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# Governing board skills audit 2015

## National Governors' Association

The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent charity representing and supporting governors, trustees and clerks in maintained schools and academies in England. Our goal is to improve the well-being of children and young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We do this by providing information, research, advice and training. We also work closely with, and lobby, UK government and are the only national membership organisation representing school governors and trustees.

The NGA is a membership organisation: governing boards can join at a standard (£77 for 2015/16) or GOLD rate (£260). To join NGA and receive regular updates, contact us:

Website: [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk) • Telephone: **0121 237 3780** • Email: [membership@nga.org.uk](mailto:membership@nga.org.uk)

## Introduction

This audit is a useful way of assessing the skills, knowledge and experience of your governing board. In the 2015 NGA/ TES survey, 83% of respondents said their governing board uses a skills audit. Of these, 60% used it to identify training needs; 49% used it when recruiting new governors; 65% used it to assign governors to committees; and 47% used it for succession planning.

NGA would like to see more governing boards using the results of the skills audit to help them identify any skills and knowledge they still need to deliver their functions – particularly their core functions – effectively.

No individual is going to have all the skills listed in the audit. The governing board is a team, and the purpose of the audit is to ensure that each of the skills below are covered by at least one of the governors around the table. Therefore, we have also produced a skills matrix in which governors' responses can be collated – this can be found on the [NGA website](#). If there are any gaps, these can be filled when recruiting new governors or training existing governors. The way in which this exercise is introduced is crucial – the intention is to enable all members of the governing board to set out their skills and experience whatever their backgrounds, and make clear that the essential and desirable skills for governance can be acquired through a range of life experiences. As such, the experience and skills below may come from either governors' professional or personal lives.

When considering the skills listed, it is important to understand that governance is a 'thinking' not a 'doing' role. This means that the skills and knowledge sought are those which enable governors to ask the right questions, analyse data and have focussed discussions which create robust accountability for school leaders. For example, a governor might work in the construction industry, but it would not be appropriate for him/her to carry out a health and safety check at the school. Similarly, a lawyer should not be asked to give free legal advice. Governance is a strategic role and governors must not be tempted to do the staff's job: management must be left to the school leadership team.

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<b>Your Name</b>	
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Experience, skills and other attributes	Level of experience/skill: rate on scale of 1 (none) to 5 (extensive) Do remember to think about all the situations in which you may have developed/used these skills				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Essential for all governors/trustees</b>					
Commitment to improving education for all pupils					
Ability to work in a professional manner as part of a team and take collective responsibility for decisions					
Willingness to learn					
Commitment to the school's vision and ethos					
Has basic literacy and numeracy skills					
Has basic IT skills (i.e. word processing and email)					
<b>Should exist across the governing board</b>					
<b>Understanding and/or experience of governance</b>					
Previous experience of being a board member in another sector or a governor/trustee in another school					
Experience of chairing a board/ governing board or committee					
Experience of professional leadership					
<b>Vision and strategic planning</b>					
Understanding and experience of strategic planning					
Ability to analyse and review complex issues objectively					
Ability to identify problems					
Ability to propose and consider innovative solutions					
Experience reviewing the impact of new ideas and initiatives					
Ability to learn from failure					
Ability to make difficult decisions in the best interests of pupils					
Change management (e.g. overseeing a merger or an organisational restructure, changing careers)					
Understanding of current education policy					
<b>Holding the head to account</b>					
Communication skills, including being able to discuss sensitive issues tactfully					
Ability to analyse data					
Ability to question and challenge					

Level of experience/skill: rate on scale of 1 (none) to 5 (extensive)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Holding the head to account (cont.)</b>					
Experience of project management					
Performance management/appraisal of someone else					
Experience of being performance managed/appraised yourself					
<b>Financial oversight</b>					
Financial planning/management (e.g. as part of your job)					
Experience of procurement/purchasing					
Experience of premises and facilities management					
<b>Knowing your school and community</b>					
Links with the community					
Links with local businesses					
Knowledge of the local/regional economy					
Working or volunteering with young people (e.g. teaching/social work/youth work/sports coaching/health services for young people)					
Understanding of special educational needs					

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**Existing governors only**

What contribution do you feel you have made to the governing board over the past year?

Please give brief details of courses you have undertaken in the past year - include governor training, work based training/development and/or any other development/training activities.

Are there any additional areas of the governing board's responsibilities to which you would like to contribute in the future?