# OPTIMAL SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

## SCHOOL GOVERNANCE BASICS

## COURSE OSG-N1 : OVERVIEW

**COURSE OBJECTIVE:** This short course is designed to introduce 'responsible persons' (as defined under Section 47(b) of the Education Act in New South Wales) to the NESA requirements upon school boards to establish policies and procedures for proper governance, and to expand this basic information by introducing some key facets of effective school board governance. Therefore, while the emphasis of the course is addressing ongoing professional learning needs, it is also highly suitable as a component of the induction of new 'responsible persons'.

**COURSE AIMS:**

1. To inform 'responsible persons' about the NESA requirements and expectations in the area of school governance;

2. To expand knowledge of the NESA requirements and expectations into a working understanding of these requirements, as demonstrated by a commitment to fulfil these requirements;

3. To help 'responsible persons' develop a practical strategy to fulfil the NESA requirements in terms of (a) record keeping, (b) implementing 'best practice' in school governance, and (c) expanding understanding of sound governance principles and practices;

4. To initiate an ongoing reflective process of effective governance and board evaluation.

**DURATION OF THE COURSE:** Four hours in a single session (one morning, one afternoon or one evening).

**MODE OF DELIVERY:** Face-to-face workshop with all the 'responsible persons' in one group, usually delivered at the school or at another suitable venue organised by the school.

**COURSE CONTENT:** Like the other courses offered, this course has a modular structure, drawing from the sessions listed below:

1. Introductions
2. NESA requirements
3. Governance vs management
4. Staying focussed in a crisis
5. Dysfunctional boards
6. Healthy boards
7. Mission and vision
8. Board-Head relationship
9. Board meetings and dynamics
10. Board composition and succession
11. Fiduciary duties compliance
12. Other board duties
13. Community engagement
14. Evaluating the board

Each module is designed to take approximately 45 minutes, including discussion and questions, except module 1 which normally takes 20-30 minutes. In this course, all modules are shortened in order to maximise course content within a limited time; this is done by restricting discussion and question time. The 6 modules included in this course are detailed in the table on the next page.

**CERTIFICATION:** Upon successful completion of the course, a signed letter is issued to the school certifying the name of the course, the content covered, the duration of the course, the venue, and the names of those persons who attended.

| Module | Title | Content | NESA Manual Mapping |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introductions | • Getting to know each other<br>• Being a board member means … | - |
| 2 | NESA Requirements | • Why the NESA requirements are needed<br>• What NESA requires<br>• Who is responsible?<br>• The six compliance requirements<br>• Policies and procedures<br>• Conflicts of interest<br>• Related party transactions register<br>• Professional learning<br>• Induction process<br>• External independent attestation audit<br>• Documentation and record keeping | 3.9.3<br>3.9.3.1<br>3.9.3.2<br>3.9.3.3<br>3.9.3.4<br>3.9.3.5<br>3.9.3.6<br><br>5.9.3 |
| 3 | Governance vs Management | • The nature of a board<br>• Committees<br>• Powers of a board<br>• Governance and management<br>• The accountability and responsibility relationship<br>• The scope of a delegations schedule<br>• Models of governance | 3.9.3.1 |
| 6 | Healthy boards | • The importance of mission (context and philosophy)<br>• Characteristics of high quality governance<br>• Stability<br>• Meetings<br>• Board operations<br>• The Board Chair<br>• Board priorities<br>• Collaboration<br>• Code of conduct<br>• Responsible boards and exceptional boards<br>• 'Best Practice' in school governance | 3.9.3<br>3.9.3.1<br>3.9.3.2<br>3.9.3.4 |
| 8 | The Board-Head relationship | • The most important relationship<br>• "Supporting God on a good day"<br>• Overseeing the Head<br>  ✳ Hiring the Head<br>  ✳ Responsibilities of the Head<br>  ✳ The Head's remuneration<br>  ✳ The Head's evaluation<br>• Engagement with the Head<br>  ✳ The Chair's role<br>  ✳ Trustees' (board members') roles | 3.9.3.1<br>3.9.3.5 |
| 14 | Evaluating the Board | • The 'fiduciary duty - mission - evaluation' cycle.<br>• Trustee (board member) evaluation<br>• Board evaluation<br>  ✳ Domains and dimensions<br>  ✳ Measuring 'best practice'<br>  ✳ The process of evaluation | 3.9.3.1 |