

Academy Quality Council - Terms of Reference

The role of Academy Quality Councils (AQC)

The role of the AQC is vital to an effectively functioning Trust Academy; they are the 'critical friends' of the individual Academies and of the Trust overall. AQCs operate as an advisory committee to the Trust Board, although the AQC as such has no specific legal status. The level of autonomy granted to the AQC is broadly set out in the Scheme of Delegation but may vary according to Academy performance. Academy AQC Chairs will be informed if their responsibilities differ to those set out in the Scheme of Delegation which is reviewed at least annually.

The prime role of the AQC is to hold the Academy Principal/Head to account for Academy performance, with a strong focus on learner achievement. This scrutiny is mainly undertaken through a calendar of regular formal meetings with an agenda agreed between the Chair and the CEO. AQC members will, in addition, be invited to engage with their Academies through a range of wider activities thereby giving them a broader sense of the overall quality of provision.

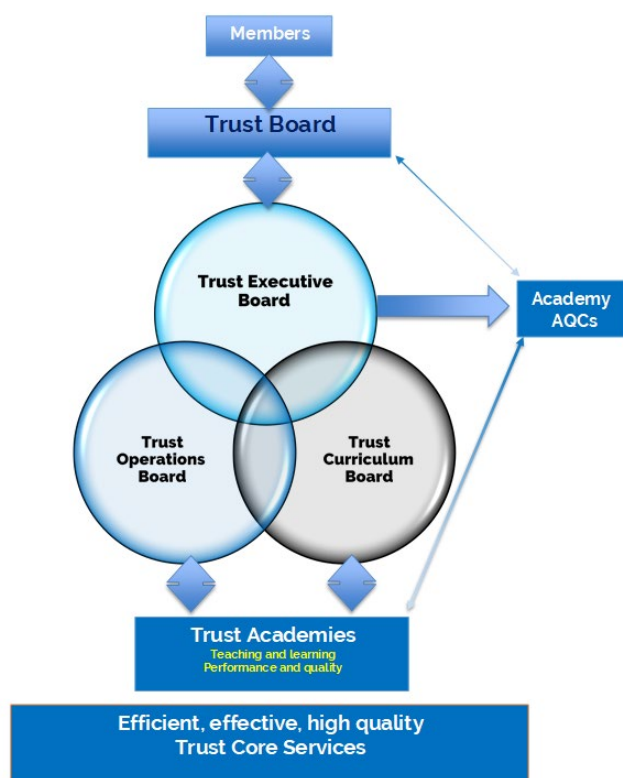
Progress against agreed performance targets for the quality of teaching and learning, attendance and behaviour is also scrutinised by the AQC. Teaching and learning targets are set out in the Academy's annual Quality Improvement Plan or QIP which is prepared by the Academy Principal/Head in close liaison with the Trust's Director of Education. This is approved by the AQC for recommendation to the Trust Board.

Safeguarding forms a major part of the role of the AQC and its deliberations. The safeguarding of learners and staff is a constant consideration and underpins every AQC agenda item.

The AQC may be required to deal with complaints from time to time, when a complainant feels the Academy has not dealt with an issue adequately. If this is the case, the Trust will follow its widely published Complaints Policy. In the event of a learner exclusion, an AQC panel may be convened, as required and will consider the decisions of the Academy Principal/Head. Grounds leading to an exclusion are set out in the Frimley Junior Behaviour Management Policy, SFCE Code of Conduct and the Tomlinscote Behaviour Policy.

The AQC is also responsible for ensuring the Academy operates in a manner that is supportive of the mission and ethos of the Trust, contributing to its key strategic priorities. AQCs operate in the context of the Trust as a whole: it is of paramount importance to remember that the Trust is one organisation and not simply the sum of its individual Academy parts.

AQC as part of overall Trust Governance structure



Membership

The AQC's have a membership of around twelve people and all councillors are approved by the Trust Board. Non-executive councillors are all volunteers and receive no remuneration though expenses incurred in discharging duties can be claimed though this does not include travel to attend normal AQC meetings.

