Governing bodies, equality and diversity in Scottish higher education institutions

Research report
Acknowledgments

ECU would like to thank everyone involved in the research.

- The many governors, chairs, university secretaries, staff and students who took the time to participate in the research
- The Committee of the Chairs of Scottish Higher Education Institutions and the Secretaries Group of Universities Scotland
- Fiona Waye of Universities UK and the ECU research team
- The National Union of Students Scotland

We would also like to thank our advisory group members for their time and valuable support.

- Neva Haites, Vice-Principal and champion for equality and diversity, University of Aberdeen
- Keir Bloomer, Chair of Court, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh and the Committee of the Chairs of Scottish Higher Education Institutions representative
- Jean Chandler, Associate Director Scotland, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
- Ann Marie Dalton, Secretary of the University, Heriot-Watt University
- Margaret Anne McParland, Staff Governor, University of Glasgow
- Davena Rankin, Staff Governor, Glasgow Caledonian University and Scottish Trades Union Congress nominee
- Liz Wilson, Independent Governor and Vice-Chair, Abertay University

Further information

Freya Douglas, Senior Policy Adviser
info@ecu.ac.uk
I was delighted to be asked to write a foreword to this important report. Respecting and achieving equality are hallmarks of a healthy institution. Diversity of insight, perspective and experience on the governing body encourages healthy and informed debate and consideration of a broader range of approaches to matters under discussion. Thus these are essential features for governing bodies whose ultimate responsibility is to secure the sustainability of their institution. The CSC believes that it is very important that governing bodies have the effective oversight of equality and vigorously seek diversity in the membership.

The report shows how the implementation of the new Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (the Code) has improved the gender diversity of independent members of governing bodies. All of the recent appointments of chairs and independent members referred to in this report will have been made on the basis of appointing the best candidate, thereby demonstrating that improving gender diversity and securing the best candidates go hand in hand.

The CSC have recently committed to seeking a minimum of 40 per cent of each gender among the independent members and hope that those constituencies who elect or appoint other members will cooperate in the pursuit of greater diversity. However, the report is right to remind us that diversity has many characteristics and there is further work to be done on improving and broadening the diversity of governing bodies.

I believe that enlarging the pool of suitably qualified applicants is fundamental to improving and broadening the diversity of governing bodies. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including explaining to individuals and employers the role and contribution to society of a member of a governing body, and the benefits to an individual and to his or her employer of the experience gained as such a member. The CSC very much wants to fulfil its part in this process and will be doing so through the ongoing development of its web presence and work with employers, ECU, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and other organisations.

I thank ECU for this report and its recommendations which I look forward to discussing with my fellow chairs as part of the work undertaken by CSC.
Governing bodies, equality and diversity in Scottish higher education institutions
Research report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive summary</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance of equality by governing bodies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of governing bodies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary: recommendations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research overview</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assurance of equality by governing bodies</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current practice in assurance of equality</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governors’ understanding of their role in equality</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induction, training and development</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality committees</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance mechanisms</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management role</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity of governing bodies</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current diversity of governing bodies</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of current diversity</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action being taken to increase diversity</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying diversity challenges</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing policies and goals on diversity</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadening applicant pools</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising awareness of the role of the university governor</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging diversity in elections and external appointments</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Next steps</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas for further guidance and activity</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance of equality</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity of governing bodies</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

Equality and diversity is increasingly central to the missions and strategies of higher education institutions (HEIs).

As the governing body is ultimately responsible for the institution’s mission and strategy, it is therefore responsible for ensuring that equality and diversity are advanced in support of that mission and strategy. From a legal perspective, the Scottish specific duties of the Equality Act 2010’s public sector equality duty brought in a new set of requirements for HEIs. Ultimate responsibility for their fulfilment lies with the governing body of the institution. Governors therefore need to be able to satisfy themselves that the institution is taking appropriate action to meet these duties, and that this action is proving effective.

Aligned to this role is the diversity of the governing body itself. It is commonly accepted that a governing body that is representative of the diversity of the community it serves is more inclusive in its decision-making, and better enabled to help the institution improve performance.

Assurance of equality by governing bodies (page 16)

The majority of research participants felt that their governing body did not face any challenges in overseeing that their institution met the Scottish specific duties.

Understanding of equality responsibilities (page 18)

Knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity among governors was highlighted by many in this research as important to enabling effective assurance of equality. While there was a high level of reported awareness of equality responsibilities and demonstration of good understanding among some governors, some participants thought that not all governors had a thorough understanding of their role in equality, for a range of reasons.

Induction materials in relation to equality varied, but mostly comprised of provision of information on the institution’s equality reports. The majority of institutions involved in the research did not provide equality and diversity training to their governors, however some provided periodic presentations from equality staff.

More equality training for governors was suggested by several participants. A number of considerations were highlighted, including the need for proportionality, individual training needs assessments for governors, and development of training that addresses attitudes and cultural awareness.
Executive summary

Assurance mechanisms (page 32)

A range of mechanisms were used by governing bodies to satisfy themselves that the specific duties for Scotland were being met by the institution. Most commonly reported among these was the approval of relevant policies, strategies and reports. Least common was engagement with equality and diversity staff.

Committees, including equality and diversity committees or equivalent groups, were the key mechanism for assurance of equality. Such committees handled the more day-to-day oversight of the institution’s equality work, providing opportunity for more detailed consideration of equality than was possible at governing body meetings. However, there was some concern that there was too much delegation of responsibility for equality to committees.

When the relationship between the equality committee and the governing body was more direct, this helped to ensure the governing body was aware of equality. Mechanisms to ensure the equality committee effectively fed into and shaped governing body meetings included having independent members of governing bodies in the group, and active discussion of the minutes of equality committee meetings at governing body meetings.

The vast majority of governor survey respondents said there was not a standing agenda item on equality for governing body meetings. However, some said that equality appears as appropriate on the agenda.

While most felt that their governing body attaches a high level of priority to assurance of equality, some reported that competing priorities could reduce the time given to equality at meetings.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) were noted by some as key mechanisms that the governing body used to assess progress on equality. Using statistics on staff and student equality and benchmarking performance against other universities was common practice. However, some mentioned limitations to using data and benchmarking for equality.

Some governing bodies had been involved in the process of setting the institution’s equality outcomes before publication in 2013. This was mainly at the approval stage.

Most governing bodies receive an annual report on equality. This often came from an equality committee. The link between annual reports and the reporting required by the Scottish specific duties was not consistently understood by participants. Several
Executive summary

mentioned how their governing body would interrogate annual reports to be assured that the duties were being met, and might request further information.

Equality impact assessment (EIA) is a legal requirement for all new and revised policies, practices and procedures. Governors need to satisfy themselves that the process is taking place in a meaningful and effective way across the institution, including in their own policy-making.

In many cases, the results of EIA were reported to an equality committee. Most governors had not been involved in EIA in their roles as governors. There were also very few examples of the court itself using EIA in its own decision-making. However, a number mentioned that papers that came to the governing body included information on any potential equality impacts. The importance that the governing body quality assures this information was emphasised.

Several interviewees made clear the difference between the role of the governing body and the executive in assurance of equality and the relationship between the two was seen as important. There were a range of mechanisms that linked the governing body and the executive or senior management in the oversight of equality.

A number of institutions had systems of senior management equality champions that had a key role in overseeing the implementation of equality outcomes and other equality strategies, using their influence to ensure action was taken.

At a national level, there is currently only information available on gender diversity of governing bodies. In January 2015, 34 per cent of all governing body members across Scotland were women. This figure reflects progress in gender diversity made by institutions in 2014.

Over 70 per cent of governors surveyed felt that there were challenges to increasing the diversity of HEI governing bodies.

Most participants described their governing body as predominantly male, with a few exceptions.
Some participants described their governing bodies as being not diverse in terms of race, while a minority said that they have members from minority ethnic backgrounds. Racial diversity of governing bodies was seen as either a particular challenge, or an issue that had not been given much attention to date. Some saw a conflict between the racial diversity of their student body and the lack of racial diversity at governance level.

Many respondents noted that members of governing bodies below 50 years old are underrepresented. Suggested issues in attracting younger members included time off from work and remuneration.

Disability was rarely mentioned in the research. A minority of survey respondents mentioned having disabled members on their board.

Interviews included discussion of ‘seen’ versus ‘unseen’ characteristics, and a lack of monitoring information meaning only the former could be known at present.

Several participants expressed concern that gender was being prioritised over other protected characteristic groups in board diversity discourse and wider equality initiatives.

The Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (the Code) has had considerable impact on prompting work to increase diversity in institutions, for many, initiating this work, and for others, providing an extra push.

The action being taken to increase the diversity of governing bodies can be described as positive action, which seeks to alleviate disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic, reduce underrepresentation in relation to particular activities, or meet particular needs.

A number of interviewees spoke about how diversity had been included in governance effectiveness reviews, which involved governing body participation.

Many institutions had recently introduced equality monitoring of their governing body members, or were planning to do so soon. Some had introduced monitoring across all of the protected characteristics. Monitoring diversity was seen as enabling
accurate analysis of the diversity of the governing body and better targeting of underrepresentation. However, some institutions had experienced challenges when introducing equality monitoring of their governing bodies.

- All HEIs have met the Code requirement to establish a policy and goals on diversity. The research found that not all of these were published on institutions’ websites, some were more measurable than others and most related only to gender diversity. Notable examples encompassed the whole of the governing body membership, included numeric goals and extended beyond gender.

**Broadening applicant pools** (page 64)

- One issue highlighted was the impact of the underrepresentation of women at senior levels within corporate and other sectors on the pool of women qualified to be independent members.

- A number felt that the skills and experience traditionally sought when appointing independent members could be limiting the pool of women candidates.

- Several secretaries described how their governing bodies had agreed to refocus or relax selection criteria that may favour men by changing the kind of background and experience required to widen the applicant pool.

- Introduction of external advertising was seen to be of benefit in increasing transparency and attracting a more diverse range of applicants.

- All institutions had reevaluated their advertisements to seek to attract a wider pool of applicants. Revisions included: addition of an equality statement, emphasis on a desire for diversity in governing body membership, revision of style and language to appeal to a wider range of people, and explicitly welcoming applications from women or other groups underrepresented on the governing body.

- Many institutions had tried using targeted websites or media to host advertisements.

- Although it is not current practice, several secretaries and related staff told us that they were considering using headhunters in future to source diverse candidates.
Executive summary

Raising awareness of the role of governor (page 72)

- There was a general sense among several interviewees that there is not enough awareness among wider communities about the role of the university governor, or there were misconceptions about who serves on a university governing body, which could discourage some groups from applying.

- A common theme in the interviews was the need to increase understanding of the role of a university governor and the benefits this role can bring to the individual, communities and employers.

- Engagement with the local community to raise awareness of the university’s role in the community and the opportunity to become a university governor was suggested. Several suggested that more could be done to work with employers to emphasise the benefits to them and their staff of university governor positions.

Elections and appointments to the governing body (page 75)

- One of the most frequently cited challenges to increasing diversity of the governing body was the limited influence the institution has over the diversity of the members that are elected to the governing body from particular constituencies.

- A number of institutions had taken steps to seek to encourage diversity in elections and external appointments to the governing body. These mainly related to working with those constituents responsible for electing or appointing to emphasise the desirability of having a diverse range of election candidates.

- There was comment on the role of the nominations committee in the selection of governors, and the importance of its awareness of equality and diversity. Several participants mentioned a need for more training that goes beyond equitable processes for those involved in recruitment and selection of governors.

- Several participants mentioned the need for institutions to think more carefully about board procedures that may disadvantage or discourage certain protected characteristic groups from becoming governors, for example, timing of meetings.
Executive summary: recommendations

The following recommendations have been drawn from the practice of institutions involved in the research.

By sharing existing learning and practice within institutions, these recommendations are intended to help institutions reflect on their current practice and support development.

Assurance of equality by governing bodies

= Provide governors with information on their equality responsibilities as part of their induction and ongoing development. Include information on:
  
  – why equality is important to the institution, for example, ethos, mission, values, reputation, risk
  
  – the Equality Act’s 2010 public sector equality duty and Scottish specific duties, and how the institution is responding to these, for example, the institution’s published equality outcomes
  
  – the structure or framework for equality within the institution, for example, committees involved, specialist staff, any champions and what they should expect to see reported to them
  
  – how progress on equality is measured by the governing body, for example, any equality KPIs

= Review the awareness and understanding of equality among existing governors and provide additional training and development where necessary. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, assess development needs on an individual basis.

= Ensure there is a clear and effective link between any equality committee, or other committees with equality responsibilities, and the governing body, and that information on progress is communicated to and addressed by the governing body regularly. Ideas include:
  
  – appoint an independent governor to the committee to feed back to the governing body
  
  – give opportunity for the equality committee to request discussion of equality matters at governing body meetings
  
  – promote discussion rather than noting of equality committee minutes and matters arising at governing body meetings

= Mainstream consideration of equality across committees, for example, through including on cover sheets.
Executive summary

- Consider involving the governing body in the development of the institution’s equality outcomes (next set to be published in 2017) to support increased engagement with equality.

- Ensure equality receives sufficient agenda time as appropriate through the year.

- Review annual reports to ensure they allow the governing body to effectively review the institution’s progress on the specific duties in line with reporting requirements.

- To ensure the EIA duty is being met:
  - include an equality impact statement or report on papers going to the governing body and ensure governors question and quality check this information
  - ensure the governing body undertakes EIA, in a proportionate form, during their own decision or policy-making

- Promote engagement between the institution’s equality staff and the governing body, for example, invite equality staff to present to the governing body or to run a training session.

- Establish or strengthen the executive’s role in the assurance of equality, and their links to the governing body.

- Consider designating a senior manager, who is a member of the governing body, as an equality champion.

- Ensure the language of any information provided and discussion on equality and diversity moves beyond a discourse of compliance with equality law to one of equality and diversity being part of the institutional mission and ethos, and therefore a core element of the governing body’s role.

### Increasing the diversity of the governing body

#### Policy and goals

- Establish and publish a clear policy on governing body diversity.

- Set and publish measurable goals to increase the percentage of independent members that are women, and the percentage that share other protected characteristics where possible, ensuring that individuals cannot be indentified.

