UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE
PROJECT AND PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE:
“PROJECT AND PROGRAMME BOARDS”

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1. **PURPOSE**

1.1 To set out the purpose of project and programme boards, their membership, a description of roles and responsibilities and provide a template terms of reference for use when constituting and running such a board.

2. **PROJECT AND PROGRAMME BOARDS**

2.1 Clear, authoritative, critical but supportive, and documented decision making is critical for IT projects which always entail the possibility of partial or complete failure. Sound governance is the key risk reduction measure. 100% success is rare in any complex project.

2.2 The ISC, or, if authority has been delegated, one of the ISC’s sub or system committees, will act as the overall “Steering Group” and set up the project or programme board (“Board”) for significant projects and programmes. In doing so they will appoint members of Boards by having sought and considered nominations, as required, from other bodies with an interest in the direction and successful outcome of the project or programme. A Board will remain in existence until the project or programme concludes, at which point the Steering Committee will consider replacing it with a Management Committee or other appropriate governance arrangements, which may include the handover to a relevant University institution. The Board reports to the Steering Group, which reports to the ISC and the PRC. The Board oversees the work of the project or programme manager (“Project Manager”) and approves the make-up of the Project Team (where specific expertise is required, relevant individuals should join the Project Team to provide support. For example, if there is external procurement, procurement and legal support should be included) The overall structure will be:

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1 ‘Significant’ – as defined in “ISC Projects and Programmes: FRAMEWORK”

2 PRC – Planning and Resources Committee
2.3 A sub or system committee of the ISC may also take the role of a Project or Programme Board itself; in these circumstances consideration should be given to whether a temporary modification to their Terms of Reference and membership is required.

2.4 The roles undertaken by the Steering Group, Boards and Steering Committees are highlighted in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Function</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steering Groups</td>
<td>Accountability for the project or programme with strategic oversight and the ability to approve progress through stage gates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards</td>
<td>Responsibility for the successful delivery of projects and programmes and accountable to the Steering Group. Ability to commit resources and funds and to recommend to the Steering Group that progress through stage gates should be approved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committees</td>
<td>Sometimes referred to as working groups. They are accountable to Boards and are often constituted to lead on specific areas of project or programme work e.g. procurement, or to gain wider insight through involving a greater number of stakeholders. Focus is tactical and they often provide advice and recommendations to Boards.</td>
</tr>
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2.4 In the same way that projects differ from programmes (as defined in the document entitled: ISC Project and Programme Governance: DECISION MAKING PROCESS), project boards will differ from programme boards. Their overall concern will be the same; to ensure successful delivery, however a project board will be focus on deliverables and how they align strategically, whereas a programme board will focus on a wider change to satisfy themselves that the projects and work being undertaken as part of the programme continue to deliver against organisational expectations.

2.5 Each such Group, Board or Committee shall require appropriate secretariat function to be in place. Responsibility for identifying and making available such function and resource shall fall to each respective Group, Board or Committee.

3. PROJECT AND PROGRAMME BOARD MEMBERSHIP

3.1 The Steering Group will propose a Chair for the Board with remaining Board membership being identified and invited by the Chair and SRO.

3.2 Board members must have the authority and ability to lead work of the size, complexity and significance involved. Together they will provide the initial mandate, visible leadership and commitment to the project. The Board will normally be chaired by a senior member of staff, often the SRO (Senior Responsible Owner), or Sponsor, appointed by the ISC and will have, as a minimum, the following membership:

- Chair / Senior Responsible Owner
- Senior Supplier Representative(s) (where appropriate)
- Senior User Representative(s)

3.3 Other members with specific interest, skills, experience or impact may also be identified and appointed, as necessary. For example, the Service Owner will likely be able to play a key role on a Board; they may also fulfil either of the senior supplier or senior user roles (but not both). Only members with decision making authority and time should be appointed to a Board to enable meetings to decide the key matters at hand and facilitate progress. Board members must be able to prioritise Board meeting attendance. Further information on the terms of reference for Boards can be found below
3.4 The project or programme manager is expected to attend Board meetings and most Boards will also have a nominated secretary.

4. PROJECT AND PROGRAMME BOARD ROLES

4.1 Senior Responsible Owner

a. The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), or sponsor, is a key role and must be filled by a senior individual, rather than multiple individuals. They will be ultimately accountable for approval of the business case and the success, or failure, of the project or programme and must lead from the front. The SRO will be a member of the project or programme board and may be the chair. They will be responsible on behalf of the Board to the Steering Group.

b. The SRO will be the owner of the overall business change that is being supported or required by the project or programme and will ensure that the change maintains its business focus, has clear authority, and that the context, including risks, is actively managed and supported. The SRO should be recognised as the owner throughout the organisation\(^3\).

c. This role requires significant time to be devoted to the project or programme, particularly during its definition phase. Good working relationships between the SRO and stakeholders is essential to the success of a project or programme.

