

# Observer Scheme

Enabling clerks, governors and chairs to gain experience of practice outside their own organisation

Leadership Skills for Governance



# Get a fresh perspective

---

The Observer Scheme allows clerks, governors and chairs from FE colleges to gain experience of practice outside their own organisation by visiting another college and attending one of their board meetings. The knowledge gained from this observation can then be applied to governing board and governance issues.

---

The scheme has been designed to be flexible and work around your needs, aims and objectives. Following an expression of interest made by you to participate in the scheme, an appropriate college will be identified for you to visit.

Information about the college, together with the contact details of the person hosting your observation, will be given to you. You will then be invited to liaise with the host directly and discuss appropriate dates, times, agenda and negotiate any charges that they may wish to apply.

## How have past observers and hosts benefited?

Observers have expressed the view that the time spent at another college proved to be of great value, both personally and in influencing their thinking about the development of their organisation.

The Observer Scheme is mutually beneficial and hosts have commented on the positive impact on their organisation.

“As a college and as governors, we have benefited enormously from the generosity of other colleges who have allowed us to observe them in action, and to share their ideas. We have therefore been happy to ‘host’ colleagues who wish to observe us and our practices – we know they will either embrace the ideas, ‘cherry pick’ certain practices that will work for them or decide that, in this case, it will not work in their context. Whatever the outcome, hosting colleagues enables them to go through that assessment and review process and assists them to move their practices forward in the direction that will work for them.”

Sheila Selwood, Clerk, West Herts College (Host)

## Benefits to observers

- Increase awareness to the value of sharing effective practices with colleagues.
- Gain knowledge in areas around making changes to a college governance framework or specific processes and procedures.
- Find out how other college boards have put change into practice.
- Help make informed decisions, address issues in advance rather than retrospectively, and assess whether that change is right for the college.
- Have the opportunity to develop an ongoing relationship and create links with the host organisation.
- Gain confidence in current role and practices.

“I am just writing to say that I went to a governors’ meeting at West Herts College yesterday and found it a very positive experience. I have learnt a lot and also gained some assurance that we were doing it right as well!”

Helen Swain, Trustee, Orpheus Centre (Observer)

# Resources

---

## Leadership Skills for Governance enews

Register to receive regular event updates, opportunities and policy news by email at:

[www.lsis.org.uk/lsgenews](http://www.lsis.org.uk/lsgenews)

## FE Governance online

For event listings, details of conferences, boardroom briefings and workshops visit:

[www.fegovernance.org](http://www.fegovernance.org)

## Governance good practice guide

The Governance Good Practice Guide (GGPG website) offers practical support and advice on:

- Governance and the FE system

- Roles and responsibilities
- Quality improvement to those concerned with the governance of further education and training.

For more information visit:

[www.ggpg.org.uk](http://www.ggpg.org.uk)

## Leadership Skills for Governance newsletter

This newsletter provides topical news items on FE governance enews and articles on the latest developments and events from the LSG programme.

Distributed termly to the clerk of the corporation for distribution to members of the governing board, it can also be downloaded from:

[www.fegovernance.org](http://www.fegovernance.org)

## Policy analysis support

LSIS offers analysis of selected major government publications, developments and initiatives.

Policy publications can be viewed at:

[www.lsis.org.uk/policy](http://www.lsis.org.uk/policy)

## Promoting disability equality

LSIS is committed to promoting equality for disabled people and we strive to ensure that all our communication and learning materials are available in various formats including large font, audio or braille.

Please let us know if you consider yourself disabled and require reasonable adjustments made to support you.



**Coventry office**

Friars House, Manor House Drive  
Coventry CV1 2TE  
t +44 (0) 870 1620 632

**London office**

Fourth Floor, 47 Mark Lane  
London EC3R 7QQ  
t +44 (0) 20 7297 8400

[www.lsis.org.uk](http://www.lsis.org.uk)

## Learning and Skills Improvement Service

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) came into operation on 1 October 2008. Combining the best aspects of two different and highly successful sector bodies – the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) – LSIS will work closely with the sector, as its key partner, to focus on learners and on supporting excellence, sustainable provision and self-regulation in the further education and skills sector. Leadership development will underpin and form an important part of the organisation's strategic role in the sector.

LSIS was established after consultations with sector leaders identified a strong desire for an organisation that would be sector-led. As a sector-owned public body, LSIS will be owned, directed and governed by further education and skills colleges and providers – the first time that this vibrant sector's talent is being harnessed to participate in this way.

LSIS will be consulting with the sector during autumn 2008 and spring 2009 about its priorities and remit. While this is taking place, the activities and services of CEL and QIA will continue under joint branding; more information about their range of activities is available on their respective websites.

### Further information

For further information about the Observer Scheme, please contact the Leadership Skills for Governance (LSG) team on:

t 0870 060 3278  
e [fegovernance@lsis.org.uk](mailto:fegovernance@lsis.org.uk)  
w [www.fegovernance.org](http://www.fegovernance.org)  
w [www.lsis.org.uk](http://www.lsis.org.uk)

LSIS 030