- Consider developing goals that encompass the whole of the governing body membership.
Executive summary

Recruitment and selection of independent members

= Introduce or continue collection of equality monitoring information on both existing members and applicants to the governing body for all protected characteristics. Provide the rationale for this activity and assurance of confidentiality to encourage disclosure.

= Analyse monitoring data at least annually to identify underrepresentation of any groups and/or progress on goals using benchmarking data, such as staff and student data or regional Scottish census data.

= Address diversity in governing body effectiveness review processes.

= Include diversity in the governing body skills matrix.

Developing the pool of external candidates

= Demystify the role and publicise the benefits of being a university governor, including the skills that can be developed.

= Be clear on the requirements, for example, time commitments, number and timing of meetings, compensation available.

= Work with communities to raise awareness of the role of the university in the community, and the role of the university governor within this.

= Work with employers to increase awareness of the professional development benefits of university board positions, secure their flexibility for their employees to serve as governors, and to publicise vacancies to their employees.

Recruitment and selection of independent members

= Implement a raft of measures aimed at increasing the number of members from groups underrepresented on the governing body.

= Consider broadening the skills and experience required to attract women and other underrepresented groups. In the person specification focus on relevant skills, underlying competencies and personal capabilities and not proven career experience.

= Reevaluate advertisement wording and style to attract diversity.

= Emphasise the skills and development opportunities that a governing body position offers.

= Advertise vacancies widely, and in targeted media, to reach underrepresented groups.
Executive summary

= Also use existing networks to publicise vacancies and source diverse candidates.

= Ensure transparent and unbiased selection processes for new members, for example, through selection panel training and ensuring gender-balanced selection panels.

Elected and externally appointed members

= Communicate the governing body’s commitment to increase its diversity to all electing constituents, including the senate, academic council and students’ association, and request their support in achieving this.

= Work with these electing constituents to support them to increase the diversity of their elections to the governing body.

= Communicate the governing body’s commitment to increase its diversity to external constituents that appoint members to the governing body, such as local authorities.
Introduction

For HEIs to be inclusive, governing bodies need to play a key role in ensuring equality and diversity are central to the institution’s mission and strategy.

HEIs operate in an increasingly competitive and global market, and at the same time place significant importance in promoting the common good. This requires them to be inclusive of all sections of society, and responsive to staff and students from different cultures and backgrounds, and with different needs. Equality and diversity are thus increasingly central to the missions and strategies of HEIs.

As the governing body is ultimately responsible for the institution’s mission and strategy, it is therefore responsible for ensuring that equality and diversity are advanced in support of that mission and strategy.

Moreover, ultimate responsibility for meeting the Equality Act 2010’s public sector equality duty and its Scottish duties lies with the governing body. Assurance of equality is therefore a core part of university governance.

Aligned to this role is the diversity of the governing body itself. It is commonly accepted that a governing body that is representative of the diversity of the community it serves is more inclusive in its decision-making, and better enabled to help the institution improve performance.

‘The position the chair and I are taking is we recognise that it is a good thing in terms of the governance. Diversity in all of its aspects is good from the point of view of governance.’

University principal

Further reading


Project background

ECU is funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to support HEIs in Scotland to advance equality and diversity. Our work in Scotland is guided by sector priorities in relation to equality and diversity.

During 2012/13, the Code was developed and introduced as recommended by the Report of the review of higher education governance in Scotland. This Code required HEIs to establish
policies and goals on the diversity of their governing body membership.

Concurrently, HEIs met the Scottish specific duties for the first time in 2013, which included setting ambitious equality outcomes to achieve by 2017. These duties brought in a raft of new aspects of compliance requiring assurance by governing bodies.

In partnership with CSC, ECU undertook a research project over the course of 2014/15 to support Scottish HEI governing bodies to meet these new equality and diversity requirements through:

- effective oversight of work to advance equality within their institutions
- seeking to increase the diversity of their membership

The project intended to contribute to the programme of development and implementation of the Code being led by the CSC and complement existing guidance on effective assurance and board diversity with information specific to Scottish HEI governing bodies.

With assistance from the CSC and Scottish Universities Secretaries Group an advisory group was formed to guide the project. Composition of the group is noted in the acknowledgments section to this report. The group met twice throughout the project.

Further reading


Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance can be found at: www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk
Research overview

The project comprised desk-based research followed by an online survey and interviews with a range of governors, chairs, secretaries and related staff from Scottish HEIs.

Desk research

The desk research searched for approaches being taken to governing body diversity by:

- Scottish HEIs
- HEIs from the rest of the UK
- UK public and private sector organisations
- HEIs outside of the UK

Online survey

Two versions of the survey were circulated in November 2014; one for governors and chairs and one for secretaries and related staff.

- 20 per cent of all governing body members in Scotland responded to the governors’ survey (80 of 393), including 36 per cent of chairs (seven of 19).
- Just over half of responses (41) were from independent governors. Twelve staff and seven student governors also responded, as well as governors from a range of other categories.
- 47 per cent of secretaries (nine of 19) responded to the secretaries’ survey. Five related staff also responded.
- As responses were anonymous, the spread of institutions across responses is unknown.

Table 1: online survey participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent member</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student representative</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate assessor</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-academic staff representative</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal and vice-chancellor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General council assessor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other academic staff representative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local council assessor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior vice-principal/other senior management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governors</strong></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary to the university</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk to court</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secretaries and related staff</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall total</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

Twenty-one interviews were conducted, including seven with secretaries or related staff, two with principals, and 12 with governors. These encompassed at least one governor, chair or secretary from 60 per cent of Scottish HEIs (11 of 19).

Table 2: number of interview participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary to the university</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent member</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and vice-chancellor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic staff representative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni representative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student representative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General council assessor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research questions

The research asked questions on:

- how governing bodies satisfy themselves that their institutions are complying with equality law and making progress on equality
- challenges of, and current practice in, increasing the diversity of governing bodies
- what further guidance would be welcomed, from ECU or elsewhere
Assurance of equality by governing bodies

At the highest level, equality and diversity are intrinsic to the mission and strategies of institutions.

It follows that equality is encompassed in the governing body’s role to develop, approve and oversee that strategy.

‘The starting point is our strategy, in terms of what we have said in our strategy about equality and diversity. For example, our strategy... says that our inclusiveness embraces diversity by valuing and respecting... all our colleagues and students... That is the starting point for our public sector equality duty.’

Chair

From a legal perspective, the Scottish specific duties of the Equality Act 2010’s public sector equality duty brought in a new set of requirements for HEIs in 2011. These include:

- mainstreaming, or integrating equality across the institution
- setting and achieving equality outcomes that improve people’s life chances (students and staff)
- assessing the impact on equality of all new or revised strategies, policies and practices

Ultimate responsibility for their fulfilment lies with the governing body of the institution. Governors therefore need to be satisfied that the institution is taking appropriate action to meet these duties, and that this action is proving effective. While it is for the executive to implement activity to meet the duties, to establish and manage the relevant staff and structures, and to ensure day-to-day compliance with the law, it is for the governing body to satisfy itself that activity is being implemented effectively, that the appropriate structures are in place, and that the institution is compliant with the law.

‘This is a legal requirement, that these are the specific duties in Scotland, this is why we have to have these various reports produced. This is a court responsibility.’

Independent governor
This research asked participants a range of questions to seek to better understand how governing bodies in Scotland satisfy themselves that their institutions are delivering on equality, including the Scottish specific duties, what mechanisms they use and how effective these are.
Overall, the majority (61 per cent) of survey respondents felt that their governing body did not face any challenges in overseeing that their institution met the Scottish specific duties. Many interview participants agreed.

‘We get the reports and we get the issues. We get written reports, and the committee chair would speak to that report at court. I’m not sure what else you would need.’

Independent governor

‘I think the current structure is working well. Like everything, it’s got scope for improvement.’

Independent governor

Some interview participants were less certain that their current systems for assurance were entirely fit for purpose, but were clear that they were working to improve things.

‘I will not suggest for a second that I’m comfortable with our level of assurance or the way that we are working to ensure that we are completely compliant with the legislation at the moment, but we’re working towards it.’

Chair

Knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity among governors was highlighted by many in this research as important in enabling effective assurance of equality.

‘One way or another, one needs to be satisfied of the appropriate background knowledge.’

Chair

There was a high level of reported awareness of equality responsibilities among governors. Ninety-two per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their governing body is aware of its legal responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity.
Table 3: awareness of a governing bodies’ legal responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
<th>Blank</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some governors spoke about their own experience of equality and diversity in their professional lives, which assisted them in oversight of equality within the institution.

‘I feel that I can say with complete honesty and accuracy that I have operated in an environment of equality for my entire professional career.’

Chair

‘Well I think it goes with the territory of working in the public sector and also having a leadership responsibility.’

Independent governor

Several governors in interviews demonstrated a very good understanding of their institutions’ work to meet the specific duties, including their equality outcomes. These governors tended to be involved in an equality committee, but not exclusively.

‘We have an equality and diversity committee action plan, which evaluates the outcomes that are set out in the university’s mainstreaming report. This is something that’s going to be reporting fully in April.’

Independent governor

However, some involved in the research thought that not all governors had a thorough understanding of their role in equality, though they felt their understanding had increased.
A range of factors that influenced governors’ understanding were reported in the survey.

- Some felt that the current lack of diversity of their courts impacted on knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity among the members.
- Others felt that some governors are not on campus often enough to be aware of the issues.
- Several mentioned that governors from the public sector had more prior knowledge than those from the private sector.

‘Those who come from the public sector, like schools in Scotland and the health service and the local authorities. They’re more experienced in this area. Whereas I think those who come from the private sector or are self-employed, it’s a new dimension to them.’

Independent governor

One governor reflected that more information at this point would be helpful, given the shift in equality law and the policy context in Scotland.

‘It is a complex area that the legal requirements, what’s happening, the extra duties within Scotland, the context and the bodies, the reports that have to be given, the work across university... I think that now is the time.’

Independent governor

There was reflection from one secretary on whether their institution had given enough thought to their governors’ understanding of equality.

‘Whether or not they truly understand it, I’m not sure. You hope that they do if you’re consistently providing them with information, but I don’t think we’ve ever stopped and asked them; do you truly understand what your responsibilities are in this area?’

Secretary

Some interviewees mentioned that their institution actively sought independent governors who were committed to equality and diversity. They saw this as helpful in ensuring they would take an active interest in assurance of equality in their roles.
’We actually say in the specifications... “You will be supportive of the university’s ethos, mission, and values, and be committed to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.” That’s something we actually set out.’

Independent member

However, there was not the same scope to put such requirements in place for elected members.

‘A lot of court members come to us because of the positions that they hold. I would say that within our independent members, those that come through a system of recruitment, we can be quite rigorous and quite sure that they have got cultural awareness around equality.’

Chair

Induction, training and development

Induction

Induction materials in relation to equality varied, but mostly comprised of provision of information on the institution’s equality reports.

‘Mostly members are very aware of public duties, so we give them an overview of the reports that they will receive and the opportunities they’ll have to ask about our approach to equality and diversity.’

Secretary

Some governors could not recall having received such induction material, particularly those who had been on the board for a number of years.

‘I’m going back. I don’t think so. I don’t think I received that as part of the induction into court. I mean I could be mistaken because obviously you just get a whole lot of information.’

Independent governor

One chair suggested that one-to-one induction processes could be used to assess individual training needs of governors.

‘There is a separate induction process on a one-to-one basis, conducted by the secretary of court... and he does a one-to-one induction process with each member of court... a very good starting point is through that one-to-one induction process.’

Chair
Training and briefing sessions

Just under three quarters of secretary respondents stated that governors had not received equality and diversity training from their institution.

Table 4: equality and diversity training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Blank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some explained that there had been one-off presentations to the governing body or other committees about equality requirements, which had functioned as governor development.

‘As part of our extended meetings and strategy days, we had a session on equality and diversity about a year and a half or so ago. So (that is) where court’s been reminded and apprised of its role in these matters.’

Secretary

‘There are, however, presentations. As it happens, I was at one last week, which was a presentation by the head of human resources (HR)... and the head of equality and diversity.’

Chair

Such one-off sessions did not reach all governors; one governor explained that they had missed an equality briefing, but had taken the initiative to find information themselves.

‘Other than what I have done of my own initiative, I am not aware that anyone has directly come to me and said... “Here is the equality and diversity strategy.” And so on and so forth. Having said that, I think there was a briefing of court earlier last year before I joined it, so I feel like that may have been covered for everyone else then.’

General council assessor
Assessing development needs

Some interviewees felt that governors had sufficient knowledge of equality from their previous roles and experience so induction and training were not necessarily required.

‘It hasn’t been part of our induction process to date. Those who come on to court, of course, tend to be people who have been in similar roles in other organisations... although my feeling is... that in a variety of ways, the people concerned are alert and aware of the issues, but it’s an issue which I shall certainly be investigating.’

Chair

Several research participants felt that more training for governors would help them to better meet their equality responsibilities.

‘More training for governing body members should be provided to ensure that all members have an understanding of their responsibilities.’

Survey respondent

‘It is a complex area. I think people have to be gently informed of this and their responsibilities.’

Independent governor

Several secretaries and related staff had given some thought to further training needs.

‘We’re looking at how we do more on induction and development of our court members, and it might be that that’s certainly on the list of things that... I think there could be sessions that we run for them.’

Secretary

Interviews revealed a number of considerations regarding developing equality training and development for governors.

= Training needs to be proportionate. Governors make a large time commitment and have many aspects of the institution’s work to oversee.

= Some reflected that it might be wise not take a one-size-fits-all approach but to ascertain on an individual basis whether new and/or existing members would benefit from training.
= Training and development needs should be periodically reviewed since effective practice in and understanding of equality and diversity continually evolves.

= There was a reservation that training does not always address attitudes and cultural awareness, and can be a tick-box exercise.

**University of Dundee**

The university provides the following to its new governors:

= an induction day, which covers issues of equality and diversity

= a court handbook, which contains information on equality and diversity

= a copy of the equality outcomes plan and an update on progress at the present time

= mandatory online equality training that all members must complete within their first six to nine months in post

‘I think the online training modules provide a good basis to contribute and to get a sense of what the university is trying to achieve in this area. It’s just something that we require them to do. We ask the same of our academic and support staff, so from that perspective, I think it’s only right that court members should do the same as a training package.’

