

Academic Board – Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Academic Board (the “Academic Board”) is a Committee of the Board of Governors of Oxford International Education & Tourism (OIET) (the “Board of Governors”), the governing body for the purposes of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

The purpose of the Academic Board is to provide **independent academic oversight, assurance and challenge** to the Board of Governors in relation to:

- The effectiveness of OIET’s systems for securing academic quality and standards
- The quality of the student academic experience and student outcomes
- Compliance with the Office for Students (OfS) conditions of registration relating to quality, standards and the student experience (including Conditions B and C)
- The identification, management and escalation of strategic risks relating to academic quality, standards and student outcomes.

The Academic Board does **not** undertake detailed operational oversight. It provides assurance to the Board of Governors based on reports, data and assurances received from the Academic Standards Committee and other academic governance bodies. Ultimate responsibility for academic quality and standards remains with the Board of Governors.

2. Authority

The Academic Board is authorised by the Board of Governors to:

- Receive and evaluate assurances on academic quality, standards and student outcomes
- Require reports, summaries and exception reports from the Academic Standards Committee and other academic governance bodies
- Require reports from Safeguarding Committee on Condition E6 compliance and an account of harassment/sexual misconduct cases.
- Seek clarification or further assurance where risks, weaknesses or non-compliance are identified
- Escalate significant concerns, risks or matters requiring decision to the Board of Governors
- Commission independent external academic or quality assurance advice, where necessary, within agreed limits.

The Academic Board has no executive or operational decision-making powers and may not take decisions reserved to the Board of Governors or delegated to the Academic Standards Committee.

3. Membership

The Academic Board shall comprise at least three members, including at least one independent governor with substantial experience of higher education academic governance, quality assurance or regulation

The independent governor shall normally chair the Academic Board and act as a critical friend, providing objective challenge and external perspective.

All members shall comply with OIET's conflicts of interest policy.

4. Attendees

The following shall normally attend by invitation, as appropriate to the agenda:

- Senior academic leadership (e.g. Director of Academic Affairs)
- The Chair of the Academic Standards Committee
- Representatives from Quality Assurance, Compliance or Registry functions
- College Directors or Centre Principals (as required).

Student representatives may be invited for specific agenda items.

5. Meetings

The Academic Board shall:

- Meet at least twice per academic year
 - Be quorate with three members present, including the independent governor
 - Operate in accordance with OIET's governance arrangements.
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6. Responsibilities

6.1 Academic Quality and Standards Assurance

The Academic Board shall:

- Receive assurance from the Academic Standards Committee that academic standards are appropriately set, maintained and reviewed
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programme approval, monitoring and review processes
- Consider high-level summaries of external examiner outcomes and thematic issues;
- Seek assurance that academic standards align with sector expectations, awarding body requirements and partner regulations.
- Receive assurances that E6 conditions have been met.

6.2 Student Academic Experience and Outcomes

The Academic Board shall:

- Review trend-level data and analysis on student experience, continuation, progression, completion and achievement
- Consider equality of opportunity and outcomes at a strategic level
- Seek assurance that systemic issues are identified and addressed.

6.3 Regulatory Compliance and Risk

The Academic Board shall:

- Review and recommend to the Board of Governors the annual OfS Quality Self-Assessment and supporting evidence
- Monitor strategic academic risks and mitigations
- Consider OfS correspondence, regulatory intelligence and emerging regulatory expectations.

6.4 Partnerships and Collaborative Provision

The Academic Board shall:

- Receive assurance that academic governance arrangements for partnerships and collaborative provision are effective
- Consider strategic risks arising from partnerships and the adequacy of oversight arrangements.

6.5 Academic Governance Framework

The Academic Board shall:

- Review the overall effectiveness of academic governance structures
- Ensure appropriate protection of academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law
- Recommend changes to academic governance arrangements where necessary.

7. Reporting

The Chair of the Academic Board shall report to each meeting of the Board of Governors, highlighting:

- Key assurances received
- Significant academic risks or concerns
- Matters requiring Board of Governors' decision or attention.

The Academic Board shall provide an annual report assessing the effectiveness of academic governance and assurance arrangements.

8. Relationship with the Academic Standards Committee

The Academic Standards Committee provides **detailed operational oversight** of academic quality and standards and reports to the Academic Board.

The Academic Board shall not duplicate the work of the Academic Standards Committee, but shall focus on assurance, challenge, evaluation and escalation.

9. Review

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually by the Academic Board and recommended to the Board of Governors for approval.
