers to inclusive practice identified in the data and how to ensure you develop an effective and regular recruitment cycle.

2.1 Is Your Board Ready?

The first thing any Board should do before it embarks on any form of development is to *reflect* and ask themselves about their readiness to embark on a redevelopment journey. This enables a critical assessment of your strengths and areas where you want to focus your attention.

This enables the Board to do the next most important thing which is to ensure that everyone involved in the process has a shared understanding and commitment to the rationale behind representativeness and inclusion. This process may be an uncomfortable one for the Board as a whole, but by challenging the uncomfortable parts, Boards find themselves in a much better position to enact sustainable diversity.

“I think first and foremost it's clear to me when an organization has had a conversation at Board level already and everyone is on Board with diversity.”

Executive Search Firm

We propose that a key way to do this is to embed these conversations into part of your Strategic Planning. Advance HE's work on governance effectiveness across the sector highlights that Boards often lack sophisticated understanding and confidence in their skills regarding equality, diversity and inclusion – which affects both the inclusive nature of the Board and how it conducts its business well as its efficacy in assuring progress on equality, diversity and inclusion matters in HE, from student success to staff retention. Taking time with the Board in this way is, therefore, time well spent. One of the best ways to do this is in a workshop format.

2.1.1 Workshop – Critically Reflecting on your Board

A workshop session on inclusion and governance can stimulate the current Board and open them up to innovative ideas and approaches. We recommend that this workshop is conducted as part of a Board CPD day themed around equality, diversity and inclusion to allow time to complete the activities in a meaningful way.

The workshop can help with reflection and shared understandings, it is an important part of a Board's development strategy and is worth investing appropriate time into this activity. By getting the thinking right among your current Board, you are creating a more inclusive environment for existing members, while also creating a context in which a drive for diversity can be more successful long-term.

This process will help to bring out interesting new perspectives from within your Board, as well as highlighting misconceptions around diversity and inclusion that the group can challenge together.

By the end of the workshop, you should be close to reaching a shared understanding as a Board over some key issues, such as:

- + what diversity, inclusion and representation mean in practice to your current members
- + how your Board can benefit from a greater diversity of experience
- + how to create an inclusive setting for new members and improve it for current members.

The definitions and guidance in this Toolkit can be used as a template to generate ideas as a Board and by the end of the process. Board leaders should have a greater idea of where the expertise and the challenges lie in their current membership.

Leaders may then seek additional training materials to address gaps in knowledge or understanding in their members.

Resources that support Section 2, including a suggested outline a Workshop on Critically Reflecting on Your Board, are available to download.

Once your Board reaches a position of understanding and agreement on diversifying the Board, leaders will be in a good position to identify which current approaches or practices may need to change.

2.1.2 Diversity and ‘Disruption’

A further aspect that needs to be considered in preparing your Board for diversity is ‘disruption’. This disruption should not be viewed, rather as a constructive disruption that is so important to innovation and the development of new ideas and thinking (Hunt et al, 2020). In the same way, as your Board moves forward in its journey to inclusion either through the preparation process or through its recruitment of new and diverse members from a range of different walks and backgrounds, there will be disruption. If your recruitment is successful, new ideas, new challenges, new perspectives will become part of your Board discussions. This means that discussions may be longer, potentially contentious and potentially uncomfortable and, your Board needs to embrace this as part of the process. Getting your Board ready will be an essential part of this and in our workshop, we recommend that your Board is introduced to this so they not only embrace this ‘disruption’ but are excited by what it can bring.

Please be sure to engage in the Workshop on Critically Reflecting on Your Board to help with this.

2.2 Reflecting on Your Board

Institutions are situated in different contexts, with different students, courses, and awards offered. These can lead to quite different advantages and barriers to successful Board recruitment. For example, data from institutions outside large cities indicated that they may have a harder time finding candidates that can add a greater diversity of thought to their Board. As mentioned previously, our data suggests that there remains, in some institutions, a belief that diversity and skills on Boards are distinctly different aims. There are several ways to move beyond this thinking and they play a crucial part in creating any strategic plan for Board redevelopment. Some of these are outlined below and include expanding your Board's skills, considering the structure of your current Board, developing a student-first approach and potentially employing external support.

2.2.1 Assess your Boards Skills Profile

There may be many factors influencing a Board's decision to assess its collective skills profile. The Board may be considering a new policy or strategy that the currently serving members could use more useful skills to support. Board leaders may want to create a starting point from which skills auditing can be monitored dynamically as governors finish their terms and new governors join the Board. The decision to embark on this process will likely be a collaborative effort between the Clerk and Chairperson, with the full Board consulted at key points identified in the guidance below.

Existing research tells us that taking a broader view of skills and competencies can improve Board diversity and Board function. Such an approach will bring in people from a variety of backgrounds with new perspectives on Board issues (Kiel, Nicholson, Tunny and Beck, 2012).

Case Study 2

How does a broader view of skills and competencies improve Board function?

If skills and competencies are more than academic or qualification, within each Board, individuals bring their own views with which to contribute - Interview 2.1 and 2.9 (Governors).

The diversification of Board make-up can bring elements that may have otherwise been overlooked and in turn reduces group think – Interview 1.2 (Board member) and 2.6 (Governor).

A balanced Board, covering a broader range of skills beyond industry knowledge, compliance and finance will possess a greater diversity of experience and may encourage more representative candidates to come forward and apply (Financial Reporting Council, 2018). Our research data has provided a base for us to look at skills and competencies beyond traditional industry knowledge.

Consider the following:

- + Inclusion as a competency and diversity as a strategic priority
 - Keeps members thinking about fair and representative governance which they must demonstrate – just like any other competency. This refers to skills and experiences of diversity and inclusion and not just having a protected characteristic.
- + Multi-disciplinary experience
 - Brings different critical perspectives which enable members (candidates) to draw on wider experiences not limited to 'Board' experience.

In our resource section, you can find our Skills Audit Framework under Section 2, to record the existing skills and competencies on your Board as well as extra skills your Board already has. This resource should enable you to form a recruitment plan and map the types of skills and competencies that you would like to add.

Discussion with your Board on the sorts of skills that are under-represented (particularly those around diversity as a competence or multi-disciplinary experience) will show you areas for development. The process itself can enhance the effectiveness of your Board as the (anonymous) results of this audit may be shared with the Board to collect more feedback and enhance transparency.

2.2.2 Consider the Structure of your Board

To prepare your Board to be diverse, representative, and inclusive, it is important to assess Board structure. Board structure in our working definition refers to rules, regulations, committee organisation and hierarchy. The reason this requires consideration is that certain barriers to successful inclusive recruitment may lie outside of, or in addition to, attitudes and recruitment processes and exist in the Board structures themselves, such as exclusive language and attendance requirements.

This process can result in significant changes to day-to-day Board activities and, in some cases lead to a more comprehensive restructuring. Leadership may be confronted with difficult choices between traditional practices and more modern, inclusive ones. The sources of these barriers may have been raised during the [Workshop in Section 2.1.1](#) as members may grapple with changing traditional structures. Board leaders may wish to refer to the outcomes of the Workshop if faced with tension in any proposed changes. It may be that a smaller and more focused version of the Workshop could help progress new ideas better.

The purpose of assessing your Board structure is to take a more holistic and critical approach to diversity and to examine all areas of a Board that could be hindering or affecting progress without being apparent. The Toolkit can help you to decide which processes may affect successful Board diversification by identifying problematic areas and asking challenging questions of your structure and processes.

Here are some diagnostic questions to consider:

- + Do existing committees make effective use of existing experience?
 - It is important that knowledge and expertise of diverse governorship exist throughout the Board structure including committee leadership positions. With greater competency in diversity existing within leadership and Chairing roles, it becomes easier to embed the principles of greater inclusion going forward. Committee Chairpersons should encourage participation from all members or a range of subjects and make sure not to pigeonhole contributions from members into areas of special interest. For example, a younger Board member may have useful perspective and insights on a resourcing question but be passed over for comment in favour of older members with industry experience.
 - Chairpersons (Secretaries, Vice-Chairs of committees) could identify this through noting the extent to which particular governors contribute and to which things. Whose views seem to dominate? Who contributes less? Do some contribute better in Committees or one-to-one? Are there any patterns?
 - Some useful ways of getting at these answers are through Board, Committee and meeting evaluations that can be conducted by the secretariat. Advance HE members have access to a [governance effectiveness survey](#) for free self-use which asks about culture as one aspect.
- + What is the culture within your Board?
 - Board culture plays a crucial role in how it welcomes new members, how it operates as a structure, how well it responds to criticism, challenge or disruption.
 - You could set up a working group to examine this. This could also be diagnosed as per the questions earlier: Whose views seem to dominate? Who contributes less? Do some contribute better in Committees or one-to-one? Are there any patterns? How does your Board respond to new members and their input?
- + Are the rules exclusionary?
 - Voting and participation may have unfair restrictions in place that disadvantage some Board members, for example, student or staff governors. Are Board members required to attend in person? Or can provisions be made to allow for remote attendance? Can you offer support/compensation for governors with caring responsibilities? This could make a difference to a disabled governor or a governor who lives far away from the institution. As with most sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic

has altered the way which Boards operate, and HE institutions now have access to more technological options enabling governors to fulfil their roles from home.

