

Council Governance Effectiveness Review: Implementation Plan

September 2025

Introduction

In February 2025 Goldsmiths commissioned Halpin Partnership to undertake an independent advisory review of the effectiveness of Council and its committees, with the scope of this review to assess institutional and regulatory governance effectiveness. The review was undertaken during the Spring and Summer Term.

The review provided the opportunity to assess the university's governance arrangements in their entirety (the review scope is set out below) and provide recommendations for improvement or enhancement. Goldsmiths also seeks to comply with the [Committee of University Chairs \(CUC\) Higher Education Code of Governance](#), which includes an expectation for universities to conduct “a regular, full and robust review of governance effectiveness with some degree of independent input” and therefore the review enabled the university to comply with this aspect of the Code. Implementation of the review outcomes allow Council to ensure Goldsmiths' governance arrangements are fit for purpose within our own context and align with best practice.

Halpin's review methodology included a desk review of Goldsmiths' governance documents and papers and a membership benchmarking exercise against comparator institutions. This was alongside extensive consultation and engagement opportunities with the university community. This included:

- oversight by a Steering Group
- Governance (15 responses) and Academic Maturity (19 responses) Self-Assessment Surveys by the Council and Academic Board
- interviews with members of the Council, Secretariat, and Executive (30 individual interviews)
- Six Focus Groups to receive insight from University stakeholders under the following headings: Professional Services staff (two sessions); Academic Leaders; Student representatives; Student Officers; Staff Union representatives;
- attendance at a Council awayday
- observation of the Council, Audit and Risk Committee, Finance and Resources Committee and Academic Board

- additional anonymous comments from the wider Goldsmiths community where all the community was invited to make a submission (10 responses)

Goldsmiths received the advisory report from Halpin, which is provided as a separate document. Based on the recommendations a draft Implementation Plan was prepared by the University Secretary for consideration by the Steering Group, Nominations and Governance Committee and Council. The Plan groups together recommendations into workstreams, which reflect the core areas of recommendation from the Halpin report. Colleagues will see the Halpin report contains a high number of detailed recommendations which fall within the core areas; these will be cross referenced during the implementation to ensure relevant actions are captured.

The Implementation Plan is provided at a high-level to map actions over the coming two years. Nominations and Governance Committee will oversee the implementation on behalf of and reporting to Council. Detailed proposals will be prepared for consideration and approval by Council in line with the timeframes. Further consultation will be undertaken in accordance with statutory, regulatory, constitutional or other requirements e.g. with the Privy Council, Academic Board and the Unions.

The Council approved Implementation Plan follows below. Council is very grateful to all members of the community who participated in this review.

Review scope

- The size, composition and terms of reference of the Council and its subcommittees. The suitability of the statement of Primary responsibilities and the enhancement of constitutional documents to facilitate effective decision making and good and agile governance
- The skills, diversity and experience of the membership and arrangements for recruitment, induction and development of members. The diversity of Council and the payment of honoraria
- The arrangements for Council and subcommittee meetings, timetabling of business and suitability of information provided. The effectiveness of decision making and the Council dynamics
- The level of support and challenge for the Executive and the responsiveness of the Executive. The interface between governance and the Executive, and between Council and the Academic Board
- The effectiveness of academic governance arrangements in enabling Council to discharge its responsibilities in this regard
- The impact and visibility of the Council to stakeholders and its effectiveness in communicating with them and understanding their views

- Innovative and dynamic models for governance or governance practice which could be applied at Goldsmiths

Council Governance Effectiveness Review: Implementation Plan

The below sets out the 12 areas of focus for the implementation plan.

