

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE (ARA) COMMITTEE**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

The members of the ARA Committee are:

Non Executive Council Members:

Mr Barry Mullholland (Chair)  
Mrs Teresa Graham (Ex-officio member)  
Mr Ivan Arbuthnot (Ex-officio member)  
Ms Daisy Mules  
Mr John Pollock  
Miss Rosemary Rainey  
Mrs Gillian Scott

Independent external members:

Mr Trevor Salmon (appointed August 2013)

The ARA Committee will be provided with a secretariat function by Corporate Services.

### **REPORTING**

- The ARA Committee will formally report in writing to the Council and Registrar after each meeting.
- The ARA Committee will provide the Council and Registrar with an Annual Report, timed to support finalisation of the accounts and the Governance Statement summarising its conclusions from the work it has done during the year.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The ARA Committee will advise the Council and Registrar on:
  1. strategic processes for risk, control and governance and the Governance Statement;
  2. the accounting policies, the accounts, and the annual report of the organisation, including the process for review of the accounts prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and management's letter of representation to the external auditors;
  3. the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit;
  4. adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter;
  5. assurances relating to the management of risk and corporate governance requirements for the organisation;
  6. (where applicable) proposals for tendering for either Internal or External Audit services;
  7. anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes, and arrangements for special investigations; and
  8. The ARA Committee will also periodically review its own effectiveness and report the results of that review to the Council.

## **RIGHTS**

- The ARA Committee may, further to consultation with Council:
  - a) co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding a year to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience; and
  - b) procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Council.

## **ACCESS**

- The Head of Internal Audit and the representative of External Audit will have free and confidential access to the Chair of the ARA Committee.

## **MEETINGS**

- The ARA Committee will meet at least four times a year. The Chair of the ARA Committee may convene additional meetings, as they deem necessary.
- A minimum of a third of the total membership of the ARA Committee will be present for the meeting to be deemed quorate.
- ARA Committee meetings will normally be attended by the Registrar, the Planning and Corporate Services Manager, Head of Internal Audit, a representative of External Audit and a Department of Education observer.
- The ARA Committee may ask any other officials of the organisation to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter.
- The ARA Committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matters.
- The Council or the Registrar may ask the ARA Committee to convene further meetings to discuss particular issues on which they want the Committee's advice.

## **INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

For each meeting the ARA Committee will be provided (well ahead of the meeting) with:

- a report summarising any significant changes to the organisation's strategic risks and a copy of the corporate Risk Register;
- a progress report from the Head of Internal Audit summarising
  - work performed (and a comparison with work planned);
  - key issues emerging from Internal Audit;
  - management response to audit recommendations;
  - changes to the agreed internal audit plan; and
  - any resourcing issues affecting the delivery of the objective of Internal Audit;
- a progress report (written/verbal) from the External Audit representative summarising work done and emerging findings (this may include, where relevant to the organisation, aspects of the wider work carried out by the NIAO, for example, Value for Money reports and good practice findings);
- any management assurance reports; and reports on the management of major incidents, "near misses" and lesson learnt.

As and when appropriate the Committee will also be provided with:

- proposals for the Terms of Reference of Internal Audit/the Internal Audit Charter;
- the Internal Audit Strategy;
- The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Opinion and Report;
- quality assessment reports on the Internal Audit function;
- the draft accounts of the organisation;
- the draft Governance Statement;
- a report on any changes to accounting policies;
- External Audit's management letter;
- a report on any proposals to tender for audit functions; and
- a report on co-operation between Internal and External Audit; and
- the organisation's Risk Management strategy