

Panel work: an introduction

An overview of the roles

Panel chair

Pre-panel

1. ensure correct procedures are followed prior to and during the review panel meeting in line with the law, regulations, national guidance and school policy and if necessary seek advice from the clerk and/or professional advisers
2. undertake specific training prior to the review panel meeting
3. ensure the guidance, policy and procedures are followed, being mindful of personal concerns and sensitivities
4. ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times, reminding all parties and those at the meeting at the outset, conclusion and throughout

Panel

1. ensure a minute is being made of the meeting
2. ensure that if a video or audio recording is being made permission has been obtained from all parties
3. ensure that all parties have the right to be represented or accompanied
4. check that all parties have had access to the same paperwork and information
5. ensure that the process and the meeting provides all parties with a fair hearing and that the rules of natural justice are adhered to
6. ensure that all parties be given reasonable opportunity to state case without unreasonable interruption
7. direct parties and their advisers as to when to join and speak, allow them to ask questions and call witnesses, and direct them when to leave
8. invite panel members to ask questions
9. if a new issue arises during the hearing offer parties the opportunity to consider/comment
10. maintain an orderly and efficient meeting free from interruptions, adjourning if necessary and keeping to time
11. thank parties, witnesses, advisers, panel members for their assistance
12. take clerk's procedural advice as needed
13. treat all parties equally and with respect throughout the process

Decision

1. Ensures panel members agree and if necessary vote on an outcome decision based on the evidence, facts and supported by solid reasoning
2. Ensures the clerk makes notes of the panel's deliberations and composes the decision letter with agreed wording

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Post-panel

1. check and sign the outcome letter as agreed by the review panel and potentially relay the outcome verbally in the first instance if agreed; the outcome must be reported to the pupil, school and LA without delay
2. check and sign the draft minutes of the review panel
3. work with the headteacher/SEL to ensure next steps in the process for the school and governors are completed as set out in the guidance
4. work with the headteacher/SEL to ensure any recommendations from the panel are implemented
5. ensure the outcome of the review panel is reported back to the next board meeting

Panel clerk

Pre-panel

1. undertake specific training prior to the review panel meeting
2. advise on procedures throughout the process and take initiative if you feel that you need to intervene to help the panel chair ensure that due process is being followed
3. form the review panel and arrange the review panel meeting
4. act as a neutral point of contact for all parties and be mindful of personal concerns and sensitivities
5. provide a suitable agenda for the review panel (HR advisers will advise for HR panels)
6. collate and distribute the evidence pack to all parties Tip: the packs should be ordered and clearly numbered and should be provided in hard copy.
7. ensure the meeting room is set up suitably with separate areas for parties to wait in if needed
8. maintain confidentiality at all times and treat all parties equally and with respect

Panel

1. record an accurate record of the proceedings within an agreed timeframe and to distribute as appropriate once approved (usually these will be sent to all parties upon request)
2. Offer procedural advice as required

Decision

1. remain with the panel for their deliberations after the review panel has heard evidence from all parties and the other parties have left the meeting and ensure the wording for the outcome letter is captured along with the clear reasons for this decision

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2. the panel should ask the clerk to take notes of its deliberations with which to draft the decision letter. These may be requested as evidence if there is an appeal. They do not form part of the formal minutes of the meeting

Post-panel

1. send the outcome letter once it has been signed by the panel chair
2. ensure the outcome of the review panel is added to the next full governing board agenda in a way that would not prevent other board members being involved in any subsequent appeal
3. ensure all paperwork and notes are filed confidentially, in line with GDPR and as in the policy, for at least six months.

Panel member

Pre-panel

1. undertake specific training prior to the panel meeting to ensure understanding of the purpose of the meeting and their own role in ensuring that the meeting is effective
2. understand the relevant policies, legislation and guidance relevant for the review panel
3. commit the time to read through the evidence pack thoroughly and come to the review meeting fully prepared
4. be prepared to ask suitable questions of all parties with the aim of gaining information sufficient to allow an informed decision

Panel

1. listen carefully to the evidence provided by or on behalf of parties and witnesses, making notes as necessary
2. remain objective, impartial and mindful of the need to ignore any personal concerns and sensitivities
3. maintain confidentiality at all times and treat all parties equally and with respect

Decision

1. consider all the information provided in advance of and during the meeting carefully and vote on an outcome decision based on the facts and supported by solid reasoning

Post-panel

1. ensure all panel paperwork is returned to the school for shredding. Continue to maintain confidentiality at all times.