

NGA's External Review of Governance

your questions answered

What is an external review of governance?

Our external review of governance (ERG) is a supportive process designed to help a board, whether governing a trust or a school, improve its effectiveness and work smarter.

It is not an audit or an inspection. It is an independent assessment of your current governance practices which provides you with a baseline for improvement.

The detailed review not only provides information on the evidence of governance found but also detailed recommendations on areas for development and links to pertinent NGA resources.

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It is one of the ways we support those governing to promote high standards, as per our mission:

NGA's mission is:

To improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards.

When to commission an ERG?

The DfE recommend that ERGs are conducted routinely as part of a wider programme of self-assessment and improvement. A review every three years is recommended, but a review can be organised at any time.

A review can be particularly beneficial when change is happening or needed. Specific circumstances that may prompt a board to seek a review include:

- A new chair, or new governors or trustees, or new leadership of the school or trust
- There has been no history of board evaluation and so the review provides a baseline
- There are specific issues, for example with standards, financial management or complaints
- The board is struggling or going through a period of change
- The board is finding it hard to recruit or retain governors or trustees
- A MAT wishes to grow and wants to ensure its governance is strong enough to support this growth

What are the benefits of an ERG?

The Department for Education (DfE) explains that an ERG can:

- ✓ be a more powerful diagnostic tool than self-evaluation
- ✓ bring an independent perspective
- ✓ identify areas for capacity and capability building for all those involved in governance
- ✓ identify areas for further learning and development
- ✓ provides a list of recommendations/actions
- ✓ provide support to a governing body at key growth or transition points

An ERG helps improve the board's effectiveness and identify areas for capacity and capability building for all those involved in governance, including members, trustees and local governors in single academy trusts or multi-academy trust, or governors in maintained schools or federations.

What is NGA's ERG process?

Once you decide to commission an ERG with the NGA, we will work with you to understand the drivers for the review, your context, and your desired timeframes for the review.

We will share the pen portrait of the NLG consultant that we feel is a good fit for you. This will be based on their experience, previous projects and physical location.

The selected consultant will work with you to complete a detailed plan for the review and scope of what they will do and what they will need to see and who they will need to speak to.

We have different processes dependent on whether you are a maintained school, federation, single academy trust or multi-academy trust.

When completing multi-academy trust reviews, we can tailor the review to meet your needs, for example, focusing more on local boards than the trust board or reviewing both in detail.

There are also add-on services you might find useful, such as:

- Advice on future governance structures as your MAT grows
- Reviewing the sustainability of your current practices

A typical review will include:

- ✓ A desktop review of the evidence of governance, looking at board meeting agendas, papers and minutes; terms of reference for committees and governance roles; visit reports and information on the educational establishment's finances, educational outcomes and improvement.
- ✓ Conversations with the chair, headteacher or CEO, clerk or governance professional and other key individuals working on or with the board.
- ✓ A facilitated self-review of those governing
- ✓ Observation of a board meeting
- ✓ A comprehensive written report reviewing findings against best practice and recommendations to improve governance.
- ✓ A meeting or workshop with the board to share the findings and the recommended actions.

What experience does NGA have completing ERGs?

NGA is at the forefront of thought-leadership and providing guidance on governance in both maintained schools and academy trusts. NGA has been undertaking external reviews since they were introduced in 2013 and has built up extensive experience of supporting and improving governance practice in all types of schools and trusts. We successfully complete hundreds of ERGs every year for MATs, academies, federations and maintained schools.

NGA has a team of over forty consultants around the country who are highly experienced practicing governance experts. Our consultants are trained, and quality assured by NGA senior staff, and are able to leverage the wealth of NGA's knowledge and best practice leadership during the ERG. We can provide NGA consultants who are experts on maintained school governance, special schools, faith schools, federations, MATs of all sizes and changes in governance, such as joining or forming a MAT, MAT growth, MAT mergers and mixed MATs (non-faith and faith academies in the same MAT). Most of our consultants also deliver governance training.

We have consultants with experience governing:

- Nurseries
- Infant & primary schools
- Junior schools
- Secondary schools
- Post 16 settings
- UTCs
- CofE, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Methodist, mixed faith schools and MATs
- Special Schools and alternative education settings
- Cooperative academies
- Hospital schools
- Federations
- Maintained schools
- Single Academy Trusts
- Multi-academy trusts (from 2-3 up to 30+ academies)

How long does an ERG take?

The aim is that all reviews are concluded eight to 12 weeks after the initial contact is made to NGA, so typically within a term. However, this is dependent on the extent of the review, the availability of governors and trustees, and how term times and board meeting schedules impact on the review timetable. Our consultant will work with you during the initial scoping meeting to agree the timeline.

What is the impact of an ERG?

Within a year of the review having taken place, the board should be:

- ✓ Effectively fulfilling its core governance functions
- ✓ Sustainable, with routine self-evaluation established, and succession planning in place
- ✓ Seeing evidence of organisation improvement as a result of improved governance

We are proud to have a record of 100% client satisfaction with our external reviews of governance.

“The consultant was amazing, and she added a lot of value and insights into governance in areas other than what was expected.”

“The review has already put governors on a track to improvement and focus on what is their role and how to go about carrying it out. This will therefore impact on the effectiveness of the board as a whole and, in time, the whole school.”

“The ERG of our MAT has helped trustees focus on what is most important and ensure structures and processes are effective and scalable as we grow. Thank you.”

“Many thanks for your invaluable contribution to our development over the past year and beyond.”

What does an ERG from the NGA cost?

Fees are outlined in the table below; fees are inclusive as VAT is not charged.

| Options and fees 2024/25 | | |
|--|--|--|
| Single school or standalone academy (SAT) | Federation or multi-academy trust (MAT) | Progress review 9-12 month after your ERG |
| Maintained school NGA members - £2,205 Non-members -£2,450 | Multi-academy trust (MAT) (all layers of governance) Sliding scale dependent on size & complexity | For single school governing boards NGA members - £899 Non-members - £950 |
| Single academy trust (SAT) NGA members - £2,750 Non-members - £2,950 | Federations Each review is scoped to reflect size and complexity | For MATs and Federations Sliding scale dependent on size and complexity |

Please note NGA’s [terms and conditions](#) which include details of our cancellation policy.

Other consultancy services

We can also support you with other areas of governance, including:

- Performance management of your headteacher or CEO
- Working with you on joining, forming or merging a MAT
- MAT governance capacity review
- Refining your Scheme of Delegation
- Trust or school website audits
- Trust governance compliance internal audit
- Setting up or developing a federation
- Facilitating strategy days
- Independent complaint investigations
- Custom training and workshops

Next steps

Please contact us at consultancy@nga.org.uk to discuss your ERG requirements, or book a meeting with our head of consultancy to discuss your project [here](#).

We look forward to working with you.