

Chair

Appointment Brief



Introduction from Dr David Knight, Chair

Thank you for your interest in becoming our next Chair.

NOCN is trusted and recognised by learners, training providers, colleges and employers as an organisation that makes a real difference to people's lives. We hope that our work inspires you and that you will consider applying for this unique and exciting opportunity to become our Chair, helping to take NOCN forward in its next stage of development as an educational charity operating in a rapidly changing commercial and political environment both in the UK and internationally.

Founded in 1986 as a UK membership organisation for similar like-minded regionally based charities, NOCN was formally registered as a charity in 1999. Our members provided a pathway for people who had not fully benefited in the formal education system to obtain qualifications or accredited recognition of their skills.

When the regulation of awarding bodies, now called awarding organisations, came into force in the late 1990s NOCN was one of the charities quickly to become a Government recognised awarding body. From March 2000 NOCN was the national awarding organisation controlling the work of all the various regional member organisations which supported the delivery of NOCN's nationally recognised qualifications. Much has changed since then and you can find out more in the section on our history.

Recently I announced my retirement as Chair in June 2016 by which time I will have served for a maximum nine years on the Board. This time has been exciting, challenging and one of constant change. It has also been thoroughly rewarding working with an excellent Board and with a very experienced and hardworking management team with clear direction on where the organisation is going.

NOCN is moving away from being an organisation that achieves its charitable objectives solely by being a recognised awarding organisation in the UK, to one that offers a diverse range of services, operating internationally as well as nationally. In response to market realities, our focus is increasingly commercial; we are managing this challenge whilst still remaining true to our charitable purpose. Our journey has already started and we have commenced an ambitious programme of diversification both in the UK and internationally.

In this appointment brief, you will find information about our work, our structure and our plans for the future. You will also find specific details on our current requirements and information on how to apply for this exceptional opportunity.

Dr David Knight, Chair



VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Vision

Our vision is to be an awarding and assessment organisation of choice, helping learners to reach their potential and organisations to thrive.

Mission

Our mission is to provide flexible qualifications that:

- Help people achieve their goals in life and work
- Are valued by employers, learning providers and communities, in the UK and internationally

Values

- We believe that individuals should be recognised for their achievements, whatever their circumstances
- We put the needs of employers, learners, and learning providers at the heart of what we do
- We enjoy working with partner organisations
- We strive for innovative and effective solutions
- We are open, straightforward, flexible, and responsive
- We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion

Leader in Diversity

NOCN is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all that it does. We are therefore proud to be the very first awarding organisation to be given the 'Leader in Diversity' award by the National Centre for Diversity, a leader in promoting equality for all in the UK.

We also support the Two Ticks scheme.



ABOUT US

Previously known as the National Open College Network, NOCN is a leading awarding organisation (AO) that has been creating opportunities for students and learners for nearly 30 years. We are recognised by Ofqual for England and Northern Ireland, Qualifications Wales, and for other qualifications in Northern Ireland by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). In addition we are an apprenticeship assessment organisation (AAO) for the newly reformed UK apprenticeships and an assessment body for some Indian Sector Skills Councils and an awarding organisation for delivery of ESOL International in Greece, Cyprus and surrounding countries.

NOCN works with a wide range of organisations, to provide qualifications including vocational skills, employability training, productivity improvement, traineeships and apprenticeships. With our expertise and unique approach we are in the best position to help employers and training providers bridge skills gaps and develop qualifications that meet the needs of industry and learners alike.

The majority of NOCN's UK business is managed from our head office in Sheffield, but we also have regional offices in Birmingham, Bristol, London and Warrington. In addition we have an office in New Delhi, India. We work with our UK partners ONE Awards (for the North East and Scotland), Agored Cymru (Wales) and OCN Northern Ireland, and a number of international partners in Europe, Asia and Africa.

We work across a wide range of sectors including business management, construction, financial services (credit services activities), health and social services, hospitality, security and facilities management as well as transport.