+ language around higher education

- As a Board in search of greater diversity, you may encounter excellent candidates who come from a non-HE background. Data from our recruiters suggest that some of the language institutions may use to make their posts look desirable may deter some candidates. Certain language around academic excellence and high competitiveness can be exclusive and examples of linguistic prestige (Pearce, 2007). This can be offset by a visible and impactful mission statement on equality, diversity and inclusion, but our qualitative data from executive search firms suggests that adjusting prestige-related language can help attract members and indeed support better inclusion for existing and new members.

“Will ask them to send us examples of their previous Board recruitment resources and will look through those for inclusive language. We’re looking for phrases that might put off certain groups from applying. Higher education sector organizations want to use phrases like “we are highly regarded University with prestige” and we know from our experience that’s going to put off people from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented groups. As soon as they read that sort of language, they think “that’s not for me, that’s for somebody much more senior than me.”

Case Study 3

What are some easy adjustments that Boards can make to their rules in order to be more inclusive and accessible?

Encouraging more diverse candidates to apply for roles on Boards arguably does not seem difficult, however the most challenging aspect is in relation to the thought process of the Board itself - Interview 1.2.

Boards need to consider the community in which the university is situated in order to recruit Board members, as these individuals will have a lived experience of the community, and have the benefit of knowing that community - Interview 1.2 and 2.8.

And with Boards, Board diversity training and effectiveness reviews are considered to be useful in supporting current Board members to diversify thought - Interview 1.2, 1.3 and 1.6.

Executive Search Firm

For more information on inclusive practice and the impact it can have on your governors, consider watching our [conversation with Elonka Soros](#) (Creative Diversity Consultant and Governor).

2.2.3 Develop a 'People-First' Attitude to Governance

As places of teaching and research, a HE institution will have a mission that the Board shapes itself around.

“The governing body is responsible for the mission, character and reputation of the institution and therefore sets the values and standards that underpin the institution’s strategy and operation.”

[CUC Code of Governance](#), Section 2.1 (CUC, 2020)

Whatever the focus of this mission, a HE Board should put the diversity of experience of the people serving, and served by, the Institution at its forefront.

There are often rules in place for Boards about how staff and students can interact with the Board, and our research affirms that these representatives are almost always internal appointments. Due to these restrictions, these internal appointments may not be the focus of a Board’s wider plan to diversify as they can be chosen and do not require pipelines and networks. Inclusive practice, however, should include all Board members and is important that Boards orientate themselves to get the best out of their internal appointments as well as seeking useful external ones.

Staff appointments can hold complex interests, especially if they are union representatives, however, this should not deter a proactive Board from helping those members feel included as they are more than just the interests they represent. It is therefore worth emphasising that Boards be inclusive of the entire membership.

“I think that sometimes when I bring up my lived experiences, it's viewed as bias. Whereas, if someone from a law or finance background brings up their lived experiences, it's viewed as experience and expertise.”

Staff Governor

The experiences of staff are valuable to the institution, and it is important that, as a Board, these experiences are acknowledged as valid and adding to your diversity of thought. They can help to contextualise finance and resourcing decisions, for example, so that fairer and better-informed decisions can be made.

Students are critical stakeholders in any HE institution and Board practice can be improved with a student-centric approach. The student body, as we have previously asserted, is more diverse than the average HE Board and can be a source of useful perspectives.

Representation and inclusion are increasingly important to young people, this can be seen in the structures and working agendas of student governance bodies, such as the Student's Union. Active and equal participation by student representatives on HE Boards has been shown to result in greater transparency and representation of the student body (Acharya, 2015) but the same study also suggested that this was only the case if student representation on the Board was taken seriously and mentored. It is the responsibility of the Board that the student representation on it is fostered and developed in a way that the concerns of students on the Board are treated with the same respect as more experienced members (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999). To help this, consider having enough student representation to spread across all committees and appointing a mentor to these governors with more experience in the area – [see section 4.2.1](#) for further information on mentoring.

Case Study 4

As a young governor, what were your expectations coming into the role and what drew you to it?

The predominant number of Boards have a disproportionate number of older Board members, in the forty and above age group, there are many reasons for this, but the main one is the right Board ready experiences that older members have compared to those who are younger - Interviews 1.2, 1.3, 1.5 and 1.6.

These figures include the Student Union Board members. Where Board members are younger, it is thought they bring a different outlook to Board contributions - Interview 1.2, 1.3, 1.5 and 1.6.

Good governance provides a basis for a higher quality of teaching and learning; this has been shown by previous research to improve student satisfaction overall (Muhsin et al, 2020). Institutions do need to consider, however, whether this process from governance to higher-quality teaching and learning, to greater satisfaction applies to all students equally. Our data has suggested that student appointments to Boards may not be consulted on certain committee issues due to inexperience but by getting them involved, you may gain valuable need perspective from the student's point of view and develop them as a Board member at the same time.

“I think the real area where we've kind of worked for actively is around the student members, because it's too easy for the whole meeting to go on and for the students to be intimidated by all these people in the room, and not have the confidence to speak up.”

University Secretary

The activity on diagnostic questions outlined earlier in this section would again serve a useful purpose here.

Activity

Clerks and Chairpersons could collaboratively identify this through noting the extent to which governors contribute and to which things.

- + whose views seem to dominate?
- + who contributes less?
- + do some contribute better in committees or one-to-one?
- + are there any patterns?

This activity can help address several issues to ensure you are not only critically reflecting on your current Board practices but that you are also preparing your Board for new members.

2.2.4 Using External Support

For a fee, some diversity specialist executive search firms can offer specialist support in auditing your existing skills. The consultants working for these firms will go through existing practice, adding their own experience, resources, and networks to the mission of finding more diverse candidates. Our data suggests that this can be helpful to some institutions attempting to increase the applicant pool.

“We have used recruitment consultants because they were successful at doing this. Their whole reason for existing is to improve diversity at senior levels in organizations, and particularly on Boards. The way that they've done that is that they go and look in places that Boards don't look already. They spend a lot of time finding someone who would never have been found by a traditional search.”

University Secretary

This does not mean that these firms are practising methods that institutions cannot replicate or pursue with time and commitment. Paid recruitment services may not be a route that is suitable in every case or for every institution, but they can be helpful when utilised in conjunction with, for example, this Toolkit.

However, the success of this process may be limited if Boards have not already challenged cultural and structural barriers within their organisation before these interventions. External help can be employed and, in some instances, may enhance some of the processes discussed in this Toolkit.

Through our data, firms have confirmed that working with Board leaders who are knowledgeable and committed already is important to the process.

“I think having these key decision-makers, really on Board and working together with the search partner is really important.”

Executive Search Firm

2.3 Getting the Best out of your Board

It is important to maintain transparency on development and recruitment plans with the Board at critical stages in the process on how you intend to address under-representation. There are two key reasons to do this.

2.3.1 Transparency Increases Protection for Stakeholders

There is considerable research on the importance of Board transparency of information on both institutional effectiveness (Chiang and He, 2010) and increasing stakeholder protection (Healy and Palepu, 2001), but how does this translate into Board make-up and recruitment? A transparent recruitment process allows Board members with skills and competencies in human resources and equality, diversity and inclusion to offer their expertise in the recruitment process. They may also be able to suggest other staff in the institution with relevant experience who can ensure that the recruitment process within the plan is checked for bias and that the process is inclusive (Advance HE, 2019).

2.3.2 Avoid Relying on Individuals for Input on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Matters

You may have existing Board members that, as leadership, you feel have important contributions to your Board diversification journey. Although this sounds positive on the surface, attempts to develop a Board member into a specialist in this area based on their protected characteristic can make that Board member feel singled out. This issue can be avoided by including the whole Board in equality, diversity and inclusion discussions as you can collect useful contributions from members with helpful insight and experience without putting them on the spot. It is at this stage that people with experience and skills in the field can be brought back into the discussion to have collated and contextualised feedback from the group. If equality, diversity, and inclusion is an important competency of your Board members, you will not need to single out individuals, as several members of your Board will be able to contribute to these discussions.

Case Study 5

How can Boards ensure valuable perspectives are captured without relying on an individual?

Some Boards consider each member to be “diverse” through individuality, personality, and cognitive diversity - Interviews 1.3, 1.4 and 2.1.

