

Government Skills College of Experts Terms of Reference

April 2026

This document outlines the aims, roles, and responsibilities of the Government Skills College of Experts (CoE). These Terms of Reference (ToR) replace the interim terms which covered October 2025-March 2026, and are the permanent ToR for the CoE.

Background

Government Skills is a directorate within the Government People Group and is responsible for equipping ministers and civil servants with the skills, knowledge, and networks needed to deliver effective government. Its remit includes assessing skill requirements, enhancing leadership capabilities, strengthening recruitment pathways, and developing evidence-based learning interventions.

Purpose of the College of Experts

The College of Experts (CoE) has been established to increase Government Skills' access to academic networks, broaden its evidence base, and strengthen knowledge exchange between government and the wider research community. Its aims are to:

- Provide independent, high-quality advice on evidence gaps and priorities, research methods, and the use of evidence in the design, delivery and evaluation of Government Skills programmes.
- Offer provision of ad hoc advice and support where appropriate, aiding with project development including on scope, design and methodology, relevant academic literature and/or contextual information and other advice and guidance related to research processes.
- Offer evidence-informed challenge and steer to help shape key policy and delivery decisions, ensuring initiatives are grounded in the best available research.
- Support horizon scanning by identifying emerging issues, risks and opportunities relevant to government skills and learning priorities.
- Provide a means of two-way dialogue with the research and scientific communities on topical issues central to Government Skills' remit.
- Support webinars, workshops, discussion fora on specific technical or subject-specific areas.
- Build internal capability in research literacy and evidence-based practice, enabling ministers and civil servants to confidently access, interpret, and apply evidence in policy and programme design.

Scope

The CoE will not be a decision-making or steering authority. Members of the CoE will not represent the Cabinet Office, nor make decisions regarding the strategic direction of the organisation. The CoE will add insights to support the work of Government Skills. Government Skills is not required to seek agreement from the CoE before it gives advice or recommendations to the Cabinet Office or the government.

Roles and responsibilities

The CoE will comprise a Chair, Secretariat, and members.

- **Chair:** Provides leadership for College activities, ensures the College operates in line with the ToR, and facilitates effective engagement across different channels including meetings, workshops, written communications and advice. The Chair of the College of Experts is the Deputy Director for Evidence and Impact in Government Skills.
- **Secretariat:** Senior Researcher(s) in the Government Skills Evidence and Impact Team. Responsible for coordinating College activities, circulating information, managing requests for advice and capturing outputs.
- **Members:** Contribute expertise through participating in small-group meetings where relevant, reviewing documents and outputs, providing written feedback, sharing insights via emails, webinars or short consultations and participating in knowledge-sharing activities such as workshops or webinars and responding to advice requests.

Recruitment

For Phases One and Two, members were drawn from academic and practitioner expert communities, to bring specialist knowledge of areas of interest relevant to Government Skills' remit. A third phase of recruitment is planned for 2026. Any future recruitment will be undertaken at the discretion of Government Skills.

Membership

Members' title will be *Member of the Government Skills College of Experts*. Members may use this to describe their role in supporting the CoE.

- Membership of the College of Experts is voluntary and no compensation will be provided.
- Membership will be for an initial term of 2 years, with an option for renewal of a further 1 year after this period.
- Members will not be required to act as representatives of their own organisation or sector.
- The names of all CoE members, together with a register of potential conflicts of interest, will be published externally on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).
- After the initial 2 year term, membership of the CoE will be reviewed yearly according to Cabinet Office priorities, and new research/expertise requirements.

Expectations

Members of the CoE are expected to:

- Act within '[The Seven Principles of Public Life](#)', particular to provide independent, informed, expert input;
- Not use the CoE as a route for lobbying (directly or indirectly) the Cabinet Office, or any of its stakeholders;
- Refrain from discussing sensitive government information that is not already in the public domain when representing the CoE;
- Treat any papers and documents provided to the CoE in the strictest confidence and not circulate further, or discuss outside the group, unless otherwise agreed;
- Think carefully when publishing content on social media that links to Government Skills/the Cabinet Office, and its policies. They should seek advice from the Government Skills team if they are unsure of social media guidance.

Government Skills will endeavour to:

- Identify expert work streams ahead of need, providing sufficient notice to enable planning arrangements including diary management;
- Provide a clear specification for each expert work stream;
- Provide the appropriate information so that College members are adequately briefed and able to contribute meaningfully;
- Provide an appropriate forum and tools for members to provide appropriate, high-quality expert input;
- Maintain members' knowledge of all CoE activities and of Government Skills' strategic thinking and direction;
- Be clear about the information CoE members can share more widely and that which is provided in confidence;
- Inform members about how the expert input will be used;
- Share the notes of work stream meetings with the wider COE.

Location and collaboration

- The CoE will adopt a hybrid model. Most meetings and workshops will be held online, particularly shorter/regular meetings.
- An annual in-person meeting will be held to encourage relationship building/networking, reflection and an annual get-together/reception.
- Where in-person events are convened, Government Skills will confirm arrangements regarding travel and subsistence in advance, with the expectation that members' institutions will be responsible for arranging and resourcing travel.

Conflict of Interest

Being a member of the College of Experts does not preclude involvement in contracting arrangements with the Cabinet Office to deliver research or other services, but these involvements should be declared. Any other conflicts of interest should be declared to us at the point of joining the College of Experts, and updated at the point of any changes.