Strengthening Council and committee members' induction, development, review

- establish an induction framework, which can be tailored to meet individual needs
- identify and provide ongoing opportunities for development, e.g. external sessions, information briefings, deep dive sessions at meetings; opportunities to engage with the community; partnering with members of the exec
- develop Council member handbook/ role description
- introduce annual review systems for Council members and the Executive

Timeline: From start of academic year 2025/26

Streamlining and strengthening Council committees

- a) retain:
 - Audit and Risk Committee
 - Finance and Resources Committee
 - Remuneration Committee
 - Nominations and Governance Committee (incorporating Honorary Awards Committee)
 - People, Organisational Development and Equalities Committee (PODEC) (renaming as People, Culture and Inclusion Committee)
- b) review and revise the committees' terms of reference and membership composition, including an independent majority in the committee membership, compliance with external requirements, ensuring relevant responsibilities from committees listed below are captured (e.g. strategy review is part of the core business of Council)
- c) disestablish:
 - Strategy Review Group
 - External Relations Committee
- d) reassign from Council (retaining appropriate reporting to Council):
 - Health and Safety Committee to Executive Board

- Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee

- e) establish a Development Board to support fundraising, alumni engagement, and philanthropic income generation, although this would not be a committee of Council

Timeline: a), c), and d) from start of academic year 2025/26; b) to prepare detailed proposals for Council approval in September following consideration by relevant committees; e) action plan by end 2025

Modernise governing documents and policies

- Review/revise/streamline governing documents including Charter, Statutes, Ordinances, Statement of Primary Responsibilities, Standing Orders
- Establish a Scheme of Delegations
- As part of this work explore with the Charity Commission the option for including the provision for honoraria for the Chair of Council/ Committee Chairs (*n.b. this is not seeking approval to implement, which would be subject to a separate approval process should the University be granted approval for the provision*)
- Update related governance policies

Timeline: complete by end of academic year 2025/26

Review/revise meeting scheduling

- Council to meet five times per annum plus one awayday, or four times per annum plus two awaydays from 25/26
- Meeting schedules to be established for two years in advance

Timeline: from September 2025

Council membership

- a) Reduce the size of Council to 17 during 25/26, but allowing current Council members to serve out their full terms
- b) To revise Statutes concerning Council membership in advance of other work on the governing documents to enable this change to be implemented
- c) Replace the election process to Council with a panel appointment process
- d) implement succession planning arrangements and related mechanisms e.g skills audits
- e) Ensure continued open and transparent approaches to recruitment
- f) Ensure EDI representation across Council and committees
- g) Review and agree whether to appoint a Senior Independent Governor (SIG)

Timeline: a) fully completed by end 2025/26; b) by end 2025; by Summer Term 2026 for new appointments; d), e) and f) ongoing; g) Autumn term 2025.

Staff and Student voice

Develop mechanisms to ensure Council can hear a wide range of staff and student voices and engage with the community.

Timeline: Identify and establish for end 25/26.

Enhancing Academic Governance

- Review and clarify the terms of reference of Academic Board, including the principles of collective responsibility
- Review the membership composition of Academic Board
- Consider whether to rename Academic Board as Senate
- Review and implement streamlined AB committees taking account of the suggestions of Halpin to combine committees to create broadly:
 - Academic Quality and Standards Committee
 - Research, Innovation and PGR Committee
- Strengthen reporting arrangements to Council to ensure appropriate visibility and understanding
- Ensure that the student experience and student voice are appropriately integrated including visibility and understanding at Council
- Establish induction and development arrangements

Timeline: to be reviewed over academic year 2025/26 for implementation from academic year 2026/27.

Increase the visibility of Council including, for example:

- Termly blogs
- Town halls
- Update the website on governance at Goldsmiths

Timeline: implement from Autumn 2025.

Revise the risk management arrangements including a revised strategic risk register and risk policy

Establish a timetable by end August 2025 and begin to implement from Autumn 2025.

Commission an institution-wide review of organisational culture

Timeline: Review in early 2026 as to whether to take this forward following implementation of some of the changes from the Governance Review.

Operational

- Review paper coversheet, agenda structure and approach to papers for enhancement opportunities
- Reporting on meeting outcomes to Academic Board and Executive Board

Timeline: Review approaches and implement from academic year 2025/26

Establish a formal Chair of Council/Vice Chancellor Memorandum of Understanding

Timeline: Explore examples of this and agree with the current role holders whether this would be useful, Autumn term 2025.