**GUIDELINE**

Program Governance

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[Purpose 2](#_Toc147841296)

[Background 3](#_Toc147841297)

[Definitions 3](#_Toc147841298)

[Guiding Principles 3](#_Toc147841299)

[Commencement of Program governance 4](#_Toc147841300)

[Program Board 4](#_Toc147841301)

[Project governance in a program 5](#_Toc147841302)

[Roles and Responsibilities 5](#_Toc147841303)

[Appendix 1 – Program Management Roles 7](#_Toc147841304)

[Additional roles 9](#_Toc147841305)

[Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference 10](#_Toc147841306)

[Program Board 10](#_Toc147841307)

[Suggested Terms of Reference for Program Boards 10](#_Toc147841308)

Purpose

This document introduces the recommended program governance models. It covers the composition of a Program Board, introduces the key roles and responsibilities, and the Terms of Reference. Each program can adapt this guideline as best serves them. However, the guiding principles should always be followed.

Background

As part of good management of the University, every active program in ACU needs sufficient oversight to ensure the business change or transition and benefits are delivered, and project deliveries meet the expectations. This also supports the Program Managers and teams in their work by providing direction and approvals, where applicable.

Each program requires its own governance structure. Below are guidelines for some key attributes but each program needs to consider them in a case-by-case basis and tailor the approach to best support the transition intended.

Definitions

Programs have established definitions which should be used in the ACU context.

* **Programs** are collections of inter-related changes which together deliver a vision or business goal. We use them to transform an aspect in the University or create a new service. A key focus is in fulfilling the ACU strategy and bringing significant benefits. The changes are implemented through projects which are set up within and overseen by the program.  
    
  A good example is the ACU Online Program: this is a program which includes projects to deliver technology, student administration, marketing and course offering changes or additions to ACU. Each project is run separately but only when they all come together, we reach our goal of online education service.  
    
  Programs have a limited life and they close once the vision or goal has been enabled. E.g. ACU Online as a program closed once all the required projects were delivered and transitioned to continuous delivery of ACU Online services to students.   
    
  Programs in ACU are managed using a globally widely recognised industry practice, Managing Successful Programmes (MSP)[[1]](#footnote-2). In Australia, it is considered as the ’de facto’ standard for program management, especially in the public sector (educational institutions included).
* **Projects** are individual bodies of work to produce a specific output (‘product’) to change something, e.g. a better way to manage student placements. The ACU Project Management Model is based on a globally widely recognised industry practice, Prince2[[2]](#footnote-3). It is considered as the ’de facto’ standard for project management, especially in the public sector (educational institutions included).
* **Benefits** are the most important aspect of a change. They are our way to show that a program or project has delivered something worthwhile, i.e. a way to evidence the value of it. The key question is: *“You are suggesting a change. But how would it benefit the University?”*   
    
  The ACU Benefits Management Model is based on a proprietary “O3” model[[3]](#footnote-4) developed by Seven Consulting.

Guiding Principles

Program governance and oversight should follow these guiding principles.

| **Principle** | **Comments** |
| --- | --- |
| **Focused** | The Program Board is kept small and focused.   * Only those who make decisions, are invited to the Program Board. For consulting purposes, various assisting reference groups can be set up, or visitors invited to the Program Board. |
| **Singular** | In a program, there is only one Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) and governance group.   * This makes the accountability of the role clear and easy to follow. * Having only one group governing the program enables clear decision-making. * In case of projects in programs, the program oversight provides direction and confirms that the Project Business Case is met and the outcome benefit achieved. The project governance oversees the success of the planning, delivery and closure, and that output benefits are realised. |
| **Manage by exception** | Action happens only as needed.   * The oversight should focus on ensuring the program has all it needs to succeed. * When the program works well, is adequately resourced and within its approved plans, the oversight should be as light-weight as possible.   + Program oversight focuses on project outcomes and realising benefits. * In case of significant risks emerging, issues, any deviations or other events requiring attention or being beyond the Program Manager’s control, the Program Board steps in to guide them and make decisions of any potential changes. |

The most important individual choice in a program often is who will be the Senior Responsible Owner SRO.

Ideally, they are accountable to the University for the success of the service being transformed or created

and therefore have vested interest in the success and value achieved.

