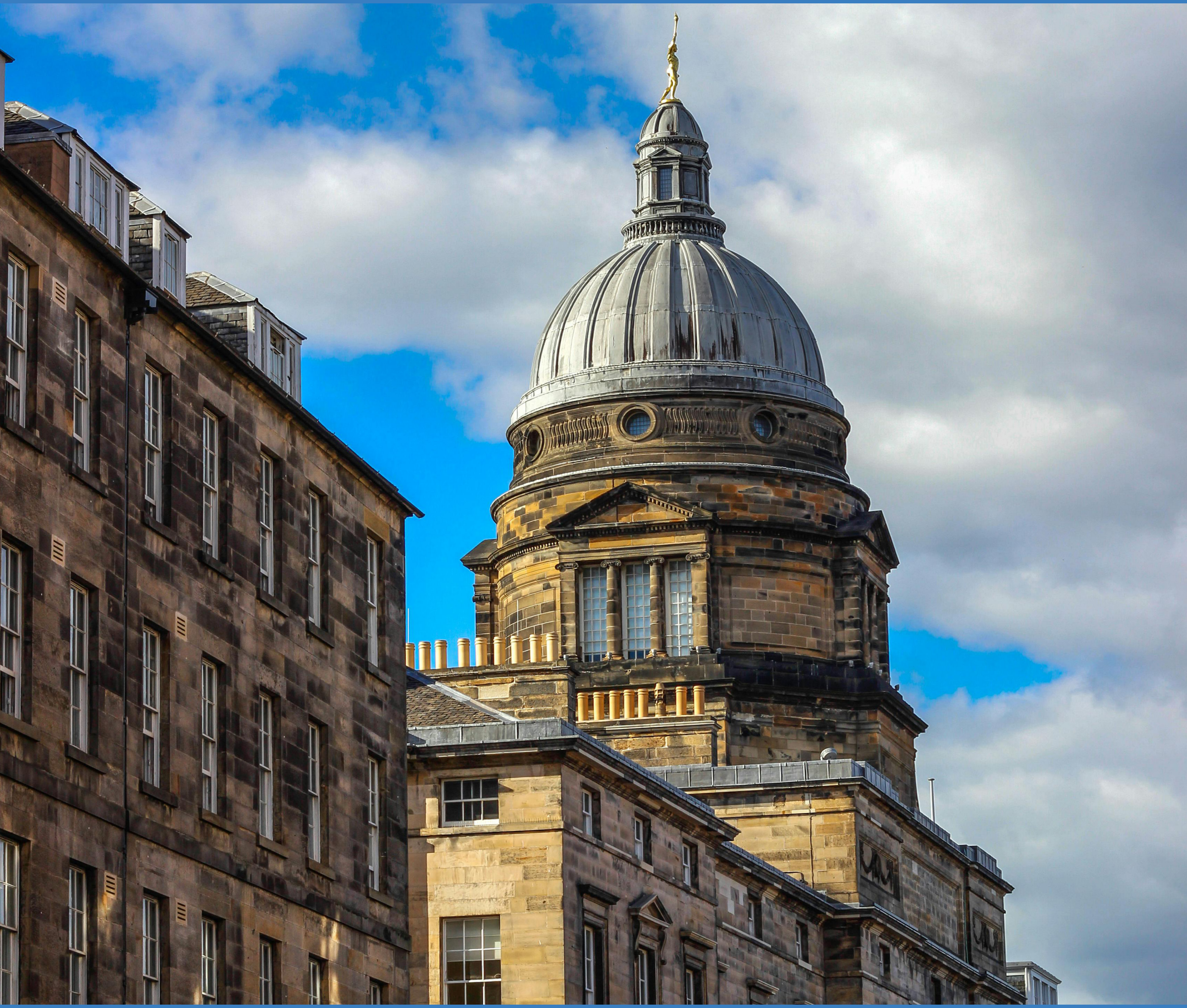
NXD Academy



NXD Development Programme

2026

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
Business School

FWB

Table of Contents

Foreword	01
Programme Partners	02
About the Programme	03
Course Sessions - Overview	04
Session Details	05
Testimonials	06
FAQ	07

For more information, you can contact our programme team at nxd@fwbltd.com

We're happy to help with any questions about the sessions, registration, or programme details

Foreword

There are few roles in business or in public life where you can make a meaningful difference so quickly, and so directly, as an independent non-executive director.

