

Role Descriptions for IFA Leadership bodies and positions: Council, President, Board, College and Committees

INTRODUCTION

The new IFA Constitution makes changes to the roles of those involved in leadership and governance positions. Having clear agreement and understanding of the roles will be crucial to the success of IFA.

This paper sets out role descriptions for the key bodies and positions under the new IFA Constitution. It covers the following:

- Council
- Board
- Responsibilities of the chairs of Council, Board, Branches and Committees
- President
- Board Chair
- Board Directors
- Appointments Committee
- Audit and Finance Committee
- Certification Committee
- Complaints Committee
- Disciplinary Committee
- College Committees
- Branch Committees

COUNCIL

Council is the representative body and plays a role similar to a Parliament in the sense that it is made up of delegates from each Branch as well as Board Directors and College Chairs. Voting power is dominated by Branch Delegates who have votes proportional to their membership, while Board members and College Chairs have only a single vote each.

Council:

- Sets policy, primarily through approving key documents such as the Bylaws, which are equivalent to legislation for IFA members. The Code of Ethics, Practice Standards, Membership and Certification Bylaws, and Disciplinary Bylaws are key documents approved by Council.
- Elects the President and practitioner Directors of the Board.
- Appoints the Chair of the Certification Committee.
- Approves Member subscriptions.
- Approves the establishment, amalgamation or dissolution of Branches and the geographic areas they operate in.
- Approves the establishment and disestablishment of Colleges.
- Approves the award of Life Memberships and Fellowships.
- Plays an important monitoring role by reviewing accountability reporting from the Board with power to revoke or review Board decisions.
- At each meeting Council receives reports from the President, Board Chair, Chief Executive, Colleges, Branches and Council Committees (if any). It also receives a financial report.
- Holds an Annual General Meeting which considers the Annual Financial Statements and appoints the auditor.

- Has power to remove an Officer from office (but only for good reason and after a formal procedure).
- Considers remits from the Board, Branches, Colleges or Councillors.
- Has power to amend the Constitution, requiring a Special Resolution which needs 66% of the votes at a meeting attended by at least 80% of Councillors.

Council normally meets twice a year, in November and May. The November meeting includes the AGM and the May meeting is when elections take place. There is provision for special Council meetings as well as meetings by telephone conference and voting by post or electronically.

BOARD

While Council's role is similar to a parliament, the Board's role is more like Cabinet. As such, the Board has the role of governance of IFA. Governance in its widest sense refers to how any organisation is run. It includes responsibility for the processes, systems, and controls that are used to safeguard assets and operate IFA. Governance is not management (the responsibility of the Chief Executive). Rather it means guiding the direction and operation of IFA, subject to approval by Council of key policies, mainly through Bylaws.

The Board

- Elects the Chair of the Board.
- Approves the Strategic Plan.
- Sets the direction for operations and develops proposals for major policies for recommendation to the Council for approval.
- Approves the budget and recommends the Member Subscriptions to Council.
- Appoints the Chief Executive.
- Appoints the independent chairs and members of the Complaints and Disciplinary Committees.
- Establishes any other committees and appoints their members.
- Oversees and supports the Colleges and Board Committees.
- Has power to act with regard to any significant matter where in its opinion it would be inadvisable to delay action until a Council meeting.

The Board is required to meet at least four times in every financial year. Normal practice has been for five meetings to be held in July, September, November, February and May with an additional day for strategy. Telephone conferences may be held to discuss significant issues between meetings. E-mail is also used frequently for discussions between formal meetings.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIRS OF COUNCIL, BOARD, BRANCHES AND COMMITTEES

While each of these positions has different roles, there are some common responsibilities, particularly as chair.

In this section, "Members" refers to members of any of these governance structures within the Institute of Financial Advisers. "Entity" refers to Council, Board, Branch or Committee as appropriate.