Commencement of Program governance

The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) is active in the program from the development of a Program Vision and Blueprint and stays involved until the full outcome and associated benefits have been achieved, i.e. the Program Business Case has been fulfilled. A Program Board is set up by the SRO when the Program Business Case has been approved and the program moves to initiate its first constituent projects.

Program Board

Each program has its own Program Board. It is chaired by the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) and consists of representatives of the key areas impacted by the transformation delivered through the program.

The SRO is the decision-maker in the program, advised and assisted by the other members of the Program Board. They are accountable for the value provided through the program and present the program in front of the relevant senior-level committees, the Senate, the Chief Executive or Senior Executive of the University.

The Delegations of Authority are followed. If a matter is outside of the SRO’s delegation, the Program Board endorses it and refers it to the appropriate delegated authority or committee for the final resolution.

|  | **Program Board** |
| --- | --- |
| **Number of members** | Up to 10 recommended, preferably up to 7 |
| **Mandatory members** | Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), and  one representative each from the portfolios impacted by the transformation delivered. |
| **Additional members (non-voting)** | Program Manager |
| **Other attendees** | Presentations can be invited from other parties, as needed.  Executive Sponsors and Benefit Owners of constituent projects can attend, as needed. |
| **Assisting groups** | Assistance and advice can be given by various reference groups set up for the program. These groups are typically chaired by a member of the Program Board or by the Program Manager. |
| **SRO’s typical position at ACU (management level)** | Chief Executive (1) or Senior executive (2), e.g. the Vice Chancellor or the Provost.  Other members of the Program Board are usually one or two management levels lower than the SRO. |
| **Program Manager** | A dedicated, professional Program Manager with appropriate qualifications[[4]](#footnote-5). Large or complex programs require a full-time Program Manager, often also a Program Coordinator. |
| **Initial risk level** | Moderate or high. A program may address organisational risks which are rated high. A program can contain projects with several risks rated high. |

Project governance in a program

All projects have their own governance structure. When a project belongs to a program, the Program Board ensures that the outcomes of the projects contribute to program in full. The program also forms an escalation path to the projects in matters which impact the program and are outside of a project’s control.

Roles and Responsibilities

Below is a brief reference to key roles in programs and a hierarchical view to the relations between the roles. Additional roles can be included in programs to support the effective delivery of change, as needed. For a full description, please refer to Appendix 1 – ‘ACU Program Roles’.

**Key roles**

* **Senior Responsible Owner** (SRO) is accountable for the success of the program and value to ACU.
* **Program Manager** is responsible for the program planning and delivery.
* **Business Change Manager** is responsible for the achievement of successful transition and benefits.
  + There can be multiple Business Change Managers in a program, each responsible for selected projects.
  + Please note: projects have a role with the same name but a slightly narrower focus.

**Additional roles**

* **Program Support** assists the Program Manager in the delivery. This typically is a coordinator-level role.
* **Reference groups** advise the program on areas assigned to them.

Diagram

Description automatically generated

Appendix 1 – Program Management Roles

The following roles are essential for effective governance, oversight and management of a program.