**University of Edinburgh**

The university took the following approach in light of the introduction of the Equality Act 2010.

= They brought in external consultants to work with their vice-principal on equality and diversity to present interactive seminars to court.

= These covered what that legislation means, what the court’s responsibilities are, and how it might approach it.

= The seminars were delivered before court meetings, with a lunch to bridge the two together. This ensured good attendance.

‘It was very much a case of not the dry, “This is just what the legislation says.” It was really about bringing out some of the potential issues for the HE sector and how the university might approach that.’
Abertay University

One governor mentioned a short paper they had recently received on their institution’s equality work, which they felt was a helpful awareness raising tool.

‘...just a very simple paper that outlined the equality and diversity framework at the university to inform court members of the national and legal context, and also a description of what was happening within the university including the work of all the committees involved.’

This paper was designed to put the different parts of the institution’s equality work into context and to enable the court to see how these different parts fit together.

‘We have reports coming into the court on equality and diversity initiatives and developments so it puts these into context rather than just separate and unconnected activities that are happening.’

The paper ‘was presented to a full court meeting.’

University of St Andrews

The university worked on an internally consulted report entitled ‘Equalities compliance: university court’. This outlined its approach to assurance of equality by its court, including:

- the court members’ handbook was reviewed in February 2015, taking into account enhanced equality performance areas, such as ensuring that appropriate and effective arrangements are in place for promoting equality of opportunity in respect of students, staff and other persons making use of university services or facilities.

- the further information/particulars for non-executive court membership were updated to include following statement:

‘In keeping with the university’s equality policy to advance equality of opportunity under the Equality Act (2010), role holders are expected to ensure that their decision-making is inclusive for all staff, students and visitors regardless of age; gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity (including paternity); race (colour, ethnic or national background); religion or belief (including non-belief); sex/gender; sexual orientation; caring responsibilities; and socioeconomic background.’
Assurance of equality by governing bodies

Equality committees

Committees, including equality and diversity committees or equivalent groups, were noted by the majority of interviewees as the key mechanism for assurance of equality. Dedication of a specific committee or equivalent was seen as a sign of the importance the governing body places on assurance of equality.

‘I suppose, ultimately (assurance of equality is) exercised through the committee structure.’

Secretary

‘Well, I suppose in the simplest terms, they delegate some of the responsibility, not their accountabilities but the responsibilities assuring that to the equality and diversity committee.’

Secretary

‘(It) is a sign of how seriously courts take the issue, namely that they are prepared to have a regular dedicated committee devoted to (equality).’

Chair

Twelve out of 14 secretary respondents said that their institution had an equality committee or equivalent. The place of these committees in the governance structure varied between institutions. Some are subcommittees of court while others report to other committees, which in turn report to court, or to the executive. In some institutions, equality is overseen by an HR or student-related committee.

‘Our court has a subgroup, a subcommittee, which is called equality and diversity committee. That one is chaired by our university secretary. That group is concerned with... the monitoring, and assurance of equality within the university.’

University principal

‘We have interest groups in the institution around gender or race equality or disability equality. They feed into the university’s equality and diversity working group, where we tend to pull work together from an executive and managerial perspective, and then that feeds into the HR committee as the first governance committee and then, ultimately, to court.’

Secretary


**Role of equality committees in assurance**

Research participants were asked about the role of the equality committee or equivalent group in assurance of equality. The following responses were recorded:

- monitoring performance of the equality duties, including progress on equality outcomes
- drafting and working towards an equality action plan
- reviewing an annual report on equality
- analysis and monitoring of equality data
- reviewing and revising activity (such as the implementation of policies)
- promoting equality mainstreaming
- receiving and reviewing completed EIAs

Equality committees were not seen as discharging the governing body’s ultimate responsibility for assurance of equality, but handling the more day-to-day oversight of the institution’s equality work.

‘We are very well aware that university court cannot advocate its responsibilities to the committee. We receive things like the most recent report on all the actions that need taking and we go through it in detail and then we give a sobering feedback into the court.’

Independent governor

Some interviewees explained how progress on the specific duties was being assured through the committee structure to the governing body.

‘For example, we recently had an HR committee just last week where there was a report from our head of equality and diversity, which highlighted the actions arising from the revised outcomes plan, stated the impacts of those outcomes and the kinds of indicators that we might require to measure those impacts. That then was discussed at the HR committee. The HR committee will then report on that up to the court.’

Secretary
Assurance of equality by governing bodies

This arrangement was seen as providing opportunity for more detailed consideration of equality than was possible at governing body meetings.

‘Ultimately, we probably have more of a debate and much more of an in-depth discussion at the HR committee because it’s one part of a smaller agenda than you could possibly have at the court itself.’

Secretary

However, there was some concern that there was too much delegation of responsibility for equality, and oversight of the specific duties, to committees.

‘I suppose there is a balance between the delegation of authority to the committee and the court itself having oversight. I think, probably given the way that this agenda is moving, the court itself will need to take more of an interest than it currently does directly in the equality and diversity side of things. If I was being critical, I think it’s probably slightly more reliant on the committee.’

Secretary

Those that did not have a committee with specific responsibility for equality explained a more direct role for the governing body in overseeing progress.

‘The decision was taken that we wanted to mainstream it... At the moment I would say it would be the court (who would have oversight of equality), so therefore the reports in relation to equality and our progress in relation to complying with the Act would come to the court.’

Chair

Equality committee links with the governing body

Some interviewees felt that when the relationship between the equality committee and the governing body was more direct, for example, as a subcommittee of court, this helped to ensure the governing body was aware of its equality responsibilities and the equality work of the institution.

‘I think that they are aware because the equality committee is a subcommittee of court.’

University principal
Most interviewees described a system where minutes and matters arising from equality committee meetings would be reviewed by the governing body, and often discussed.

‘What happens is each committee puts a front sheet with points to raise, for the committee, to report up the line. So we review the minutes of the committees. We also have a sheet at the front that tells us main points that they wish us to review particularly.’

Staff governor

‘We receive usually a few items through the agenda highlighted as being ones that we are likely to want to discuss – not that that debars us from discussing any of the ones that haven’t been highlighted; if we want to discuss anything that the committee has been talking about, we’re perfectly free to do so.’

Chair

Some institutions also made sure that discussion was held on updates from the equality committee at governing body meetings.

‘Whenever the minutes go to court, we never just say... “Please note the minutes.” We always have a discussion about it. It is really encouraging to see that the governors ask really pertinent, searching questions. They don’t just accept what they hear. That always takes us a step further as well.’

University principal

One institution had established a further mechanism through which the relevant committees could link into and shape the governing body meeting agenda.

‘The conveners of the main committees meet with myself, the principal and the secretary of court a couple of weeks or so before each court meeting to finalise the court agenda. But also, I introduced a thing that we talk about the five most important things that are currently ongoing. So there’s an opportunity for any convener to pitch up and say... “Look, I think we need to be talking about this on a wider basis.”’

Chair
A number of equality committees had one or more independent members of governing bodies on the group. Interviewees felt that this worked well in ensuring that the equality work being undertaken by the institution was fed back to the governing body, and the interests of the governing body were represented at the committee.

‘The current vice-chair of court is on that committee, so is well versed in it.’

Independent governor

‘We have a very good court member who is on the group and who usually does the reporting back to court.’

Chair

‘Their (the court’s) interests are represented on that committee by court members that have been appointed to the committee... her role is very much to see what the implications are from a court perspective.’

Secretary

**Champions on equality committees**

Some participants told us that senior management champions had recently been appointed to equality committees to improve the functioning of the committee.

‘After some restructuring of my senior team, I decided to ask one particular person, the university secretary, to take over the chair of this group. I asked her for two reasons. One is because I thought, simply, personally, she was the right person who wanted to change things. Secondly, also her position of being the university secretary, for me, really guaranteed the right, I don’t know whether you call it transit or not, but the right link between the court and the rest of the university. I think it is going well.’

University principal

‘I think we did have a point at which the equality and diversity working group that sits underneath the HR committee... I wouldn’t say it was moribund, but it perhaps wasn’t as active as it could be, and I think we’ve tried to address that by identifying a senior management champion to help really push that agenda along.’

Secretary
Mainstreaming equality across other committees

Assurance of equality by governing bodies

‘The equality and diversity committee is currently chaired by the university secretary. It means it’s taken more seriously because there’s a top person in charge of it.’

Independent governor

Some interviewees felt that responsibility for equality featured in other committees’ work, depending on the meeting agenda. This was seen as an effective way of mainstreaming equality across the functions of the institution, as is required by the Scottish specific duties.

‘Capital expenditure, in the university... goes through a process that there has to be a capital plan or a special circumstance. It then has to go through the estates committee, and we then get a report. That will record whether or not there are any equality implications in that particular project. I mention that simply to make the point that at a more granular level, information on implications comes through in different ways.’

Chair
Assurance mechanisms

A range of mechanisms were used by governing bodies to satisfy themselves that equality requirements were being met by the institution. Most commonly reported among these was the approval of relevant policies, strategies and reports (75 per cent), including equality outcomes and mainstreaming reports. Least common was equality and diversity staff attending meetings (27 per cent).

Table 5: assurance mechanisms used by the governing body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assurance mechanism</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approving relevant policies, strategies and reports</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and diversity appears as appropriate on meeting agendas</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting and reviewing progress on performance indicators for equality</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing equality monitoring data on staff and students</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing an annual report on progress on the specific duties</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring the governing body’s formulation of policy/decisions are equality impact assessed where relevant</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring equality impact assessment is taking place across the institution</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and diversity staff attend meetings to provide updates</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One survey respondent noted that:

‘A mixture of the above measures (listed in the question) ensure the court has a good understanding of the university’s performance in relation to the duties.’
Approving relevant policies, strategies and reports

There are a number of policies, strategies and reports relating to equality that a governing body should approve. This includes the strategy and reports required by the Scottish specific duties:

= the equality outcomes set by the institution every four years (the first in 2013)
= biennial progress report/s on mainstreaming equality, staff equality data and its equality outcomes (first in 2013)
= biennial reports on equal pay and occupational segregation information (first in 2013)

Institutions choose to report on these duties in different ways. Some publish one report encompassing all requirements, others publish separate reports.

Three quarters of survey respondents indicated that approving relevant policies, strategies and reports in relation to equality was a key assurance mechanism employed by their governing body.

Some interviewees spoke about how their governing bodies had been involved in the process of setting the institution’s equality outcomes before publication in 2013. This was mainly at the approval stage rather than in the development of the outcomes.

‘Well, court would be consulted and told about the process for creating the equality outcomes. Then what would happen is they would come back to court for approval, and court would then agree the reporting requirements, so court has oversight of these things.’

Independent governor

‘I would say it’s more a ratification. I think it would be misleading of me to suggest that our court has had major, major discussions about the detail or direction of some of these policies or schemes... I’m not saying that’s right and I’m not saying that’s wrong, but I think that’s how it has been.’

Chair

However, some described how governors had also been involved in the development of the outcomes.

‘The discussions on equality, diversity, widening participation and internationalisation at the 2013 all-staff event in which 60 per cent
of [the institution's] staff participated, also fed into the process which began with a workshop to fully engage the board of governors and the executive group.’

Mainstreaming report, 2013

Progress reports on outcomes were similarly approved by the governing body. A key role was played by the equality committee in this, with final approval from the governing body.

‘The equality action plan, equality outcomes report, we received the first draft of that in our committee in January. We had, as I say, quite a deep discussion on that... We’ll input at the next meeting on that work to the court, but the final version will come first of all to the committee to look at in detail. Then, as we said, we will bring it to the court for its approval.’

Independent governor

Mainstreaming reports were likewise approved by governing bodies. Again, equality committees had a more hands-on role in their development and review.

‘The committee would do that (review the mainstreaming report) in detail and then we would make our report into the next court. They would have to finally approve it. It won’t be available for all the members of the court to view and to see but, shall we say, the deeper nuts of it will be done by the people’s health and equalities committee.’

Independent governor

**Agenda time on equality**

The vast majority of governor survey respondents said there was not a standing agenda item on equality for governing body meetings. However, many respondents said that equality appears as appropriate on the agenda. Some mentioned that equality is a standing agenda item for the planned cycle of governing body meetings.

Interviewees confirmed that standing agenda items on equality is not standard practice. However, inclusion of some other topics as standing items, such as health and safety, had occurred recently in some institutions and parallels were drawn.
While most survey respondents (77 per cent) felt that their governing body attaches a high level of priority to assurance of equality, some interviewees reported that competing priorities could reduce the time given to equality at meetings.

‘I think there is maybe one of those issues about just how much time the governing body itself devotes to equality and diversity, and whether, sometimes, it gets slightly squeezed by other things.’

Secretary

KPIs were noted by some as key mechanisms that the governing body used to assess progress on equality. Some had KPIs on equality within strategic plans and an annual review against these.

‘The other elements that we have is that we do include some equality measures within our strategic plan, so there’s an annual reporting against that.’

Deputy secretary

‘It’s actually looking at the performance indicators and how we’re doing, how we’re being benchmarked, how we’re doing against our past performance, so they will actually see all of these figures and see the direction we’re going in.’

Independent governor

Using statistics on staff and student equality and benchmarking performance against other universities was common practice.

‘As far as equality among the staff, I know that (the university) compares itself with other universities in Scotland. See how many professors who are women or are from Scotland or different backgrounds etc, and I would say that there is quite a lot of effort at least, at a supervisory level, to get statistics and see whether they’re moving in the right direction.’

Independent governor

‘The other thing that we do is we do have facts and figures about, shall we say, things like course numbers, the makeup of the university court, the makeup of the staff in the senate because there can be diversity issues that come from those kind of figures...
Assurance of equality by governing bodies

Again, these are all things that are openly discussed (by the equality committee meets) and the figures are brought to the court.’

Independent governor

However, some survey respondents mentioned limitations to using data and benchmarking for equality, particularly in terms of insufficient data being available to enable robust monitoring of progress. There were also comments relating to the challenge of measuring progress on equality.

