



## MEMORANDUM

**Memo No. 24-061**

TO: Board of Trustees  
Student Trustees

FROM: Pino Buffone, Director of Education  
Jesse Mark, Executive Officer of Corporate Services  
Mary Jane Farrish, Superintendent of Education

DATE: November 21, 2024

**RE: Revisions to P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity**

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This memo provides additional information about the revisions to *Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity* (“Existing Policy”). This information is provided to support the trustees’ decision-making process in response to the Policy Review Committee’s (“Committee”) recommendation.

### **BACKGROUND**

As with all policy changes, staff prepared a revised version of the policy (“Revised Policy”). The revisions reflected staff’s best attempt to meaningfully consider and incorporate feedback received during consultations, including feedback from current members of the Advisory Committee on Equity (“ACE”) and feedback from Director’s Executive Council. The Revised Policy is attached as Appendix A.

On November 14, 2024 the Committee met to consider the Revised Policy. The Committee debated several motions to amend the Revised Policy. The successful motions have been incorporated into an Amended Policy, attached as Appendix B.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Three of the Committee’s adopted amendments are of concern to staff:

1. Section 4.6 - list of identity-based groups
2. Section 4.10 - term length
3. Section 4.24 - number of meetings

#### ***Section 4.6 - List of Identity-Based Groups:***

Section 4.6 of the Revised Policy is about prioritising membership on ACE for particular people or organisations. The Revised Policy indicated that priority would be given to people and organisations that represent students and communities subjected to discrimination on a protected ground according to the OCDSB’s *Human Rights* policy.

The Committee amended section 4.6 to include a list of certain identity-based groups. Staff understands that the intention of this amendment is to prioritize ACE membership for people and organisations which represent groups who have experienced disadvantage or systemic discrimination at the OCDSB.

The list in the Amended Policy is not necessary to achieve the intended result. The list prioritises certain identity-based groups, but does not include all groups which may experience discrimination or disadvantage. By contrast, the version of this section in the Revised Policy references the protected grounds in the *Human Rights* policy, and in so doing achieves the same intended result without prioritising only certain identities.

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the version in the Revised Policy.

#### **Section 4.10 - Term Length:**

Section 4.10 of the Revised Policy is about term lengths for voting members of ACE. The Revised Policy allowed two-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms, for a maximum 4-year total for each member.

The Committee amended section 4.10 to allow each member to serve up to four consecutive terms, for a maximum 8-year total. In recent membership selection decisions, ACE has not denied any member's wishes to serve a consecutive term, suggesting that serving on ACE for 8 years may become the norm should this section of the Amended Policy be adopted.

Shorter term lengths can support a regular influx of fresh perspectives and ideas to governance committees, preventing stagnation and helping the committee to be maximally impactful. Shorter term lengths can also increase opportunities for diverse community members to participate and contribute to committee recommendations, ultimately leading to more inclusive Board decisions. Shorter terms further allow the balance of influence on the committee to be equitably shared among committee members over time, thereby fostering a more accessible, accountable, and responsive committee structure.

Staff recommends that the Board reject this amendment and adopt the approach in the Revised Policy, for a maximum 4-year total.

#### **Section 4.24 - Number of Meetings:**

Section 4.24 of the Revised Policy is about the number of ACE meetings per year. The Revised Policy allowed for 6 meetings per year.

The Committee amended section 4.24 to allow for "6 to 9" meetings per year.

Trustees should remember that staff support for the Board and its committees extends well beyond taking meeting notes or running virtual meeting rooms. There is significant work and resources invested in preparing for each meeting, and following each meeting. Adding additional meetings does not only increase staff time to attend the meetings, but also requires additional time and substantial resources before and after each meeting.

The demands placed on support staff have increased significantly in recent years. This increased workload is already negatively impacting staff well-being. Staff does not believe there are sufficient resources to support an increase in meetings without further impacting staff well-being. Staff also notes that ACE has already made some changes to its meeting agenda priorities which will allow it to accomplish more within its existing meeting times.

Staff recommends that the Board adopt the six meetings suggested in the Revised Policy.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff recognize that there may be a need for a comprehensive review and assessment of the Board's committee and governance structures to ensure long term sustainability and effectiveness. Staff is committed to supporting the Board in any efforts to conduct such a review and assessment. In the interim, staff recommend that the Board adopt the versions of the above-mentioned sections in the Revised Policy.

Appendix A: Revised Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity  
Appendix B: Amended Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity

cc Senior Staff  
Manager, Board Services  
Corporate Records