Please note that the ‘Activities’ provides a comprehensive but not fully exhaustive list of activities and outputs expected. Should any ambiguity about those exist, the SRO will perform or delegate the relevant activities, as applicable.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER (SRO)** | |
| Overview | Accountable for the success and value of the changes carried out through a program. Owns the Program Vision and Blueprint. |
| Key responsibilities | Chair the program governance (Program Board).  Approve key documents at the program level. |
| Characteristics | The SRO should come from Senior Executive (level 2 in delegations), e.g. COO, DVC or Provost. This ensures the organisational priorities and support align with the intent to deliver lasting changes to the University.  The daily leadership of a program can be assigned to Executive level (level 3). However, the accountability for the success and value still remains with the SRO. |
| Activities | * Oversee and guide the program and Program Manager. * Produce the Program Vision and Blueprint. * Chair the Program Board. The SRO is the ultimate decision-maker in the program. As part of this:   + Approve the Program Brief and Business Case, including the related financial modelling.   + Approve any material changes to the program (e.g. inclusion / exclusion of a project, changes to benefits / value created, etc).   + Appointment of the Program Manager and any potential changes.   **Please note:** The SRO operates within their delegated authority[[5]](#footnote-6). Should a matter require a higher level of delegation, the SRO endorses it and submits to the relevant delegate or committee for resolution. |
| Please note | The program sponsorship and SRO role are often combined but can be kept separate, if it is seen applicable. The focus of the roles is similar, therefore suggesting they can be combined. The separation of the roles would be applicable in particularly long and high-impact programs of work where the benefits are owned at the top of the organisation while the delivery of the business change is delegated (e.g. the VC as the Sponsor and a DVC or COO as the SRO). |
| **BUSINESS CHANGE MANAGER** | |
| Overview | Responsible for the achievement of successful transition and benefits. Ensures all impacted services, processes and people are successfully transitioned and the related benefits achieved. |
| Key responsibilities | Plan and oversee the work at the program level to transition impacted services, processes and people across to the future state.  Oversee the benefits realisation and ensure the tracking is done at the project level and the program level value is achieved, as planned. |
| Characteristics | This is a senior role who will need to be able to “open doors” and prioritise work at least at a directorate or faculty level and influence other directorates or faculties.  The Business Change Manager(s) should be only one level down from the SRO in the organisational hierarchy (e.g. if the Provost is the SRO, then this role would owned by the Deputy Provost, PVC, Executive Deans, or Directors). |
| Activities |  |
| Please note | In a large program, there can be several Business Change Managers, each guiding a specific set of changes.  The Business Change Manager can quite naturally also often serve as the Senior User in the respective projects. This role ensures that the project outputs meet the business needs  A similar role exists also in projects. Its focus is slightly narrower as it focuses only on “people change”, transitioning services and people to the future state. The benefits realisation in projects is done by the Benefit Owner. |
| **PROGRAM MANAGER (PGM)** | |
| Overview | Responsible for the program or project planning and delivery. |
| Key responsibilities | The PgM works under the guidance of the SRO (for the program delivery purposes). The PgM organises and guides the projects, and monitors the delivery of project outcomes. They also are responsible for keeping the stakeholders informed of the program progress and any potential challenges or risks. |
| Characteristics | A good Program Manager excels in stakeholder management and is highly organised. The key goal is to support the SRO and Program Board in directing the program to fulfil the Vision and Blueprint. |
| Activities | * Produce the Program Brief and Business Case. * Maintain the program documentation. * Define the program controls (processes, procedures, reporting, etc). * Monitor the progress of the program and related projects (focus on milestones) * Respond to escalations from projects, resolve issues, and take corrective actions, if required * Present at the Program Board * Chair or facilitate program-level reference groups, as applicable. * Manage the program budget and allocate funds * Oversee the timely delivery of project outputs and benefits * Oversee the quality of project output * If a project is funded through the program budget, oversee the adherence to the budget assigned * Handle the alignment of and dependencies between projects * Manage the risks and issues involved in the program * Raise program-level change requests, if required * Manage stakeholders and perform program communications (as assigned) * Ensure that the program achieves the defined financial & business benefits. |
| **PROGRAM BOARD** | |
| Overview | A key focus of a Program Board’s work is on the outcomes enabled through individual projects and ensuring they result in the intended benefits. Including the respective Benefits Owner in the Board helps in balancing the program’s workings to best guarantee a favourable result. |
| Key responsibilities | Oversee the delivery of value from the program, provide prioritisation of changes (projects) and direction to them. |
| Characteristics | The Program Board consists of the following members. At the discretion of the SRO, additional attendees can be invited, as required.   * Decision-making (voting members): SRO (chair), Business Change Manager(s) representatives of change recipients, representatives of change delivery. * Supporting members in attendance: Program Manager. * Additional guests to be invited, as needed: the Executive Sponsor of each active project. |
| Please note | The Terms of Reference for the Program Board will specify the membership, the governance and oversight responsibilities, and meeting and other arrangements applicable. |

Additional roles

Additional roles can be introduced in programs, as needed, to support the effective delivery of the changes. The program support role is introduced below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PROGRAM SUPPORT** | |
| Overview | Assist the Program Manager in the delivery. |
| Key responsibilities | Manage program documentation.  Maintain the tools and templates used by the program.  Run status and other regular reports.  Assist the Program Manager in managing the program budget and milestones.  Schedule and document meetings and other program activities, as needed.  Assist program stakeholders in engaging with the program.  Assist Project Managers and project stakeholders in engaging with the program. |
| Characteristics | This role usually is done at a coordinator level (HEW7), especially in large programs. Ideally, they have a good understanding of the units and stakeholders involved in the program through their earlier roles in ACU.  A good Program Coordinator is able to continuously “connect dots”, has a good understanding how projects work, and can see the “big picture” and relations between projects and other pieces of work. A high degree of planning skills and financial literacy are beneficial. |
| **WORKING / REFERENCE GROUPS** | |
| Overview | The Senior User and Senior Supplier can be supported by various reference groups, e.g. a User Reference Group and Technical Reference Group, respectively, as needed.  The working groups can consist of all those stakeholders who should be consulted or thoroughly informed in the project. This can also include external parties, e.g. vendors.  The working groups should be led by the decision-maker who uses the group’s advice to support the decisions made. |