‘It’s about actually interrogating ourselves to say... “Can we show that we’re making progress there? Is there a way of measuring it?”’

Secretary

Annual reports

Most interviewees explained a system where governing bodies receive an annual report on equality, which is more frequent than the reporting required by the legislation. This often came from an equality and diversity committee or equivalent group. Most felt this system worked well.

‘From a governance perspective, one of the key actions that takes place is the annual report.’

Secretary

‘Obviously, the court has an obligation to oversee all of these types of issues, so we’d expect to be receiving a report, at least once a year, in relation to how we are fulfilling those obligations.’

Independent governor

The link between annual reports and the reporting required by the Scottish specific duties was made by some. They were aware that a report would be coming to their governing body in advance of the April 2015 specific duties reporting deadline. Others were less aware of how these required reports would be coming to the governing body.

‘We are due to report on progress against our targets, I am not sure of the exact date... I know that that is coming up on the court’s agenda, that report. So I am aware that is one way that we do it.’

General council assessor
Several mentioned how their governing body would interrogate annual reports to be assured that equality duties were being met, and might request further information.

‘Certainly, some of the board members, over the last few years, as they’ve looked at the annual report, have asked questions where they felt certain things we were writing might be open to a more adverse interpretation.’

Secretary

‘We ask the questions. We interrogate the report.’

Independent governor

‘The board are proactive, as appropriate, in asking for additional information, so I think at that level at least, we are providing information that makes the board either reassured or able to ask for more and then receive.’

Secretary

Some highlighted the importance of keeping reports brief for the governing body.

‘The board, I don’t think, necessarily want to see a great depth of numbers. They want to see the broad approach.’

Secretary

‘We want sufficient data but we don’t want too much paper.’

Secretary

**Robert Gordon University (RGU)**

The RGU Board receives an annual report on equality, which is structured to report against progress on the university’s equality outcomes. They receive this in March each year, to enable biennial publication in April, as required by the duties. The board took an active role in deciding on this approach.

‘The board decided that rather than just receive a report on the equality outcomes every two years, they would like an annual report on the outcomes to monitor progress in between the years that we were publishing information.’
Equality impact assessment (EIA)

EIA refers to the process of ensuring current and future policies and practices are assessed proactively to prevent negative impact and promote positive impact for protected characteristic groups. EIA is a legal requirement for all new and revised policies, practices and procedures.

In practice, the work of EIA is an operational matter for the executive. Nonetheless, governors need to be satisfied that the process is taking place in a meaningful and effective way across the institution. They also need to ensure their own formulation of policy is assessed for impact where relevant. For instance, in developing a strategy or approving a policy, the impact (if any) on students or staff of different protected characteristics should be anticipated, and any disproportionate impact avoided or mitigated where possible.

Some interviewees described how the results of EIA processes were reported to an equality committee or equivalent group rather than the governing body.

‘I think these come to the HR committee, but don’t come to court.’
Chair

Most governors had not personally been involved in EIA in their roles as governors. There were also very few examples of the court itself using EIA in its own decision-making, such as in approving new strategy.

‘No I haven’t been involved personally and I am not aware that the court has either.’
General council assessor

There were suggestions that EIA of new strategies and policies is not consistently robust, particularly in relation to use of evidence and involvement of staff and students, and unions where appropriate.

However, a number mentioned that papers that came to the governing body included information on any potential equality impacts, which may then be discussed by the court.
‘We’re not involved directly in doing any of that, but we do see in all the proposals that come for approval that it has been done and any implications that there are.’

Independent governor

‘When papers come to the court, there’s a summary paper sheet and part of that summary paper sheet is the comments on the equality impact assessment. The expectation is that it’s done by, shall we say, the university executives and those involved in the university.’

Independent governor

One chair stressed the importance that the governing body quality assures this equality impact information.

‘We also have to really quality check those... How do we get that then is about questioning the assumptions, so into the impact assessment, and getting assurance that the assessment has been carried out thoroughly and hasn’t just been addressed by... “Yes, we’ve thought about equalities, we can tick the box.”’

Chair

Inclusion of equality impact information in board papers was not standard practice in all institutions, and there was a call for the results of EIA for strategic decisions to be more visible to governors.

‘One thing that we don’t do, is there is not an equality impact statement on court papers, and that is something that might well be helpful... particularly if there are big decisions being made or whatever, it would be nice to know that the EIA has taken place and what it said.’

General council assessor

Some governors explained that they ensured they asked at meetings whether an EIA had taken place.

‘I think to be fair certainly quite often equality is referenced in discussions but on the other hand I think sometimes, it is because people like me say, “has this analysis been carried out with a view to gender difference, in terms of what’s happening or whatever?”’

General council assessor
One interviewee commented that training for those operationally involved was the key to assurance of EIA.

‘I think that a lot of the work that we need to do is to get assurance that those people that we are asking to do EIAs are appropriately trained and assessed as being fit to be able to conduct them thoroughly, rigorously, to give us that assurance, and that’s a big piece of work.’

Chair

**University of Edinburgh: EIA in court papers**

The university uses a standard template for all papers that come to court and through any lower level committees. This includes a specific section that asks how equality and diversity issues have been investigated and/or addressed within the particular issue that is being brought to a decision.

**Further reading**


**Governing body engagement with equality staff**

Over half (58 per cent) of governors surveyed stated that they had direct contact with their institution’s equality and diversity staff. Just over a quarter of all survey respondents stated that equality and diversity staff have attended governing body meetings to provide updates. Interviews confirmed that this does not happen regularly. However, there were examples of equality staff presenting to their governing bodies for one-off sessions, as previously mentioned.

**Senior management role**

Several interviewees made clear the difference between the role of the governing body and the executive in assurance of equality. The relationship between the two was seen as important.

‘In the end, the court has the responsibility, but management has the job to manage. It’s our responsibility to make sure we are feeding the court the right things, we’re asking them the right questions, and we’re encouraging them to make the right decisions.’

Secretary
Leadership that clearly demonstrates the importance for embedding equality across the institution was seen as key to the governing body seeing equality as important in its role.

‘I think it does make a difference. It becomes more important. It becomes more natural, more embedded and that these things are openly discussed at the court.’

Secretary

There were a range of examples of specific mechanisms that linked the governing body and the executive or senior management in oversight of equality. One institution spoke about regular meetings between the chair and principal to discuss university business, including equality.

‘The main mechanism that I have, as chair, for discussing university business as a whole is that the principal and I meet generally once a fortnight, and that’s usually a couple of hours we meet for... That very regular meeting with the principal is actually quite an important mechanism, not just in relation to this (equality) but in relation really to keeping myself happy about the activities of the university as a whole.’

Chair

Several survey and interview participants highlighted the importance of the role of the university secretary in managing the governing body’s assurance of equality.

‘The other important role in this context is the university secretary, who will raise issues inbetween (court meetings) if something has come up.’

Independent governor

Equality champions

A number of institutions told us about systems of equality champions that had a role in assurance of equality. Some had one senior member of staff, such as a vice-principal. Others had departmental equality champions.

‘I think that vice-principal aspect has made, in terms of the wider assurance aspect, a big, big difference.’

Secretary
‘We have a vice-principal responsible for equality and diversity who attends court as well, to support court in thinking about those issues as and when necessary.’

Secretary

Senior management equality champions had a key role in overseeing the implementation of equality outcomes and other equality strategies, using their influence to ensure action was taken.

‘It’s really about somebody to champion with our equality and diversity officer the achievement of the outcomes plan. That person works with our equality and diversity officer to identify the lead responsible people and to help effectively track that we’re on course for meeting the timescales and objectives.’

Secretary

University of St Andrews

Monthly progress of the university’s ‘Single Equality Outcomes Scheme’ (April 2013-2017) is monitored by the vice-principal for governance with a monthly update meeting with the head of equality and diversity endorsed by the two new vice-principal equality and diversity champions, plus a summary provided to members of the university court throughout the year.

Vice-principal champions can be found at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/hr/edi/structure/vp-eq-champions

Beyond compliance

A recurrent theme in the interviews was the notion of moving the governing body’s relationship with equality and diversity beyond that of simple compliance. One principal felt this was already happening in their institution.

‘We never talk about the legal framework and we never talk about compliance. This is not to say that we don’t understand it. The university secretary understands it, our HR colleagues understand and in a general way I understand it without being an expert in it. But it doesn’t affect the way we run ourselves as a governing body.’

University principal
**Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been drawn from the practice of institutions involved in the research. By sharing existing learning and practice within institutions, the are intended to help institutions reflect on their current practice and support development.

= Provide governors with information on their equality responsibilities as part of their induction and ongoing development. Include information on:

− why equality is important to the institution, for example, ethos, mission, values, reputation, risk

− the Equality Act 2010’s public sector equality duty and Scottish specific duties, and how the institution is responding to these, for example, the institution’s published equality outcomes

− the structure or framework for equality within the institution, for example, committees involved, specialist staff, any champions and what they should expect to see reported to them

− how progress on equality is measured by the governing body, for example, any equality KPIs

= Review the awareness and understanding of equality among existing governors and provide additional training and development where necessary. Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, assess development needs on an individual basis.

= Ensure there is a clear and effective link between any equality committee, or other committees with equality responsibilities, and the governing body and that information on progress is communicated to and addressed by the governing body regularly. Ideas include:

− appoint an independent governor to the committee to feedback to the governing body

− give opportunity for the equality committee to request discussion of equality matters at governing body meetings

− promote discussion of equality committee minutes/matters arising at governing body meetings

= Mainstream consideration of equality across committees, for example, through including cover sheets.
Assurance of equality by governing bodies

- Consider involving the governing body in the development of the institution’s equality outcomes (next set to be published in 2017) to support increased engagement with equality.

- Ensure equality receives sufficient agenda time as appropriate through the year.

- Review annual reports to ensure they allow the governing body to effectively review the institution’s progress on the specific duties.

- To ensure the equality impact assessment duty is being met:
  - include an equality impact statement or report on papers going to the governing body and ensure governors question and quality check this information
  - ensure the governing body undertakes EIA, in a proportionate form, during their own decision or policy-making

- Promote engagement between the institution’s equality staff and the governing body, for example, invite equality staff to present to the governing body or to run a training session.

- Establish or strengthen the executive’s role in the assurance of equality, and their links to the governing body.

- Consider designating a senior manager, who is a member of the governing body, as an equality champion.

- Ensure the language of any information provided and discussion on equality and diversity moves beyond a discourse of compliance with equality law to one of equality and diversity being part of the institutional mission and ethos, and therefore a core element of the governing body’s role.
The make up of HEI governing bodies in Scotland differs between institutions. However, all include independent members directly appointed by the governing body, staff and student members elected from within the institution, and the university principal. Some also include alumni and local councillors, and five institutions have rectors.

The diversity of HEI governing bodies, as it relates to equality legislation, has received recent attention in Scotland. Following a review of higher education (HE) governance commissioned by the Scottish Government in 2011, the Code was introduced in August 2013. This sets out governance principles that must be met by all institutions. Principle nine requires governing bodies to establish goals and policies on the balance of their independent members in terms of equality and diversity, and regularly review their performance. Scottish institutions are required to comply with the Code as a condition of funding.

‘The Scottish Code of Governance, which was introduced in 2013, the new and separate one from the existing Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Code, does have a more express requirement in relation to this matter than the CUC Code.’

Chair

As a result, over the last year each Scottish governing body has taken action to develop and implement policies and achieve goals on the diversity of their independent members. Some are also looking into what can be done to improve diversity across the whole governing body, including those members elected from senate or the student body.

‘Every university, of course, has had to go through the process of ensuring that they were compliant with the new Code or could explain why they weren’t... They’ve looked at all of the areas covered, and that clearly includes the issue of equality and diversity.’

Chair

A further aspect of context to this research was the proposed new Scottish Higher Education Governance Bill, which was being consulted on at the time of the interviews. The consultation stated the Scottish government’s desire to require more of HEIs in relation to gender balance on their governing bodies, but explained that it cannot presently legislate in relation to this.
Importantly, this political context and introduction of the Code have not been the sole impetus for work to increase diversity. Indeed, the moral and business cases for diversity were expressed by interview participants.

‘The real reason we are doing it is because it is the right thing to do.’

‘The reasons for valuing diversity in all its forms... there are good business reasons for following and there are good moral reasons related to the university’s ethos of following it. All of which are much deeper than compliance with regulation.’

University principal

Some expressed how their governing bodies were already convinced of the rationale for increasing governing body diversity, and were now seeking to find ways to achieve it.

‘Just a summation of discussions among colleagues and peers about this issue is that we’re not talking about why; we’re talking about how.’

Chair

Since this research was undertaken, the CSC has committed to achieving a minimum of 40 per cent of each gender among independent members of Scottish HE governing bodies, with the remaining 20 per cent being made up of either gender. This reflects the proactive approach that has been taken by institutions since the introduction of the Code and signals the ongoing commitment to increasing diversity of governing bodies that is shared by chairs and institutions.
Women on Boards: the business case

Lord Davies’ report in 2011 outlined a clear business case for increasing the number of women on corporate boards:

- improve performance at board and business levels through input and challenge from a range of perspectives
- access and attract talent from the widest pool available
- be more responsive to market by aligning with a diverse customer base, many of whom are women
- achieve better corporate governance, increase innovation and avoid the risks of ‘group think’

Following the target set in 2011 by Lord Davies of achieving 25 per cent women in FTSE100 boards, these companies have undertaken activity to improve gender diversity of their boards. As a result, in 2014 Lord Davies reported that women now account for 20.7 per cent of board positions in the FTSE100 – up from 12.5 per cent in 2011 and 17.3 per cent in April 2013.

Further reading

Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance can be found at:  
www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk

CSC policy statement on gender diversity (April 2015) can be found at:  
www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk

Women on boards can be found at:  
www.gov.uk/government/collections/women-on-boards-reports
Diversity of governing bodies

At a national level, there is currently only information available on gender diversity of governing bodies.

In January 2015, according to institution’s websites, 34 per cent of all governing body members across Scotland were women.