At its best, the NXD role is about helping organisations make better decisions, by bringing an independent perspective, asking the questions that need to be asked, and providing valuable input shaped by experience. For founders and management teams in growing private companies, that can be particularly helpful. High-growth environments move at pace; priorities shift; capital, customers and talent all need attention at once. Independent directors can help leadership teams to look up and look out - to stress-test strategy, sharpen focus, and navigate challenges in ways that only seem obvious with hindsight.

The impact of good governance, however, is not confined to the private sector. In the public and charitable sectors, the stakes can be every bit as high - sometimes higher. That's because in these settings, public trust, mission delivery and stewardship of scarce resources are often on the line. In such situations, boards can bring clarity of purpose, constructive challenge and accountability, while still being a critical friend to the executive team.

Many senior executives choose to pursue an NXD pathway as a next chapter or alongside their executive career. The rewards are rarely about fees or financial upside. The real return is the combination of contribution and growth through exposure to new sectors and business models; the privilege of working with other committed, capable people; and the chance to add value in a way that draws on experience but also stretches it.

Being an NXD is not a softened version of executive leadership and should not be taken lightly. In private companies the governance arrangements can look different from listed businesses - but the fiduciary responsibilities are still considerable and must be taken seriously. You are expected to bring independent thinking, to influence without relying on executive authority, and to form judgement with limited time and imperfect information. When challenges arise - a strategic setback, a leadership transition, a crisis - the board's role becomes even more important, and the demands can increase significantly.

That is precisely why structured development matters. The 'first board' is often the hardest step, and boards rightly look for individuals who can contribute from day one. This programme, run by FWB and the University of Edinburgh Business School, provides a practical grounding in what the role ***really*** involves: the mindset, the behaviours, the governance fundamentals and - crucially - the real-world discussion of cases and dilemmas that every independent director eventually faces.

Done well, becoming an independent director is one of the most stimulating, enjoyable and fulfilling roles you can take on, and one that can genuinely help organisations and the people who work in them to thrive. If you are considering an NXD role, I would encourage you to approach this programme with ambition and humility in equal measure - ambition to make a positive contribution, and humility to keep learning.

I wish you every success.

Calum Paterson
Chairman & Senior Partner
Scottish Equity Partners

Executive Education

FWB and the University of Edinburgh Business School have been developing and running Learning & Development programmes for a number of years, starting with the Executive Women in Leadership Programme and continuing today with the Executive Leadership Programme and NXD Development Programme.

Delivered in partnership

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH Business School

FWB_

University of Edinburgh Business School

Located at the heart of the University of Edinburgh, a University ranked 34th in the world (2026 QS world rankings) and 4th in the UK for research power (2021 Research Excellence Framework), the University of Edinburgh Business School holds 'triple crown' accreditation, granted by the three main bodies who assure quality of education in this area (AACSB, EQUIS and AMBA).

Our mission, together with our communities, is to create and share knowledge through research and education in order to make meaningful change for people, organisations and the environment. We wish to be a Business School for better futures: Diverse. Digital. Sustainable. With a strong engagement team and a number of faculty consulting with organisations on real world issues, we have built a wealth of experience in delivering solutions for a variety of organisations in Scotland, the UK and internationally. We have developed expertise across a number of subject areas including Strategic Leadership, Accounting and Society, Financial Decision Making, Fintech, AI, Credit Research, Resilience, Service Management and Sustainable Business. We are the world's experts on Carbon Finance.

