

Transforming Governance for a new normal: Governance Conference 2020

20 November 2020

Session abstracts

Live Keynote Session 1

Diversity and inclusivity: The governance imperative

Lord Simon Woolley CBE, Director and co-founder of Operation Black Vote

This session will reflect on what the levers might be for change, desire for institutional success and competitiveness, as well as the power of stories and uncomfortable truths. It will explore demand for step change in the active role Boards play in holding their institutions to account for progress on EDI matters, both by equipping individual governors to recognise and realise the full potential of their roles as leaders, and through the collective agency and power of the Board. We know that many Boards still lack the confidence, skills, curiosity and diverse perspectives to lead effectively on this compared to say, the usual matters of financial sustainability and planning. Yet, we would all accept that these matters are intrinsically linked. Ultimately we need Governors and Boards to fulfil their leadership potential and create the right environment and culture for real progress.

Live Panel Session 1

The role of governance in a new normal: Establishing a new approach for governance in an era where Covid never goes away

Chair: Andy Shenstone, Director of Business Development, Advance HE

Joined by: Michael Queen, Chair, CUC and Chair, University of Surrey; Professor Steve West VC, University of the West of England, Bristol; and Martha Longdon, Chair, OfS Student Panel

This live panel session will explore how the governance of the UK HE system has had to change and may need to further change in the Covid and post-Covid environment.

Key issues and questions the panel will explore include, but are not limited to, 'Does how we approach the governance of our universities need to change in light of Covid? If so, why and in what way?'; 'How can governing bodies get assurance that students are getting value for money especially given the rapid move to blended delivery?' and 'How has governance practice had to change in the last six months – and has any of it been a change for the better?'

Live Parallel Session 1.1a

Delivering on diversity and inclusion for all - what the Board can do

Chair: Victoria Holbrook, Assistant Director Governance, Advance HE

Joined by: Robiu Salisu, Student Inclusion Officer and Member of Courts, University of Bristol; Monica Chadha, VC, Queen Mary University of London; and Jenny Tester, Head of Business Development, Advance HE

In this session we will share the practical experiences and perspectives of a university Vice-Chair (Monica Chadha) and a staff member leading EDI work (Robiu Salisu) in their drive to ensure that their respective institutions deliver on diversity and inclusion. Jenny Tester of Advance HE will also share insights from our recent Chatham House roundtable exploring

the Board's assurance role on this agenda, attended by a wide range of UK Chairs and Governors. How can the board use its role help drive progress in EDI? What does a strategic approach look like?

Live Parallel Session 1.1b

The revised Governance Code: In conversation with John Rushforth

John Rushforth, Executive Secretary, CUC; Andy Shenstone, Director of Business Development, Advance HE and Aaron Porter, Associate Director Governance, Advance HE

Andy Shenstone Director of Business Development, Advance HE and Aaron Porter, Associate Director Governance, Advance HE, will be joined by John Rushforth, Executive Secretary, CUC, to discuss the revised Governance Code. The session will explore the shift in language used in the revised Code – many more 'shoulds' than 'coulds' for example – and why there has been a change in emphasis. The session will also discuss how key behaviours, values, lessons from other sectors and changing regulatory regimes influenced thinking for the new Code and how it can work along side these factors. Finally, the session will explore the potential response from governing bodies to the revised Code.

Live Parallel Session 2.2a

Governance across borders – what can we learn from the nations?

Chair: Aaron Porter, Associate Director Governance, Advance HE

Joined by: Janet Le Grand QC (Hon), Senior Lay Member of Court, University of Edinburgh; Emyr Roberts, Chair Aberystwyth University Council; and Kim Ansell, Senior Adviser, Advance HE

Aaron Porter, Associate Director Governance, Advance HE, will be joined by panel members from across the nations to discuss governance and what the nations can learn from each other. Janet Le Grand QC (Hon), Senior Lay Member of Court, University of Edinburgh, will discuss early reflections on settling into Court at Edinburgh and the election processes for Court in Scotland as well as reflections on the differences and similarities between Governance in Scotland and England and the challenges they are currently facing.

Also joining the panel is Emyr Roberts, Chair Aberystwyth University Council. Emyr will talk through his experiences of Governance in Wales, the autonomy (or seeming autonomy) of HEIs in Wales, interactions with HEFCW as well as key findings from the Gillian Camm report on Governance in Wales.

Our final panel member, Kim Ansell, Senior Adviser, Advance HE, will outline governance codes and frameworks followed in other countries and discuss what we in the UK may be able to draw from their experiences.

Pre-recorded interview

Key reflection and a look ahead

Nicola Owen, DCE Operations, Lancaster University and Chair AHUA, Victoria Holbrook, Assistant Director Governance, Advance HE

In this pre-recorded interview, Victoria Holbrook, Assistant Director Governance, Advance HE, will catch up with Nicola Owen, DCE Operations, Lancaster University and Chair AHUA, to reflect on some of the biggest governance challenges this year, how governance approaches have had to adapt in the current climate, as well as exploring how university

governance in general needs to evolve further and what learnings and what we can take into the future from recent experiences.

Live Keynote 2

Devising new strategies that will be resilient in a time of prolonged and unprecedented turbulence

Professor Eunice Simmons, Vice Chancellor, University of Chester

In her keynote, Professor Eunice Simmons, Vice Chancellor, University of Chester, will reflect on how, as a new VC, she developed a strategy for the University of Chester just as the pandemic broke. The session will also explore how the pandemic has affected planning and strategy development, as well as consider the opportunities we can take forward from the current situation.

Live Panel 2

Devising new strategies that will be resilient in a time of prolonged and unprecedented turbulence

Chair: Aaron Porter, Associate Director Governance, Advance HE

Joined by: Professor Eunice Simmons, VC University of Chester; James Aston MBE, National Head of Education, BDO; Mary Curnock Cook MBE, The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology; and Beatrice Fraenkel, NHS

This session will comprise a range of complementary perspectives on what it means to have resilient strategies in place and how to deliver them. Mary Curnock Cook will reflect on the work of the provider she Chairs, The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology, in setting a strategy that challenges the traditional model of higher education. James Aston will share insights from supporting providers as they navigate choppy waters due to financial or regulatory issues. Beatrice Fraenkel, NHS, will consider what can be learned from the NHS governance experience, and the perspective of working in partnership with the higher education sector during Covid.

Panellists will also reflect on the role of a strategy in the context of a turbulent policy environment, and consider whether the boundaries of governance and management need to flex in order to support the organisation.