

Governance newsletter

Issue 10, summer term 2009

Leadership Skills for Governance





Foreword

LSIS was established last year as a new type of organisation working with the learning and skills sector in its drive for excellence. It combines the work of the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and that of the Quality Improvement Agency, and crucially has the third dimension of being sector-led.

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The significance of being sector-led was established initially through our unique Cabinet Office conferred status as a ‘sector-owned body in the public sector’ and secondly through our governance arrangements. These include the appointment of a sector-led Board and an elected Council of 30 members from across our diverse sector, which owns the LSIS charity.

As we move into the next phase of our development, sector ownership of LSIS is reflected in what we do and how we manage the organisation. These are some highlights:

- The Board and Council have received feedback on our statement of strategic direction, and in agreeing a way forward, have taken into account the many points raised from across the sector.
- The first report from the LSIS Performance Review Panel (elected from within the Council) considered LSIS’s performance during the

period October to December 2008 on behalf of the sector and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The role of the panel is to submit these reviews quarterly.

- Details of both the above are being published on the LSIS website, with minutes of all LSIS Board and Council meetings.

I was pleased to meet many of you at the annual governance conference in March, and would like to reconfirm our belief that good governance is crucial to the success of all colleges and providers in the FE and skills sector.

We are committed to working with you, listening to you and adapting what we do so that we can respond to your needs and best support you in your critical strategic leadership role.

Roger McClure
Chief Executive, LSIS

The purpose of college governance

When a group of individuals is formed to accomplish something, there could be process loss. Even the very best, highly trained and focused teams do not achieve 100 per cent of their potential.

More heads may be better than one and sometimes it can feel that the group is greater than the sum of its parts, but Steiner's equation¹ is worth considering:

Actual productivity = potential productivity – process loss²

The potential productivity of college corporation boards is usually high, especially in light of governors' expertise and experience. But clerks, principals, senior staff and governors will recognise that the process loss can be surprisingly high.

Encouraging boards to be clear about the contribution of governance to the leadership of the college could help address this. We know about the six responsibilities of the board as defined by the Articles of Government – the educational character and mission; the quality strategy; the financial health; and the employment of staff. Also, most boards will have considered and approved

1 Steiner, ID, 1972. *Group Process and Productivity*. New York : Academic Press.

2 The extent to which group performance is inhibited by misunderstandings, miscommunication and dislike among group members.

a strategic plan proposed by the principal.

But what is the group goal? What does the board, with its team of governors, want to achieve? What is the purpose of governance at the college?

Three publications can help us with a statement of purpose to galvanise the college board towards defining its group goal.

The purpose of governance at a college might be to achieve a successful vocational education and training college through:

- Agreeing and driving the strategic plan³
- Effective challenge, scrutiny and ambition from all governors⁴
- Informed governance practices⁴
- The centrality of teaching and learning⁵

3 Independent Commission for Good Governance in Public Services, 2004. *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services*. OPM/CIPFA.

4 Ofsted, 2008. *How Colleges Improve : A Review of Effective Practice*.

5 Coffield, F, 2008. *Just Suppose Teaching and Learning Became the First Priority*. LSN.

- Accountability and responsiveness to all stakeholders³
- Using the core values of trust, openness, respect, equality, reflection, selflessness.³

The adoption of a clear statement for governance purpose by each board could help each governor and the governor team to appreciate more clearly what governance is trying to achieve and how.

Having defined the purpose of college governance in headline form, each board has the task of interpreting its statement of purpose or governance and considering how best to deliver and achieve governance in the expected ways.

There could be benefits for governors and senior staff alike as the focus of governance leadership effort becomes clearer. The key gain, however, will be realised when students and teachers benefit from the reduction in process loss by the topmost team at the college.

Ron Hill and Ian James
LSG associates, ICSA joint lead tutors and practising clerks

Annual governance conference review

More than 300 delegates from further education and sixth-form colleges attended this year's annual governance conference, "Stepping up to self-regulation", which took place at the Hinckley Island Hotel in Leicestershire towards the end of March.

This was the first governance conference hosted by LSIS following its creation as a new organisation. LSIS is now responsible for the Leadership Skills for Governance programmes established by the Centre for Excellence in Leadership in 2006.

It was the second time that the governance conference brought together a range of governing body members: chairs and vice-chairs, governors – including some staff and student governors – and clerks.