Appendix 2 – Terms of Reference

Each program will need Terms of Reference for the Program Board and to guide the program oversight.  
The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) should review them and – where needed – adapt them to suit their program.

The Terms of Reference can be changed to improve the oversight and governance, e.g. the meeting frequency, membership, or any other aspect. All changes are approved collectively by the Program Board.

If a project changes their Terms of Reference, the change is noted in the Program Board.

Program Board

Every program needs a dedicated Program Board, chaired by the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).The Program Board oversees and directs the delivery of sustained value through the program and guides the related projects so that their timing, outcomes and benefits are optimised.

The following pages contain suggested Terms of Reference for programs. The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) should review them and – where needed – adapt them to suit their program.

The Terms of Reference can be changed to improve the oversight and governance, e.g. the meeting frequency, membership, or any other aspect. All changes are approved collectively by the Program Board.

If a project changes their Terms of Reference, the change is noted in the Program Board.

Suggested Terms of Reference for Program Boards

The Program Board’s key focus is to direct the program through its life and successful transformation or creation of a service in ACU so that the Program Vision and benefits can be realised and Program Business Case will be met.

The Program Board is also an escalation point for the project governance groups, providing support and guidance as required to ensure projects can successfully continue.

Should a matter arise which is outside of the Program Board’s or Senior Responsible Owner’s (SRO) control or delegation, the Program Board will refer that to the appropriate delegated authority or committee for resolution.

**PURPOSE**

The Program Board is responsible for the oversight of the management delivery of the program as identified in the Program Vision and Blueprint to create a significant change in the respective services[[6]](#footnote-7).

The Program Board will oversee the overall budgets, timelines and outcomes of the projects that deliver to this program and ensure the program delivers change and benefits described in the Program Brief and Business Case. In undertaking its role, it will consider alignment of the program and projects in ACU’s business ecosystem to achieve an effective, productive and interconnected improvements.

This Program Board is established for members to advise and assist the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) in decision-making to support the implementation of the program. It is empowered to approve changes to scope, cost and schedule for the program within the delegation of the SRO. Where there is a matter which exceeds the delegation of the SRO, the committee endorses and refers the matter to the appropriate delegated authority or committee for resolution.

**KEY FUNCTIONS**

Program oversight

* Review and advise on the prioritisation and sequencing of projects outlined in the Program Vision and Blueprint, to maximise the value delivered within appropriate budget, risk parameters and capacity to deliver.
* Provide governance oversight and support for the Program by receiving reports and acting on identified risks and issues.
* Oversee the project-level benefits realisation plans and note any variations. Ensure the program-level benefits are delivered, as identified in the Program Brief and Business Case. Any variation to approved Benefits (from the Program Business Case) must be endorsed by the Program Board and approved by the SRO.
* Approve the Program Structure and initiation of any project streams to support the implementation.

Project oversight and direction

* Endorse the new or changed Project Business Cases for each constituent projects. Review and endorse project outcomes and deliverables, ensuring alignment with the ACU Strategic Plan and organisational priorities.
* Note the Project Initiation Document (PID) for each constituent project and assure the identification of impact, relationship and integration across ACU systems.
* Note the Post-implementation Review Report (PIR) for each constituent project and confirm the realisation of benefits to date, and the delegation of any potential follow-on work.
* Monitor that the projects are implemented using the ACU Project Management Model. The continued oversight of this is provided by the project-level governance while the Program Board monitors the adherence.
* Ensure that all projects deliver distinct benefits to ACU and the benefits are managed using the ACU Benefits Management Model.
* Provide an escalation path for changes in schedule, budget and planned benefits of the program and make recommendations in the interests of ACU as a whole.