NOCN also believes investment in its staff is essential to its success, achieving Silver status in Investors in People.



HISTORY

NOCN's network of educational organisations was set up in 1986 and launched in 1987, bringing together a loose federation of seven open colleges and access centres. This new network ensured consistency of quality for NOCN qualifications nationwide. These local organisations eventually became known as OCNs (Open College Networks) as members of NOCN's network. By 2000 there were 31 regionally based organisations and in 2006 these merged into 11 larger OCNs. The history of this development is summarised in the 2007 joint NOCN and National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) publication "Celebrating Achievement – 25 Years of Open College Networks" a copy of which is available on request.

During the 1990s and the early period of the 2000's NOCN was instrumental in developing a credit based approach to incremental achievement of a qualification. These credits were transferable between organisations so that a learner could start learning in one place and then complete their training later in another establishment. As part of this the concept of the recognition of prior learning (RPL) was developed.

This approach was eventually adopted by the UK Government and became known as the Qualification Credit Framework (QCF). Many of the principles of the QCF has been embedded in European standards as well as those in the middle-east, India and Africa.

From 2011 major UK Government reforms to funded adult education resulted in NOCN refocusing its strategy to match government aspirations for the sector. This meant more higher level qualifications matched to the needs of industry and less of the 'traditional' general OCN qualifications, such as foundation level and 'niche' awards.

Integral to this strategy NOCN re-established itself as an independent leading brand of adult vocational qualifications as well as apprenticeships. In 2013 it entered the international market for assessment services and qualifications.

As a result of Government policy changes, many of the former regional OCNs left and established themselves as local awarding organisations in their own right, rebranding to make it clear they no longer delivered NOCN qualifications. However, not all OCN members left and in fact NOCN continues to work with ONE Award in the North East and Scotland, Agored Cymru in Wales and OCN Northern Ireland in Ireland.

Since 2013 NOCN has been through a major period of change in its governance, business strategy, operations and staffing. This change continues in response to the Education and Skills Policies of the new UK Government elected in May 2015 as well as the opportunities available overseas.

BOARD AND STAFFING STRUCTURE

Board

The Board, which meets quarterly, currently consists of:

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| Dr David Knight (Chair of the Board) | Open University |
| Professor Sandra Jowett (Vice-Chair) | Cumbria University |
| James Blackhurst (Chair of Audit) | Jigsaw Training |
| Kay Dickinson | Former UKCES (UK Commission for Employment & Skills) |
| John Fuller | Former Cabinet Office & DWP |
| Alison Lamplough | Laing O'Rourke, Construction |
| Guy Lane | Consultant, Health & Social Care |
| Seb Schmoller | Vice-Chair Sheffield College |
| Peter Wallwork | Credit Services Association |
| Jackie Williams | TUC |

There are three sub-committees of the Board: Audit Committee, Finance & Resources Committee and Regulation & Enhancement Committee.

Staffing Structure

Our total UK staffing headcount of staff and contracted personnel, including our three UK Delivery Partners (Agored Cymru, ONE Awards and OCN Northern Ireland) is 171. Of these 37 are permanent NOCN staff and 40 are contracted personnel working direct to NOCN.



Our Managing Director is Graham Hasting-Evans and the Director of Business Development is Jane Jones. The Deputy MD & Director of Quality Standards is covered on an interim basis by David Hutchinson.

At the Board in October 2015 the Trustees agreed to revisit the senior management structure and we are now recruiting a permanent Director of Customer Support and Operations. We aim to have this permanent person in place in the Spring 2016.

GOVERNMENT POLICY ENVIRONMENT

UK

In May 2015 a new Conservative Government was elected, with a radical agenda for change in vocational education and skills development:

Employers Involvement:

Employers are intended to be at the heart of deciding the standards, curriculum and content of apprenticeships and vocational qualifications. They will be in charge of the development process for these including the training and assessment methodologies.