Therefore, Board members are encouraged all to speak out during meetings, drawing on previous experience, which will ultimately be a differing factor across the Board, to express a perspective - Interviews 1.4 and 2.1.

Consequently, valuable perspectives can be captured through allowing individuals a voice or an opinion and avoids group think - Interview 1.4.

Here, there is an allusion to team work instead of group think:

“We do need our governing body do have overall responsibility for an equality, diversity and inclusion scheme, to which we all contribute. I think colleagues would have no issue with that they're well used to the important fact, you know, that a varied team builds a better product. Through using a checklist, that you just actually read, could mean that we were all working together with equality, diversity, and inclusion. For example, you see, we are going to extend our search for new Board members, which I think that might be useful. Those sorts of things really and before we would progress any further with recruitment, as a Board we need to stop and reflect, to check we have done X, Y or Z?”

Serving Governor

2.4 Developing an Effective and Regular Recruitment Cycle

Board leaders must maintain a position that a diverse Board is not an aim that can be simply achieved once and ticked off. Diversity must not be a *sometimes* issue, but an *always* issue, that needs to be cultivated, supported, and reinforced.

Board recruitment cycles are often slow to complete, with long-serving members leaving one at a time. It is unhelpful therefore to view Board development as the product of a singular, isolated process but as something that is always being improved upon. Board leaders should be forward-thinking in their approach and by staying up to date with new research and thinking, Boards can refine their Board Development Plan appropriately for each new recruitment effort and this can be owned by the Nominations Committee or equivalent.

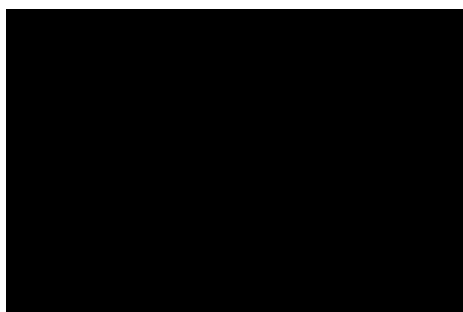
It is important that through meetings with the Board, that leaders can identify the kinds of smaller barriers that can be cleared during their current development plans, such as changes in interview practice and job specifications.

Other challenges may require more time, beyond a single recruitment cycle, for example, slow membership turnover or changing cultural attitudes and it is these kinds of challenges Boards should identify as targets that roll over to the next cycle.

2.4.1 Conversation with Dr Matthew Andrews (University Secretary and Registrar) where he discusses the, potentially challenging, process of reflecting on diversity as a full Board.

A conversation on constructing an effective and inclusive Board with Dr Matthew Andrews

Our conversation with Dr Andrew Matthews, University Secretary and Registrar of the University of Gloucestershire, where we discuss the, potentially challenging, process of reflecting on diversity as a full Board.



2.5 Section Summary

This section is one of the most crucial and perhaps most challenging parts of this Toolkit. This is because this section requires critical and honest reflection of your Board and its structures. It has required you to work with your Board members and perhaps illuminate areas that require further work and development internally before you even embark on a recruitment cycle. It is also the section that will have taken the most time to work on. This is all essential to get the best and most out of the remaining sections and will shape your activities and interpretations of the rest of the Toolkit.

Doing Section 2 well is the vital part of the journey which leads to the transformation required for genuine and sustainable equality, inclusion and diversity that benefits your institution as a whole and not just your Board.

2.5.1 Checklist

By the end of this Section, you should have:

1. Engaged in critical reflection of your existing Board and how it works in terms of its culture, its thinking, as well as structures and processes.
2. Reached consensus on diversity as a Board by running the suggested Workshop.
3. Decided on the areas you can work on yourself and where you may need external support.

2.5.2 Section 2 Useful Links and Resources

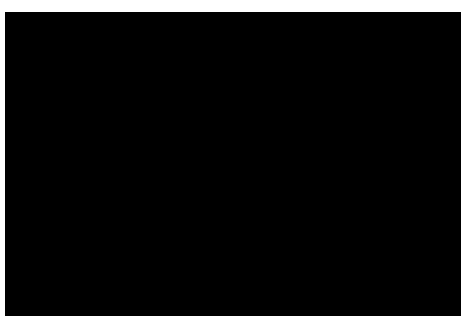
- + [Introductory video with Dr Matthew Andrews](#)
- + [Conversation with Dr Matthew Andrews](#)
- + [Workshop - Critically Reflecting on your Board](#)
- + [Skills Audit Framework](#)
- + [Advance HE Governance effectiveness and benchmarking](#)
- + [CuC Code of Governance](#)

3. Maximising your Recruitment Potential

Before reading the following section, consider first watching the introductory video that accompanies this section and our in-depth [conversation with Lucy Simpson](#) (Head of UK Board Practice, Perrett Laver) where we discuss examples of inclusive recruitment practice.

Introduction to Section 3 of the Toolkit with Lucy Simpson

Lucy Simpson guides you through some of the key information and discussion points for use with Section 3 of the Toolkit.



This section of the Toolkit examines some of the specific things that you can do to support a new recruitment effort that widens your pool, ensures that the candidates you need make it through to interviewing do so, and that your interviewing draws out the best in candidates, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds. The following guidelines are likely to be helpful even if your Board only needs one new member and can be employed at any stage to ensure best recruitment practice. This includes developing sustainable recruitment networks; inclusive job specifications and inclusive interviewing.

3.1 Developing Sustainable Recruitment Networks

According to our data, one of the key challenges facing Boards is establishing and sustaining a reliable pipeline of candidates from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Qualitative data illuminated issues with Boards resorting to personal networks to fill Board positions when vacancies arise. The issue with doing this is that the types of candidates appointed through personal networks often share similar backgrounds, characteristics, and experiences to the person appointing them. This results in a Board with similar values, experiences, and perspectives; leading in turn to a reduction in rigour and challenge of Board decision-making. Homogeneity of experience can potentially prevent HE Boards from staying active, effective, and representative of their students.

“Talent identification is often reliant on the networks of Board members and tapping people up through those networks. So, we believe is very limiting because Boards only have a limited number of people in their network themselves and they tend to be drawn towards people like themselves.”

Executive Search Firm

A more open and equitable pipeline for sourcing candidates can help to improve this, allowing candidates with a diversity of skills and experience from those already on the Board to be successfully appointed. A pipeline constructed from many different recruitment sources is more likely to yield diversity in the candidates.

In this section of the Toolkit, we will explore recruitment sources and offer some guidance on how to set up and maintain them.

3.1.1 Student and Alumni Networks

Student populations (both current and prior) can be a key source from which to develop a candidate pipeline. Many HE institutions maintain contact with alumni, many of whom have gone on to interesting and engaging careers. Alumni can make good candidates for governors due to the good relationships many of them will have with the institution they attended. They can come from a wide range of backgrounds and may have once been students from underrepresented groups. Alumni can be targeted for governing roles either via direct approach or through role advertisement in alumni-specific newsletters and communication. One thing to consider is that alumni the institution have contact details for may be early in their careers and role advertisements would need to be suitably engaging to gather a broad selection of candidates (see [Section 3.2](#) for help with role advertisement).

Beyond providing alumni candidates, the student population has more to offer. You may wish to consider advertising to *current* students for several distinct reasons:

+ For student representation

- Although rules and regulations exist that prevent institutions from recruiting their students as externally appointed governors, that should not necessarily prevent them from recruiting students who may attend different institutions. Wider advertising for good governors may attract candidates who are not affiliated with the SU but have valuable skills, experiences, and energy. The chances of good student candidates increase if the role is advertised clearly, with an explanation of governance in general and a focus on the professional experience a student can gain from Board participation.

- + For students with valuable experience
 - The widening participation agenda has meant that institutions now benefit from a student body from a wider range of backgrounds and walks of life (OfS, 2020). Alumni or unaffiliated students with Student Union experience can provide representation and high-level skills, Executive Officers in the organisation must develop experience in resourcing and regulation while also maintaining links to the student body as a whole. They are used to “Boardroom style” meetings and can speak passionately and confidently about issues affecting students that the Board may be unaware of (Alcock, 2021).
- + For the networks that students have access to
 - Advertising to the student body can reach beyond the students themselves, to their families, friends, and wider communities. Students can extend an institution’s reach beyond its traditional networks via word of mouth. A student can pick up a flier and pass them on to family members or friends who fit the criteria for consideration. The way the role is marketed and the language used will have an impact on any potential success utilising this method. (NGA, 2020). Testimonials from previous young (student) governors can be very powerful.

It is important that younger governors are treated with respect and possess the same rights and powers as other members of the Board. It can be easy for these young people to feel like they are “shouting into a void” (Alcock, 2021). Please refer to [Section 4](#) to ensure good quality induction enables you to do this.

There can be real advantages to developing the student representation you have as internal appoints as well. Not only does this improve and enlarge the pipeline of young, Board ready people in the sector, but it also ensures high-quality input from those governors. Advance HE can help with this process and provide recommendations, training and development tools for this purpose.

