

Departmental Advisory Boards (DABs) at the University of York

Principles and Guidance to Departments

1.0 Principles

1. The University Strategy (2014-2020) articulates a desire for stronger engagement with business and industry and an enhanced approach to how we identify and cultivate partnerships in order to support the three main objectives of delivering world-class research, excellent teaching and a distinctive student experience. While autonomy and excellence of course remain central to our academic activity, we acknowledge that formal structures such as Departmental Advisory Boards (DABs) can provide a vehicle through which departments are able to foster strategically important regional, national and international relationships which help meet our ambitions as a global institution.
2. DABs are not part of the formal governance of academic departments or the University, however, membership of a DAB is considered a key volunteer role. As such, responsibility for the management of DABs rests with the Head of Department and the University Executive Board maintains institutional oversight of these volunteer relationships by ensuring University stewardship practices (thanking, reporting, and recognising) are upheld.
3. It is not essential that all departments establish a DAB, only where it is believed that volunteers can add value in any of the ways outlined below, and where the value of membership to our external volunteers is carefully considered.

If managed well, DABs can add value at departmental level including:

- advice on academic programmes and our learning environments;
- an informed view on student employability;
- advocacy and access to wider networks, including external lobbying;
- support of academic and student recruitment and retention;
- support in achieving specialised accreditation, for instance management school accreditation (EQUIS, ACCA and AMBA);
- philanthropy, funding and other in-kind support;
- collaborative research opportunities.

Departments may choose the format and structures of DABS according to their needs and focus. Alternative models are provided in the further guidance provided below.

2.0 Guidance to Departments

2.1 Q&A Information

What are Departmental Advisory Boards (DAB)?

DABs are advisory boards comprising University staff and external members.

What is the role of a DAB?

A DAB acts as a critical friend and provides access to strategic intelligence and networks outside the University, helping staff and students access employment, research and funding opportunities. They also help to publicise the work of the Department and University more widely.

What is excluded from the role of the DAB?

They are not part of the formal governance of the University of York or academic departments. However, all external members of Departmental Advisory Boards will automatically be considered for nomination on to the University's Court.

Who should be on a DAB?

The precise composition and role of the DAB will vary according to discipline and department, and structure of the group. Generally, they should comprise people of appropriate seniority from external, UK and international organisations, possessing relevant and recent experience of either the discipline or an appropriate employment sector. Membership should be for terms of two years (renewable) to encourage new and relevant perspectives and focus.

How big does a DAB need to be?

The focus and objectives of the DAB will dictate the size and format of the board see section 2.2 point 10 for further guidance on alternative structures. The Board should include members from the University's academic and professional support community, but should be drawn largely from external organisations. It is usual that the role of Chair is assigned to an external member.

How often should a DAB meet?

The frequency of meetings will depend upon the structure of the DAB but between one and three times a year is typical.

Where do I find more detailed guidance?

More detailed guidance, including draft terms of reference which you can adapt as appropriate and suggested remits for different types of department, see section 2.2

Who should I contact for more help on setting up a DAB?

Contact the [Development and Alumni Relations Office](#) for more guidance on establishing your Departmental Advisory Board including potential members, terms of reference, volunteer codes of conduct and recording member details. DARO would also like to support Departments in the

development of meeting agendas and ongoing thanking, reporting to and recognising the role of these volunteers.

2.2 Detailed Guidance on Departmental Advisory Boards

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Context

The University Strategy (2014-2020) articulates a desire for stronger engagement with business and industry and an enhanced approach to how we identify and cultivate partnerships in order to support the three main objectives of delivering world-class research, excellent teaching and a distinctive student experience. While autonomy and excellence of course remain central to our academic activity, we acknowledge that formal structures such as Departmental Advisory Boards (DABs) can provide a vehicle through which departments, and the wider institution, are able to foster strategically important regional, national and international relationships which help meet our ambitions as a global institution.

1. DABs are not part of the formal governance of academic departments or the University however, membership of a DAB is considered a key volunteer role. As such, responsibility for the management of DABs rests with the Head of Department and University Executive Board maintains institutional oversight of these volunteer relationships by ensuring good stewardship practices (thanking through events and communications, reporting through interim updates, and recognising their contribution through volunteer rolls and on departmental webpages) are upheld. DARO will support academic departments in the development of boards through identification of members and stewardship of these volunteer relationships, as outlined above.
2. It is not essential that all departments establish a DAB, only where it is believed volunteers can add value in any of the ways outlined below, and where the value of membership to our external volunteers is carefully considered.

If managed well, DABs can add significant value at departmental level including:

- advice on academic programmes and our learning environments;
- an informed view on student employability;
- advocacy and access to wider networks
- support of academic and student recruitment and retention;
- support in achieving specialised accreditation, for instance management school accreditation (EQUIS, ACCA and AMBA);
- philanthropy, funding and other in-kind support;
- collaborative research.

Departments may choose the format and structures of DABS according to their needs and focus. Alternative models are provided in the further guidance provided below.