Apprenticeships:

A major up-grading of traditional apprenticeships and widening of the coverage to other sectors and types of job is starting to come into place through the Trailblazer process. New style apprenticeships will be a qualification in their own right, just like an A Level or Degree.

Levy:

These new style apprenticeships will be funded by large employers through a proposed 'Levy', similar to that in the UK Construction industry and other European countries. This Levy will be 0.5% of payroll costs for employers with a payroll of £3m or more per annum.

Vocational Qualifications:

New vocational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 will be needed to support a vocational based offering to young people from 14 to 19 years old. These are also to be available for adults who wish to retrain.

Functional Skills:

Functional Skills English and Maths will be reformed with fundamental changes to the curriculum, assessment and regulatory controls.

QCF Withdrawal:

At the beginning of October 2015 the former qualifications framework (the QCF) ceased to exist. Awarding organisations are free to offer different qualification structures provided they are compliant with the validity criteria in Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR) and match the requirements of employers. NOCN has launched its replacement for the QCF called MY-VOC.

FE & Sixth Form College Restructuring:

A major restructuring of 16 – 19 years provision in England has commenced with local areas, through the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), restructuring the provision of Further Education (FE) and Six Form Colleges. It is expected that this will result, through closures and mergers, in a halving of the number of Colleges.

National Colleges, Career Colleges and University Technical Colleges (UTCs):

Alongside the restructuring of existing FE and Sixth Form College provision the Government is opening new types of providers such as National Colleges for certain industry sectors (e.g. Advanced Manufacturing, Nuclear and Rail), Career Colleges for 14 – 19 years and UTCs.

All of this has a major impact on the market for awarding and assessment organisation services. At present there are over 150 active awarding organisations. This number is just not sustainable in this environment and inevitably over the next 2 to 3 years there will be a reduction through closure and mergers. NOCN is positioning itself for this situation.

International

Many countries and regions such as China, the Far East, India and the sub-continent, the Middle East, South America, Southern African and the former USSR states appreciate that they need to raise technical and vocational skills.

Accordingly many are introducing qualification credit frameworks (NQFs), national occupational standards (NOS) and vocational qualifications as well as establishing sector skills councils (SSCs).

Some countries like India and the Philippines recognise the need to raise skills to an international standard so that their populations can move abroad to satisfy the demographic skills gaps in the developing world such as Europe, the Middle East, the USA and UK.

Many of these Governments are looking to experts from countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, the USA and UK to help with this transition. This presents real opportunities to NOCN which it has started to capture, initially in India.

NOCN'S FUTURE DIRECTION

NOCN has recognised the strategic implications of the policies that were emerging under the coalition Government in the UK. We have therefore been re-aligning our business strategy to meet this challenge since the OCN's left in 2013. We are achieving this whilst recognising the need both to be commercially driven, employer focused and to deliver the charitable objects.

In addition the potential for international activity has been recognised and NOCN has started to achieve a presence in certain overseas markets.

NOCN has an ambition to be in the top 10 of awarding organisations in the UK (it is currently ranked by Ofqual as 14th out of some 155 awarding organisations) and to be a key player in emerging UK apprenticeship assessment market as well as an internationally recognised player.

Progress to date:

- Strategic partnerships with like-minded charities and policy 'players' such as the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AeLP), NIACE, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and The Campaign for Learning in order to bring together a common view and voice on the major campaigning issues around education and skills development in the UK.
- Promoting a policy voice through the press and other channels. This includes equality, diversity and inclusion as a Leader in Diversity.
- Promotion of adult learning and its benefits through the sponsorship of the major national event - Adults Learners Week.
- Development of an approach to supporting learners who have learning disabilities called 'Pathways to Adulthood'.
- Delivery of a faith qualification which encourages respect between different faiths.
- Range of qualifications which are still based upon the QCF approach which will provide learners with difficulties and others with a bit-by-bit pathway to learning and achievement; including employability skills. We have branded our new approach as MY-VOC.
- Delivery of Functional Skills in English, Maths and IT for learners who have not succeeded at their GCSE level.
- Food processing and hygiene safety courses for farmers in Bangladesh, funded by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).
- Employability skills development in Bangalore, India.
- ESOL international qualifications in Europe.