“I would have to say that our Student's Union President this year has been an excellent contributor made some really good suggestions and feedback in terms of some of our key decisions and strategies. Following an independent review by Advanced HE in 2019, one of the recommendations was to mentor some of those younger staff members. So we're able to say the SU President has been a very, very valued member of the team that in the year that I've been involved with the governing body.”

University Secretary

3.1.2 The Wider Community

The qualitative data derived from Secretaries emphasised the significance of local demographics on an institution's perception of success when it comes to diversifying. The data shows that the underlying belief is that diversifying is much easier for institutions in the cities due to them having a larger population. This belief does not necessarily support our findings, as there seems to be little difference in success rates based on location. Data gathered from the surveys suggested that 84.1% of respondents agreed that it was a challenge to attract a suitable number of diverse candidates. This percentage figure includes respondents from universities across the United Kingdom, with those based in cities and those who were not.

This topic was researched further during the interviews, and the evidence below from the Secretaries' interviews shows that having diverse Board members is an issue across the Board, regardless of where the university is situated. To contextualise, the quotes are stating the limitations that the institutions are facing in obtaining diverse candidates:

"It's an issue across the country for Asian and other minority ethnic professors, but still quite a, you know, quite a minority. And that some of the structural things just around the makeup kind of drive the diversity as well."

City-based University Secretary

"And to represent the diversity of the student body in the staff body, but we are positioned in a region that is 96.5%, white British which provides some challenge."

Non-City-based University Secretary

"And we try to have international students to try and support that. But that is partly the type of areas in which we function where there is less diversity. So, we're not as diverse as we would want to be. And our student mix isn't as diverse as we would want it to be either."

Non-City-based University Secretary

"So, it's very unusual that the thing that makes it obviously more unusual is that it's a [City] based University, even the most diverse city in the world. And there's seemingly a lack of diversity in our institution."

City-based University Secretary

Diversity of skills and experience exist (Fredette and Bernstein, 2019; Fredette et al, 2015) but may require different methods to find them. Large cities may have more established pipelines to source "Board ready" candidates who can bring a diversity of thought to the Board but that does not mean that these places have all the candidates with diverse skills and experience.

HE institutions are situated within local communities, and due to the vocational nature of many of the courses run by the sector, they tend to have key links to local businesses, charities, and community groups in their local area. These types of organisations can be a source of skilled candidates who can bring a distinct perspective to your Board, so you must consider these sources when advertising upcoming roles. Filter your advertising through your institution and encourage academics to share with their local industry link, encouraging people to apply.

3.1.3 Social Media

Social media can provide extra reach to Boards beyond their traditional networks but utilising these platforms effectively is the key. Our data did not identify the use of social media to promote roles and perhaps reflects a gap in the activity for promoting the roles. We suggest that to reach new audiences and candidates, this may therefore provide a new recruitment avenue for Boards to consider. There are several ways to do this:

+ Professionally-focused social media.

- Apps such as LinkedIn provide a view into a candidates' experience on a single browse, including their skills and competencies. These apps are useful for direct approaches, but institutions may find themselves in competition for the services of highly suitable candidates. Another thing to consider about professional apps is that they only provide you with a limited sample of the potentially excellent candidates out there who do use these apps. Thus, these platforms are useful when used in conjunction with the other methods outlined in this Toolkit.

+ Socially-focused media.

- Apps such as Twitter and Facebook will have a greater reach than professionally focused apps but are less suitable for vetting candidates and direct approaches. These apps are best utilised for advertising roles, encouraging candidates to use other methods for approach. These adverts can be also shared by students and may be passed on to family or friends with the skills advertised for. With an eye-catching advert and a social media specialist managing the process, social media like this can bring in a lot of potentially valuable candidates.

Social media is a helpful way for institutions to cast a wider net when advertising roles. If used in conjunction with an exciting advert and an inclusive job spec, institutions have a much greater reach, especially if the advert is promoted by someone with expertise in social media. Any barriers to entry in experience and qualifications should be stated clearly to prevent a flood of applications from unsuitable candidates.

3.1.4 Board Diversity Resources and Campaigning Organisations

There are many resources dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of governance and who recognise that diverse and inclusive governance is key to this process. These resources are dedicated to supporting Board effectiveness and diversity and can offer dedicated, sector-specific advice and include:

- + [Advance HE Governor Resources](#)
- + [The Committee of University Chairs \(CUC\)](#)
- + [The Association of Heads of University Administration \(AHUA\) Resources](#)

There are also organisations dedicated to raising awareness of issues and debates more generally around Board diversity. These organisations can provide training materials, coaching and advice on how to appeal to certain groups and advertise inclusively.

- + [Women on Boards](#)
- + [30% Club](#)
- + [Olmec](#)

Advice and support from these organisations are often free of charge and bring together experience and best practice across many sectors. They tend to focus on one characteristic, and this can help Boards when considering their data benchmarks.

3.2 Inclusive Job Specifications for Recruiting Governors

Inclusive job specifications are an important part of diversifying successfully as for many candidates, this will be their first impression of the institution. It is at this stage that prospective governors should be able to visualise themselves volunteering their time and experience to your institution. Inclusive language and an open attitude towards skills and experience can help to ensure that the first impression is a positive one ([see Section 2](#)).

When advertising the role, you may want to consider using the [Board Vacancies Portal](#), as a collaborative effort between Advance HE, AHUA, the CUC and the 30% Club it is a reliable place to advertise vacancies.

3.2.1 Considering ‘Board Readiness’ and Cultivating Potential

When looking for candidates who may bring something new to your Board, it is worth going beyond the established pool of governors already widely linked into recruitment networks. There are a few reasons to consider this.

Firstly, by looking beyond candidates with established Board experience, you reduce the chances of having to compete with other HE institutions or other Boards in general for a small number of “Board-ready” candidates. You can widen the candidate pool by taking an open and thoughtful approach to what a good governor can look like. The work you will have done in Section 2 will help you with this.

Secondly, by broadening the experiences a candidate needs to have had, you may be able to prioritise diverse skills, experience and thinking less present in the established pool of candidates. This helps the sector to develop as a proactive element in diversifying governance. If the sector produces more new governors, the arguments around scarcity, and diversity vs skills/experience lose even more validity.

Finally, your institution could add to the professional development of talented people who will form the basis of effective Boards in the future. These governors will help to feed into your institution’s future recruitment cycle by offering feedback and ensuring that diversity in your organisation is sustainable.

We will explore methods for developing governor experience, including Board Apprentices in [Section 4.2](#).

3.2.2 Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is a valuable tool when recruiting potential new governors to roles. However, language bias can be difficult to identify if you have not considered its importance to the process of inclusive recruitment. It is also more complicated than simply word choice; Boards must be aware of how they articulate their desires for specific experience and competencies. One way that institutions could detect this type of language, would be to pilot the job specification with a potential candidate or if one is not available then target a person unrelated to the Board. The Resource Kit for this section includes [a guide to inclusive role advertisement and person specification](#). For those looking to adapt their resources, here is a list of things to consider:

- + Display your commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
 - Ensure your institutional stance on these issues is close to the top of the advert and is detailed enough to show its importance to your institution. A brief mention as a token of compliance lost in the small print is unlikely to motivate candidates to see your organisation as a progressive and inclusive one, it may prevent a viable candidate from applying.

- + Avoid using jargon.
 - Excessive acronyms and terms like “stakeholder” have been shown to receive a negative reception from some candidates and excessive jargon is a way that a predominately white, male organisation codes the Board space for themselves. It is easy for people to be left feeling that they do not belong, especially if it is not your traditional candidate. One way to avoid this is to leave acronyms out of job specifications entirely and fully explain important ones during the OnBoarding process. Reduce the corporate language, stakeholders are students, staff and business partners and this kind of language is more inclusive (Blanche, 2020).
- + Consider non-gendered language.
 - Language can be gender-coded in subtle ways, as a starting point, gendered pronouns for instance may be off-putting to gender-neutral or non-binary applicants. Research has shown however that gender-coded language extends beyond the obvious, terms such as “fast-paced,” “ambitious,” “competitive” are examples of male-coded language that often have negative connotations for women (Harvard Gender Action Portal, 2011)
- + Replace requirements with results.
 - Several studies call for a reduction in requirement-led job specifications. By requirement-led they mean job specifications that focus on desirable and essential skills as a way of vetting candidate suitability. Our data from recruitment specialists has confirmed that women and people from some socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are less likely to apply for jobs with extensive requirements. For example, job requirements may also contain implicit ableism such as the need to attend meetings in person where many disabled people may feel transport is a major issue. An effective way to combat these issues is to replace job requirements entirely with a “results” based system. This means a job description that focuses on the achievements of successful governors six months into the role. A Board can therefore help a talented candidate to self-select by describing what success looks like in the role at key milestones (Bogino, 2019). This also adds to the growth and development potential for the role and can be a useful motivation for those considering a move into governance.
- + Be conscious of higher education language.
 - It is worth reiterating this point here, as it is an easy way for candidates to feel excluded at the earlier stages of recruitment.