Lloyds TSB sponsored the event, Lifelong Learning UK was the evening dinner sponsor, and Becta provided a very popular internet café for delegates.

As in previous years, the rich networking and learning opportunities appealed to both new and experienced governors. This was reflected in the initial feedback, which suggested that delegates found the event to be a valuable use of their time, and that it succeeded in balancing the national educational context with the specific concerns of the sector and the governance audience.

The conference was chaired by Bill Lucas, co-director at the Centre for Real-World Learning, University of Winchester and chairman of the Talent Foundation, who provided delegates with excellent direction and a thoughtful overview of the programme throughout the event.

"Balanced conference, which took account of clerks as well as governors. Organisation was extremely professional and seamless. Current issues were given appropriate focus and debate was constructive. Personally the conference has provoked some excellent ideas for discussion and improvement in my own college."

Ra Hamilton-Burns, Clerk to the Corporation, Sussex Coast College

Programme

The conference programme was designed to incorporate many of the elements that had been requested following last year's event. These included being held over two days with more focus on workshops, as well as increased tailoring of the workshops to the roles of clerk and governor in particular.

For many clerks and governors, the conference offers the chance for updates and professional development for specific areas within their role.

This year's workshops included:

- Becoming an outstanding corporation
- Managing funding risks in a volatile market
- The characteristics of effective college governance
- Governing in a recession
- Making use of the Framework for Excellence
- Leading equalities from the top
- Demonstrating board excellence under self-regulation.

"A well-organised conference. Very intensive with plenty of opportunity to participate and contribute to discussions. Good diversity of speakers and workshop facilitators. Good venue and good food."

Khan Moghal, Governor
The Manchester College

"A very useful, well organised event. Thank you."

Nick Moore, Governor
Somerset College



Self-regulation

The minister for further education, Siôn Simon MP, said that the government was awaiting the final report of the LSIS seminars on self-regulation before announcing the next steps. At that point, the implications for governors will be clearer.

Colleges' rising expectations and the greater responsibility by the sector for its performance and standards implied by greater self-regulation will, however, inevitably put additional demands on governors and their role as scrutineers in safeguarding the public interest.

College building projects

The new and real challenges facing the 149 colleges whose capital build projects have been delayed were covered extensively by the national press in the week before the conference, and featured strongly in conversations at the event.

LSIS organised a breakfast meeting on the second day of the conference, at short notice, to give delegates the space to share and consider priorities in small discussion groups.

Post-conference website

The post-conference website contains all the slides from keynote speakers and from the workshops: www.lsis.org.uk/governanceconference

“Congratulations on a very successful conference. Delegates were well cared for and the opportunities to listen and participate have been of a high intensity and quality.”

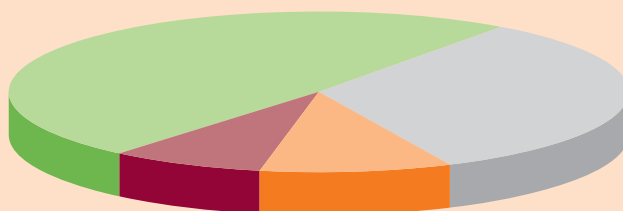
Margaret Hicks, Chair
Brooklands College

“Well-organised – well done to the team. Best of the conferences (governance/ clerks) I’ve been to over the past four years.”

Nils Elgar, Clerk to the Corporation
Wakefield College

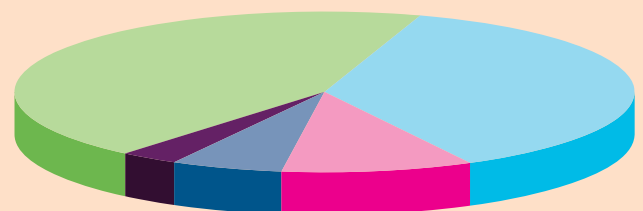
Conference audience

All delegates



- Governors 49%
- Clerks 33%
- LSIS and speakers 10%
- Sector agencies 8%

Corporation board members



- Governors 44%
- Chairs and vice-chairs 37%
- Student governors 10%
- Staff governors 6%
- Principals 3%

Governance and the financial crisis

The further education and skills sector is far too integrated with the world of employers and business to escape concerns about the grim economic climate, and it is probably unavoidable that some businesses will cut back on training as a way of reducing costs.

The current crisis may also provide many opportunities for FE to continue, and even expand, its training provision and take a key role in national recovery efforts.