4.2 Senior Supplier \(^4\)

a. The Board role that provides knowledge and experience of the main discipline(s) involved in the production of the deliverable(s). The Senior Supplier represents the supplier interests within the project or programme, is there to help the Board resolve uncertainties or problems as the supplier engages in implementing the project or programme’s objectives and provides supplier resources. Compromises and adjustment of the supplier’s obligations may be necessary to achieve overall project success and the Senior Supplier will have decision making authority to facilitate such action.

b. If the system is substantially based on a commercial product, the supplier of this product should be represented. The Senior Supplier must have the authority to commit or acquire supplier resources as required. As a member of the Board, the Senior Supplier has the right to vote, but only on matters impacting the supplier’s interests. There may be circumstances in which the Board needs to meet in the absence of the Senior Supplier, particularly where the matter for discussion is commercial in confidence.

c. There may be a need for multiple supplier representatives on a board where more than one supplier has been contracted. Suppliers can be internal to the University, for example the University’s Information Services (UIS), or external. In terms of governance, internal and external suppliers should be held accountable in a similar way.


4.3 Senior User

a. The Senior User is responsible for ensuring that user needs are specified correctly and that the solution meets those needs.

b. The Senior User represents the interests of all those who will use, or benefit from, the final product(s) of the project or programme. The role may require more than one person to cover all the user interests but for the sake of effectiveness, the role should not be split between too many people. If the system being developed is for use by the colleges as well as the University, representatives of both must be included on the board. The Senior User is responsible for:
   i. specifying the needs of those who will use the final product(s);
   ii. ensuring user needs are considered throughout the project or programme lifecycle;
   iii. providing user resources;
   iv. user liaison with the project or programme team; and
   v. monitoring that the solution will meet those needs and the objectives within the Business Case in terms of quality, functionality and ease of use.

4.4 Board Secretary

a. The Board’s Secretary schedules and supports Board meetings, inviting members, arranging appropriate facilities, collating circulating papers in advance of the meeting, taking, circulating and amending minutes and maintaining the action log.

5. PROJECT AND PROGRAMME BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

5.1 The Board will guide the project or programme and report regularly to the Steering Group. Its terms of reference (tailored for each project or programme) will be along the following lines:

   i. understand and ensure that risks to success are assessed appropriately and have effective management plans associated with them;
   ii. approve project plans and assess progress against them;
   iii. exercise financial control and oversight of the Project or Programme Team’s work and decide matters escalated for decision by the Project or Programme Manager;
   iv. advise the Steering Group on budget required, its make-up and spending;
   v. have the authority to commit funding and resources from their respective user and supplier communities;
   vi. report to the Steering Group on significant project or programme issues and risks, as appropriate;
   vii. authorise the start of each stage of the project or programme lifecycle up until acceptance and project or programme closure;
   viii. approve progress of the project or programme against its strategic objectives, set out in the Business Case;
   ix. assess progress of the project or programme against identified benefits in the Business Case;
   x. approve delivery of significant project and programme objectives and tasks;
   xi. commission project or programme assurance reviews to be undertaken;
   xii. where an external supplier is to be engaged:
   • consider the risk profile and circumstances;
   • confirm the contractual approach (for example, iterative, or waterfall; cloud based or on premise);
   • confirm the procurement approach in light of Financial Regulations requirements; and
• authorise the signing of supplier contracts.

xiii. assist the Project or Programme Manager with major risk and issue management;
xiv. set tolerance levels within which the Project or Programme Manager must operate;
ivr. authorises deviation from tolerances;

xvi. brokers and maintains relationships with stakeholders within and outside the project;

xvii. provide delegated authority, as required, to ensure the project meets its objectives;

xviii. facilitates communication within the project and with other stakeholders, both internal and external;

xix. approves completion of a stage and authorises moving on to the next stage; and

xx. approves the membership of subsidiary committees and liaises with these.

6. SUBSIDIARY COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

6.1 In all but small projects, the Board may need to devolve some aspects of its work to subsidiary committees and working groups, e.g. a Steering Committee, User Group(s) and/or Special Interest Group(s). Such groups are typically necessary to assist with defining users' requirements and the business change process as well as to ensure that users and potential users of the system at all levels are sufficiently represented and that their views and concerns are visible to the Project Team and the Board in a timely fashion.

6.2 The SRO, is responsible for the forming, terms of reference and membership of these subsidiary bodies; subject to the approval of the project or programme board. Such terms of reference are likely to be based on those for project and programme boards but with a more specific focus. Ultimately, subsidiary committees will be accountable to the Board that constituted them.

6.3 A typical Subsidiary Committee might have the following roles represented:

• Chair
• Senior user representatives for each functional area
• Development and implementation representative(s) from the Project Team
• Operation and support representative(s) from the Project Team

6.4 The Subsidiary Committee may in turn be assisted by a number of User or Special Interest Groups chaired by Steering Committee members.