The Academy Principal/Head is an ex officio member; other members of an Academy's senior leadership team are required to attend as non-voting members, as and when the agenda demands. AQC's involve two staff representatives. Staff are invited to put themselves forward when a vacancy becomes available; when there is more than one candidate, an election will be held with all Academy teaching and support staff eligible to vote. The successful candidate's application is then considered by Trust Board. Staff members serve for a period of four years. This can be renewed depending on approval from Trust Board, up to a maximum of three terms.

Additional members are volunteers recruited from the Academy parent body or wider community for example, in the case of a Church Academy, a local representative of the Church of England (a foundation councillor). Foundation councillors will not constitute more than 25% of the AQC membership.

When there is a vacancy for an AQC member, parents of current learners are invited to apply. The Trust CEO and AQC Chair will shortlist and interview parent and nominated foundation candidates, recommending appointment by the Board on the basis that the individuals fit the skills and expertise matrix of the AQC. Parent and foundation members

will serve for a period of two years. This can be renewed dependent upon approval from the Trust Board.

Where Academies include learners aged 16-18, the AQC will also include two student members who serve for one year. Student members are elected by the student body.

All those serving on Trust AQCs must declare interests before taking their seats and withdraw from discussion and voting should there be a conflict. AQC members are expected to uphold the ethical standards of all those holding such public office, as reflected in the seven Nolan principles:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

(See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>)

Roles within the AQC

When a vacancy for AQC Chair or Vice Chair arises, a current member of the AQC may put themselves forward. All applications will be considered by the Trust CEO and outgoing AQC Chair. The positions of AQC Chair and Vice Chair are approved by Trust Board normally for a term of two years, though the Board reserves the right to extend this to a term of four years on occasion. There is no maximum number of terms a Chair and Vice Chair can serve but each term must be approved by Trust Board.

The AQC Chair, in conjunction with the Vice Chair, is responsible for ensuring that the AQC complies with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. The Chair and Vice Chair are expected to develop an effective working relationship with the Academy Principal/Head and also with the Trust Board. This is enabled through the attendance at Trust Board meetings of the Chair as a non-voting participant, plus regular communications with all parties, between meetings. The role involves contribution to the appraisal of the Academy Principal/Head. Chairs are invited to attend meetings of the internal management boards of the Trust – the Executive, Curriculum and Operations Boards, notes of which they will receive throughout the year.

The AQC will include a Safeguarding Lead and a SEND Lead. Other roles, e.g. Equality and Diversity Lead, may be assigned. These roles require the development of relationships with the Academy Senior Leadership Teams.

Induction of all new AQC councillors will include sessions with the Chair of the AQC, the Clerk and the Trust CEO. This may be face-to-face or via a telephone call. Periodically, attendance at training and development sessions to ensure that councillors can discharge their duties effectively may be arranged either in-house or using external agencies. The full cost of such training and any expenses necessarily incurred will be paid by the Trust.

Meetings

Meetings are held, on average, six times per year either online or on site at the Academy, with a calendar of dates circulated in advance. Times of meetings vary but it is the intention of the Trust to arrange of possible for meetings to take place in the day if possible. All papers related to meetings will be circulated at least one week in advance by the Clerk. Minutes will be agreed and circulated to the Trust Board with a copy placed on the Trust website. The Trust CEO and Trust Board members may attend any AQC meeting should they wish.

In addition to the normal cycle of AQC meetings, councillors are invited to the Trust AGM and the annual Trust Advisory Forum.

Related Trust Documents

Scheme of Delegation

<https://www.theprospecttrust.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=48&type=pdf>

Trust Complaints Policy

<https://www.theprospecttrust.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=83&type=doc>

Frimley Junior Behaviour Management Policy

http://frimley.surrey.sch.uk/?page_id=3622

SFCF Code of Conduct

https://farnborough.ac.uk//App_Files/Upload/Policies/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202020-21.pdf

Tomlinscote Behaviour Policy

<https://www.tomlinscoteschool.com/attachments/download.asp?file=2804&type=pdf>