The common roles are to:

- Oversee the structure, composition, membership, and activities of the entity.
- Ensure that the entity and members discharge their principal roles.
- Adopt procedures and ensure that resources are available to members in order that the entity can conduct its work effectively and efficiently, including deciding committee structure and composition, agenda setting, scheduling and management and operations of meetings, within the framework defined by the rules and by-laws of the Institute.

- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the entity and its members are well understood by the members, and are executed effectively.
- Serve as the “hub” for all member activity and provide effective leadership, overseeing all aspects of the entity’s direction and administration, ensuring that the members work as an cohesive team, building a healthy governance structure.
- Arrange for meetings to occur on a regular basis.
- Allot sufficient time during meetings for serious discussion on agenda items, relevant issues of importance to members.
- Encourage all members to ask questions and express viewpoints during meetings.
- Deal effectively with dissent and work constructively towards achieving consensus and arriving at decisions.
- Ensure that members receive information that is high in quality, in the appropriate quantity, in a timely fashion, in a convenient format, and from reliable and suitable sources.
- Set agenda and chair meetings of annual strategic planning or other meetings.
- Oversee preparation and distribution of communication material to outside stakeholders when required and appropriate.
- Monitor and periodically suggest changes to officer role descriptions.
- Oversee annual member and entity effectiveness assessments.
- Encourage and assess ongoing professional development of members, and induction of new members.
- Manage registers of interests, and proactively manage conflicts of interests.

PRESIDENT

The President’s role is primarily to be the professional leader of the Institute. The functions of the President are:

- Chair of the Council.
- Representing IFA on professional matters (including internationally). This would include working with and assisting the Chief Executive Officer, in representing the Institute to its members and other stakeholders, such as government agencies, industry training organisation, major education providers, other industry associations, significant employers of members and product companies.
- Spokesperson on professional matters. In this role the President would be the main spokesperson to the media and stakeholders on any professional matter such as practice standards.
- The President is responsible to Council and reports to Council. They are required to present an address to the Council at its November meeting covering a review of the Institute’s activities during the past financial year and for the period to the date of the meeting.
- The President is also a member of the Board and has the responsibilities of a director.

BOARD CHAIR

Under the new Constitution the Chair of a Board will be elected annually by the Board members – as confirmation of ongoing support. The Chair may also be the President, but the two positions need not be held by the same person. This also opens up the possibility that the Chair might be an Independent Director.

The Chair’s role is:

- Chair of the Board.
- Setting the agenda for the Board in consultation with the CEO and other directors.
- Management of the CEO relationship.

- Spokesperson for the Board (while the President is spokesperson on professional matters and the CEO is spokesperson for the IFA).
- The Chair, like the President, is accountable to Council and required to provide reports to Council. Unless one person holds both positions, the Board Chair is required to report to the November Council meeting, giving a summary of the acts of the Board during the past financial year and for the period to the date of the meeting and an indication of the policy the Board proposes to implement during the year of office.

BOARD DIRECTORS

The majority of IFA Board Directors are practitioners, elected by Council from nominations by Branches. While the process of appointment is as representatives of members, once appointed, their prime duty is to act in the best interests of the Institute as a whole. This is the normal fiduciary obligation of any director.

There are two Independent Directors who are appointed by the Council on the recommendation of the Appointments Committee. The purpose of having Independent Directors is to provide wider input to the Board, but they have the normal obligations of any director.

The responsibility for the success or failure of an entity rests primarily with the Board of directors and how it fulfils its duties. Boards are decision-making bodies whose effectiveness depends not only on the competencies and behavioural characteristics of their members, but on the manner in which directors complete all their tasks. Directors need to be fully informed as to what they are expected to do. In addition to the concept of the duties of care and loyalty to the entity that every director must meet a director should comprehend and work to translate these responsibilities into action.