“It can be off-putting for candidates to see language such as “prestigious”, “ancient” or “eminent” to describe a University. People can rule themselves out on the basis that their background, or scale of experience, does not match such a description. HEIs could instead use language such as ‘innovative’, ‘future-facing’, ‘disruptive’ or ‘modern’.”

Executive Search Firm

For more discussion on language and its importance, please refer to [our conversation with Elonka Soros](#).

Glossary

Implicit Ableism:

Implicit ableism relates to a person’s unconscious attitudes on disability, their understanding of disability as lacking independence and their concept of impairment in relation to the norm. This can lead to employers failing to recognise issues of difficulty or importance to disabled people, including areas where adjustments could be made easily (Friedman, 2017)

3.2.3 Selling the Role

It is important to make unpaid voluntary roles exciting and worth investing time into. When requiring highly qualified professionals to give up their time, it is important to be explicit with how these candidates can, not only make an impactful difference, but also the benefits to them within the advertisement itself. You can do this in several ways:

- + Tailor the advert for the source.
 - If you are advertising to groups who may not know much about governing roles, consider including an explanation of what governance involves. It is also useful to describe where governors fit into the institutional hierarchy. If the role is explained in an aspirational and informative way, you may attract candidates who are less familiar with governance as a role, but who have vital experience (NGA, 2020).
- + Emphasise the gains for the candidate.
 - Explain to candidates the kinds of professional skills they can expect to develop that can be transferable and useful in their current working life. These can be short terms gains such as Board experience in general, but they also stand to develop knowledge in equality, diversity and inclusion, resourcing, safeguarding and other desirable skill areas (NGA, 2020).

+ Make the institution's mission and core values a priority.

- In the description, emphasise the value of governors in helping students reach their potential, improving the community and leading research. Our qualitative data from executive search firms say that by taking time on a diversity mission statement and referring to it regularly, candidates will have greater confidence that the institution believes in the mission itself (See Section 2). This should be reflected across the Institution's social media and website as candidates will be using these resources for research.

"It goes back to that point about the way that the organization is perceived, I think they have to put themselves in the candidate shoes and think. The first thing they would do is go on to the website and take a look at that organization to see what the culture and values are. They need to work hard on those and ensure the culture comes across on the website, and when it comes to interviewing, it is really embedded."

Executive Search Firm

+ Be clear about what is needed.

- State the time and energy requirements for candidates, try to take a flexible approach to the commitments of the role. What can be done from home? Conversely, what can candidates do to get more involved? This clarity can dispel misconceptions around time constraints and logistics and may encourage busy, skilled candidates who may not apply otherwise. This also recognises that potential candidates are likely to be engaged in full-time work and/or caring responsibilities more so than the traditional candidate which our data showed is likely to be older.

+ Remuneration and expenses.

- The debate over remuneration is complicated and controversial. The qualitative data we collected from Secretaries suggests a cautious view on paying governors. Research does exist however that makes the case for paying HE governors to increase diversity (Wheaton, 2019). Regardless of an institution's stance on remuneration, there are still practicalities to consider. To get the best candidates, an institution may have to recruit governors from some distance away. Ensuring candidates are aware that governors can recoup any costs associated with fulfilling their roles, such as fuel and food costs. To further incentivise governors, institutions may consider "enhanced expenses" that include a living allowance, incentives such as paying governors to attend professional development days and providing grants for further training and qualifications and performance-related reward payments (Hill, 2010). You can find a link to a recent debate paper on the subject in our [Section 1 Useful Links](#).

“You don't want people to take on these positions for the monetary reward, but if you don't provide any compensation, then you don't have people from charities or less lucrative industries. As long as expenses are easy to claim and are generous that solves a lot of the arguments.”

Staff Governor

3.2.4 Accessible Materials

Qualitative data from executive search firms have highlighted the importance of ensuring your institution publishes all role related materials in several formats. Having accessible formats available on requests is better than nothing but having them visibly available without asking is better practice.

“If it says that line on the website “if you need this in an alternative format, please get in touch with us and we will provide it” people tend to know that nobody has produced that ready. It immediately puts off candidates who need that in another way. We just make both readily available on our website in advance.”

Executive Search Firm

Having these materials prepared beforehand and not on request can broaden the appeal of your job specification. Consider including:

- + braille versions of paper documents
- + read aloud function on online documentation
- + larger font versions on written and online sources
- + subtitled videos

This extends as well to document formatting and layout, as accessibility issues go beyond sense impairment. People with learning difficulties also benefit from accessible formatting and there are things that institutions can do in their original documents to put this into practice. Microsoft offers a [guide to achieving this on word](#), and many of the good practices put forward in this guidance can be extended to other document-making software.

3.3 Inclusive Interviewing for Recruiting Governors

It is important to focus on the format, content and structure of your interview process and procedures long before you have candidates in front of you. It needs to be part of your initial planning process and will involve some changes to your procedures to ensure your entire process is inclusive. It is possible to take some of the fear out of the process and bring the best out of your candidates by interviewing inclusively. Here are some methods you may wish to employ to reduce bias and draw out a candidate's experience:

3.3.1 Setting, Format and Structure

An area that is often overlooked is that of the interview panel itself. An appropriate setting and appropriate interviewers are key in how a candidate views the role and your institution. There are simple but significant changes Boards can make to minimise the impact of this and ensure that panels are well equipped with the skills, experience and importantly attitude when embarking on interviewing.

Consider the following:

- + Think through your panel composition in terms of their backgrounds and experiences.
 - Having someone on the Board with a shared experience of characteristics can help a candidate to feel a sense of inclusiveness and belonging on your Board. It represents a commitment to Equality, diversity and inclusion and will help candidates to feel more comfortable and forthcoming. A diverse panel also allows the Board to reduce affinity bias, where a candidate may be seen more favourable based on shared characteristics with the interviewer (Hanover, 2015).
- + Consider beginning with a tour.
 - Take the candidate to the meeting room, introduce them to the campus and the environment. By doing this, you give the candidate a real sense of the institution, the culture, and the mission in action. This can be done in person or virtually.
- + Explore with candidates how their experience might fit in with the aims of the Board going forward.
 - Focus on the candidate's skills and experience, explain exactly how you intend to use these to improve your Board and what they can add to the institution. Give them an idea of the sort of impact they can have over their term and allow them to feedback with their expectations of the role.

3.3.2 Drawing out Useful Skills and Experience

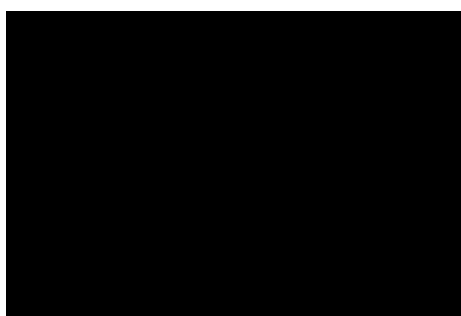
- + Scrutinise your interview questions.
 - Interview questions themselves can contain a form of bias that can set up candidates to respond in a certain way. It is thus important to consider your actual questions and the kinds of responses they are likely to elicit. Do they enable a candidate to present diverse experiences or do they prevent them from doing so?
- + Standardise your questions for the formal part of the interview process.
 - However, rigid standardisation can prevent interviewers from exploring interesting points made by the candidate that could demonstrate their skills and experiences better. You may want to start with a standardised root question with the opportunity to explore this experience better in follow-up questions.
 - A standard format with identical questions for all candidates reduces interviewer bias and promotes diversity (Hanover, 2015). Ask questions that explore a candidate's motivations, wider skills, and competencies, For example:
 1. What are your motivations for becoming a governor?
 2. What is your understanding of this role?
 3. Can you tell me about professional training you have completed that you feel is relevant to this role?
 4. Do you have any training or experience with social media that could help you in this role?
 - However, rigid standardisation can prevent interviewers from exploring interesting points made by the candidate that could demonstrate their skills and experiences better. You may want to start with a standardised root question with the opportunity to explore this experience better in follow-up questions.
- + Reduce opportunities for bias informal interviews.
 - Avoid discussions around a candidate's personal life, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, family status, age, or disability in the formal interview. These questions can lead to unconscious bias and should not affect their chances for successful appointment
- + Consider multiple meetings.
 - An informal meeting before or after the formal interview will give candidates a chance to go into their experiences in more depth. This type of meeting, without standard questions or a rubric, can help Board leaders to get a sense of the candidate as a person and how they will fit with the Board. With regular opportunities to ask questions and talk in more detail, candidates will be able to draw on their wider experience and skills without the pressure of a formal setting.

