

ICGS Assurance Board draft terms of reference [published 17 December 2024]

TYPE OF GROUP

Decision-making and consultative.

PURPOSE OF GROUP

The Assurance Board conducts assurance of the ICGS on behalf of the parliamentary community. This entails holding the ICGS Director to account, scrutinising the performance of the ICGS, approving ICGS Procedures under the Policy Framework, and recommending any changes to the Policy Framework to the appropriate governance bodies.

GROUP OWNER (*FORMERLY CALLED “REPORTING AUTHORITY”*)

This Board is established by resolution of the House of Commons and by decision of the House of Lords Commission.

These terms of reference will be agreed by the House of Commons Commission and House of Lords Commission.

REMIT OF GROUP

The Board’s remit is to:

1. Discuss issues of common interest to stakeholders and giving advice to the ICGS Director;
2. Scrutinise the performance of the ICGS and hold the Director to account;
3. Review ICGS Internal Guidance proposed by the ICGS Director;
4. Review the ICGS Risk Register;
5. Oversee the implementation of the recommendations from the Paul Kernaghan review;
6. If necessary, resolve issues of disagreement among teams or bodies within the Scheme by discussion and mutual consent

The Board will also take any necessary decisions in the following areas:

1. Whether to recommend to the House of Commons Commission and House of Lords Management Board (and, if necessary, the House of Lords Commission) any changes to the ICGS Policy Framework
2. Approval of, and of changes to, ICGS Procedures.

Changes to these terms of reference must be put to the group owner for decision.

OWNERSHIP

This group has ownership of:

1. ICGS Procedures

STRATEGIC LINK

House of Lords Administration strategy: Being an inclusive, diverse and professional workforce, delivering a wide range of services; Making Parliament safer, more secure, and sustainable

House of Commons Administration Strategy: We attract, retain, reward and develop talented people, promoting professional and respectful working relationships and acting as one unified organisation; We ensure the safety and security of all those who work for and visit the UK Parliament.

MEMBERSHIP (INCLUDING CHAIR)

1. Clerk Assistant, House of Commons and Clerk Assistant, House of Lords (Co-Chairs)
2. Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards
3. Chair of the Independent Expert Panel
4. A lay member of the House of Lords Conduct Committee
5. A Member representative of the House of Lords Commission
6. A Member representative of the House of Commons Commission
7. Managing Director, People and Culture Team, House of Commons
8. HR Director, House of Lords

Permanent invitee:

1. Director of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

Changes to the roles that make up this Board require a decision of the House of Commons and the House of Lords Commission; except that changes to role-holders due to staff turnover only require the House of Commons Commission and the House of Lords Commission to be notified.

PROCESS FOR SELECTING CHAIR

The Clerk Assistant, House of Commons and Clerk Assistant, House of Lords are co-chairs (by rotation).

SUBSTITUTES

Members of the Board are expected to attend meetings wherever possible. However, they may authorise an appropriate colleague to represent them if they are unable to attend a meeting. The substitute will have the same powers as the absent member.

The substitute for a Member representative must be another Member. The substitute for the Chair of the Independent Expert Panel must be another member of the Independent Expert Panel. The substitute for a lay member of the Lords Conduct Committee must be another lay member of the Lords Conduct Committee.

RULES FOR DECISION MAKING

In order to make a decision, all members (or their substitute) must be present. Only one co-chair need be present.

Only group members or their nominated substitutes may vote (not either Co-Chair in the first instance). Voting is by simple majority. In the case of equality of votes, the Co-Chair in the chair at the time has the casting vote.

Any Board member who is not present or who leaves a meeting prior to its conclusion shall be taken to be a non-participating member for the purpose of a decision taken after the time of departure.

Virtual participation shall be considered as equivalent to participation in person.

The Board may take decisions by correspondence, unless any member of the Board objects.

The decisions of the Board will not displace existing agreements between:

- The Director of the ICGS and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (the “oversight agreement”)
- The Director of the ICGS and the House of Commons and House of Lords Administrations (MoU)

The ICGS Director remains solely responsible for HR and finance matters within the ICGS team.

During dissolution periods, the Board may meet for informal discussion but cannot take decisions.

SECRETARY

Policy, Procedures and Guidance Advisor, Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS

The Board will meet every six weeks when both Houses are sitting, varied by agreement by the Board.

The Board will not normally meet when either House is in recess.

The Board will confirm the date of the next meeting at the end of each meeting. The meeting date may be varied by the co-chairs having given sufficient notice to the members of the Board.

Papers will be circulated to the Board one week prior to the meeting.

Virtual participation is permitted.

The Board's work is strictly confidential. The Board will not discuss the details of ongoing individual cases in order to preserve the independence of the Scheme, though may review thematic issues, and lessons learned from concluded individual cases on an anonymised basis.

REPORTING

Minutes will be taken at each meeting by the Secretary and will be circulated to the Board in advance of the following meeting. The Board will approve the minutes.

Where the Board decides to approve or amend ICGS Procedures, a record of this decision will be published.

CULTURE STATEMENT

The Board commits to upholding the values of each House and the Behaviour Code.