Principal Appraisal Panel

Terms of Reference 2026-2027

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LEGAL FORM	GOVERNANCE BODY	EFFECTIVE DATE
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1. Constitution and governing hierarchy

These Terms of Reference operate subject to applicable law, the Trust's executed Articles and current single Funding Agreement, the current Academy Trust Handbook, Board resolutions, the Scheme of Delegation and relevant policies. Higher legal or contractual requirements prevail. The Articles use Governor for the office now described as Trustee and company director. Hadrian is a single-academy trust; its Board governs the academy directly, without a local governing tier.

The Board establishes the Panel as a committee under article 101 for the appraisal functions in the Scheme of Delegation. It appoints members and an independent external adviser annually. Hadrian is an academy trust: the maintained-school appraisal regulations do not automatically apply. Use the Trust's adopted Appraisal and Pay Policies, contractual provisions and applicable employment and equality law.

2. Purpose and intended outcomes

The Principal Appraisal Panel conducts a fair, evidence-based and developmental appraisal of the Principal, aligns objectives with Trust priorities and evaluates leadership impact. It makes a written recommendation on pay to the Pay Committee, which performs the Scheme of Delegation's Remuneration Committee function. The Panel does not determine pay or vary the Principal's contract.

3. Authority and reserved matters

- Agree the appraisal period, timetable, evidence requirements, leadership expectations and a proportionate set of objectives with the Principal, taking advice from the external adviser.
- Evaluate prior-year performance, conduct an interim review and final assessment, agree professional development and identify support and resources required.
- Access relevant validated Trust performance and assurance information on a need-to-know basis, without taking over executive management or commissioning excessive evidence.
- Agree an appraisal statement recording the assessment, objectives, support, development and Principal comments; make a reasoned written pay recommendation to the Pay Committee.
- Refer unresolved procedural disputes, conflicts, serious concerns and matters outside remit to the Board or authorised process. Keep appraisal, capability, disciplinary and grievance routes distinct.
- Do not award pay, alter pay ranges, vary contractual terms, decide formal capability outcomes or hear an appeal against the Panel's own assessment.

Limits and urgent business

No Chair, individual Trustee, adviser or working group may exercise a decision-making power merely through custom or urgency. Use only an express lawful delegation; record the authority, reasons and reporting. No local decision replaces Member powers, required consultation, contractual obligations or prior external consent. Report delegated action to the next Board meeting.

Committee and executive interfaces

The Curriculum and Standards Committee provides educational assurance. The Finance, Resources and Audit Committee provides finance, resources, audit and risk assurance; some source documents call this the Finance, Resources, Audit and Risk Committee. The Pay Committee fulfils the Remuneration Committee remit. The Principal Appraisal Panel assesses performance and recommends on pay. The Principal manages the academy within delegation. The Board must maintain consistent names and powers across controlled records.

4. Core responsibilities

Planning and external advice

Appoint a suitably skilled, experienced and independent external adviser through the Board-approved commissioning process. Check interests, prior involvement, confidentiality and scope. The adviser supports objective-setting and evaluation but has no vote and does not make the Panel's judgement. Provide timely papers and a fair opportunity for the Principal to prepare.

Objectives and success criteria

Agree specific, measurable and achievable objectives that reflect the role, Trust strategy, academy improvement priorities and leadership expectations. Record baseline, intended pupil or organisational outcomes, milestones, evidence, responsibilities, support and review dates. Include safeguarding, inclusion and resource stewardship where relevant to priorities. Avoid judging leadership through a single attainment measure or unadjusted cohort comparison.

Evidence and review

Use the Principal's self-evaluation, agreed objectives, validated pupil outcomes, improvement evidence, stakeholder feedback and committee assurance. Consider internal scrutiny 2025/26 and external financial audit 2025/26 findings relevant to the Principal's responsibilities, including the quality and timeliness of corrective action; do not assume an audit outcome or attribute every finding personally. Consider context, agreed support, changed responsibilities and evidence limitations.

Development workload and wellbeing

Maintain a supportive professional dialogue alongside robust accountability. Identify development, coaching, resources, workload and wellbeing needs. Make reasonable adjustments and consider part-time work, disability, family leave and other protected circumstances fairly. Agree changes to objectives prospectively, record reasons and do not retrospectively alter success criteria.