- + There are research-led resources available online that go into greater detail on inclusive interview techniques. [The one we have used](#) is now accessible.

3.3.3 Conversation with Lucy Simpson (Head of UK Board Practice, Perrett Laver) where she discusses examples of inclusive recruitment practice.

A conversation on maximising recruitment potential for HE Boards with Lucy Simpson

Our conversation with Lucy Simpson, Head of UK Boards at Perrett Laver, where we discuss examples of inclusive and effective recruitment practice in HE.



3.4 Section Summary

This section should have enabled you to critically evaluate your recruitment processes and consider what changes you can make to them to attract not only diverse candidates to apply but also to enable you to be able to effectively assess how their skills and experiences (through their application and interview) can contribute to your Board and what they can potentially bring to your institution. You will have noticed how the time and energy invested during Section 2 should have given you and your Board a new lens and skills to draw out the best from all candidates at the interview stage and give you confidence in your processes.

3.4.1 Checklist

By the end of this Section, you should have:

1. Identified new networks to form a pipeline for future recruitment.
2. Created a job specification that is effective and inclusive.
3. Created an exciting new advertisement for the role.
4. Developed a new advertising strategy to attract more respondents.
5. Scrutinised and redeveloped interview practices and procedures to be more inclusive.

3.4.2 Section 3 Useful Links and Resources

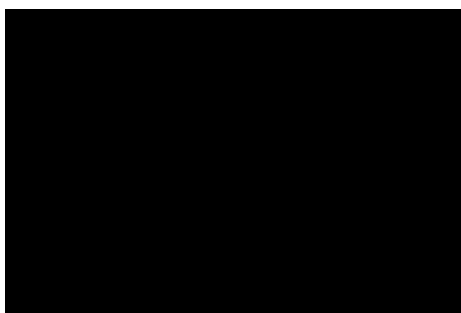
- + [Introductory video with Lucy Simpson](#)
- + [Conversation with Lucy Simpson](#)
- + [Guide to Inclusive role advertisement and Person specification](#)
- + [Inclusive interviewing from Hanover Research](#)
- + [Advance HE Governor Resources](#)
- + [The Committee of University Chairs \(CUC\)](#)
- + [The Association of Heads of University Administration \(AHUA\) Resources](#)
- + [Women on Boards](#)
- + [30% Club](#)
- + [Olmec](#)
- + [Board Vacancies Portal](#)
- + [Microsoft guide to inclusive documents](#)

4. Supporting Governors: from Induction to Retention

Before reading the following section, do watch the introductory video, which accompanies this section and our [conversation with Elonka Soros](#) (Creative Diversity Consultant and Governor) where we discuss how you can make your new governors feel respected and valued as part of a diverse team.

Introduction to Section 4 of the Toolkit with Elonka Soros

Elonka Soros guides you through some of the key information and discussion points for use with Section 4 of the Toolkit.



Our data indicated that how a new Board member is received and introduced to an institution has an impact on how that Board member interacts with the Board in the future; and whether they will stay. There is less literature available on board induction than there is on recruitment and so this section has been informed by our qualitative data.

4.1 Onboarding and Induction Resources

The best way to ensure that a new governor contributes to the diversity of your Board in the long term is to make sure they are made to feel welcome at the start of their term and valued throughout. Some of the work you did for Section 2 would be useful here too, but here are some things to consider when settling your new governor into their role.

4.1.1 Induction Packs as Part of Recruitment

Data from the recruitment and equality, diversity and inclusion specialists emphasise the need for institutions to have robust induction packs to provide governors with the resources they need to acclimatise to their new role. This is not new as many institutions engage in some form of induction, however, our data indicated that including induction information into recruitment materials, as additional information can help candidates on both sides of the appointment process:

“Recruitment and Induction Packs give them a real flavour. It isn't dense text has lots of pictures, lots of diagrams, you know, “what is the university?”, “what's it about?” and “What does it mean to be a governor?” So, a governor who is then selected has already had a good flavour at a prominent level of what they are getting into. I think helps them say, “Yes, I'm the right person to apply”. It helps them with the application itself, but it means that if they are selected, they have already got a foundation layer.”

Externally Appointed Governor

As discussed earlier, these packs should avoid industry-specific jargon and unnecessary acronyms. Jargon can be confusing to new people in a role, and it can be used to misinform or misrepresent the reality of a setting. Acronyms are often used in Board meetings under the assumption that everyone present knows their meaning. This is not always the case for new governors, so consider including a dictionary of regularly used acronyms as part of your induction pack.

4.1.2 Onboarding

OnBoarding is the process of bringing a new governor onto your Board. It is a key step in the process of ensuring that your new appointment feels welcome and included. During this process, Board leaders should introduce new appointees to the rest of the Board and relevant staff to their Board specialism. The qualitative data from equality, diversity and inclusion experts have highlighted the importance of creating social time during the OnBoarding process, to allow new governors to interact with the rest of the Board as people and not just professionals. This is especially important with new members who are bringing a diversity of experience to your Board, as good personal relationships will allow the new appointee to give their new opinions without fear of judgement.

For more on this, please see our [accompanying video](#) for this section, and also to the new [Advance HE Induction Document](#).

This can be accomplished through pre-arranged social events, but also by embedding social time into formal proceedings. Just by ensuring a coffee break or a lunch break you are allowing time for your Board to gel and developing the inclusivity of the environment.

Within the current climate of conducting online meetings as well as face-to-face, this can be a challenge. Thus, it is worth ensuring that first meetings for new appointees are designed as in-person meetings. If this is not possible (if for example, your recruitment drive has led to the right candidates but who are geographically quite distant), then the link below can offer some guidance to facilitate these opportunities for social and professional introductions using online platforms.

Here is a link to a useful online guide on [how to conduct online inductions successfully](#).

4.2 Developing your Governors

HE institutions are in an advantageous position compared to many other settings when it comes to developing good governors. As teaching and learning institutions, growth and development are core values. The concept of “Board readiness” is a difficult one to define but is connected to professional knowledge. The term assumes previous Board experience when we already know that many new diverse candidates may not have this. Though Board experience is important to have, Boards need to be skilled enough to draw out skills and talents that will lend themselves to being on a Board. Otherwise, the risk is that a potentially good candidate is not identified.

The following guidance should help Boards to get the most out of a new governor and utilise the experience at their disposal.

4.2.1 Mentoring and Board Apprenticeships

According to our data, 44% of the institutions that responded have employed some form of a mentoring scheme for their new governors. Further information provided on this suggests that these mentoring systems tend towards the informal, with new governors being assigned a mentor at the start of their term to show them the ropes. However, no institution reported that they assessed the effectiveness of these mentoring systems formally, but that the effectiveness of this arrangement would be discussed at informal feedback meetings held a set time after the appointment. In this Toolkit, we suggest that feedback on the effectiveness of the mentoring for the mentee be a more formally embedded process. Though this can carry the risk of becoming a tick-box exercise, it also sends the message that you are serious about the significance of mentoring new members as part of the Induction process.

More formal mentoring systems exist for other elements of training and support, but there is little currently in development for HE Board mentorship. Through our research, we have synthesised the approaches recorded in our qualitative data to provide a potential framework for institutions to try. These approaches may work for some institutions, but others may need to alter certain elements to make them effective for a specific system. Here are some suggestions for mentoring formats:

+ Skill development pairing.

- Work with your new governor to assess if there are any skills they want to develop further and pair them with a governor who can help develop them.

+ Skills match pairing.

- Try matching a new governor with someone who has a similar background or skills who can help the new governor to feel included and help them to best give their perspective in meetings.

Boards may consider both approaches and appoint a new mentor to a governor after a set amount of time, to maximise their development potential.

These mentors must receive training to effectively work with a new governor. There may be an argument for an expenses payment here given the additional workload.

The institution can choose the language it thinks most suitable for the governors they are supporting. Mentoring may seem patronising to highly skilled people so Boards may prefer “buddying” or “pairing up” as appropriate.



[Board Apprentices](#) is a specialised organisation that provides a structure for any Board to take on first-time candidates and help them to grow into effective future governors. The organisation is particularly focused on developing candidates from diverse backgrounds and underrepresented groups to increase the size of the “Board ready” candidate pool. If your institution is not already affiliated with Board Apprentices, this may be a good place to start. The company states that more than 75% of their apprentices become full Board members after a year, so for institutions taking part, there is a good chance of gaining a valuable Board member in the future. By taking part, institutions are also boosting the sector, by developing new governors and increasing the pipeline. When used alongside Sections 1 and 2 of the Toolkit, schemes like Board Apprentices can be effective in developing new governors (Board Apprentices, 2021). Perret Laver offers the [Governance Apprenticeship Programme](#) (GAP), which aims to bridge the gap to Board diversity and shorten the timeline

to creating truly representative Boards. GAP Apprentices will have the opportunity to shadow a Board for one academic year as non-voting observers. They will also have a dedicated mentor on the Board who will oversee their time there. Through this experience, apprentices will gain valuable insights into governance and contextual knowledge that will form a good foundation for future non-executive appointments (Perrett Laver, 2021).