During the recession of the early 1990s, enrolment in FE and skills institutions increased, when workers chose training as a way of avoiding unemployment and making themselves more competitive in a tighter jobs market. Student numbers were already increasing before the recession, growing 18 per cent between 2001 and 2007. Ucas reported 465,000 applications for the 2009/10 academic year, an increase of 7.8 per cent over the previous year.

The recession is also opening new streams of government money for training programmes. In an effort to reach the skills targets set out by Lord Leitch in 2007 and to keep unemployment low, the government has diverted hundreds of millions of pounds, since October 2008, to support training and skills courses for the unemployed. Specific measures include:

- £100 million budgeted by the Department for Work and Pensions to fund retraining and skills courses for workers who are made redundant, to be disbursed over the next three years
- £350 million from the Train to Gain budget for SMEs, to *help small businesses get through the tougher economic climate by building the skills and expertise of their workers*
- 40,000 places in short-term pre-employment training, as part of a £158 million scheme to help the unemployed, including new careers and training advice
- £140 million to fund 35,000 apprenticeship places in the private and public sectors
- 21,000 new apprenticeships in the public sector, including 2,500 in FE colleges and universities.

Increased public-sector spending on skills may signal new business opportunities for providers throughout the FE and skills sector, which governors

should discuss with their principals and senior teams.

These programmes confirm the sector's central role in the government's overall strategy to maintain employment and economic stability during the downturn. Sector leaders have a priceless opportunity to gain influence and voice in public policy. The sector can argue for more work in partnership with, rather than under the direction of, the government. Success in delivering the economic recovery agenda will also strengthen the case for increasing autonomy and greater self-regulation.

The financial crisis will continue to cause concern and deprivation, and governors should not ignore the possible dangers it poses to their colleges and institutions. But all crises bring the opportunity for change and reform, and the FE sector can and should use this time of change to argue for a more sizable, independent role in British public life.

This is an extract from an LSIS policy paper, available at www.lsis.org.uk/policy

Leadership and technology in FE and skills

What's learning got to do with it?

Professor Michael Shayer at King's College, London recently tested the ability of 13 and 14-year-olds to think *analytically* and *logically*, with a test first designed and used on the same number of pupils of the same age in 1976. He concluded that the children's responses had become quicker but lacked depth of thinking. These learners will soon be enrolling in our FE and skills system; leaders, including governors, need to reflect upon the following questions:

- What is the relationship between digital technologies and learning?
- Are children and young people now learning in different ways from adults?
- What does *deep* and *shallow* learning look and feel like in the digital age?
- How does the fast-paced, multisensory, multiscreen, partial-attention world of digital technologies affect the ability to reflect and deepen learning?
- How should we design buildings, interiors and technologies to support active learning, content creation and collaboration?

- What implications does all this have for leadership and governance in the FE and skills system?

The changing nature of learning and interaction in society surely needs greater attention when thinking about the future of education and the learning places we may need to create to account for such changes. It is not difficult to understand the chasm that is emerging between what learners use in their everyday lives and what goes on in classrooms, lecture theatres and workshops in the FE and skills system.

In *Tomorrow's People*, Baroness Susan Greenfield draws a distinction between *people of the book* and the younger *people of the screen*. She alludes to the real digital divide between teachers and learners, which could have profound effects on preparing young people for the next generation learning they rightfully expect and increasingly demand.

At her inaugural lecture, Professor Diana Laurillard, chair of digital technologies at London Knowledge Lab, explored the role of digital technologies in achieving our educational ambitions. She noted that the majority of

learning theories emphasise the importance of the learner being the *active agent* in the learning process, but has the investment in ICT in the FE and skills system taken this into consideration?

What has been the relative investment in technology for teaching or has the investment been in technology for learning? There is an inherent danger that this trend will reinforce *learning by attention* and pedagogical models not suited to the collaboration, co-construction and personalised learning of the 21st century. Ambitious plans for personalisation are unaffordable without changes in both approaches to learning and teaching and the effective use of digital technologies.

On 6 February 2009, LSIS and Becta held a partnership conference to focus on developing governors' and clerks' understanding of the need for strategic leadership of technology and its likely impact on their governing board and the work of their colleges.

Subsequently a new support publication, *Governors in Conversation*, was launched at the annual governance conference in March 2009.