UK industry:

- Involvement in apprenticeship delivery and engagement with employers groups in several of the new Trailblazer apprenticeships in several sectors.
- Expansion in the construction sector for craft trades and Tech Level in Civil Engineering for 16-19 years as a preparation for university. This is jointly working with training providers and employers.
- Air traffic control and air traffic engineering qualifications with the National Air Traffic Control Service (NATS). This will present international opportunities as well.
- Fish processing courses with Tesco.
- Apprenticeships developed with York Teaching Hospital for the National Health Service.

- Development and delivery of a practical Level 4 Management of Productivity qualification with supporting training materials and exercises.
- Work with employers on credit services.
- Work with employers for security services and facilities management.
- Work with EDF Energy, Hinkley Point Training Association (HPTA) and local employers for new qualifications and apprenticeships to support the Nuclear New Build Programme.

International:

- Development and roll-out of management qualifications in India, with training content in the form of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).
- Development and roll-out of a Professional Manager Recognition System (e.g. similar to chartered status in the UK) in India.
- Assessment for staff in the telecommunications industry through the contract with The Telecom Sector Skills Council (TSSC).

In developing and monitoring its business strategy NOCN uses the approach embodied in the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), with an under-pinning work programme of activities and change projects. Our strategy recognises the commercial reality that we must deliver commercial products and services to generate surpluses which support our charitable activities.

Priority sectors for the coming period include:

- **Business administration and management qualifications**
- **Construction, including civil engineering**
- **Financial services**
- **Health and social care**
- **Hospitality**
- **Security and facilities management**
- **Transport**

In addition we will continue with qualifications in core skills which support all sectors such as employability skills, English, Maths and Functional Skills.

We are diversifying our customer basis in order to increase the proportion of customers who are employers and private training providers.

ROLE PROFILE

This is a rewarding *pro bono* appointment. If you would like to make a difference in our world, this is a great opportunity to bring your skills, knowledge and experience to help us achieve our objectives.

Travel expenses directly incurred as a Board member can be reimbursed. Board and other meetings are held in Sheffield. Committee meetings are held by telephone conference.

Board members are appointed for an initial three year term with the opportunity to extend for a further two or three year period.

As Chair, your commitment to NOCN will include chairing the four (11.00-15.00 excluding travel) Board meetings per annum and the AGM, as well as up to four sub-committee meetings. There may also be a limited number of ad-hoc extra Board meetings, usually held by telephone conference.

In addition the Chair leads the selection committee for new Trustees. The Chair also liaises with the Managing Director, by telephone and email, and may on occasion attend external meetings such as with the Chair of One Awards or in the run-up to Adult Learners Week.

It is estimated that all together the Chair's time commitment is approximately 2 days per month.

Overall Objective

The Chair holds the Board and the executive to account for the organisations mission and vision, providing inclusive leadership to the Board, ensuring that each trustee fulfils their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity.

The Chair also supports and, where appropriate, challenges the Managing Director, ensuring that the Board functions collectively and works closely with the entire senior management team of the organisation to achieve agreed objectives.

