

Specimen skills register for board members

Guidance note

Specimen skills register for board members

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If you have any feedback on the content of these resources, or additional questions that you'd like to discuss, please contact the SGA: **020 7612 7029** | **info@sportsgovernanceacademy.org.uk**

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Introduction

For an organisation to build and maintain an effective board capable of carrying out its strategic plan and meeting its objectives, it is imperative that the board members collectively possess a range of skills, knowledge, attributes and experience. The Code for Sports Governance recommends that boards regularly carry out an audit of the skills and experience of their members and suggests that this be done annually (Req. 1.10). Undertaking a regular assessment of the skills available on the board, and comparing it to the strategic plan can help identify those skills and competencies required to realise the plans agreed and best serve the organisation. Where there is an identified gap between the stated skills required and those currently available, it may be decided to specifically recruit board members with those skills, provide training for existing board members, co-opt individuals, or engage an external professional to provide the necessary input required.

A skills audit should not be seen as a means by which individual board members are somehow evaluated, but recognised as an opportunity for the board, collectively, to identify areas of strength and areas where additional support and training may be required. A skills audit is one way in which the board can take stock of their ability to lead the organisation effectively, with a view to ensuring that delivers the impact it hopes to make. A skills audit not only highlights existing experience, expertise and backgrounds, but also flags up those areas where a board member may be willing to acquire new skills. Learning new skills, or using and enhancing existing ones are equally valid when building an effective and diverse board and benefits the individual in their personal and professional development.

This specimen skills register for the boards of sports organisations should be read in conjunction with the guidance on the SGA website and other tools available in the knowledge base.

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Board member qualities

The board should have a range of skills, competencies and experience to help the organisation develop and deal effectively with any challenges that arise.

As with any organisation, it is not necessarily advantageous to have fixed criteria for board composition. The board should have the requisite collective experience to satisfy the requirements of the governing document and to ensure that the strategic and business plans are implemented effectively. It should be remembered that the skills the board requires can be derived from professional, social and personal experience.

Diversity in the widest sense – incorporating different socio-economic backgrounds, ways of thinking, work and lived experience, as well as the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 – can help a board remain well-informed and responsive to the challenges the organisation faces and can enhance discussion and decision making.¹

In order to assess whether the board has the knowledge and experience to meet the challenges the organisation faces and to achieve its goals, it may be helpful to undertake a skills audit and maintain a skills register. A skills audit will highlight those key attributes required and identify whether and where that knowledge is held on the board.

A skills audit and register will be able to provide guidance, when recruiting new board members, as to the most desirable experience, competencies and knowledge required. A skills audit may be incorporated into any periodic board performance evaluation that the organisation undertakes to ascertain the effectiveness of the board, its committees and individuals sitting on each. Where

¹ See, for example, a Code for Sports Governance, Principle 2 - People.

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regular board performance reviews are adopted, it is likely that the skills set of each board member will be discussed with the facilitator of the exercise, which thereby provides a way of assessing the degree of knowledge and understanding each individual professes to have, or seeks to acquire. Consequently, ongoing training and development programmes can be organised and tailored to augment the skills, experience and knowledge of the board in line with the requirements of the organisation.

For larger bodies, it may be that a nomination committee also plays an integral role in the skills audit and devises ongoing programmes to improve the skills of the board via a range of options such as training, mentoring or recruitment.

For board members themselves, a skills audit and skills register may provide a useful opportunity to formally record the new skills they have acquired and also list any other training or development they have undertaken in another role that may be beneficial to the organisation.

Undertaking a skills audit periodically, preferably not less than once a year, will generate a clear picture of the skills possessed by the board and identify sources of knowledge and experience available and/or missing at a specific point in time. The following specimen document can be adapted to suit the particular requirements of individual organisations undertaking a skills audit.

Specimen skills audit form for board members

[This organisation] operates a register of skills of all members of the board so as to easily identify sources of specific skills and expertise when particular situations arise. Such a register will also highlight the circumstances where it would be prudent to acquire certain expertise and professional guidance from outside the body when board members collectively do not have the

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appropriate skills and knowledge. In addition to recognising the skills and competencies around the board table, it can provide an opportunity for individuals to highlight any areas where they would like to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in order to be a more effective board member.

The register is for use by [This organisation] to manage the composition of the board. The information contained in the skills register will not be shared with a third party, other than an external board facilitator or board recruitment specialist [and Sport England/UK Sport if they instruct us to share the information as part of any investigation or compliance work]. The data shall be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, incorporating the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

This register will be maintained regularly by [the governance lead], each year or whenever there are significant changes to the register.

Please complete the following register, listing the skills that you possess and are willing to use, acquire or develop in order to perform the ongoing duties and responsibilities of the board.

Name of board member

.....

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What motivated you to join the board of [The organisation]?	
Do you have any experience of [The organisation's] work? If so, how was that gained?	
What do you believe will be the most important contribution you can make to the running and impact of [The organisation]?	
Are there any areas of [The organisation's] activities in which you have a particular interest? And any areas that interest you less?	
What would you like to achieve in your time as a member of [The organisation's] board, for the organisation and for yourself? Does this include chairing the board or any committees in the future?	

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The Companies Act 2006 lists the legal duties owed by directors of a company, including a charitable company limited by guarantee:

- act within your powers
- promote the success of the company for the benefit of the members as a whole
- exercise independent judgement
- exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
- avoid conflicts of interest
- not to accept benefits from third parties
- declare an interest in a proposed transaction or arrangement

CC3 – The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do, published by the Charity Commission highlights several duties which trustees must perform:

- ensure your charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit
- comply with your charity’s governing document and the law
- act in your charity’s best interests
- manage your charity’s resources responsibly
- act with reasonable care and skill
- ensure your charity is accountable

The following table lists those skills, experiences and attributes that will be essential to comply with these legal requirements. Please complete this table, indicating with examples which of these you possess and which you would be willing to acquire.