Bob Harrison, consultant, Becta

Quarterly review of LSIS performance

As part of the new governance arrangements, the framework agreement between LSIS and the Secretary of State requires a panel of the company's members to undertake a quarterly review of the charity's performance and submit a report to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

At a meeting on 5 March 2009, the LSIS Performance Review Panel considered a report provided by the LSIS executive on the charity's performance during the period October 2008 to December 2008. A summary of the letter from the interim chair of the panel, Mike Smith, to Ian Watmore follows:

The report covered a period of time when LSIS as a new organisation was facing the major challenges associated with a complex merger. In this context, the ability to maintain the level of programme delivery and the quality of support for the sector shown in the report is both a credit to the commitment of the staff, and a major achievement in itself.

Having considered each of the programmes, we find that the majority are running on time, are intending to spend to budget and are delivering their targets and objectives.

Two programmes caused the panel concern. One of these, World Class Skills, is a substantial programme, £18.5 million. We were reassured by LSIS staff that this programme was being closely monitored and that contingency measures had been implemented to restore the position by the end of the year.

The other area of concern was Functional Skills 14-19. We heard that this programme took longer than anticipated to start up. On the evidence

provided, we were not able to conclude that the level of activity generated by the programme provided value for money. We have asked for additional information on both these programmes at the next quarterly review.

For each of the programmes, an initial rating was applied; however, the panel accepts that at this stage, it has applied a high degree of subjectivity.

Finally, in terms of the future development of LSIS reporting, we have requested that the following recommendations be introduced. We recognise that not all of these changes can be implemented for the next quarter's report.

Number of programmes	Rating allocated by the panel	Description of rating
16	Green	Running to time and on budget and meeting their objectives
2	Amber-green	Some concerns, mainly around programme management, which could be easily rectified
2	Amber-red	Some significant concerns that needed close monitoring
0	Red	
1	Grey	Too little evidence to form a substantive judgement.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are:

- A move towards reporting on highlights and areas of concern, in line with effective practice in self-assessment in the sector
- More rigour and consistency in the use of evidence, particularly around contextualisation
- More evidence of impact of the programmes and activities
- A focus on how programmes provide value for money for the sector
- Information on the proportion of funds spent purchasing sector expertise
- Adding a requirement to external evaluations to provide a standard set of summary judgements
- Where appropriate, indications of what will happen when programmes come to the end of their contracted period and how activities might become self-sustaining.

A full copy of the letter can be found at www.lsis.org.uk

HE in FE colleges: a new role for college governors

Most general and specialist FE and some sixth-form colleges offer higher education.

All colleges that receive funding directly or indirectly – via a higher education institution – from the Higher Education Funding Council (Hefce) are required to submit a higher education strategy to Hefce in January 2010. The strategy should cover all the higher education the college offers, that is, all qualifications at level 4 and above, irrespective of how the students are funded. This will include higher-level courses funded by the LSC, by student or employer fees and by international student fees.

Importantly for governors, the strategy should follow from the college mission and wider strategic objectives, and must be approved by the corporation.

The HE in FECs Expert programme is funded by the Hefce Leadership Management and Governance fund to support strategic change and disseminate good practice.

A seminar for governors and clerks is being hosted, in collaboration with LSIS and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), at the Central Hall, Westminster in London on Tuesday 5 May 2009.

This will offer participants the opportunity to:

- Hear about the context for the strategy requirement
- Learn more about other related initiatives
- Participate in discussion groups
- Influence the development of training and support materials and a guide for governors.

The seminar will be chaired by Tony Alderman, chair of corporation at Barnet College and an LSIS interim Council member. Further details about the project can be accessed on the Hefce website at www.hefce.ac.uk/news/events.

The fee is £100 for the first governor and £50 for a second governor or clerk attending from the same college.

To register an interest in the seminar and request a booking form, please email the project administrator, Karen Kitchen at k.kitchen@sheffield.ac.uk.

Penny Blackie, consultant

Chair and principal – a meeting of minds?

In December, LSIS hosted its first boardroom briefing exploring the relationship between the chair and the principal.

The topic drew considerable interest from a range of providers, and 15 people attended from 10 colleges, including general FE, sixth-form, land-based and specialist institutions, from as far apart as Lancashire and London.

The group, which included 10 corporation chairs, four clerks and a principal, very quickly found common ground on a wide range of issues.

Much is spoken and written about the role of principals, governing bodies and clerks, each of which is now formally recognised in the Instrument and Articles of Government of Colleges; but the role of the chair remains largely undefined and not well understood.

