

Board Orientation, Training and Mentoring Policy

Approval Authority: Board of Governors

Established On: 2014 09 24

Amendments: 2019 05 10, 2022 02 02

Category: Board of Governors

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy provides a standard and consistent approach to orientation, training and mentoring of Governors and non-Governors to the work of the Board of Governors and to NOSM University.

2.0 SCOPE

The objectives that might be considered, who should lead the process and how an orientation program might be structured.

Board orientation is not just about the transfer of information. As a result of the orientation, training and mentoring a member should:

- Understand their roles, responsibilities, and time commitment to governance work around the Board and committee table and away from it.
- Be aware of the current goals, opportunities and challenges facing the organization.
- Be aware of the organization's main stakeholders including other members, funders, partners, the community, as well as learners, staff and faculty.
- Consider how their own background, knowledge, experience and skills will contribute to the current work of the Board and the goals of the organization.
- Appreciate the background, knowledge, experience and skills of each of the other Governors and members of the committees.
- Understand how Board meetings are run, decisions are made and what formal governing policies and practices exist.
- Appreciate how this Board's functions differently than other Boards on which they have served or are serving.

3.0 PROCESS

Board orientation begins with the recruitment and selection phase. The application, recruitment, and interview process should include:

- Why and how their expertise and skills, and which ones in particular, are valuable assets to the Board and to the organization.

- Member roles and responsibilities
- The time commitment required.
- Current challenges and opportunities facing the organization.

Depending on the degree of familiarity with the organization, the orientation may be tailored to the needs of the new Governor or Committee member. Once recruited and selected to serve on the Board or a committee, the next step should involve special meetings as well as setting up a formal mentor. This may include:

- Arranging a mentor
- Providing the individual with information contained in the Board Policy Manual and directing them to the Board Portal Site
- Meeting with the President Vice Chancellor, Dean and CEO (President) or designate.
- Tour of the University (depending on location and availability)

Topics to be covered:

- Mission, values, history and distinguishing features of the organization, reputational advantages.
- The distinction between the Board's corporate and fiscal governance role, the University Senates' academic governance roles, and the operational roles of the President and Executive Group.
- Overview of key stakeholders (members, funders, government, community) and relationships to them.
- Strategic plan, priorities, performance measures, goals and current challenges (industry trends, environmental scan, public policy environment).
- Legal, ethical and advocacy responsibilities of the Board.
- Board structure, role, decision procedures, culture, committee structure, membership, and Board-staff communications.
- General duties for members as well as the role in attendance and contributing to reviews and evaluations.
- Review of media, communications and expectations for attendance at events, as well, the role and expectations as an ambassador.
- President, Senior Leadership and University roles and relationships and collaboration agreements
- Revenues, expenses, reserves, fundraising costs, financial management, and the Board role in budgeting process.
- Review fundraising responsibilities of the Board, including the organizations charitable status and an expectation to participate in the annual giving campaign in support of the University's advancement.
- By-laws and other policies and procedures in place; review practices.

Just as the needs of the Board guide the recruitment process and require a Board level conversation, so too does the orientation process. The whole Board has responsibilities that include welcoming new members, participating at an orientation session, where applicable, and most importantly participating as a mentor for new members.

It is the responsibility of the Governance Committee Chair or designate as well as the University Secretary, to ensure that the new member and the mentor are aware of the tasks and responsibilities for onboarding.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 MENTORING

Mentoring supplements ongoing orientation activities by pairing each new Governor and Committee member with an experienced Governor who acts as a resource person to answer questions and review materials as needed.

Mentoring will provide the following benefits to the Board:

- Support new members in their work on the Board and its Committees.
- Build collegiality amongst members.
- Build connectedness to NOSM University community.
- Foster engagement with the work of the Board, and individual' ability to contribute; and
- Develop the individual and collective knowledge of the Board, thus contributing to a level of shared understanding that promotes informed decision-making.

For Mentors

- Mentors should provide advice and direction to the Mentee as required, particularly with respect to Board culture and behaviours, background of issues/items coming before the Board, etc.;
- Mentors should be accessible to Mentees (by email, phone or in person); and
- Mentors may contact the University Secretary with questions or concerns about their role as a Mentor, or if they are unable to fulfill their commitment as a Mentor.
- The Office of the President can assist in setting up virtual meetings as required.

For Mentees

- Mentees should leverage the opportunities to ask questions of their Mentor, particularly those related to the Mentor's area of expertise.
- Mentees should be accessible to Mentors (by email, phone or in person).
- Mentees should be prepared for meetings with Mentors; and
- Mentees may contact the University Secretary with questions or concerns, or if they are unable to participate for any reason.

To the extent possible, experienced Governors will also be paired with committee members (non-Governor positions) to act as a resource person for both institutional knowledge and the role and responsibilities of committee member.

4.2 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

As part of the Board performance evaluation conducted each year, the Board will identify areas for professional development and training for the Board as a whole. Board and membership development needs may be met through:

- team building/retreat activities
- presentations by programs or senior leadership
- on site events or visits
- specific training on relevant topics that impact the governance role.

Each Governor is expected to take personal responsibility for their own continuous learning and upgrading of skills to contribute to the highest standards of governance for the NOSM University.

4.3 EVALUATION

Approximately 8-12 weeks after new members have completed the orientation, the Board Chair or Governance Committee chair may follow up with new members and possibly their mentors to get feedback on what worked well and to gather suggestions for improvement.

The orientation process could also be assessed as part of the annual Board self-evaluation with a rating question such as “how useful did you find your Board orientation” or an open-ended question like “given what know now about the work of the Board, what would you have liked to have known when you started as a Governor or Committee member?” [Sometimes it is best to do this right after orientation]

The Governance Committee will review the survey responses and recommend to the Board proposed revisions to the applicable policies and processes.

5.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

In support of this policy see the following links and documents:

- Mission, Vision and Values
- University Governance webpage link (Board, Chancellor, Senate):
<https://www.nosm.ca/about/governance/>
- Strategic plan - <https://strategicplan.nosm.ca/>
- Board Biography
- Portal Orientation - <https://nosm.sharepoint.com/sites/Board>
- Board Policy Manual - <https://www.nosm.ca/about/governance/board/board-policy-manual/>
- Communications and Publications
 - Added to lists for Dean’s Desk, Pulse etc
 - Receives Northern Passages, NOSM Report to the Community, the Scope
- List of abbreviations and acronyms commonly used in the field -
https://nosm.sharepoint.com/:x/r/sites/CommunicationsandExternalRelations/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BC33C62C9-1F8A-4E8D-9E07-F48CFE2BB872%7D&file=NOSM-Acronyms-FULL-2021--1-.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true

6.0 GETTING HELP

Queries regarding interpretations of this document should be directed to:

University Secretary and Assistant Secretary

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