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Ability to understand and adhere to applicable legislation (including reporting requirements) and the <i>[the organisation's]</i> purpose and objectives, recognising and avoiding 'mission creep'	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Awareness of the broad environment in which <i>[the organisation]</i> operates, including specific legal issues affecting it or its users	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Willingness to discuss proposals and activities in a manner that promotes the achievement of <i>[the organisation's]</i> mission and objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to communicate <i>[the organisation's]</i> mission, objectives and activities to a range of audiences (internal and external)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to ensure that resources are expended prudently and in accordance with the stated objectives and for the benefit of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to strategically review whether <i>[the organisation's]</i> mission, objectives, activities or operational arrangements are fit for purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Experience of financial accounts and reporting, including the requirements for external audit or independent examination	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Knowledge of, or willingness to learn, how to read financial and management accounts, including profit and loss sheets and cash flow projections	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Willingness and ability to maintain the highest standards of probity and integrity	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to place the interests and success of [the organisation] above any other professional or personal interests	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Willingness to make difficult decisions in the best interests of <i>[the organisation]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
An understanding of conflicts of interest and loyalty and how to recognise, avoid and/or manage them	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Avoiding and refusing any undue personal benefit which may arise as a result of your position on the board	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to ignore irrelevant factors when making decisions about <i>[the organisation]</i> and the furtherance of its interests	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to 'live' <i>[the organisation's]</i> ethos, values and culture while performing the duties of a board member	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Experience and/or understanding of strategic planning	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Agreeing key performance indicators, managing and monitoring performance against plans	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Understanding of the organisation's performance and impact, and how that can be communicated more widely	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Ability to analyse and come to an independent judgement on complex data	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Finance and resource (income generation, staff and estates) planning and management, including budget setting and oversight	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Understanding of, or willingness to learn, risk management and mitigation strategies	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Awareness of the need to ensure third party suppliers/partners/contractors act in accordance with legal requirements and the organisation's values when representing the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Where the organisation is a charity, an understanding of, or willingness to learn, the difference between restricted, unrestricted, designated and endowed funds	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Knowledge of how to map <i>[the organisation's]</i> key stakeholders and how communications are maintained with each	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Knowledge and understanding of whistleblowing practices	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues and practices, in general and specific to the environment in which <i>[the organisation]</i> operates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Awareness of those matters which cannot be delegated to others	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to assess what matters can be delegated, to monitor their use and review delegations	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Essential attributes required in order to contribute to effective governance

The following table lists those skills, experiences and attributes that have been found to contribute towards effective governance in organisations.

Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Commitment to the purpose, mission, values and ethos of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to work effectively as part of a team	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to constructively challenge papers and proposals presented to the board	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
A commitment to collective responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Ability to learn from failure and improve organisational performance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Basic administrative skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Willingness to acquire new skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Willingness to participate in an appraisal of the effectiveness of the board	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Desirable attributes – general board work

The following table lists those skills, experiences and attributes that are viewed as desirable within the collective possession of the board in order to lead the organisation in pursuit of its purpose.

Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Board or committee work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Chairing/leading a board or committee	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Problem solving	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Ability to think creatively and innovatively in relation to decision making	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Description of the essential skills, competencies and experience required	Level of aptitude/ experience (1=none, 2=some, 3=significant)	Please describe what you can offer in relation to this descriptor (including professional qualifications)	What training and/or development would you like in respect of this descriptor?
Communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Governance experience and capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Digital skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Business leadership and development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Marketing and PR	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		
Legal knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3		

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Are there any other skills, competencies, experience or attributes you would like to note here that may be of benefit to the organisation?

Signed.....

Date.....

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Specimen heatmap of collated board member responses

The following provides a brief example of what a heatmap of collated board member responses might look like following the completion and analysis of the skills audit by all board members.

For illustrative purposes, the size of the board is ten, with completed forms received from all board members.

	16-30	Strong showing of skills and experience as a board
	6-15	Requires some development of the board
	0-5	Urgent attention required to develop the board

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Description of the desirable skills, competencies and experience required	Number of board members by level of experience (none = 0 points, some = 1 point, significant = 2 points)	Willingness to learn and improve
Board or committee work	None 3 x 0 Some 2 x 1 Significant 5 x 2 Score = 12	Several new and existing board members have recognised a need to strengthen their skills in this area and requested appropriate support. Action required: not urgent, review committee composition to provide greater exposure to such work.
Chairing/leading a board or committee	None 5 x 0 Some 2 x 1 Significant 3 x 2 Score = 8	More established board members have requested training on the skills of chairing committees and meetings. Action required: not urgent, training to be built into individual training and development programmes
Problem solving	None 0 x 0 Some 1 x 1 Significant 9 x 2 Score = 19	There appears to be a need to open the board to more creative ways of decision making and problem solving. Action required: build into ongoing board development activity
Ability to think creatively and innovatively in relation to decision making	None 6 x 0 Some 3 x 1 Significant 1 x 2 Score = 5	Board responses show a distinct lack of awareness of the creative thinking abilities of the board collectively. Some board training on this area may be valuable. Action required: urgent
Governance	None 4 x 0 Some 3 x 1 Significant 3 x 2 Score = 9	Responses demonstrated a need for all board members to be up to date on their governance functions and a board away day has been organised to meet this need. Action required: not urgent, but in hand