It soon became clear that the role of the chair and how they interact with the principal has a major impact on effective governance and ultimately the success of the college.

In private sector research, it has been referred to as “that sacred and secret relationship”, with its importance emphatically underlined by the evidence of company success.

Lively group interaction brought forward a number of recommendations, including the need for a national network of chairs for the informal exchange of views; the importance of training and proper induction for the chair; and the need for the clerk’s role to be better understood.

There were no rule books for ensuring a successful partnership, but at its heart was the need for trust and understanding, both of which thrive on shared values and require high levels of emotional intelligence from both parties.

Feedback from those who took part in the briefing was positive; here is one example:

“I think this is an excellent concept and venture and should be repeated ... my main suggestion is that it needs to be longer.”

Look out for the next session later this year.

Mike Snell, LSG associate

Who is investing in your principal?

Principals in the post-16 sector hold one of the most demanding positions in education.

Theirs is a lonely job and research shows that they value development opportunities that are personalised, use peer support and networking, embed experiential learning and work-related approaches, and have coaching and mentoring support and robust assessment.

The Principals Qualifying Programme from LSIS offers all of these, and 130 principals and chief executives have embarked on the programme since its launch in March 2007. Principals are encouraged to think deeply about working effectively with their governors, especially their

chair. This strategic relationship will be increasingly important as self-regulation and the machinery of government changes take hold.

Email executive@lsis.org.uk for further information about this subsidised programme.

Observer scheme

Our board of governors has welcomed participation in the observer scheme, as part of a continuing commitment to sharing good practice in the sector.

Through the scheme, a governor and three clerks have been able to attend a board meeting and see governance in action in another college setting.

All the clerks received the meeting papers and were able to meet me beforehand to get background information on the governance framework and context on some of the papers, and to share documents such as board and committee business plans.

We also shared some useful ideas on governor recruitment strategies. One clerk took the opportunity of a follow-up meeting, which provided the chance to ask more questions and also for me to get some useful external observations from her on the effectiveness of the meeting she had observed.

The observer scheme has also offered a reciprocal opportunity, and I already have plans to visit two of the colleges later in the year, to see their board in action and to learn from their best practice.

Sheila Selwood
Clerk to the Corporation
West Herts College

“I attended West Herts Board on 1 April 2009 as an observer hosted by Sheila Selwood. I found it a good experience to see how her board functioned under a Carver type of model. There was good governor engagement with limited SMT involvement. I have taken away ideas to add to my board function.”

Phil Stone
Clerk of Eastleigh College



“Observing a board meeting at West Herts College gave me a front-view seat of a board that has embraced the Carver approach to governance taking it from theory to active practice. Sheila Selwood also provided an informative background session before the meeting, and as two other clerks were also observing, there was an opportunity to share good practice and areas of development – student governor engagement and governor recruitment in times of economic difficulty being just two of the hot topics.”

Gillian Steels
Clerk of Gloucestershire College

ICSA Certificate in FE Governance

This qualification programme is designed to develop the skills and knowledge of clerks to the corporation in an FE college. A well-established and successful programme, it is now in its sixth year.

The programme increases your knowledge and understanding of the corporate governance and legal framework, and helps you develop confidence in handling and interpreting data and advising governors.

There is one intake a year and recruitment for 2010 will start in summer 2009. For further information and an application form, please call 0870 060 3278 or email enquirieslondon@isis.org.uk

First impressions of the ICSA programme

Julia Tindall-Jones and Dawn Brown – both members of the 2009 cohort – share their first impressions of the ICSA programme.

Conscious incompetence – that’s me on the scale of new learners and I don’t feel too happy about it. Since starting as a part-time clerk in September last year, my learning curve has been vertical. I had no background in the FE sector; I have been in uniform most of my working life as an officer in the Royal Navy and then the Royal Naval Reserve. The practicalities of taking minutes, producing them and generally managing the administrative part of being a clerk is a relative doddle, but realising that there is significantly more to this unsung occupation than meets the eye has been life-changing.

I was required to undertake the ICSA Certificate in FE Governance as a condition of my employment, and signed up with some trepidation as a member of the 2009 cohort.

Two single foundation days at LSIS in London during the autumn term sowed the seeds of what was required and the time and effort that would be necessary to achieve success.

The two days also gave me the opportunity to meet other clerks from all over the UK and to swap experiences and discuss concerns.