**Table 6: governing body composition (January 2015)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEI</th>
<th>Male No.</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female No.</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow Caledonian</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow School of Art</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heriot-Watt University</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gordon University</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Conservatoire of Scotland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC and SAC combined)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Aberdeen</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Abertay</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Dundee</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Edinburgh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Glasgow</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the Highlands and Islands</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of St Andrews</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Stirling</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Strathclyde</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the West of Scotland</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Open University in Scotland has been excluded since its governing body is UK-wide. At the time of this review, the University of Aberdeen had three independent member vacancies.
These figures reflect progress in gender diversity of governing bodies made by institutions in 2014. This progress was reported by the CSC one year after the introduction of the Code.

- five of the last six appointments to the role of chair have been women
- 43 of the last 53 appointments to independent member roles have been women

The overall figures at the time of their report were:

- 33% of the entire membership of governing bodies were women
- 28% of chairs were women, up from 0% in 2012/13
- 32% of independent governors were women
- 37% of staff members, including academic and non-academic staff members, were women
- less than a third of student representatives were women

**Benchmarking with rest of UK HEIs**

The UK-wide picture for HE governing bodies was reported in *WomenCount: leaders in higher education* (2013). This report found that:

- 32% of all members of HE governing bodies across the UK were women
- women occupied at least 40% of board seats in almost a fifth of these governing bodies

HE governing bodies in Scotland therefore mirror these figures.

**Benchmarking with staff and student demographics**

ECU’s 2014 statistical report presents the staff and student demographics of HEIs in Scotland in 2012/13.

- 54% of staff were female
- 57% of students were female

HE governing bodies in Scotland are therefore not representative of the gender composition of their staff and student populations.
Once institutions have the necessary information, they could also benchmark against their staff and student populations in relation to race, disability and age. In 2012/13 profiles in Scottish HEIs were as follows:

- 3% of UK national staff and 25% of non-UK national staff were black or minority ethnic (BME)
- 7.6% of students were BME
- 3.4% of staff had disclosed a disability
- 8.4% of students had disclosed a disability
- 14% of staff were aged 30 and under, 80% were aged between 30 and 60, 6% were aged 60 and above
- 56% of students were aged 21 and under

**Benchmarking with public sector boards**

- In 2012, research by Women on Boards found that 27.9% of seats on public sector boards are held by women.
- In October 2014, Women on Boards re-conducted this research for internal purposes, and found that about 29% of seats on public sector boards are now held by women.

HE governing bodies in Scotland compare favourably to this figure as a whole.

**Benchmarking with local populations**

Scottish census data shows that in 2011:

- 51.5% of the population was female
- 4% of the population was minority ethnic: together, minority ethnic and white non-British groups made up 8% of the population
- 20% reported that they were limited by a long-term health problem or disability
- 17% of the population was aged 65 and over

Institutions can use the Scottish census data explorer tool to find demographic data for their local authority areas for regional benchmarking.
Over 70 per cent of governors surveyed felt that there were challenges to increasing the diversity of HEI governing bodies.

**Table 7: perceptions of challenges to increasing the diversity of governing bodies**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research participants were asked to describe the current composition of their governing bodies. Responses were varied. A number of respondents said that they do not have complete data on the protected characteristics of their governors so could not make a complete judgment.
Diversity of governing bodies

**Gender**

Survey respondents described their governing body as predominantly male or said that its gender balance ‘could be improved’.

‘Diversity in our court – the first issue is probably gender. The court is very aware of that and very open to discuss that.’

  Independent governor

A small number of some survey respondents and interviewees said that their governing body has a good gender balance.

‘We were pretty much 50/50 on a gender split and that all preceded the Code.’

  Secretary

**Race**

Some survey respondents described their governing bodies as being not diverse in terms of race, for example, saying it was ‘100 per cent white’, ‘underrepresented in terms of black and minority ethnic’, and ‘white professional’.

A minority of survey respondents said that they have members from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Racial diversity of governing bodies was seen as either a particular challenge, or an issue that had not been given much attention to date.

‘There is not much consideration given to sourcing people from different ethnic backgrounds.’

  Survey respondent

‘It has been difficult to get BME candidates to come forward.’

  Survey respondent

A couple of interviewees commented on national and local demographics making achieving more racial diversity challenging. One view, which may not be shared by all and will depend on regional context is the size of the BME population in Scotland (4 per cent).
Diversity of governing bodies

‘I think its biggest challenge is that of ethnicity. Mainly because, in Scotland particularly, there’s not a strong ethnic mix in terms of particularly Afro Caribbean and Asian populations, in the sort of roles that we recruit to court.’

Staff governor

Some interviewees saw a conflict between the racial diversity of their student body and the lack of racial diversity at governance level.

Age

Some survey respondents said that their governing body is made up of staff from varying age groups. Others said that members under 50 years old are underrepresented.

Interviewees emphasised the overrepresentation of older, retired people and underrepresentation of younger, employed people.

‘If we come back to the age thing for a second – that’s actually like a personal bee in my bonnet, when I sit round the table. I’m 57, so I’m part of that old, coming up towards retirement type.’

Independent governor

‘We have one or two younger members on the court from the business community... I think where the businesses are, maybe they don’t have the time for the university... there would be a desire to have some more younger people on the court.’

Independent governor

Survey respondents believed that there is a lack of younger members because they are:

= more likely to be working, and might not be able to negotiate the time off work
= more likely to need remuneration to afford to give their time to being a governor
= may not be aware of the existence of the role of a governor on a university court
= may perceive that they do not have the experience to be a governor
Disability was rarely mentioned in the research. A minority of survey respondents mentioned having disabled members on their board. One survey respondent said they had a discussion around disabled members planned for January 2015.

Issues around disclosure of disability were discussed by some, with suggestions that more could be done to foster an environment that supports disclosure.

Interviews included discussion of ‘seen’ versus ‘unseen’ characteristics, and a lack of monitoring information meaning only the former could be known at present. There was also reflection that most work had been focused on gender so far.

‘I think the genuine aspiration was that we should have a more diverse board in terms of other characteristics... We’ve done something on gender but for other areas there’s a lot more progress to be made.’

Secretary

‘In relation to the other protected characteristics we have not made any specific actions in relation to those. We don’t have the information and it’s not something that we’ve considered actively as a court.’

Chair

Several survey respondents and interviewees expressed concern that gender was being prioritised over other protected characteristic groups in board diversity discourse and wider equality initiatives.

‘I do think there is a bit of a focus at the moment, sector-wide, on gender, and gender being in danger of becoming the only show in town. I think the whole Athena SWAN thing has pushed that because, suddenly, there is a more statutory business reason for people taking it more seriously perhaps than they have in the past.’

Secretary

‘The current emphasis on gender balance risks marginalising other protected characteristics.’

Survey respondent
Several interviewees mentioned that the diversity of their governing body could change quite frequently due to turnover of membership.

‘The percentage of women in court fluctuates quite significantly. For example… prior to June, we actually had more than 40 per cent of court who were women. However, due to promotions, three of the seven academic members retired and were replaced by three men. The alumni elected two women, as opposed to who was retiring – one man and a woman.’

Chair

‘If you had two BME members, one of them resigns and then one of them comes to the end of their period of office, you can move from a position where you looked like you were reasonably well-represented relative to the local community to suddenly being at the pariah-end of the spectrum.’

Secretary

### Action being taken to increase diversity

1. **Establish policy and goals on diversity**
2. **Develop pool of candidates**
3. **Use measures to attract diverse applicants**
4. **Work with internal electing bodies**

---

**Diversity of governing bodies**

---

**June 2015**
The CSC’s progress review gave clear indication of action that has been taken to increase diversity since the introduction of the Code.

Several interviewees spoke about the impact of the Code in their institutions. Some were clear that the diversity of their governing body was being considered before the Code, but it had provided a helpful extra push.

‘I think, to be honest, it has probably provided an additional stimulus to the court, but many of these issues were already part of the way in which the court was moving.’

Secretary

‘Before the Code came out we actually had a commitment in our mainstreaming report saying that we had a commitment to ensure that all committees and decision-making bodies of the university were representative of their community.’

Independent governor

However, a number of interviewees felt the Code requirements on diversity had created considerable impact. Some explained how it had prompted discussion and debate that had been beneficial in developing thinking around equality and diversity.

‘Our court last year genuinely responded very positively to the Code. In terms of its own diversity, I think that the whole issue has become much more to the fore in its thinking and in its discussions. We’ve talked about it on a number of occasions at court.’

Secretary

‘It has been really healthy to test the arguments around gender.’

Secretary

**Taking positive action**

The action being taken to increase the diversity of governing bodies outlined in this section can be described as positive action.

Positive action is not positive discrimination. Positive action is legal and refers to steps that HEIs can take to alleviate disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic, reduce underrepresentation in relation to particular activities, and meet particular needs. Such measures must be proportionate to achieving the aim. For example,
encouraging more women or BME people to apply through targeted advertising or working with local community groups.

Positive discrimination, on the other hand, is illegal. For example, selecting a woman to be a governor because she is a woman rather than because she is the most suitable appointee.

Some interviewees told us that the definition between the two needed reinforcing to reassure governing bodies and their institutions as to the legality of their action.

‘We didn’t want to come over as positively discriminating, but at the same time we wanted to encourage people to apply who in the past might not have applied.’

University principal

**Queen Margaret University: policy on court diversity**

‘In undertaking any recruitment activity concerning the appointment of lay members of court, the court will have regard to equality and diversity characteristics of the court and will take positive actions to increase the likelihood of applications being submitted from applicants that would enhance the representative character of the court.’

**Identifying diversity challenges**

**Diversity as part of effectiveness reviews and the skills matrix**

A number of interviewees spoke about how diversity had been included in governance effectiveness reviews, which involved governing body participation. Diversity of the governing body had been including as an element of the skills matrix. This was seen as an effective way to mainstream equality into a wider programme of review.

‘It came about, really, through the work that we did at the last review of court effectiveness, where we were looking at the membership of the court and considering issues like diversity and the skills and experience matrix for members. We had a session at the court retreat, which is our sort of away day each year. We looked at diversity and the overarching membership of the Court and we might look to change and address that over the next wee while.’

Secretary
Diversity of governing bodies

‘The skills matrix, depending on how broadly it is interpreted, is really a skills and experience matrix. I think you can use that to look at equality and diversity.’

University principal

One institution expected that mapping the diversity of governing body membership may feed into and complement work on its skills matrix.

‘We may well end up with an equivalent diversity matrix to the skills matrix that we currently have, and then we can probably map the two against one another when we go out for new members.’

Secretary

**Monitoring diversity**

Many institutions told us that they had recently introduced equality monitoring of their governing body members, or were planning to do so soon. In most cases this was to enable them to meet the Code requirements on publishing a policy and goals on diversity. Some had introduced monitoring across all of the protected characteristics. Monitoring diversity was seen as enabling accurate analysis of the diversity of the governing body and better targeting of underrepresentation.

‘I think people shied away from this before which was asking members of the board to set out their own personal background in terms of protected characteristics. That wasn’t done before because they weren’t seen as employees. I think if you’re not willing to do that then you’re only judging it on gender and potentially ethnicity but obviously that doesn’t really do it unless you ask people.’

Secretary

‘We know what we know about our members, but we haven’t actually formally surveyed them. We’ve just designed a new questionnaire so that we can capture as much diversity information as we can from our membership, which will help us again just target.’

Secretary

However, some institutions had experienced challenges when introducing equality monitoring of their governing bodies, including:

- resistance from governors and chairs linked to a lack of understanding of the need for monitoring
Diversity of governing bodies

== a preference among governing bodies for a ‘light touch’ monitoring form rather than the full range of protected characteristics

== reluctance to use the same monitoring questions as for staff at the institution (that is, Higher Education Statistics Agency categories)

To encourage disclosure, some participants stressed the need to reassure governors of the confidentiality of the data they disclose and to explain what it will be used for and the importance of this activity.

Monitoring applications

Some institutions had not yet introduced equality monitoring for applicants to the governing body. Collecting this information could help to determine which groups are applying, which are not and which are being successful, beyond looking at gender.

Queen Margaret University: monitoring of court diversity

The university has introduced the collection of equality data in relation to court members in support of its commitment to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of independent members on the university court in terms of equality and diversity. The data will provide the court with the information it needs to ensure that its equality and diversity goals are being met by identifying where gaps in representation arise, allowing the court to target recruitment activity to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved. The university will undertake an annual review of the equality and diversity characteristics of the court or as a specific need for review is identified.

Further reading

ECU guidance on collecting data and designing monitoring questions can be found at:
www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/using-data-and-evidence/collection-data

www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/using-data-and-evidence/monitoring-questions
Establishing policies and goals on diversity

In its review of progress, the CSC found that all but one HEI had met the requirement to establish a policy and goals on diversity. Since publication, that institution has also met the requirement.

In review of institutions’ websites, this research found that:

- not all policies and goals were published on institutions’ websites
- of those that were, they were not all easy to locate or clearly signposted
- only a few of the published goals were measurable – only two set a figure for achievement and few had timescales
- published goals mostly only related to gender, however, intentions to consider other protected characteristic groups in future were noted by a few institutions

Interviewees shed some light on the approaches that their governing bodies and their institutions had decided to take on policies and goals.

- some institutions had set measurable goals internally
- some decided against numeric goals due to the small number of independent members on their governing bodies

‘Like the majority of Scottish universities, we took the view that we weren’t in a position, particularly because of the very small number of court members who are appointed by court, to set a numeric goal.’

Chair

- some had set goals for the whole of their membership, rather than just independent members
- one mentioned concerns expressed by women governors relating to policies and goals

‘The individuals who’ve been most concerned, when we were discussing the (policy), were females. I think a real concern that they are going to just be there because of their gender.’

Secretary
Goals published by HEIs

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

‘The board will also seek to achieve a blend of experience both from across Scotland, mindful of its national role, and furth (outside) of Scotland, so as to maintain appropriate ethnic, national and international perspectives. Specifically in terms of gender, the board will seek to achieve a minimum representation of 40 per cent for either gender among lay governors by July 2019.’

University of Aberdeen

‘The court will seek, without prejudicing the skills and knowledge requirements of the court, to address the current gender imbalance within its membership and will aim to achieve and maintain female representation of a minimum of 25 per cent, with aspirations to achieve 40 per cent, over the longer term.’