Representation and Membership

3. The University strives to be a globally recognised leader in teaching and research and membership of DABs should represent and help deliver our ambitions as a global institution. It is possible to invite international members onto DABs and it is not essential that members attend every meeting in person.
4. Generally, DABs should comprise people of appropriate seniority such as those with decision-making authority or influence within their organisations. Most will not be directly involved in university education, but they should possess relevant and recent experience and/or knowledge of either the disciplinary area or the employment sector with which the departments is linked, or aspires to be. They may also be people who have good knowledge or influence that would be helpful to the department concerned, eg through knowledge of the research community relevant to the discipline or policy development. The skills of members should complement each other and, together, cover the full range of learning and teaching and research activities.
5. It is not essential to include alumni of the University of York on DABs but senior level and internationally located York graduates may have relevant knowledge, experience and a greater willingness to volunteer on this basis.
6. The size of DABs and number of volunteers required to sit on the board will depend on the chosen format for the group (see point 10). Where a partnership format is implemented the board will typically range between eight and fifteen in total, including internal members, largely drawn from senior staff in other organisations.

7. Members should be sought through a process instigated by the Head of Department. The Chair appointment should be made in consultation with the appropriate Dean of Faculty, and Board appointments should be jointly approved by the Chair of the Advisory Board and the Head of Department.
8. Members will normally be appointed for two-year terms and are eligible to serve for a maximum of three terms.
9. It is possible to vary the structure of the board according to the desired focus and remit of the group, as outlined below. For instance, a *forum* or *mentor* structure may be a more suitable format where a department requires the DAB to focus on employability, rather than curriculum development. Many DABs adopt a hybrid structure of the *partner* and *ceremonial* formats.

It is important to decide and articulate to members the level of activity required between meetings. Departments may choose to develop a cross-departmental board in circumstances where there are particular sectorial synergies between departments.

Structures

<p>Ceremonial Structure: to provide structure to relationships with individuals who have an ability to contribute significantly to or make an investment into the University - meetings should be formal and informational rather than discussion orientated.</p> <p>Benefits: easier to manage, can generate resources Drawbacks: engagement levels may be lower and therefore they will not endure unless personal motivations are also being met</p>	<p>Forum Structure: to facilitate exchange, sharing ideas and networking from research through to contractual relationships. These will be larger in size than other types and have a higher turnover of members</p> <p>Benefits: topical and exciting Drawbacks: may not generate resource, hard to manage due to size</p>
<p>Mentor Structure: this structure values engagement with students and staff members - board members might work with students on interview skills or actively review programme proposals. May even vote on curriculum approval - members are aligned to institutional goals.</p> <p>Benefits: generates long term commitment and the impact of the board is quite visible Drawbacks: high time requirement and extensive admin support</p>	<p>Partner Structure: the board is trusted and actively seeks or engages in multiple activities including - programme design, co-chairing events, research and professional development</p> <p>Benefits: high levels of engagement support and less susceptible to turnover Drawbacks: requires continuous active management</p>

Leadership

10. It is recommended that the Chair of the DAB is an external member. The Head of Department may be the Chair or an ex-officio member, and departments may wish to also include the relevant Dean of Faculty, Director of Research and Enterprise, Director of External Relations, Director of Development and Alumni Engagement or Director of Employability and Careers as ex officio members.
11. It is the responsibility of the Chair (whether internal or external) to ensure that members are aware of the escalation routes should a member have any concerns about the departmental advisory board. As University Executive Board lead on Departmental Advisory Boards, members should be advised of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's oversight of these volunteers. Departments may wish to direct external volunteer members to the Guidance for Volunteers at the University of York at www.yorkspace.net/volunteer-charter

Induction and Stewardship

12. Induction of volunteers onto the DAB is conducted by the Department Head or Chair of the DAB. The opportunity to report to DAB volunteers on wider institutional matters such as the University Strategy, or the development of a unified brand proposition is possible through nomination of external members to Court. Departments should contact DARO to discuss further.
13. The details of all external members will be maintained on the university's partnership and alumni database and members will automatically be invited to annual stewardship events for volunteers and donors to the University and other high profile events such as YorkTalks, Graduation and high profile public lectures.

Remit and Frequency of Meetings

14. Advisory Boards should meet a minimum of once per academic year and a maximum of three times each academic year, with the schedule of meetings being agreed in advance at the beginning of each academic year.
15. In order to discharge their role effectively, Boards should have access to an appropriate range of departmental information and, also, have the opportunity to meet representatives of the student community in the department.

16. It is important, both to the department and to members of the Advisory Board, that there should be a realistic expectation of the matters that would come under the purview of the Departmental Advisory Board. In particular, it should be made clear in the terms of Reference that the Board is not a formal part of the management of the department and has no role in the day-to-day operation of the department, staffing matters, or allocation of resources.
17. Since Boards will play slightly different roles according to the discipline involved, departments will wish to construct their own precise Terms of Reference which should be reviewed on an annual basis. In outline, however, they might cover:
- to receive, and comment upon, an annual report on the work of the department
 - to share intelligence on matters relevant to the department, including developments in the discipline, research opportunities, business and community relationships, wider policy developments that might affect the work of the department
 - to share good practice about the promotion of the department to key external audiences
 - to foster good industry/professional links as appropriate
 - to support initiatives that assist in the employability of graduates
 - to assist in identifying teaching, research and knowledge exchange activities

Review and Reporting Process

18. Whilst it was not envisaged Departmental Advisory Boards produce their own annual reports, records should be maintained about the DAB's activities and be available to inform relevant discussions within the department and the University as appropriate.
19. Names of external members should be shared with DARO in order that membership information can be recorded on the University's partnerships and alumni database, NXT. DARO can also provide departments with broader information about other links to member's businesses and organisations in order to help departments cultivate and steward relationships.

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