The Program Board may establish reference groups to advice the Program Board or report on specific delivery streams and activities within the program or individual projects. Each reference group is chaired by a member of the Program Board or the Program Manager and will report back through the relevant member. The reference groups will establish their own terms of reference.

**INPUTS**

* ACU Strategic Plan, Vice-Chancellor’s annual priorities, portfolio priorities or roadmaps, and other similar documents about organisational priorities and direction.
* ACU service catalogue.
* Proposals / business cases / PIDs / PIRs for projects or services.
* Service / solution designs, as reviewed by the Technology Advisory Group (TAG), where applicable.
* Status / performance reports for individual projects or services.
* Service readiness reports, implementation and operational handover plans.

**OUTPUTS**

* Approvals for Program of Work and project outputs (deliverables) and outcomes.
* Prioritisation and sequencing of approved projects.
* Advice and guidance to the project Executive Sponsors or Project Boards as requested / required.
* Meeting outputs summarising the conduct of meetings, including minutes, actions, decisions, approvals, guidance and directions given, etc.

**QUORUM**

The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) and three (3) or more other members or at least 51% of the membership attending, whichever is greater.

If a member is unable to attend, they will nominate a proxy to attend on their behalf. The proxy will operate within their own delegations of authority[[7]](#footnote-8).

**FREQUENCY AND DURATION**

* Meets every two months. Additional meetings can be requested from the SRO by any stakeholder. A meeting is called by the SRO or as delegated.
  + A meeting can be called to discuss or resolve a single matter, if required and appropriate.
* The invitations are extended to all members of the Program Board.
* Out-of-session reviews, endorsements and decisions can be facilitated at the SRO’s discression.

**STANDING AGENDA**

* Welcome and apologies
* Confirmation of the agenda; other business to be included
* Minutes from the previous meeting
* Review of open action items
* Program status and forecast
  + Including the forecasted level of benefits realisation
* Project status reports and forecasts
* Escalated matters for decision / direction
* Other business
* Next meeting

Additional standing agenda items can be added to the meetings, as applicable.

**DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA AND PAPERS**

Ten (10) calendar days prior: Papers and specific agenda items due by email or upload to the Secretariat.

Seven (7) calendar days prior: Agenda and papers distributed by email. Alternatively, they can be published online and a link sent by email.

**MINUTES, ACTIONS, DECISIONS AND APPROVALS**

The draft minutes and any other resulting documentation are produced within five (5) business days and either emailed to the members or published online (with a link emailed). They will be confirmed (ratified) in the next Program Board meeting or out-of-session (if required).

Confirmed minutes will serve as a record of a decision or approval. Physical signatures in documents are not required, unless requested for university governance, regulatory or other similar reasons.

The minutes and other documents of decisions and approvals are retained as University records, following the relevant guidelines for records keeping.

**REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION**

The regular program status reports are made available to all Program Board members online when published. Any additional updates are provided as per the program’s Communications Plan or as requested.

Any other material is hosted in the program folder and available to the Program Board members for the parts needed for the effective oversight and governance of the program.

Working documents and other material related to the development of the outcomes are available to the program team for their work. They can be made available to the Program Board, if required.

Program Board meeting materials are hosted in the program folder and available from there.

**SECRETARIAT**

The meeting agenda and minutes are produced and distributed by the Executive Officer of the SRO, or as assigned.

1. MSP (Managing Successful Programmes) was initially developed for the UK Government. It is currently owned and maintained by Axelos. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Prince2 (Projects in Controlled Environments, v2) was initially developed for the UK Government. It is currently owned and maintained by Axelos. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Outcome, Outputs, Objectives (O3). The model focuses on the long-term change and what is needed to enable that change. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Industry certifications Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) or Program Management Professional (PgMP) together with prior experience are preferred. Project-level certifications Prince2 Practitioner, Prince2 Agile, Project Management Professional (PMP) and training and/or experience in business change management and benefits management are useful additions to the skills held by the Program Manager. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Please refer to the ACU [Delegations of Authority Policy and Register](https://policies.acu.edu.au/governance/delegations_of_authority_policy_and_register). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. In the Terms of Reference approved for a program, you should name the service(s) in question. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For example, if the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) nominates an Associate Director (AD) as their proxy, the AD will carry their Senior Management (level 4) delegation, unless they have been appointed as the Acting CFO, in which role they carry the Executive (level 3) delegation. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)