ColegauCymru
CollegesWales

Code of Good Governance for Further Education Colleges in Wales

2026

This document is available in Welsh

Introduction

This Code applies to Further Education Colleges established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in Wales.

Colleges in Wales are:

- Independent corporate bodies
- Exempt charities
- Publicly funded institutions
- Accountable to the Welsh Government
- Regulated by Medr

Colleges operate within:

- Further and Higher Education Act 1992
- Welsh Government funding and accountability frameworks
- Medr Regulation
- Managing Welsh Public Money
- Charity law
- Estyn inspection framework

This Code does not replace statutory requirements or Instrument and Articles of Government. It establishes governance principles which Boards must adopt, evidence and review as part of continuous improvement.

Boards adopting this Code should publish a statement of compliance and explain any deviations in their annual financial statements.

Seven principles of public life

The Nolan Principles set out the key ethical standards expected of those in public roles, forming the foundation of integrity and accountability across public service.

They apply in full to college governance in Wales, guiding governors to act in the public interest and uphold high standards of transparency and conduct.

The **Nolan Principles** apply in full to college governance in Wales:

1. **Selflessness**
2. **Integrity**
3. **Objectivity**
4. **Accountability**
5. **Openness**
6. **Honesty**
7. **Leadership**

Boards must embed these principles in all governance practice.

Governance Principles

The Code is structured around six core principles:

1. Strategic Purpose and Direction
2. Accountability and Stewardship
3. Leadership, Integrity and Culture
4. Stakeholder Engagement and Civic Mission
5. Regulatory and Statutory Compliance
6. Board and Organisational Effectiveness

Each principle contains:

- Rationale
- Governance Behaviours
- Recommended Practice
- Suggested Sources of Assurance
- Intended Outcomes

Governance Behaviours

Principle 1

Strategic Purpose and Direction

Rationale

The Board is responsible for determining the college's mission, values and long-term strategic direction, ensuring alignment with Welsh Government priorities, learner success and regional economic need.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Is learner-centred and future-focused • Sets and demonstrates clear institutional values • Champions equity, diversity, inclusion and Welsh language development • Considers social, economic, environmental and policy contexts • Promotes sustainable development and Net Zero ambitions • Models behaviours that define organisational culture	• Approved Mission and Values Statement • Strategic Plan aligned to Welsh Government priorities • Annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) • Strategic Risk Register including risk appetite • Well-being and sustainability strategy (aligned to Well-being of Future Generations Act principles) • Welsh Language Standards compliance • EDI strategy and action plan • Regular review of safeguarding assurance and risk reporting	• Estyn inspection • Medr funding review meetings • Internal Audit • Internal and external governance review • Strategic KPIs • Learner outcomes and achievement data • Board and committee minutes	• Clear strategic direction • Clear shared values and behavioural expectations • High-quality provision meeting learner and employer need • Strategy demonstrably aligned to national and regional priorities

Governance Behaviours

Principle 2

Accountability and Stewardship

Rationale

The Board is collectively accountable for the effective and efficient use of public funds and for safeguarding the college's long-term sustainability.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Provides constructive challenge to senior leaders • Ensures that an individual is formally designated as the Accountable Officer • Scrutinises performance against agreed Key Performance Indicators and available benchmarks • Ensures value for money • Oversees risk and financial sustainability • Acts collectively and transparently • Assurance over activities delivered through external partnerships/subcontracting arrangements	• Annual budget approval and in-year monitoring • Financial regulations and scheme of delegation • Audit Committee oversight and scrutiny • Senior post-holder objective setting and review • Remuneration Committee governance • Workforce strategy • Climate and sustainability roadmap • Whistleblowing policy and reporting arrangements • Quality assurance framework	• External audit • Internal audit • Medr accountability reviews • Audit Committee Annual Report • Benchmarking data • Board and committee minutes	• Financial resilience • Effective resource allocation • Transparent and defensible decision-making

Governance Behaviours

Principle 3

Leadership, Integrity and Culture

Rationale

Effective governance depends upon integrity, ethical leadership and a culture of openness, challenge and respect.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Adopts and upholds the Nolan Principles • Acts impartially and in the public interest • Manages conflicts of interest robustly • Oversees and monitors organisational culture • Encourages open debate and constructive challenge • Respects the independence of the Governance Professional	• Code of Conduct for Governors • Register of Interests and Gifts • Annual Board self-assessment • Governance Professional independence policy • Clearly defined roles and responsibilities • Succession planning	• External Governance Review • Annual Board effectiveness review • Audit findings • Stakeholder feedback • Board and committee minutes	• Strong ethical culture • Public confidence • Transparent governance • Strengthen the organisation's reputation

Governance Behaviours

Principle 4

Stakeholder Engagement and Civic Mission

Rationale

Colleges in Wales play a central civic role. Governance must reflect meaningful engagement with learners, staff, employers, communities and regional partners.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Values and embeds learner voice • Engages meaningfully with college staff • Collaborates regionally • Aligns curriculum to local, regional and national skills demand • Promotes Welsh language and cultural identity • Engages constructively with recognised trade unions, learner representatives and learner representative bodies • Encourages meaningful participation and dialogue to build trust and confidence in governance and decision-making	• Learner Governor participation • Staff Governor representation • Stakeholder engagement • Complaints and feedback reporting • Community engagement framework • Learner voice informed decision making • Structured employer engagement and representation	• Learner and staff surveys • Employer feedback • Regional Skills Partnership data • Estyn inspection • Equality impact assessments • Board and committee minutes	• Stakeholder trust and confidence • Provision responsive to local need • Strong civic identity

Governance Behaviours

Principle 5

Regulatory and Statutory Compliance

Rationale

The Board must ensure compliance with legal, regulatory and funding requirements. Failure to comply may lead to intervention or reputational damage.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Understands its statutory duties • Ensures safeguarding is prioritised • Recognises when external advice is required • Maintains up-to-date governance training • Receives timely and accurate information • Promotes a culture of compliance, transparency and integrity • Supports continuous improvement and proactive risk management • Engages constructively with regulators and stakeholders	• Compliance calendar • Safeguarding oversight and reporting • Data protection compliance • Health and Safety oversight • Equality, diversity and inclusion, and Welsh Language compliance	• Internal audit • External audit • Estyn • Regulatory returns • Safeguarding audits • Board and committee minutes	• Full regulatory compliance • Reduced intervention risk • Strong safeguarding culture

Governance Behaviours

Principle 6

Board and Organisational Effectiveness

Rationale

An effective Board provides strategic leadership, scrutiny and assurance without interfering in operational management.

The Board	Recommended Practice	Suggested Sources of Assurance	Outcomes
• Understands its strategic role • Maintains a clear delegation of responsibilities • Ensures diversity of skills and background • Promotes succession planning • Invests in governor and governance professional development • Ensures that key governance information is made publicly available and kept up to date	• Annual skills audit • Governor recruitment policy • Formal induction programme • Board and Committee Terms of Reference • Board effectiveness review • Succession planning framework	• Annual self-assessment • External Governance Review • Committee effectiveness review • Attendance and participation monitoring • Board and committee minutes • College Website	• High-performing Board • Strong governance culture • Improved learner and organisational outcomes

Declaration of Compliance

Each college adopting this Code should:

- Confirm adoption by Board resolution
- Publish compliance statement annually
- Explain any deviations
- Commit to regular review of the code