4.2.2 Sponsorship

Case Study 6

How have your skills been utilised during your time with the Board?

Diverse Board members report that their skills have been utilised based on their prior work experiences and they have been placed on a variety of committees to reflect that - Interview 2.7.

“Where I feel I bring additional insight and expertise, that has tended to be in areas of strategic planning, how we use and monitor our KPIs against various objectives. It's been in the HR space, of course, in terms of the policy and the various policies and their effects, and new directions or new ventures that the university might undertake. I mean, whatever is on the agenda, if I have a view, I will share it, not for its own sake, but where I think it can add value. Put forward initiatives, I have particularly in the HR committee, we have refashioned the remit of the committee so that it's focused less on transactional HR business, and is focused more on the strategic agenda to see how best we can deliver on the strategic ambition of the university overall, so that we only meet four times a year. And for me, it was important that we use that time to really engage with the substantive issues, even why we balance our responsibility for dealing with the compliance piece as well. But I think in my view, the ratio between the compliance and the more strategic discussions needed to be reset.”

Serving Governor

There is an argument that Boards can go beyond mentoring and buddying as methods of developing members who bring diversity to the table. Sponsorship is the process of developing board members who actively network, support and open doors for new and potential members. The difference between Mentors and Sponsors lies in scope:

“A Mentor would be someone that you meet with, and you talk through potential issues you are having at work. You will have the opportunity to ask some questions they try to help you to come to solutions to career challenges. Sponsorship, however, is much more common, particularly for BAME communities and it is more about providing proactive opportunities and opening doors for people. What we would really love to do is to develop a Sponsorship type relationship for Boards. You can then start opening doors and saying “oh, come and watch, come and shadow this committee with me and then we will have a quick chat afterwards and talk about what you observed and what you learned from it”. Those sorts of sorts of interactions could be really valuable. And I don't think the sponsor necessarily has to be from underrepresented groups themselves.”

Equality, diversity and inclusion Professional

4.2.3 Specialised Roles for Developing First Time Governors

Our data indicated that some institutions favour specialised or associate roles for new or inexperienced governors. Similar to the Board Apprentice scheme, this system enables a new governor to gain valuable experience with limited accountability for the time they are still learning about their role. For instance, a governor in this specialised role may receive training to enable full participation in a committee, they may be in a buddy arrangement with a senior member in order to boost their knowledge. Such a member could contribute to proceedings, ask challenging questions, and involve themselves in deliberations, but they would not be expected to vote on sensitive matters or scrutinise complex documents for example. This relieves the pressure and accountability during a defined induction phase and can encourage fellow Board members to proactively support the new governor during this phase.

“We are a widening access University. We have a lot of people who are either, first in family going to university, or they're from lower socio-economic backgrounds.”

Board Chairperson

“We have mentors for all the governors to make sure that they feel comfortable. And then when they've been with the organization for about six months, I'll normally have a chat with them to say, How are you feeling? And is there anything we could do differently? Or, do you feel welcome?”

University Secretary

Set an appropriate amount of time for a feedback session, this will vary depending on the frequency of Board meetings. At this point, Board leaders can work with the new governor, assess their development, and set a target together for when that governor can take on the full role.

All this does require additional time and investment from the University and the Board, but it also means that your new Board member/s are well integrated into your university and that you can begin benefitting from their experience and skills. It thus means that you are a more effective Board.

For support with ongoing development, consider using externally available induction and development opportunities eg, [Advance HE Governor Development Programme](#).

4.3 Retaining talented governors

A key element in creating a diverse and sustainable Board, is keeping the governors in post for their term and beyond into successive terms (Board rules permitting). The quantitative data indicated that, in general, retaining governors is something the sector does well, with 100% of relevant responses claiming that the vast majority of Board members stay on after their first term. The implication here, is that there is already good practice in the sector that we can draw upon.

Case Study 7

What is it that you do as a Board that ensures you have a good rate of retention?

In some cases, recruiting Board members has been quite arduous, specifically trying to recruit more diverse members, and especially when members are not paid for their time - Interviews 1.2 and 1.3.

In other cases, retention of governors seems to be more effective when a Board develops organically through diverse candidates and in some situations mentor schemes - Interviews 1.2, 2.5 and 4.3.

It was in these situations that a gentle introduction into the governing Board built confidence and empowered new Board members to feel as if there were part of the team.

“First they arranged for me to have a mentor, which was very valuable, for someone like me, coming on to a Board for the first time. I think that could be the same for any university Board. I also think that there is that element of mentorship that works well because you, you end up having two different personality types. Sometimes someone who can't stop talking teamed with someone who doesn't know when they can contribute. So, the mixture can be a very positive experience. At a university Board, I imagine that mentorship develops relationships and shows how a group of people have managed their chemistry. So, we're looking at how do you develop board readiness in younger people. We'll buddy them up with an experienced governor, somebody has been in it for years, and it has been beneficial for both individuals. When we did mentorship training, I was very happy that I was given mentor training as I could use it to encourage the development of a new Board member in a safe and productive way”.

Serving Governor

Beyond general good practice, a welcoming and inclusive Board has an even greater impact with the new governors you bring and by drawing on the guidance in this Toolkit.

“I am aware from experience and research that retention and satisfaction for Black, Asian and minority ethnic board members can be linked to a sense of belonging with an institution, particularly driven by the wider presence of staff of colour (Board members or staff in visible roles) and the institution’s clear commitment to Equality, diversity and inclusion and this is often cited as one of the areas Black board members wish they had spoken out about more often in board meetings, or that they wish they left organisations not committed to Equality, diversity and inclusion earlier.”

Equality, diversity and inclusion Professional

4.3.1 Conducting Board Proceedings

It is important that new governors appointed to your Board feel valued and heard. This requires a concerted effort on the part of board leadership. If a governor is new, or quiet, that it is up to the rest of the Board to bring that governor into the conversation in a way that draws on their experience. Chairpersons should ensure every governor is given the opportunity to speak by having the Board skills audit close by. When relevant topics are touched upon, Chairs can refer to this list and bring in the relevant perspectives ([See Section 2](#))

“I think sharing of the meeting is very important. And if we haven't heard from a member of the board, then I think the Chair should pick up on it and rather than waiting for them to comment, will draw them in actively.”

University Secretary

4.3.2 Mechanisms for Safe and Inclusive Governor Feedback

It can be easy for governors to become isolated in between formal meetings, especially if they attend those meetings remotely. This can lead to a disconnect between a governor, their fellow members, the leadership, and the institution itself. Our qualitative data indicated that governors feel valued when they are kept in contact with the institution, and they have an opportunity for interaction and feedback outside of meetings. Regular formal opportunities to do this should be ensured by Board leadership and feedback from governors should be recorded and acted upon within an agreed timeframe.

“Every governor needs to have a one-to-one review, with either the Chair or one of the Deputy Chairs every year. For new appointees, we're trying to do that twice, so every six months after they join I have been wanting one. It is a good opportunity for reflection.”

University Secretary

A truly effective feedback mechanism needs to go beyond this however by, for example, having a governor engagement framework or a link scheme with key staff or areas to develop understanding and share insights as a two-way process. [The University of Greenwich has produced a document like this](#). Governors must have the opportunity to engage in strategic discussions beyond the formal meetings through regular CPD, away days, seminars and roundtable discussions.

Case Study 8

What are some of the key positive experiences that a Board can provide to help a governor stay on in post for a second term?

Boards have both similar and different ways of working; however, the following examples show the importance of acceptance, communication and value of Board members are at the heart of being a governor:

“The chair of the governing body undertakes an annual review, as much as it can be with people who are given their time voluntarily. So, there are sort of developmental type conversations to reflect on their contribution or how they feel they are contributing to encourage and develop those contributions”

University Secretary

“I felt that my view was invited and valued, I was encouraged to speak, and when I did weigh in, a note would be taken of, of what I was offering”

Serving Governor

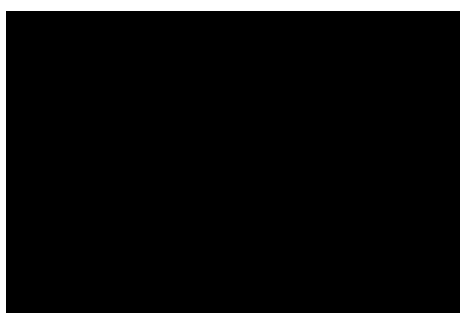
“We have set out a profile of what the governors might expect, so in the first year, we recognize that you are establishing yourself as a governor, and this explains the sort of things you might be involved in or the sort of things you might do”

Serving Governor

4.3.3 Conversation with Elonka Soros (Creative Diversity Consultant and Governor) where we discuss some of the ways in which you can make your new governors feel respected and valued as part of a diverse team.