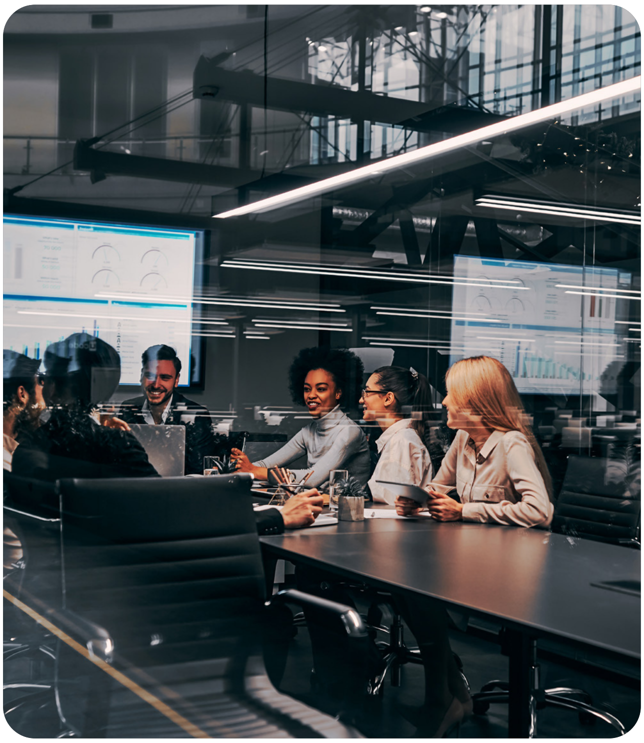
FWB Executive Search

FWB is a leading UK wide boutique Executive Search & Board Advisory firm, headquartered in Scotland, with presence throughout the UK, including the North-East & North-West of England and London.

For over 30 years, FWB has grown to be the largest firm in Scotland within Executive Search, and in addition to Executive & NXD recruitment services, the organisation delivers a variety of consulting services including management due diligence & board assessment, remuneration benchmarking & market mapping, leadership development and the facilitation of professional networks, including the Scottish Finance Leaders Network, the Scottish HR Leadership Group and the GC Scot Network.

Over the past 10 years the business has worked closely in partnership with the University of Edinburgh to deliver leadership programmes specifically designed to support Executive Women in Leadership, aspiring Executive Leaders (through the Executive Leadership Programme) and NXDs.

FWB works across the UK's critical industry sectors, including Consumer Goods & Services, Technology & Manufacturing, Public & Third Sector, Built Environment & Energy, Financial and Professional Services, to develop leadership teams – a task considered by many to be the most important factor in driving business and economic growth.



NXD Development Programme

FWB and the University of Edinburgh Business School are delighted to introduce its flagship NXD Development Programme for the seventh year.

The 2026 Programme

Each year we discuss with Chairs and NXDs, across the UK and further afield, what issues are on their board agenda and what knowledge and skills their Board members need to have to be effective at the boardroom table.

The programme focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing boards today. Over the past year, several issues have become increasingly prominent as businesses grow more complex and regulations continue to evolve. Boards face heightened scrutiny, greater pressure to ensure compliance, and rising expectations to evaluate their own performance and articulate a clear organisational purpose.

Evolving technologies are reshaping the business landscape, requiring boards, and NXDs in particular, to stay informed about their potential impact. Climate change and sustainability also remain central considerations, with boards needing to understand the risks, opportunities and strategic responses associated with these issues.

These and other developments mean that NXDs must be proactive and adaptable to support the long-term success of their organisations. This programme has been designed to provide the insight and perspective needed to meet that challenge.

Core Benefits

Learn from leading Chairs and NXDs

Learn directly from leading Chairs and NXDs who share practical insights, real boardroom experience and the skills needed to operate confidently at the highest level.

Practical and applied learning

Engage in interactive workshops, case studies and peer discussion that translate complex board issues into clear, usable tools you can apply immediately.

Real-world case studies

Work through scenarios drawn from actual board challenges, giving you a safe environment to test your thinking and sharpen your judgement.

Build a powerful network

Build meaningful connections with a diverse cohort of executives and NXDs, creating a supportive community that strengthens your development and future opportunities.

Course Sessions

As with our previous programmes, our 2026 course has been designed to be highly practical.

With course sessions led by experienced Chairs and NXDs, the programme is aimed at those interested in all types and sizes of organiations: listed, private, entrepreneurial, SMEs, public sector and not-for-profit. Each session is interactive with small group activities and real-life case studies, together with plenary discussion and Q&A. These sessions have been designed to allow plenty of time for interaction and active learning in all areas. While each module has a core theme, the conversations and questions are intentionally wide-ranging to encourage rich interaction and active learning throughout.