University of Dundee

‘The court is particularly concerned to address the issue of gender imbalance in its own membership, as well as in the membership of its own committees and those across the institution. In respect of its own membership it has declared a commitment to achieving a 40 per cent minimum representation of either gender among its lay appointments as vacancies become available over the medium to longer term.’

Queen Margaret University

‘The university will work towards achieving practical gender balance among lay members of court. Practical gender balance will be achieved where the lay membership of court constitutes not less than 40 per cent of either gender.’
Women on Boards recommendations on targets (2014)

The efficacy of setting targets on boardroom diversity has been studied by Women on Boards. In its 2014 report it recommended that targets for gender balance be set by all corporate boards.

‘We continue to ask chairmen to set out their aspirational targets for the number of women on their boards in 2015 or beyond. The key to success is setting down stretching, but achievable targets, combined with a clear statement on gender balance in the boardroom and robust action through the search and selection process.’

The report also recommended publication of targets and progress reports to increase transparency and demonstrate commitment.

‘Meaningful public disclosure and effective systems to monitor progress are also key components to achieve more gender balance on boards and in the workplace. Given the longer time frame needed to fill board appointments, targets, disclosures and monitoring systems add transparency. They act as effective signposts of intent to shareholders, employees, customers and other stakeholders.’


CSC sector-wide goal for gender: 40:40:20

Since this research was undertaken, the CSC has announced (on 9 April) a commitment to achieve a minimum of 40 per cent of both men and women on the governing body, with the remaining 20 per cent of either gender. This applies to the independent members of the governing body.

Progress against the commitment will be reviewed in 2018 to give the sector chance to achieve change considering the typical serving periods of independent members.

CSC policy statement on gender diversity insert can be found at: www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk/
In light of the suggestion that each governing body should be required to ensure that at least 40 per cent of their membership is female by the Report of the review of higher education governance in Scotland in 2012, it is not surprising that a number of research participants mentioned gender quotas.

Among survey respondents, some were for quota systems, some had reservations, for example, fearing they could lead to tokenism, and some were strongly against quota systems.

Some interviewees said that significant debate had been held at governing body meetings, and elsewhere, as to the use of quotas for governing body membership. In most cases they reported their governing bodies were against their usage.

‘Most of the governors were utterly, completely against quotas, but were for putting a range of actions in place that would encourage people, otherwise overlooked, to come forward. To put actions in place that supports these people to shine. Quotas were very much opposed.’

University principal

However, some felt quotas might help institutions to take action without the opposition they were, or anticipated, experiencing.

‘I sometimes wonder, if we were able to say... “It’s not down to us. We’re about to do this by statute.” Whether that might actually help resolve a lot of the issues.’

Secretary

One interviewee reflected that a more appropriate requirement may be for boards to reflect the composition of the university community.

‘I do wonder whether a better way of expressing the original desire would have actually been to question whether or not boards should, broadly speaking, reflect the diversity of the institutions which they are governing.’

Secretary
Diversity of governing bodies

Goals in comparison to quotas

Quotas relating to gender or other protected characteristics are unlikely to be lawful under the Equality Act. This is because they result in discrimination against other protected characteristic groups, for example, men or white people.

Institutions can set measurable goals to increase representation of one group when it is underrepresented. These can be expressed as a proportion of your governing body. A range of positive action measures, as illustrated in this section, can also be used to increase the pool of applicants, attract applicants and to ensure a fair, unbiased process.

Further reading


Broadening applicant pools

Traditionally, many universities look for their independent members to have had senior-level and/or board-level experience in the corporate or other sectors. Research shows that women are underrepresented at senior levels in the corporate sector and the civil service, which therefore narrows the pool of women candidates qualified to be independent university governors. Several research participants commented on this issue.

‘I know from my own experience of recruiting that men with the right level of experience usually vastly outnumber women with the right level of experience.’

Independent governor

‘I think the challenge for court is to increase the pool of suitably qualified applicants. That is where we focus our attention. That is the challenge, and my colleagues at other universities and I have discussed this.’

Chair

Others felt that the skills and experience traditionally sought when appointing independent members could be unnecessarily limiting the pool of women candidates.
‘There is a great focus by some of our members who are from a financial business background to almost look to appoint people in their own image and to not think more creatively about the third sector, charity or social enterprise in the same kind of way and to value people from those kinds of backgrounds in the same kind of way.’

Secretary

‘The other thing that disadvantages women is that very often part of the criteria is that we’re asking for previous experience of board membership.’

University principal

Connected to the level of skills and experience sought, one interviewee drew attention to the body of research on the application behaviours of men and women.

‘As you know, from your own research, and from available research all around, international and national as well, that women are less likely to apply if they don’t think they fulfil 100 per cent of the criteria given. While men don’t seem to have such an issue.’

University principal

Further reading

Women on Boards reports can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/women-on-boards-reports


Defining the role specification inclusively

Several secretaries described how their governing bodies had agreed to refocus or relax selection criteria that may favour men by changing the kind of background and experience required. This was intended to widen the applicant pool. However, this practice is not consistent across the sector.

Interviewees stressed the importance of:

= relaxing board or senior management level experience requirements
Diversity of governing bodies

‘We were quite heavy in the past on board-level experience, and, actually, our feeling is that that probably, again, pushes towards, if you like and speaking pejoratively, the late middle-aged white businessperson, and often a man.’

Secretary

‘Certainly deleting the fact that you must have prior experience. You’ve got to get your first directorship some time. I mean that is just nonsense.’

Chair

= focusing on skills rather than comparable experience in a similar role

‘I think you’ve got to be careful. I think you can describe someone who you think is like yourself, which is not a good starting point.’

Chair

= emphasising the usefulness of a background in the third sector, voluntary sector or social enterprise

‘The third sector, charity or social enterprise... Often, you can get a more diverse constituency coming forward from those kinds of backgrounds.’

Secretary

= inviting candidates from ‘all walks of life’

= ensuring there is clarity on the role the governor is expected to play

‘On the other hand, I think it is equally important that whoever is coming on board does understand the role they’re being asked to play.’

Chair

= combining skill-sets and diversity

‘If you like, we’re looking for combinations of skill-sets and attributes in what we’re going out for, and for the first time, I think the court is really thinking in detail about that skills matrix as well as diversity. The two need to go together.’

Secretary
**Using advertising to attract diverse applicants**

For some institutions, recruitment of independent members had previously operated through a process involving existing networks and word of mouth, rather than by external advertisement. Some had changed this in the last few years, others more recently. This was seen to be of benefit to increasing transparency and attracting a more diverse range of applicants.

‘Since I’ve taken over, I’ve moved the court away from a closed-door, people-who-know-people approach to appointing new lay members to a proper advertising selection process, which has itself, I think, helped contribute significantly to improving diversity.’

Secretary

Among those with previous advertising experience, action had been taken to improve the efficacy of advertising, which in some cases had previously resulted in a disappointing response from both men and women.

Participants spoke about how they had reevaluated their advertisements to seek to attract a wider pool of applicants. Revisions included:

- inclusion of an equality statement
- emphasis on a desire for diversity in governing body membership
- revision of style and language to appeal to a wider range of people
- explicitly welcoming applications from women or other groups underrepresented on the governing body

‘We said that we were particularly interested in applicants from groups who were the underrepresented on our court which included women and black minority ethnic candidates.’

Secretary

= emphasising the benefits of becoming a university governor

‘The reality is we’re now living increasingly in an environment with real risks to be managed. So that, again, is another feature of the university governing bodies’ responsibilities, which I think may attract other people.’

Chair
Diversity of governing bodies

This now seems to be common practice across the sector; the CSC’s 2014 review found that every institution now makes specific reference to its interest in receiving applications from underrepresented groups in advertisements for new independent members, or will do so at the next opportunity.

**Heriot-Watt University independent court member advertisement**

‘We especially encourage expressions of interest from women, recognising that women are currently underrepresented on the committees of our court.

Expressions of interest will be welcomed in the form of a CV and covering letter from individuals from all walks of professional life, who have a genuine interest in higher education and Heriot-Watt University, and who possess the skills and experience that could add value to the work of our governing body.’

**Targeted advertising**

Many institutions had tried using targeted websites or media to host advertisements. CSC found that five institutions have targeted marketing of vacancies in media more likely to reach a female readership and another seven intend to do so in future. Interviewees for this research shared a number of avenues they had trialled:

- *Scotsman*
- *Scotland on Sunday*
- *Women on Boards*
- *Women in business forums*
- *Scottish Government Public Appointments*
- *Regional equality networks for example, Fife Equalities Participation Network*
- *Non-executive directors website*
- *Local chamber of commerce bulletins*
- *The Metro*
- *Times Higher Education*
- *The Voice* (newspaper for the black community)
One institution had targeted its advertising of a vacancy at industry-appropriate media for the skill-set they had been looking for.

‘We advertise, and for example, the university has a major, major estates project... we have a huge campus development programme. We're looking for people with estates expertise. We’ve been advertising in various appropriate magazines, and it does have a measure of success.’

Chair

Use of headhunters

Although it is not current practice, several secretaries and related staff told us that they were considering using headhunters in future to source diverse candidates.

‘We will be going out with an advert for some new members to be appointed from September of this year, and we will almost certainly take forward headhunters for that to address what is a slight underrepresentation still in gender terms, but also, I think, in BME terms... we have one member coming off who is a minority ethnic background, and we don’t want to see ourselves go backwards in terms of that level of representation, so we will probably look again to use a headhunting firm to bring us some good candidates from those communities.’

Secretary

One governor had professional experience of the efficacy of targeted searches.

‘So, I’ve got six or seven searches I’m doing just now, and I need good women on all the shortlists for those; it’s a priority for me, but I don’t advertise any of them. So, anyway to widen your choice you need professional help; that’s my suggestion or recommendation.’

Independent governor
Diversity of governing bodies

Voluntary code of conduct for executive search firms

Many large search firms are now implementing good practice in gender diversity due to the introduction of the code of conduct in 2011. Following this model, institutions could require search firms to:

- in defining briefs, ensure that significant weight is given to relevant skills, underlying competencies and personal capabilities and not just proven career experience
- when presenting their longlists, try to ensure that at least 30 per cent are women – or justify why there are no qualified female candidates through demonstrating their research
- seek to ensure that the shortlist is appropriately reflective of the longlist
- discuss with the institution each woman on the longlist
- aim to have at least one woman whom they would ‘strongly recommend’ to the institution
- during the selection process, provide appropriate support, in particular to first-time candidates, to prepare them for interviews and guide them through the process

The standard Voluntary code of conduct for executive search firms can be found at:

Women on Boards: voluntary code for executive search firms – taking the next step (March 2014) can be found at:

EHRC (2012) Gender diversity on boards: the appointment process and the role of executive search firms can be found at:
www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-81-90/
Many research participants spoke about how their institution had used, and sought to expand, its existing networks to reach a wider pool. Some had explicitly sought to identify diverse candidates through these networks. For some, using networks had proved more effective in finding suitable women candidates than other advertisement methods.

‘Alongside the advertising process, we still do encourage members to identify and put potential names forward to us, and we have deliberately pushed that process to one where we’re expecting people to try and come up with a more diverse range of ideas and names.’

Secretary

Some reflected that this approach had its negatives as well as its positives.

‘We do a lot of tapping on shoulders... one of the problems with governing bodies is they can become quite oligarchic in their character. This is caused by people asking people they know whether they might want to join the governing body.’

University principal

It was hoped that governors would become champions for diverse governing bodies and increase interest in university governance among underrepresented groups through their own networks.

‘Those who we then do recruit, that by word of mouth and by their various networks, they then encourage others to come forward. Not only at [our] university, but at any other university. It is really through these champions, we get the three members of court, that they spread the word. That is our hope, to do it that way.’

University principal

One governor suggested that students’ parents could be a fruitful network to engage.

‘And if you want to represent the university then you might try and find ways to interest some of the parents.’

Independent governor
Diversity of governing bodies

Suggested networks:

- recent graduates and alumni
- philanthropic fundraising networks
- existing governors’ own networks
- principal and senior teams’ networks
- staff networks
- students’ parents
- local and national employers

Raising awareness of the role of the university governor

There was a general sense among several interviewees that there is not enough awareness among wider communities about the role of the university governor.

‘Even though you might try and get wide publicity for the fact that you’re seeking court members, I think it would be quite difficult for people to say... “Ah, university court, that’s important within my community. I can contribute to good governance.” I think people are ignorant of what courts do, of what the functions are.’

Chair

Some felt there are misconceptions about who serves on a university governing body, which could discourage some groups from applying.

‘Then beyond that I think that there is a view which is that they are – they tend to be made up of the – of high academic, of people with high academic credentials and people who will feel as though they cannot fit in.’

Chair

For younger people, and those from private sector backgrounds, there was a feeling that the public sector board environment might seem quite foreign.

‘I think if you’re coming from the private sector or maybe slightly younger, it’s more difficult I think to maybe be comfortable with the public sector speak, the language that’s used.’

Independent governor
A common theme in the interviews was the need to increase understanding of the role of a university governor and the benefits this role can bring to the individual. Although there were not yet many examples of individual institutions doing this, there were plans to develop work at a national level to support all institutions to recruit governors.

‘We (the chairs in Scotland) are going to develop our existing web presence... We already have a website which deals with this code of governance, and we are hoping to develop that to make it... a sort of governance, in the wider sense, website, which will explain what governing bodies do, which few people understand, which is entirely reasonable, like who’s on it, why they’re on it, what the commitment involves, and provide for it to be a portal linking through to the individual websites of the university.’

Chair

Some suggested emphasising the career development benefits could particularly help to attract younger professionals.

‘I think for a younger person in the business, maybe the value that it can bring in terms of their own personal CV, their own development. This is a complex sector. You are talking about some pretty large organisations with big budgets so I think that may be something that might attract some younger people.’

Chair

A couple recommended that allowing observation of governing body meetings could demystify the role of governors and encourage applicants.

‘I think if they opened up meetings to the public it would actually be quite significant. I think if people could actually see the work of a court and what they did I think it might encourage more people to – people would understand what they do and the responsibilities and might feel more comfortable about playing that part.’