A conversation on supporting governors from Induction to Retention with Elonka Soros

Our conversation with Elonka Soros, Creative Diversity Consultant and Governor, where we discuss some of the ways in which you can make your new governors feel respected and valued as part of a diverse team.



4.4 Section Summary

This Section is designed to ensure that everything you have done in Sections 1-3 come to fruition for the successful candidates. If Sections 1-3 have been done well, this Section should seem obvious.

Successful induction means not only has your recruitment process been successful, but that your whole journey to equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded and in practice. It enables not only your new governor to be well integrated into your Board, but for your existing Board to also have benefitted from the development that the process brought. No longer is your Board in the same place it was before you started this process.

4.4.1 Checklist

By the end of this Section, you should have:

1. Developed Induction materials for new governors that are part of your recruitment materials
2. Planned an onboarding process that includes opportunities for new governors to interact with the Board
3. Considered developing a mentoring or buddy system
4. Created a regularly assessed system of feedback for new governors

4.4.2 Section 4 Useful Links and Resources

- + [Introductory video with Elonka Soros](#)
- + [Conversation with Elonka Soros](#)
- + [Advance HE Induction Document](#)
- + [Advance HE Governor Development Programme](#)
- + [Board Apprentice](#)
- + [Governance Apprenticeship Programme](#)
- + [University of Greenwich – Governing Body Handbook](#)
- + [How to conduct a successful Induction online](#)

5. Conclusion

During the course of this Toolkit, we have established how the journey to diversity and inclusion is a process and the challenges facing the sector in keeping up with these changes. In this section, we aim to look forward towards the kinds of trends waiting in the future for HE Boards to tackle.

We have discussed previously the unique position Higher Education institutions can hold in addressing the long-term future of diversity and inclusion. We can use our knowledge of previous research and trends to make some useful speculations. Beyond this, we can look to adapt some strategies as a sector that will enable us to contribute and be ready for the future of diversity and inclusion no matter what form it takes.

5.1 Developing Strategies to Get Ahead

Strategies in this Toolkit range from effective “tried and tested methods” to some new thinking around Equality, diversity and inclusion practice. It is our hope that through testing this Toolkit, Boards will be able to provide more evidence as to the efficacy of some of the methods here that are newer, developed from work in other sectors, or are successful in different national contexts. We would be grateful for case studies on the following strategies:

- + Sponsorship
- + Results-led job specification
- + Social media
- + Utilising students and communities to grow networks

5.2 Working Together to Address Change as a Sector

One useful advantage of this Toolkit is that it allows for the sector to have reference to a single form of guidance has a benchmark for communication, feedback and growth. By looking at Board diversity in a holistic way and through multiple lenses, we hope to provide a platform from which Boards can share their stories using it. By sharing this experience of the Toolkit in practice, we can, as a sector, keep moving forward.

Definitions, social trends and inclusive practice will also continue to move rapidly, as will governance itself! However, with a lively, sector-wide conversation going on behind these changes, we can be proactive in adapting our strategies to meet these new challenges.

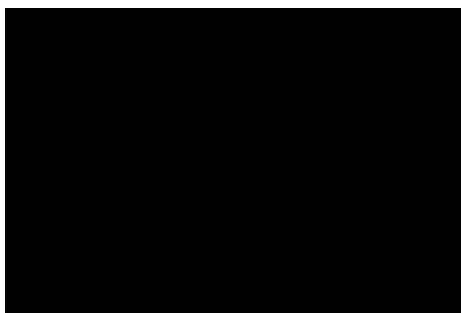
During our research we sought to capture some of the fantastic practice underway in Board settings across the UK HE sector and it was clear from the data that a lot of good practice was underway. It was also clear through the research that Boards are up for the challenge, as 89% of Boards spoken to having a diversity strategy either in place or in development. Board leaders contributing to our qualitative data have a strong belief in the need for greater diversity, with 79% believing that the case for diversity is clear.

With such positivity behind the process, the sector can make huge strides over the coming years and build on the successes we have seen with gender equality ([See Section 1.3.1](#)) and extend representation and inclusivity to governors from a wide range of characteristics, backgrounds and experiences.

5.2.1 Conversation with Dan Clark and Jenny Tester discussing how they view the sector going forward with regards to equality, inclusion and diversity.

A conversation on future trends in HE Board diversity with Dan Clark and Jenny tester

Project researcher Dan Clark speaks with Jenny Tester – author of multiple guides to better HE Board diversity at Advance HE, about the future of the sector and where it may go from here.



5.3 Next Steps

We would love to hear about your experiences in using the Toolkit to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in your setting. Please contact governance@advance-he.ac.uk with feedback.

[Advance HE Connect](#) is a platform where Board leaders can discuss their experiences, provide feedback, and share strategies on developing techniques to improve Board diversity

It is also important to keep up to date with the [latest developments and trends in HE governance](#) by subscribing to tailored governance bulleting and news alerts.

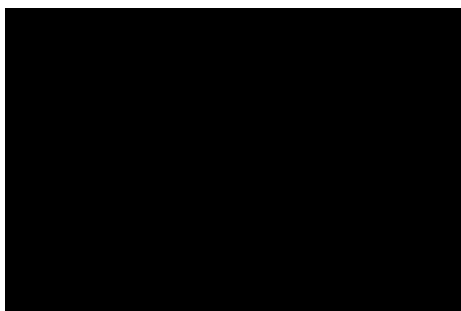
Advance HE will be updating and publishing the sector report on the diversity of higher education governors every two years (next in 2022) to keep focus on the topic, and looks forward to continuing to with the sector to support any other actions that will help address this challenge.

5.4 Afterword

As you approach the end of the Toolkit, we hope you find yourself in a different place than you were at the beginning. As a Project Team, we have not only enjoyed developing this Toolkit and the additional resources, but have also found that we too have learnt a tremendous amount. One of the key areas of learning were that there are lots of tips and advice about what we should do to improve equality, inclusion and diversity but not much on the how. And thus, in this Toolkit, we have attempted to provide the *how*, with an evidence-based rationale as well as an innovative, deeper and reflective approach. It is this that we believe are missing in the bigger conversation and as equality, inclusion and diversity is not just a doing thing, but a feeling and values thing, we have placed greater importance on personal transformation, coupled with action things. We hope you find it useful, but if there are areas that you think could do with more emphasis or that we have missed something you have tried and it works, please do be in touch!

Completing the Advance HE Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit

Congratulations for completing the Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, please remember to give us feedback on your experiences at governance@advance-he.ac.uk.



6. Resource index

6.1 Section 1

- + [Introductory Video with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi](#)
- + [Conversation with Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi](#)
- + [Board Diversity Principles Flowchart](#)
- + [The Board Diversity Practice Project – Data Analysis Report](#)
- + [Board Recruitment Framework \(2018\)](#)
- + [The Diversity Principles Framework \(2017\)](#)
- + [HEPI Debate on Remuneration](#)

6.2 Section 2

- + [Introductory video with Dr Matthew Andrews](#)
- + [Conversation with Dr Matthew Andrews](#)
- + [Workshop - Critically Reflecting on your Board](#)
- + [Skills Audit Framework](#)
- + [Board Development Planner](#)
- + [Advance HE Governance effectiveness and benchmarking](#)
- + [CuC Code of Governance](#)

6.3 Section 3

- + [Introductory video with Lucy Simpson](#)
- + [Conversation with Lucy Simpson](#)
- + [Guide to Inclusive role advertisement and Person specification](#)
- + [Inclusive interviewing from Hanover Research](#)
- + [Advance HE Governor Resources](#)
- + [The Committee of University Chairs \(CUC\)](#)
- + [The Association of Heads of University Administration \(AHUA\) Resources](#)
- + [Women on Boards](#)
- + [30% Club](#)
- + [Olmec](#)
- + [Board Vacancies Portal](#)
- + [Microsoft guide to inclusive documents](#)

6.4 Section 4

- + [Introductory video with Elonka Soros](#)
- + [Conversation with Elonka Soros](#)
- + [Advance HE Induction Document](#)
- + [Advance HE Governor Development Programme](#)
- + [Board Apprentice](#)
- + [Governance Apprenticeship Programme](#)
- + [University of Greenwich – Governing Body Handbook](#)
- + [How to conduct a successful Induction online](#)

6.5 Section 5

- + [Conversation with Dan Clark and Jenny Tester](#)
- + [Advance HE Connect](#)
- + [Advance HE Governance Newsletter](#)
- + [Conclusion video with Adeela ahmed Shafi](#)

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