Principal Responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership to the organisation and the Board, ensuring that the organisations objectives are adhered to and delivered to achieve maximum impact for its beneficiaries
- Work with the Board and the executive to deliver the strategic plan for the organisation
- Ensure effective mechanisms for the evaluation of performance against agreed targets for the achievement of the organisation's objectives
- Ensure that NOCN complies with its memorandum and articles of association, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- Ensure that NOCN pursues commercial activities both in the UK and internationally which supports the achievement of these objectives
- Ensure trustees fulfil their responsibilities in line with best practice and guidance
- Ensure that trustees represent the charity in a professional manner, internally and externally and uphold the values of NOCN
- Ensure that trustees use their own networks to raise the profile and visibility of the organisation and potentially identify new opportunities for NOCN

- Develop an effective relationship with the Managing Director, providing regular support through telephone and face-to face contact
- Safeguard the good name and values of the organisation
- Work with the Managing Director and the executive team to ensure the financial viability of the organisation
- Protect and manage any property of the organisation and ensure the proper investment of the organisations funds
- Appoint the Managing Director and other members of the senior leadership team
- Monitor and appraise the performance of the Managing Director in collaboration with other trustees

Duties

- Set agendas for board meetings in conjunction with the Managing Director and Company Secretary
- Chair and facilitate Board, Annual General and Extraordinary meetings
- Provide direction to Board policy-making
- Ensure and monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented
- Bring impartiality and objectivity to decision-making
- Represent the organisation at functions and meetings
- Act as a spokesperson and figurehead where appropriate in support of the Managing Director
- Work in partnership with the Managing Director to keep an overview of NOCN affairs and to provide support as appropriate
- Facilitate change and address conflict within the board and within the wider organisation
- Facilitate the development of the Board
- Ensure that the Board incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead the charity effectively, ensuring that the Board reflects the wider population
- Participate in appointment and disciplinary panels as appropriate
- Participate in appeals panels for learners as appropriate

The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive. The Chair will be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We seek an experienced individual with strong governance skills and strategic ability, an individual who will be an ambassador for NOCN and who can help us maximise our ability to grow both in the UK and internationally, with a commitment to the objectives of the organisation.

You will also bring:

- A commitment to the vision, mission, values and strategic aims of NOCN
- An enthusiasm and ability for networking, and the capacity to apply this to building relationships on behalf of NOCN
- Excellent communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills
- A broad knowledge of the voluntary sector, combined with commercial acumen and expertise
- The strategic vision and ability to lead a national organisation operating in an increasingly important space
- Good independent judgement, and an ability to think creatively
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- Ability to effectively lead the Board as a team
- Appreciation of the need to adhere to the boundaries of governance and management
- Experience of chairing meetings effectively
- Experience and in depth understanding of at least one educational or skill sector
- Interest in education, skills development, assessment and learner achievement
- A knowledge of qualification frameworks
- Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to fulfill the role
- Commitment to working within Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership

HOW TO APPLY

To apply in confidence to become the new Chair of NOCN please forward a copy of your CV or an extended biography together with a short supporting statement and a list of any directorships or trusteeships that you currently hold. Please ensure that your application fully addresses the requirements for the role.

You should give the names, positions, organisations and telephone contact numbers of two referees, relevant to this role. References will only be taken once your express permission has been granted.

You are also invited to complete and return the enclosed monitoring form. The information on the form will be treated as confidential, and used for statistical purposes. The form will not be treated as part of your application. We would also be grateful if you could let us know if you will require any special provision as a result of any disability should you be called for interview.

Finally please ensure that you have included mobile, work and home telephone numbers, as well as any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty with the indicative timetable.

Applications should be submitted via our website:

www.prospect-us.co.uk/executive/job/HQ00162331

Applications can also be posted to: Jeni Syckelmoore, Prospectus, 20-22 Stukeley Street, London, WC2B 5LR

Timetable

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| Published advert closing date | Monday 18th January |
| Preliminary interviews with Prospectus | w/c 25th January |
| Informal conversations with Chair and Managing Director | w/c 15th February |
| Final Panel Interviews | w/c 22nd February |

Recruitment Process

You will receive feedback within five working days of the closing date.

If you have any questions on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information or wish to have an informal discussion, please contact Lottie Wihl or Philip Nelson on **020 7400 6373** or via email at **lottie.wihl@prospect-us.co.uk** or **philip.nelson@prospect-us.co.uk**