There are 13 of us in the 2009 cohort, of varying age and clerking experience but all determined to get as much as possible from the course. The prospect of tackling the equivalent of an NVQ 5 seems daunting to most of us, particularly as our academic experience, in some cases, dates back to the 1980s.

The course includes three two-day residential units based at Ashridge Business School, a beautiful building sited in a National Trust estate with very good facilities and excellent catering. Each unit covers a distinct area of FE governance and is accompanied by a reading list and a 2,500-word assignment for completion within four weeks. We can then look forward to a three-hour exam in which we will be required to apply all that we have learned without the aid of books or the clerks’ network.

The first unit, delivered by our tutor, Ron Hill, in January, was excellent. He took us through the syllabus in a way that made us question, participate and contribute, using case studies, our own experiences and the clerk’s bible (the Instrument and Articles of Government 2008).

I am finding my first assignment challenging, stimulating and hard work. I look forward to completing it and am keen to move on to the next unit and the challenges that await.

Julia Tindall-Jones, Clerk to the Corporation, City College Plymouth

When I started work as a clerk three years ago, I wanted to get a qualification. I considered becoming a chartered secretary, but would be nearing retirement age by the time I had finished the modules. Having spoken to several colleagues from other colleges who had previously taken part in the ICSA programme, I decided to enrol.

Our first residential weekend was a great success. While the networking opportunities were valuable, we also had the luxury of time to reflect on our own practices and discuss the relative merits and pitfalls with critical friends. I need to plan blue-sky time, and stick to it, so that I don’t lose the longer-term benefits of this qualification – continuously improving in my professional role.

Dawn Brown, College Secretary and Clerk to the Corporation, Oaklands College

Coaching for governors

Is the truth being aired in your board meetings?

If not, why not? The issue is often not that you mean to collude, but that agreement is oh so seductive.

We provide some tips to help you engender truth-telling in your board meetings and discuss executive or team coaching as an approach to achieving excellent governance.

What is truth-telling?

Truth-telling or naming it is often viewed as a type of challenge or confrontation.

Challenge may be defined as a call to engage in a contest, fight, or competition: a challenge to a duel and confrontation as the act of confronting or the state of being confronted, especially a meeting face-to-face. From these definitions, confrontation appears closer to what truth-telling should look like in the boardroom.

What is its purpose?

Truth-telling should be in the service of achieving and sustaining excellent provision for your learners. It is not about point scoring, game playing or exercising power. It is an essential leadership skill that is critical for success.

When executed well, it looks like focused questioning, honest feedback, and framing issues.

Tips for truth-telling

1. Build strong relationships and increase your self-awareness.

Consider whether you have earned the right to challenge. Is your relationship robust enough? If not, how can you make it so?

2. Don't be dissuaded.

Ensure that you are clear on your motivations for the truth-telling.

3. Step out of neutrality.

In a bid to be neutral, we can sometimes become detached, lose our strong opinions and not take responsibility when necessary. This results in passivity or collusion.

4. Contain your anxiety.

The Mum effect (from keeping *Mum* about undesirable messages) describes the scenario where we worry about what will happen to us as bearers of bad news. What's the worst that can happen if you don't name that truth?

5. Maintain your strategic view.

Think long term and examine what the potential impact of your actions might be.

6. Create space for experimentation.

Change the venue of your board meeting, try different approaches, be playful, and allow space for something different to emerge.

Developing truth-telling in your board

Governance is a considerable responsibility and developing truth-telling skills might require a stretch of your skill base. This is where one-to-one executive coaching or team executive coaching can help.

The coaching relationship is all about truth-telling, and offers the perfect environment in which to learn about supportive challenge. Coaching can help you gain clarity about your role as a governor and focus on what you want to achieve. The flexibility and short time investment makes it particularly appealing to governors.

For more information about LSIS coaching approaches, email coaching.bespoke@lsis.org.uk

Diary of a student governor

It's quite refreshing to meet other students like yourself, living almost 100 miles away, with similar goals and ambitions.

The LSG Student Governor Forum on 29 January 2009 was the perfect opportunity for me not only to build my circle of Facebook friends, but also to share my experiences, plans and visions for the future of my college with other student governors. Held at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London, the annual event opened my eyes to how essential our role as student governor is, and the extent to which our opinions are valued.

I began my term as student governor in January 2008, as part of my role as elected student union president.

Of course, as the title suggested, I was an important member of a team, but to what extent I was going to be useful and have important opinions was yet to be determined.