Directors, in the process of fulfilling all their responsibilities to the many different stakeholders, must:

- Contribute to fulfilling the fiduciary, oversight, strategic and governance tasks of the Board.
- Attend all Board of directors and committee meetings of which they are a member.
- Attend the annual general meeting and the directors' annual strategy retreat.
- Prepare fully for the meetings of the Board of directors and committees of the Board of which they are a member.
- Participate knowledgeably and meaningfully at Board and committee deliberations inside and outside of meetings.
- Ask appropriate questions of management.
- Insist on receiving satisfactory answers to all pertinent questions.
- Listen carefully and bring personal skills, experience and knowledge to discussions regarding the strategic issues facing the entity.
- Work constructively with Board colleagues.
- Encourage discussion of key issues.
- Introduce items for discussion that are not on the agenda.
- Initiate meetings with fellow directors to discuss critical issues.
- Exercise mature business judgment, not emotion, in discussion of issues.
- Refrain from interfering in the day-to-day responsibilities of management.
- Be available when needed for consultation and advice.
- Not panic over a crisis.
- Comply with the IFA's Bylaws (including the Code of Ethics).
- Act with integrity and high ethical standards.
- Abide by principles of collective responsibility: "the board speaks with one voice".
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest and respond appropriately if any issues arise, e.g. by not taking part in decisions.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

The Appointments Committee is a committee of the Board and consists of the President, Chair of the Board and immediate past President. The committee has the following tasks:

- Recommending to Council candidates for appointment as Independent Directors.
- Recommending to the Board appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and their remuneration, terms and conditions.
- Evaluate the Chief Executive Officer's performance and meet with the Chief Executive Officer to discuss this evaluation.

The results of these tasks will be reported to the Board. The Board will make the formal decisions on appointment of the CEO and their remuneration.

AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

This committee of the Board has responsibility for monitoring the finances of the Institute, internal control systems and processes, the budget and the results of the annual audit. This includes:

- Input into development of the annual budget and the recommendation for annual member subscription rates.
- Review of management financial reports during the financial year including meeting with management.
- Reviews of internal control systems and the evaluation of potential risk.
- Input into finalisation of the annual financial statements.
- Input into the recommendation to Council for the appointment of an auditor.
- Meetings with the auditor to discuss the financial statements, annual audit and any recommendations in the auditor's management letter.

CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE

The Certification Committee manages the rules for acceptance of members into IFA and for award of professional status under the education track. The administration of membership applications is now a management function, including checking that initial entry requirements have been met for acceptance as a Provisional Member. The Certification Committee:

- Provides advice and recommendations on the requirements for admission to membership of IFA to the Board and Council. These are formalised through Board policy decisions and Membership and Certification Bylaws approved by Council.
- Evaluates non-standard applications for membership, where judgment is required for such aspects as recognition of prior experience and assessment of overseas qualifications for recognition in NZ.
- Approves the appointment of mentors for provisional members.
- Reviews and approves mentor's reports.
- Approves appointment of General Members and award of higher professional status such as Associate, CLU or CFPCM.
- Approves other changes in membership category, e.g. temporary suspension of practitioner status.

To ensure that the Certification Committee operates in an independent manner, the Chair is required to be an independent person who is not a member. To ensure that the members of the committee have experience as financial advisers, the other committee members are appointed by each College. To ensure smooth operation of the committee, each member (other than the Chair) has an alternate who may substitute when a member is absent so the committee can meet with a full quorum.

COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

The Complaints Committee has a quasi-judicial role in considering complaints about a Member. So that it operates in an independent manner, the Chair is required to be an independent person who is not a Member. To ensure that the members of the committee have experience as financial advisers, the other committee members are appointed from each College. Anyone with a conflict of interest must stand down from the committee in respect to that case.

The Constitution sets out entitlements for a Member who is the subject of a disciplinary action. These are consistent with the principles of natural justice. It has been normal to have a lawyer as the Chair, so as to demonstrate independence and as they have experience of process and natural justice.

