

MAT governance self-evaluation questions

Self-evaluation is a fundamental feature of good governance – NGA recommends that governing boards evaluate themselves annually to help them:

- deliver core functions in an effective, ethical and accountable way
- assure compliance
- continuously improve
- achieve improved outcomes for pupils

These self-evaluation questions for multi academy trusts (MATs) include:

- 21 questions for trust boards
- 16 questions for academy committees (local governing bodies)

The questions are presented as a set of statements for individuals to reflect on, to help the trust evaluate its effectiveness and identify areas for development.

Those governing in a local authority-maintained school or single academy trust should refer to the 20 questions for governing boards at www.nga.org.uk/self-evaluation-questions

How to use the questions

We recommend that you take the following approach:

1. Consider adapting the questions to reflect the board or academy committee's current context.
2. Decide whether to use all of the questions or to focus on a particular section.
3. Ask your governance professional to circulate the questions and collate responses – each trustee and academy committee member should provide responses to their respective set of questions.

○ We encourage boards to use a 'red, amber, green' or similar rating system to provide responses, rather than 'yes/no' answers.
4. Discuss the results as a board – identify any training, development or recruitment needs and agree action that needs to be taken.

In order to assure the trust's members that the board reviews its own governance culture and practice, trustees should share evaluation reports with their members each year.

Online self-evaluation

NGA's online self-evaluation uses these questions, automatically collating responses into two reports and includes:

- guidance on how to set up and run your self-evaluation
- template documents to guide you through an analysis of your evaluation report and the creation of a governance action plan
- an optional mentor session with an NGA governance consultant

Find out more and book an online self-evaluation at www.nga.org.uk/board-evaluation

21 trust board self-evaluation questions

Board culture and practice

1. Governance culture

The board is a committed team that works well with the trust's executive leader and the governance professional.

2. Board leadership

The chair is appointed annually, leads with integrity, is supported by a vice chair and ensures the board stays strategic and does not shy away from making the right decisions for the trust.

3. Governance professional

The trust employs a dedicated governance professional who coordinates the delivery of governance support across the trust, ensuring independent clerking of board committees and academy committees.

4. Skills and diversity

Succession is planned, the recruitment process is designed to ensure trustees are recruited to fill skills gaps and ensure diversity of knowledge, experience, perspectives and approaches.

5. Induction and ongoing development

There is a quality induction programme in place for new trustees and a culture of ongoing governance training and development.

Board structure

6. Separation

Each layer of governance is separate with no overlaps, conflicts or opportunities for undue influence.

7. Size

The trust board is the right size with a proportionate committee structure.

8. Delegation

The scheme of delegation and committee terms of reference are clear and fully aligned with the responsibilities allocated to each tier of governance.

9. Local governance

Guidance, support and communication with academy committees is effective, enabling academy committees to play a meaningful role in the governance of the trust.

Core functions

10. Values, ethics and culture

Trustees and executive leaders have agreed the trust's values which are evident in policies and practice, ensure ethical behaviours and underpin a healthy culture across the trust.

11. Vision

Trustees and executive leaders have established a clear and ambitious vision which describes what the trust should look like in three to five years and what pupils will achieve.

12. Strategy

Trustees have agreed with the executive leader a limited number of measurable strategic aims which need to be met in order for the trust to achieve its vision; these aims drive the board's business.

13. The board as employer

The board acknowledges its responsibilities as employer of trust staff and ensures the development and wellbeing of the executive leader.

14. Accountability – quality of education

Trustees hold the executive leader to account for the quality of education that pupils receive, ensuring school leaders develop, implement and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.

15. Accountability – financial oversight

Trustees understand how the trust's funds are managed and hold the executive leader to account for the efficiency, sustainability and impact of the trust's financial planning and management.

16. Accountability – stakeholders

Trustees know their schools and their stakeholders and take into account their views when making key decisions, reporting annually on the work of the trust board.

Compliance

17. Statutory requirements

Trustees are confident that the trust meets all legal requirements and takes into account statutory guidance, including on conflicts of interest and related party transactions.

18. Managing risk

Trustees are involved in the identification and assessment of key strategic risks.

Evaluation and impact

19. Evaluation of trustee contribution

A 360° appraisal process is used to evaluate the chair's effectiveness, and the chair or vice chair reviews trustees' individual contributions and effectiveness each year.

20. Evaluation of board practice

The board undertakes annual self-evaluation and commissions an external evaluation every three years; these are reported to the trust's members.

21. Evaluation of impact

Trustees are confident that the decisions the board makes have led to both improved outcomes for pupils and ongoing financial stability for the trust.

16 academy committee self-evaluation questions

Academy committee structure and practice

1. Governance culture

The academy committee is a committed team, is well led and acts professionally.

2. People

There is a role description for academy committee members which is used to recruit new and diverse committee members with the right skills and who reflect our local community.

3. Size

The academy committee is the right size for carrying out its role.

4. Governance professional

The trust employs a dedicated governance professional who provides advice and guidance to our academy committee.

5. Guidance documents

There is a range of trust-specific documents – including a scheme of delegation – that explains our role and helps us to fulfil it.

6. Induction and ongoing development

There is quality induction for new academy committee members and a culture of ongoing governance training and development.

7. Communication

Our academy committee is able to communicate effectively with the trust board and the trusts' executive leader.

Core functions

8. Values, ethics and culture

Our academy committee understands and embraces our trust's values, ethics and culture.

9. Vision and strategy

Our academy committee understands the part we play in our trust's vision and strategy for the future and how that shapes our school.

10. Support and challenge

Our academy committee has a meaningful role in supporting and challenging the headteacher in order to ensure pupils receive a high quality education

11. Engaging with stakeholders

Our academy committee knows its school and community, engages with stakeholders and shares their views with the trust.



Compliance

12. With policies

Our academy committee is clear which policies it is monitoring and how to report any concerns to the trust.

13. Safeguarding

Our academy committee has a good understanding of its role and responsibilities in ensuring pupils are kept safe and know how to report concerns.

14. Risk

Our academy committee understands how our trust manages risk.

Evaluation and impact

15. Self-evaluation

The trust ensures we all participate in evaluating our own effectiveness each year action is taken as a result.

16. Evaluation of impact

Our academy committee's role in governance is valued by both the trust and the school and has a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