I became familiar with my role, started participating in discussions, and wanted my perspective on certain issues to be heard. This usually sparked further discussions and my ideas were built upon.

Initially I didn't think that this experience was going to teach me as much as it has done so far; I have learnt about the many logistical aspects of my college, grown in confidence to communicate with people I am familiar with as well as those I may know nothing about.

To be quite honest, I felt lost at some points and apparently that's completely normal. But to overcome this, I attended governors' training sessions to help me interpret reports, financial documents etc, and it's not as daunting when I pick up the notes any more.



One of the most useful tools for me was my mentor, and funnily enough they were all of the governors put together. Each one of them has led me through this experience in some way, making me feel welcome, valued and most of all respecting my views and the views of fellow students.

Just remember, the power of speech is immeasurable; voicing our opinions can help to transform our colleges, influence college practice and even shape national policy.

Joanne Jayerajah, student governor, Brockenhurst College

E-governance boardroom briefing – 11 June 2009

Building on John Carver's Policy Governance system, Our Boardroom Technologies has developed a set of online tools that will be previewed at an LSG boardroom briefing on 11 June 2009.

Whatever your views on the relative importance of people and process, it is hard to deny the efficiencies that have been brought by technology to almost all aspects of organisational life, and this

briefing offers an opportunity to see how sophisticated boardroom technology can be. For further information and an application form, please call 0870 060 3278 or email enquirieslondon@lsis.org.uk

Leadership Skills for Governance: Programme and events

Leadership Skills for Governance incorporates a set of development and support programmes designed for college governors, chairs, clerks and others involved in FE governance.

Inductions				
Governor Induction	£330	Newcastle	7 May 2009	16.30–19.30
Student Governor Induction	£120	LSIS, London	3 June 2009	11.00–15.00
Governor Induction	£330	Bristol	9 June 2009	16.30–19.30
Boardroom briefings				
College Involvement in Academies	£60	Dexter House, London	28 April 2009	10.00–13.00
Leading Equalities from the Top	£120	LSIS, London	5 May 2009	13.00–16.00
E-governance	£60	LSIS, London	11 June 2009	09.15–12.30
Student governor finance	£65	Manchester	7 July 2009	09.30–12.30
Events				
Governance and the HE in FECs strategy seminar 2009	£100 for college governor/clerk; £50 per extra delegate from same college	London	5 May 2009	09.30–14.00
Framework for Excellence and Governance conference	Free of charge	London	21 May 2009	10.00–15.00

Fees are quoted per delegate and LSIS reserves the right to change programmes and arrangements. Leadership Skills for Governance programmes can also be delivered in-house to your entire board. For further information or to book, please call **0870 060 3278** or email enquirieslondon@lsis.org.uk

Framework for Excellence and Governance – 21 May 2009

This second event hosted jointly by LSIS and the LSC is for governors and clerks from FE colleges. The conference will focus on understanding the impact of the Framework

for Excellence 2009/10 on colleges, and on governance, as its structure and use evolves and develops. The event is free to governors and clerks at FE colleges and attendees will receive a copy of our new

publication, *A Governor's guide to the Framework for Excellence*. Places are strictly limited; please register online at www.fegovernance.org, call 0870 060 3278 or email enquirieslondon@lsis.org.uk

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Learning and Skills Improvement Service

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) came into operation on 1 October 2008.

Combining the best aspects of two different and highly successful sector bodies – the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) – LSIS works closely with the sector, as its key partner, to focus on learners and on supporting excellence, sustainable provision and self-regulation in the further education and skills sector. Leadership development underpins and forms an important part of the organisation's strategic role in the sector.

LSIS was established after consultations with sector leaders identified a strong desire for an organisation that would be sector-led. As a sector-owned public body, LSIS is owned, directed and governed by colleges and providers in the further education and skills sector – the first time that this vibrant sector's talent is being harnessed to participate in this way.

LSIS continues to consult with the sector about its priorities and remit. While this is taking place, the activities and services of the former CEL and QIA organisations continue under LSIS branding; more information about the range of activities is available on their websites at www.centreforexcellence.org.uk and www.qia.org.uk.

Disability equality policy

LSIS is committed to promoting equality for disabled people and we strive to ensure that all our communication and learning materials are available in various formats including large font, audio or braille. Please let us know if you consider yourself disabled and require reasonable adjustments made to support you.

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