Assessment and pay recommendation

Record achievement against each objective and wider leadership expectations under the adopted policy. Give the Principal the written assessment and opportunity to comment. Make a clear, evidence-based recommendation on pay progression, including reasons, to the Pay Committee. Pay decisions require the correct separate approvals, affordability assessment and any advance DfE consent; a positive appraisal does not itself authorise a payment.

Concerns disputes and follow-through

Raise emerging concerns promptly with evidence and reasonable support; avoid surprises at final review. Follow the Appraisal Policy for disagreements and the separate applicable procedure if formal capability or other employment action is considered. Maintain independent appeal capacity, record actions and check development and support commitments at interim review.

5. Membership skills and independence

Appoint three non-employee Trustees with appropriate leadership, appraisal and equality knowledge; the Board appoints a Panel Chair and a substitute pool where practicable. The Principal attends appraisal discussions as appraisee and has no vote. The external adviser and Governance Professional/Clerk provide non-voting support. Exclude close personal, family, business or other conflicts and prior involvement that undermines impartiality. Preserve independent pay and appeal decision-makers.

Record appointment, term, voting status, required identity, DBS and suitability checks, interests and training. Members must observe the Code of Conduct, Nolan Principles and confidentiality requirements. Seek relevant HR, financial, legal or educational expertise when needed; professional advice supports rather than replaces independent judgement.

6. Meetings quorum and decisions

Frequency notice and papers

Hold an annual assessment and objective-setting meeting, normally in the autumn term, and at least one interim review. The appraisal period and completion deadline are those in the adopted policy and contract; record the agreed timetable before the cycle begins. Give at least seven clear days' notice and papers, unless the governing documents or policy require longer. Allow adequate preparation and reasonable adjustments.

Quorum

The quorum is all three appointed, eligible, unconflicted Trustee members. The Principal, external adviser and clerk do not count or vote. If a member is unavailable or conflicted, defer or obtain a Board-appointed eligible substitute. Ensure continuity and access to the evidence without allowing informal substitution.

Decision making

Seek an agreed assessment and objectives with the Principal. Trustees retain responsibility for the assessment and act under the Appraisal Policy if agreement is not reached, recording the Principal's comments and the dispute route. Panel recommendations are agreed by a simple majority; a tied motion is not carried unless lawfully authorised otherwise. Conduct private deliberations without the appraisee or conflicted participants. No informal email poll replaces a valid meeting or authorised written decision.

An inquorate meeting may receive information but cannot take a formal decision. Record provisional recommendations clearly. Minutes must identify the decision-maker, applicable authority, conflicts, evidence, reasons and any conditions or external approvals.

7. Agendas records and reporting

The Chair and Governance Professional/Clerk agree the annual work programme and each agenda. Papers must state the decision or assurance sought, options, evidence, limitations, affordability, pupil impact, equality, safeguarding, workload, risk and required approval. Defer a decision if information is inadequate.

The Governance Professional/Clerk records attendance, declarations, challenge, advice, decisions, reasons, votes and actions. Issue draft minutes promptly, normally within fifteen working days, and submit them for approval at the next meeting. Track each action by owner, deadline and completion evidence. Report delegated decisions and recommendations to the next Board meeting; escalate material risks or compliance concerns immediately.

8. Conflicts confidentiality and information governance

Declare interests on appointment, annually and at each relevant agenda item. Record the nature of the interest, withdrawal, exclusions from voting and item-specific quorum. No individual may decide their own remuneration. Obtain advice where a connected-person interest or loyalty conflict affects impartiality.

Use a secure governance portal with role-based access. Keep named personnel, appraisal and pay evidence in restricted Part 2 records and share only what each authorised recipient needs. The Principal may submit evidence and representations but must withdraw from their own pay decision. Apply UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, lawful access rights and the records retention schedule. Public terms and required governance disclosures must remain accessible; confidentiality must not conceal a mandatory disclosure or prevent proper Board accountability.

9. Training evaluation and review

Provide induction and annual development in the body's remit, constitutional duties, conflicts, equality and evidence-based decision-making. Review effectiveness, attendance, skills, independence, quality of papers and challenge, timeliness, action completion and impact annually. The Board reviews these terms at least every twelve months and after a material change to the Articles, delegation, law, funding requirements or policy.

10. Approval and signatures

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