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

The Disciplinary Committee also has a quasi-judicial role in considering discipline cases that follow consideration of a complaint about a Member. So that it operates in an independent manner, the Chair is required to be an independent person who is not a member and a second independent person who is not a Member. To ensure that the committee has access to knowledge of requirements for a financial adviser, the third committee member is a General Member from the College appropriate to the case. Anyone with a conflict of interest must stand down from the committee in respect to that case.

The Constitution sets out entitlements for a Member who is the subject of a complaint. These are consistent with the principles of natural justice. It has been normal to have a lawyer as the Chair, so as to demonstrate independence and as they have experience of process and natural justice. The quorum is set as the full membership of the committee to ensure a balanced hearing.

COLLEGE COMMITTEES

The word College arises from the word collegiate, meaning those who share a common interest. IFA's Colleges reflect the special interests of groups of members. All members are financial advisers, but different members focus on different areas of advice. The purpose of a College is to support members who share a particular special interest in an area of advice and to provide the Board and Council with technical support.

The Constitution provides Council with power to establish Colleges and it is likely that the number of Colleges will increase to reflect the trend towards specialisation and the need for greater focus on each area of advice as we develop as a professional association. The roles of a College are to:

- Represent the specialist area of advice at the Institute's Council.
- Provide input into Institute policy issues, such as the formulation of competency standards, training, education and mentoring paths, pinnacle marks, codes, professional practice standards, guidelines for good practice and rules.
- Foster research consistent with advancing advisers' technical knowledge and practice standards.
- Provide technical advice and support for Institute submissions to government agencies or international associations (e.g. the Financial Planning Standards Board) on issues such as regulation, practice standards or codes of conduct.
- Provide informed technical comment for the Board to assist it in dealings with government and the public.
- Foster networking and communication among College members and between members and the College Committee.
- Facilitate the dissemination of professional and technical information to members interested in the relevant area of advice, including promotion of best practice amongst members.

- Provide input into relevant continuing professional development.
- Award study/educational scholarships.
- Regular reporting to the Board and Council.

The Chair is elected by Council and the Board appoints the members who are nominated by the Chair.

College Committees normally meet about four times annually but maintain contact between meetings through telephone conference calls and e-mail.

BRANCH COMMITTEES

Branches are the focus for Members who reside in their geographic area. Branch Committees are the local democratically elected representatives of Members. Each Branch appoints Delegates to Council with authority to vote on issues in accord with the views of the Branch Committee. The number of Branch votes in Council is proportional to local membership.

Branches nominate the President and Practitioner Directors for the Board.

Branch meetings provide Members an opportunity to keep up with industry developments and to network with industry colleagues.

Each branch is to have a committee responsible for the proper functioning of branch affairs. The Committee is to have a minimum of four members, including a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary and a Treasurer or a Secretary/Treasurer.

The formal functions of the Branches and Branch Committee are those normally and ordinarily associated with a branch of any association:

- To constitute the local administrative and operational body for Members of the branch.
- Undertake membership development activities.
- Organise membership education and other activities for Members.
- Promote the interests of and foster fellowship amongst Members in all areas.
- Implement policies established by the Board or the Council.
- Involve itself in increasing public awareness of the Institute, including the functions of the Institute and its professional standards.
- Elect two delegates to the Council, at least one of whom must be a Practitioner Member. Delegates may be the branch Chair and/or other Branch committee members. Directors or College Chairs may not be Branch Delegates.
- Consider Bylaws or amendments to Bylaws and/or remit to Council so that members can give guidance or instruction to Branch Delegates who will attend Council on their behalf.
- Make recommendations to the Board from time to time.
- Provide National Office with minutes of Branch General Meetings.
- Prepare an annual Business Plan and Budget.
- Manage Branch finances responsibly, ensuring that over time, sufficient funds are raised from fees or sponsorship to cover the cost of activities.
- Provide National Office with details of income and expenditure.