Chair

**Working with communities**

One governor suggested that HEIs should engage their local community to raise awareness of the university’s role in the community and the opportunity to become a university governor.
‘So, going out to communities to help them understand the role that we play in the community and why they should think about being involved.’

Independent governor

**Working with employers**

Several research participants suggested that more could be done to work with employers to emphasise the benefits to them and their staff of university governor positions. They felt this could enable more employed candidates be allowed time off to attend meetings, which could help younger people and those with caring responsibilities outside of work hours to apply.

‘Employers must recognise that board experience can help develop the skills of their employees. This would encourage employees to apply and justify the employee taking the time off from their employment to attend board meetings.’

Survey respondent

‘Where we are now is that – and I’m hoping that my colleagues and the other chairs will join in this – we’re setting out to approach the organisations who represent employers… medium to larger employers who are engaged in this sort of staff development and training.’

Chair

**CUC – developing diversity programme**

Following interest from chairs at its October 2014 Plenary, CUC is developing a programme that will work with major companies to provide placements to HE boards, with a view to improving the diversity of boards.

The programme proposes to place high potential leaders who are female, from a BME background, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) or disabled on HE boards. These individuals will be on talent development schemes and already have shown the potential to operate at board level.

CUC will work with institutions and companies to match candidates to board places in universities. There is also an option for companies to request an academic staff member from a university to serve on their boards, which CUC will help to organise.
The CUC intends to run a pilot of the scheme with approximately five institutions and five companies. If the initial scheme is successful, they would actively promote it in subsequent years.

It is hoped that through the programme:

- candidates will gain invaluable hands-on experience from serving on a HE board
- the HE institution will benefit from a high-potential leader adding new thinking and diversity to their board
- a significant contribution will be made to the widely supported goal of making UK boards more diverse, and to the development of talent across the UK

Encouraging diversity in elections and external appointments

One of the most frequently cited challenges to increasing diversity of the governing body was the limited influence the institution has over the diversity of the members that are elected to the governing body from particular constituencies.

‘Ultimately, the appointment of lay members is within our control and within the court’s control. Therefore, the court can deal with that and target its activities... I think the challenge is more broadly how we influence the electoral processes that underpin many of the appointments we have to the court. That’s a slightly more difficult area.’

Secretary

There were questions as to the appropriateness of seeking to influence elections.

‘Our board does question: “How about these elected members: the students, the academic council, the non-academic and the academic staff governor? We’re trying really hard to address a gender balance there. How can we influence an elected process?” It’s a very, very good point because if you think of a general election, do we, as members of the public, want to go into a ballot box and be told we should be going for a female candidate if we feel that the male candidates are better?’

Secretary
A number of institutions had taken steps to seek to encourage diversity in elections and external appointments to the governing body. These mainly related to working with those constituents responsible for electing or appointing to emphasise the desirability of having a diverse range of election candidates.

‘To date, it really has been about emphasising to those constituencies in the electoral documentation the court’s commitment to equality and diversity, the fact that it now has targets, and that we’re interested in people standing from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible. However, we have stayed clear from trying to overly influence the process itself, really because, essentially, these are meant to be democratic appointments.’

Secretary

‘It’s about awareness-raising and drawing attention to areas where we do have underrepresentation at the moment in the hope that that will encourage people to think more when they choose whether or not to stand and who they choose to put their cross against in the box when the ballot paper comes around.’

Secretary

**University of Aberdeen**

The university’s published statement of intent on court diversity included the following:

‘All internal or external bodies when electing or appointing members of court are asked to take this statement and the commitment to greater diversity on court that it represents, into account.’

---

**Staff members**

A number of participants spoke about challenges in securing diversity among academic members of the governing body, usually from the senate. The senate is the supreme academic body for the institution. Its membership is often large and usually includes vice-principals, heads of colleges and schools, representatives of academic and research staff, representatives of the students’ association and a number of ex-officio members. The diversity of senate elections to the governing body was seen by some as one barrier to achieving gender balance on the governing body.
‘If the senate, for example, is contemplating who would be the best of their members to serve on the court and it happens to be a man, they will see their responsibility primarily in terms of putting forward the best representative they can... There’s not much that they can do to achieve any kind of balance in that with just one post.’

Chair

There was also discussion of the ethnic diversity of university staff in general and how that impacted on the diversity of staff representatives on the governing body.

‘Our staff ratios with ethnic groups is not well balanced. Therefore that feeds up the line in a way, so your staff representatives tend not necessarily to be from a wider ethnic group.’

Staff governor

Some interviewees noted that influencing the diversity of elections of professional services and support staff to the governing body was more of a challenge than other elections.

‘When it comes to electing somebody from the professional services staff that is also a challenge because there aren’t any appropriate forums where we could have the kind of discussion. They do not have an equivalent of senate.’

University principal

Some institutions had taken actions to encourage diversity in senate elections:

- communicating the intention to increase the diversity of the governing body, and specifying the role of the senate in achieving this
- holding discussion about governing body diversity at senate
- ensuring notes of equality committee or governing body meetings are on senate agendas so the senate is updated on, and can discuss, intentions in relation to governing body diversity

‘We had a wide discussion... so that the senate members were aware of what the challenges are. Hoping that that would have positive effects in terms of who they are going to elect as well or even nominate who is going to be elected. Funnily enough, it did result
Diversity of governing bodies

in a man coming forward, not a woman. But we continue bringing it to the forefront so that people are aware of the issues. I think that’s the least we can do.’

University principal

**Student members**

Many research participants noted that student association members of governing bodies are predominantly male.

‘I have to say the student body has resolutely appointed male presidents for the last five or six years, which is an interesting one. We have had two female members from the student community from the second category, which is an independent student member.’

Secretary

‘I have, on the other hand, had a discussion with the student president to the effect that it is very odd in the university, in which nearly 80 per cent of the students are women, that only in one year since I have been on the court has the students’ union ever sent us a woman.’

Chair

There was an observation that a contributory factor to this is that most candidates for students’ association presidencies are male.

‘Their annual report always comes to the court as well and we learn about the various elections that have taken place, and what they say does appear to be true that for the posts of president and vice-president they don’t seem to get many, if any, female candidates.’

Chair

This corresponds with the UK-wide gender demographics of students’ association presidents according to the National Union of Students (NUS) officer diversity survey, which found that:

- only 45 per cent of student officers are women
- only 38 per cent of student presidents are women
This means that at the highest level of association leadership, women are underrepresented.

For access to the NUS officer diversity survey please contact Mandeep Rupra, Charitable Services Equality and Diversity Consultant at NUS on Mandeep.Rupra@nus.org.uk

There were limited reports in the research of work by governing bodies with students’ associations on the diversity of their elections to the governing body. There was recognition that some students’ associations were trying hard to address the gender imbalance in elections to the students’ association president.

‘We will continue to push the students’ association to try and encourage greater diversity, but, to be perfectly honest, they are trying really hard, so I don’t think it’s for want of trying that they’re not succeeding.’

Secretary

‘I think probably genuinely they are considering whether they couldn’t do a bit better.’

Chair

**Women in Leadership: NUS Scotland**

Addressing women’s underrepresentation in institutions has been a key priority for NUS Scotland Women’s Campaign for a number of years. NUS realises that there is work to do to ensure that women are fully empowered and enabled to stand for election and take up positions of leadership within its own structures.

NUS Scotland Women’s Campaign recognises the disparity between the number of women and men in leadership positions within students’ associations and aims to change this through a three-pronged approach:

- by simultaneously challenging itself when reviewing its structures, and ensuring they enable women to take up positions and opportunities available
- through empowering the women leaders on campuses to realise their potential
- by continuing to challenge wider, societal and structural barriers
NUS structures and gender diversity

NUS has put in place a number of measures to increase participation of women in NUS. The measures are listed below.

Gender-balanced delegations

At the NUS UK’s national conference 2014 a motion was passed meaning that all delegations to future national conferences will have to be made up of at least 50 per cent self-defining women (rounded down). This recognises that women are more likely to run for election when there are places reserved for them, and so will increase the diversity of candidates running. Having reserved places for women ensures that all students’ associations have the responsibility to do more work to improve the diverse representation of candidates and delegates. NUS sees it as a vital to making it more representative and reflective of the needs of students.

Fair representation on its executive committee

At the 2015 Scottish national conference, delegates voted to ensure a minimum of 50 per cent of places on its Scottish executive committee were reserved for women. This was done to ensure fair representation of women among its national leadership who can go on to promote and inspire future women leaders nationally and locally.
Diversity of governing bodies

Empowering women leaders

In 2013, NUS launched ‘I Will... Lead the Way’, a leadership coaching programme to increase the number of women in leadership positions within students’ associations. The programme provides coaching, information and networking opportunities to empower and support women to stand for election or take on other positions of leadership.

At the same time, NUS also created a women’s leadership development and mentoring scheme to connect, support, train and build the confidence of potential women leaders.

In 2014, NUS held a successful women in leadership event which brought together women student representatives and women staff within students’ associations. The programme has further developed to include leadership sessions for Muslim students and for students who also define as LGBT, black or disabled. This work has also led the way for the development and delivery of further programmes within NUS seeking to tackle the underrepresentation of students who self-define as black, disabled and LGBT.

NUS Scotland has supplemented this UK-wide work this year by launching a women in leadership pack for students’ associations to use to tackle the underrepresentation of women in elected positions at their own students’ association. The pack includes training notes and materials for two sessions designed to be delivered by the students’ association. To access the pack, contact Charlotte Lawley, Development Manager at NUS Scotland on charlotte.lawley@nus-scotland.org.uk

Tackling societal issues

NUS recognises that there are many underlying societal issues which continue to mean that women are underrepresented, and believes these need to be addressed. NUS believes that of primary concern among these more systemic problems is the issue of ‘lad culture’; continued and pernicious views of women and their place in education as well as wider society.

Since the launch of its report That’s what she said: women students experiences of lad culture in higher education in March 2013, NUS has undertaken a large amount of work and
campaigning about lad culture and the need to tackle it on campus, including:

- commissioning and publishing *That’s what she said* a research report on women students’ experiences of lad culture in higher education
- further consultation with students’ associations on confronting this in higher education
- hosting the ‘Confronting Lad Culture in Higher Education’ national summit
- launching of the National Strategy Team: Lad Culture (NSTLC), which consists of representatives from education and external organisations
- support for students’ associations to tackle lad culture on campus

**General, academic and graduate councils**

Most ancient universities in Scotland have a general council, which is a representative body for graduates and senior academics. These councils elect assessors to the university governing body. Some interviewees explained that general council elections to the governing body could perpetuate gender balance issues.

‘the same people were electing people to court from the general council committee. Obviously they were all going to vote for each other... It was just historically happening in the past that they were part of what was – it was known as the “old boys’ club”’

Student governor

However, in some institutions this was not always the case.

‘As chance would happen, the other people who were actually up for election this year were also female.’

Alumni governor

There had been some action taken to influence the diversity of general, academic and graduate council elections to the governing body. These included general awareness raising and more specific communications during election processes.
'We've certainly made... the academic council aware, of our diversity principles and our targets.'
Secretary

'At the electing stage... when you went to vote online, you were confronted with that statement (about the court seeking diversity).'
Secretary

Two institutions had made significant changes to the general council’s relationship with the governing body; one reducing its number of places and the other changing the process by which members secured places on the governing body.

'At our last governance review, we identified that a very small number of people are voting in this election... We have moved to a position where those people are going to be advertised for and interviewed for in the same way as a lay member would be, but there would be ring-fenced adverts where we are seeking graduates of the university. I think that, in itself, will again help with diversity.'
Secretary

One institution thought they could do more with deans to increase women academics in elections.

'Certainly, I think the deans have a much greater role to encourage female members of academic staff to stand for academic council elections than they might do at the moment, for example.'
Secretary

**Local council members**

Eight university governing bodies have local council representatives in their membership. Some interviewees told us about the limited input they have over appointments from the local council to their governing body.

‘There was a change within the council and we were notified about a week before the next court meeting that we had a new member. We had no input into that, because to them we are but one of hundreds of bodies that they appoint to, and that is a difficulty that we have.’
Secretary
Diversity of governing bodies

One interviewee thought that there could be opportunity to engage with local councils to seek diverse appointments to their governing body.

‘So when we know, and in the run up to the next set of elections, it’s incumbent on us to go to the chief executives of the councils to say... “When you come to appoint, bear in mind that we’ve got a gender imbalance, bear in mind the diversity issues that we have,” and so on and so forth, as well as having some input to the kind of individual we would find helpful to have on our governing body.’

Secretary

A few interviewees spoke about recent or planned work to alter the composition of their governing body to increase the number of independent members and/or decrease the number of elected members. This was being undertaken to meet the Code requirements on the size of the governing body and proportions of independent members. However, they felt this could also benefit diversity as the governing body would have more control over the appointment of independent members and could seek diverse candidates. This was, however, noted as a contentious issue among some constituents.

‘As I understand it we are currently debating a change in the constitution, in the make up of court and I know that some argue that a change to having more co-opted members would give the court better scope to hopefully seek and appoint, to achieve better diversity, as well as the other skills and so on that it needs.’

General council assessor

‘We’re wanting to increase the number of members appointed by court, and reduce the number of members appointed by alumni, and as you will appreciate, among a small group of some of the alumni is a contentious issue.’

Chair
Ensuring equitable recruitment and selection practices

There was comment on the role of the nominations committee in the selection of governors, and the importance of its awareness of equality and diversity.

‘I know that within the governance and nominations committee, which meets several times a year, they are very aware of equality when considering selections.’

Alumni governor

In some instances governors and certain committees seemed to be unsure of the difference between positive action and positive discrimination in recruitment and selection.

Several research participants mentioned a need for more training that goes beyond equitable processes for those involved in recruitment and selection of governors.

‘Mandatory equality training focused on the value of diversity and not the mechanisms and processes of recruitment/selection is essential to ensure that those in influential positions accept the basic fundamental that diversity is a good thing.’

Survey respondent

One governor advised universities to simplify their recruitment process to attract more candidates.

‘The whole recruitment process is a total turnoff – too many forms to fill in online. I wouldn’t go through it. So to make it less complicated and faster... that’s something that could be done.’

Independent governor
Support candidates throughout the appointment process

Recent research with search firms suggests that women candidates are more likely to apply for board positions with additional information and communication during the process, for example:

- more in-depth discussion about what is required of the role
- updates during the process
- feedback if unsuccessful to help improve for next time


EHRC (2012) *Gender diversity on boards: the appointment process and the role of executive search firms* can be found at: www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports/research-reports-81-90/

Unconscious bias

Implicit or unconscious bias happens when our brains make quick judgments and assessments of people and situations without us realising. Our biases are influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. We may not even be aware of these views and opinions, or be aware of their full impact and implications.

Research has found that unconscious bias can heavily influence recruitment and selection decisions. Several experiments using CV shortlisting exercises have highlighted bias by gender and ethnicity.

ECU unconscious bias research and training materials can be found at: www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/employment-and-careers/staff-recruitment/unconscious-bias
Ensuring equitable board procedures

Several research participants mentioned the need for institutions to think more carefully about board procedures that may disadvantage, or discourage certain protected characteristic groups from becoming governors.

There was considerable feedback on the timing of meetings.

‘Think about the routine board procedures through a different perspective – schedule meeting times to avoid school pickups, consider accessibility.’

Survey respondent

‘We’ve looked, for example, at timings of meetings, and are timings of meetings a problem? Well, I think the conclusion we’ve come to is that on the basis that you can’t meet everyone’s particular requirements all of the time, the most suitable time for meetings is actually during the working day, because people who are house husbands or women at home looking after children are no worse off during the working day than at other times.’

Chair

‘They may not want to start meetings at 6 o’clock at night or later either, so that is a thing that may attract some but it may put an equal or more number off, who knows?’

Independent governor

There was also some debate about whether remuneration of governors would help attract more diverse candidates.

‘The challenges we face in terms of diversity, in fact we’ve just had two conversations about this, in relation to paying members, because there’s a view that there are people from our community, for example, that might consider becoming court members but that they would experience costs in doing so.’

Independent governor

‘People are giving up their time to come to governing body meetings. Some people can afford to give up time this way and some people can’t... The cons would be people might argue that people would do it for the wrong reasons.’

University principal
Diversity of governing bodies

Case studies

University of Aberdeen: statement of intent on court diversity

The university developed a statement of intent on court diversity, which is on their website. The statement sets out the goal for gender diversity that has been adopted by the court, which is to achieve a minimum of 25 per cent women on the court, with a view to achieve 40 per cent over time. This is articulated as a goal rather than a target. The statement also recognises the importance of diversity in relation to the other protected characteristics.

Approach

The approach was unusual in that it applied to the entire court membership, not just the independent membership as required by the Code. The court took this decision because:

- it felt it might empower the university to engage better with some of the electing and appointing bodies on the issue
- addressing only the eight independent members appointed by court might not significantly improve the overall gender balance on a board of 28 members

Recruiting new independent members

The university had used public advertising for several years but with mixed responses in terms of the number and quality of applicants received. However, in a recent round of recruitment they took the following steps and had a better response.

- included a specific reference to seeking female candidates in their public advertisement
- used less paid advertising and conveyed more messages through their alumni community and through sharing the vacancy with staff
- shared the vacancy via Women on Boards’ website, Public Appointments Scotland and a local chamber of commerce bulletin
- brought the vacancy to the attention of potential female candidates that they knew through alumni and professional networks
Impact so far

The recruitment process was successful in generating interest from a range of excellent male and female candidates, with a female candidate being appointed. The university still, however, received far fewer female than male applicants (nine of 33 applications were from women).

However, the development of the statement is considered to have had a positive impact on engagement with equality and diversity issues, both within court and the wider university community.

University of Dundee: statement on court diversity

As part of its court effectiveness review the university looked at the membership of the court in terms of diversity alongside the skills and experience of members. They also included a session at their annual court retreat where they considered diversity, what they wanted to address, and how they might do this. As a result, the university published a statement on diversity on court, which states:

‘The court is particularly concerned to address the issue of gender imbalance in its own membership, as well as in the membership of its own committees and those across the institution. In respect of its own membership it has declared a commitment to achieving a 40 per cent minimum representation of either gender among its lay appointments as vacancies become available over the medium to longer term.’

Actions committed to included:

- use of advertising to reach as diverse a range of candidates as possible, which may include the use of external search agencies
- promotion of greater diversity from those groups who elect members to serve on the court
- appointment panels for new court members will demonstrate principles of good practice in equality and diversity
- making use of an evaluation of the range of skills along with equality and diversity information of current court members in future appointments of independent members to be able to promote inclusivity and equality in terms of all nine protected characteristics in the selection process
Diversity of governing bodies

‘I think our statement is clear in setting our expectations around issues of equality and diversity, and particularly gender equality, where historically our membership has been at or around 30 per cent to 35 per cent female over the last number of years. It’s now about just pushing that bit further and saying that a 40 per cent minimum of either gender is the target we’re committed to and so we would expect women to comprise 40 per cent to 60 per cent of our members, with fluctuations in the precise proportion occurring due to turnover in the membership as periods of office come to an end.’

Queen Margaret University: targeted recruitment

The university has undertaken a range of actions to address directly the diversity of membership on its governing body.

Approach

- Recruitment for independent members during 2013 and 2014 sought to address directly the diversity of membership in line with the commitment set out in its mainstreaming report and equality outcomes that ‘all committees and decision-making bodies of the university are representative of its community’.

- A diversity audit of current membership was conducted by the nominations committee so that recruitment took account fully of the balance of skills, attributes and experience of the existing independent membership.

- Vacancies in 2013 and 2014 were advertised with wording to encourage expressions of interest from women, disabled people, ethnic minorities and applicants who would further enhance the diversity of the court.

- Revised criteria to particularly attract more women – person specification revised to accommodate those without previous board-level experience able to demonstrate a track record of success in professional areas of expertise.

- Approached groups and publications to target equality groups, for example, Women on Board and publications for ethnic minorities.
Impact so far

They received slightly more applications from women – 15 per cent compared with around 10 per cent before.

The awareness raising that had taken place among court and the nominations committee resulted in the appointment of two women and one man.

This did not increase the gender diversity overall as two women had left, however it improved the process and awareness of the need to seek diversity.

‘I think now it’s so embedded in the thinking that where we could go to the court now and say we have three vacancies and they’ve appointed three men, they would reject that. I’m pretty confident they would.’

‘The impact has been more on the process and transparency of when it comes to finding new governors... in terms of the process, in terms of the slight increase in applications by women, and in terms of the ratio of women to men, in terms of those who were successful, that in itself was quite successful.’

University of the Highlands and Islands: governors development programme

The university is considering developing a programme for people from underrepresented groups to give people some education, learning and training in the role of the governor, including through shadowing. They hope this will generate a bigger pool of potential candidates, not just for university court membership but for public bodies and other voluntary and charity organisations within their area.

‘I mean if we can get this off the ground I hope it would encourage people to think about it, but also make them board ready, or more board ready.’

They would hope to target people from underrepresented groups:

‘Members of community councils, of trade unions, of housing associations, tenant’s groups, women’s groups... from areas of social deprivation or from minority groups, and other underrepresented groups as well. Which should help boards
They are looking at how they can fund this programme, and will investigate support from other public bodies. They hope to start in autumn 2015.

**University of Western Australia: gender balance on committees**

**Resolutions on gender balance of boards and committees**

The university has passed a range of resolutions over recent years in a concerted attempt to effect gender balance on its committees.

- Academic board committees were requested to make recommendations to the board on strategies for increasing the proportion of women in their membership at least to a level which reflects the percentage of women in the relevant section of the university staff.

- Senate was requested to develop strategies for ensuring that the proportion of women in its membership is increased, and to ask heads of division to do the same in respect of their own divisional committees.

- Academic council was requested to draw the relevant electorate’s attention to the university’s policies on the representation of women on university boards and committees in future elections for board representatives to university committees.

- Nominating committee was instructed to consider gender balance on university boards and committees when undertaking its work.

More information can be found at: www.hr.uwa.edu.au/equity/committees
Methods to improve gender balance

The university also made a range of recommendations to its committees, faculties and schools to help them improve existing gender balance.

- Extending committee membership eligibility to limited term and fractional full-time staff.

- Statement used for nominations – ‘nominating bodies are asked to note the university’s interest in increasing the proportion of women in its decision-making bodies. You are accordingly requested to consider nominating women as well as men’.

- Information should be available on the committee structure, describing the aims, responsibilities and composition of each committee, the qualifications and experience required for membership, and a statement encouraging expressions of interest from women.

- Co-option of women members – if a committee does not include any women, it should be required to co-opt at least one woman member.

- Broadening levels of appointment – as the pool of women at senior level is small, previous ‘seniority requirement’ should be loosened. All levels of academic and general staff can make a significant contribution to the university.

- Review of ex-officio membership – committees should consider whether in all cases ex-officio members are warranted, or whether membership could be broadened. Alternatively, include provision for ‘or nominee’ to allow ex-officio members to nominate women representatives.

- Training for women on effective participation in committees, and observer status for women staff in committee meetings.

- Timing – committee meetings to be held at times which will not disadvantage people with family responsibilities.
The following recommendations have been drawn from the practice of institutions involved in the research. By sharing existing learning and practice within institutions, they are intended to help institutions reflect on their current practice and support development.

### Policy and goals

- Establish and publish a clear policy on governing body diversity.
- Set and publish measurable goals to increase the percentage of independent members that are women, and the percentage that share other protected characteristics where possible, ensuring that individuals cannot be indentified.
- Consider developing goals that encompass the whole of the governing body membership.
- Introduce, or continue collection of equality monitoring information on both existing members and applicants to the governing body for all protected characteristics. Provide the rationale for this activity and assurance of confidentiality to encourage disclosure.
- Analyse monitoring data at least annually to identify underrepresentation of any groups and/or progress on goals using benchmarking data, such as staff and student data or regional Scottish census data.
- Address diversity in governing body effectiveness review processes.
- Include diversity in the governing body skills matrix.

### Developing the pool of external candidates

- Demystify the role and publicise the benefits of being a university governor, including the skills that can be developed.
- Be clear on the requirements for example, time commitments, number and timing of meetings, compensation available.
- Work with communities to raise awareness of the role of the university in the community, and the role of the university governor within this.
- Work with employers to increase awareness of the professional development benefits of university board positions, secure their flexibility for their employees to serve as governors, and to publicise vacancies to their employees.
Recruitment and selection of independent members

= Implement a raft of measures aimed at increasing the number of members from groups underrepresented on the governing body.

= Consider broadening the skills and experience required to attract women and other underrepresented groups. In the person specification focus on relevant skills, underlying competencies and personal capabilities and not proven career experience.

= Reevaluate advertisement wording and style to attract diversity.

= Emphasise the skills and development opportunities that a governing body position offers.

= Advertise vacancies widely, and in targeted media, to reach underrepresented groups.

= Also use existing networks to publicise vacancies and source diverse candidates.

= Ensure transparent and unbiased selection processes for new members, for example, through selection panel training and ensuring gender-balanced selection panels.

Elected and externally appointed members

= Communicate the governing body’s commitment to increase its diversity to all electing constituents, including the senate, academic council and students’ association, and request their support in achieving this.

= Work with these electing constituents to support them increase the diversity of their elections to the governing body.

= Communicate the governing body’s commitment to increase its diversity to external constituents that appoint members to the governing body, such as local authorities.
Next steps

As part of this research, ECU asked participants what further guidance or activity was required to support governing bodies to meet their equality and diversity responsibilities. This generated a range of ideas, some of which have been addressed through this report, the rest are listed below.

Ideas for further guidance and activity

Collaborative activities

- A cross-sector governors’ working group on equality and diversity should be established.
- Sector-wide events for governing body members should be provided to enable sharing of ideas and practice on equality and diversity.
- Secretaries and chairs should continue to share examples of practice from their governing bodies via their groups and mailing lists.
- The CSC should continue to develop its existing web presence to increase awareness of the benefits of becoming a university governor at a national level.
- Individual institutions and the CSC should work with communities and employers to increase awareness and interest in university governor positions.
- ECU should collaborate with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education on equality and diversity within their governor development programme.

Guidance and resources

- Publication of case studies, for example, successful board engagement with the equality and diversity agenda or board members from non-traditional backgrounds adding value to the board.
- Online equality training for governors or adaptable training resources.
- Guidance for governors on what they should be expecting the management of the institution to give them and present to them, and the kinds of questions they should be asking the executive about this agenda.
- Guidance on the use of language or terms in relation to equality and diversity.

ECU will be publishing a handbook for governors which will provide some of these guidance and resources.
## Resources

### General

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Assurance of equality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECU guidance on the equality legislation. Online resource.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/equality-legislation">www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/equality-legislation</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Diversity of governing bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSC (2014)</td>
<td><em>Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance: one year into implementation.</em> CSC, Scotland.</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk">www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources

ECU guidance on collecting data and designing monitoring questions. Online resources.
www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/using-data-and-evidence/collecting-data
www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/using-data-and-evidence/monitoring-questions

www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/employment-and-careers/staff-recruitment/unconscious-bias

http://women-count.org/


Scottish census data explorer. Online resource.
www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-web/home.html

www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk

www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/media/images/research/wbl/geo1.pdf


*Voluntary code of conduct for executive search firms*. Online resource.
Women on Boards: public sector boardroom diversity index 2012 (to be re-published in 2015). Online resource.

Women on Boards. All reports as online resources.
www.gov.uk/government/collections/women-on-boards-reports

Women on Boards (2014) Voluntary code for executive search firms – taking the next steps. BIS, London

Equality Challenge Unit

ECU works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.

ECU works closely with colleges and universities to seek to ensure that staff and students are not unfairly excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or through any combination of these characteristics or other unfair treatment.

Providing a central source of expertise, research, advice and leadership, we support institutions in building a culture that provides equality of both opportunity and outcome, promotes good relations, values the benefits of diversity and provides a model of equality for the wider UK society.

Did you find this publication useful?

Your feedback will help us to improve and develop our publications and resources, and help us to ensure that we produce materials that support your work.

Please take a few minutes to complete our publications feedback survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/ecu-publications-feedback

You can also email us with your feedback: pubs@ecu.ac.uk