What is the Role of the NXD in Rethinking Organisational Design for AI-Driven Success:

Online

Thursday 10th September, 6pm - 8pm

- How organisational design shapes AI maturity
- How AI shifts decision-making and accountability
- How to govern AI ethically and responsibly, whilst ensuring a culture of continuous innovation

The Role of Boards in Understanding ESG Compliance

Online

Thursday 24th September, 6pm - 8pm

- How ESG is shifting from compliance to strategy
- How global regulatory trends affect board oversight
- How to link ESG to value, risk and performance
- How boards embed sustainability into the business model

The Potential Impact and Opportunity for NXDs of the Global AI Revolution

Online

Thursday 8th October, 6pm - 8pm

- How AI is reshaping sectors and competitve dynamics
- How AI accelerates innovation and strategy cycles
- How NXDs can add value amidst rapid technological change

Cybersecurity: A Rapidly Growing and High-Priority Risk for All Boards

Online

Thursday 22nd October, 6pm - 8pm

- Why cyber risk is now a core board responsibility
- How threats are evolving and why humans remain the weakest link
- What boards must oversee to ensure cyber resilience
- How NXDs assess and challenge organisational preparedness

What Are the Main Criteria of an Effective Board?

Online

Thursday 5th November, 6pm - 8pm

- What makes boards effective?
- What good Board papers look like
- Key questions NXDs should ask
- How to spot and fix poor Board information

Geopolitik or Realpolitik? Geopolitical Literacy as a Core Boardroom Skill

Online

Thursday 19th November, 6pm - 8pm

- How geopolitics impacts markets and supply chains
- Key global risks boards must track
- How to embed geopolitics into strategy and risk
- How NXDs assess vulnerabilities and readiness

Flexible Online Format

Access high-impact learning with minimal disruption to your schedule, supported by session recordings for continued learning.

Final in-person session

Surviving the Vacuum: The Art of Making Lasting Improvements to Your Organisation

Thursday 3rd December, 6pm - 9pm

- How organisational pressures shape behaviour
- How to create a “change vacuum”
- The NXDs role in driving change
- What enables lasting organisational change?

Our in-person session is an opportunity to meet fellow delegates from the programme, take part in group discussions and plenary sessions, and network over wine and canapés.

Location:
University of Edinburgh

Session 1

What is the Role of the NXD in Rethinking Organisational Design for AI-Driven Success?

Online Thursday 10th September, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speakers Phil Le-Brun and Jana Werner

What you will learn

- How organisational design shapes AI maturity
- How AI shifts decision-making and accountability
- How to govern AI ethically and responsibly, whilst ensuring a culture of continuous innovation

Session Synopsis

Artificial Intelligence is redefining how value is created, decisions are made, and work is structured. Traditional hierarchies optimised for control and efficiency are giving way to networked, adaptive models optimised for learning and responsiveness. NXDs therefore have to understand that AI maturity often depends on the organisation's design, not its technology.

This requires that NXDs have clarity around data ownership and ethics, transparency and integration. Whilst AI expands decision capacity, it also shifts where and how decisions are made, which means that NXDs have to monitor which decisions AI can safely make or support, and understand how autonomy and responsibility are structured into the organisation.

Using AI raises important issues about judgment. Whilst AI can make some organisation processes faster, it also can make organisations more exposed, so boards and NXDs have a stewardship role to ensure the AI agenda aligns with organisational purpose and societal expectations. They also have to ensure that governance evolves beyond compliance: for example, is there an AI risk register at board level? Are there cross-functional oversight bodies? How is AI performance tracked beyond ROI?

In this session, we will discuss how leading organisations achieve continuous innovation using AI without disruptive overhauls. The session anchors on three principles that boards can immediately apply: establishing clarity of strategic priorities, creating ownership structures that drive accountability, and fostering organisational curiosity that anticipates market changes and the skills needed to be successful.

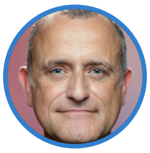
Click here to book

£200 20% discount when registering for all six online sessions

This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speakers



Phil Le-Brun

Executive in Residence, Amazon Web Services

An experienced business and technology leader with proven skills in organisational change, retail operations, technology adoption, engineering and software development, Phil has led several transformational technology initiatives in one of the world's largest and iconic businesses. He was recognised in 2018 and 2019 as one of the top 100 CIOs in the UK and now spends time helping senior leaders achieve their own organisations' potential through cultural and technological changes. Prior to Amazon, Phil was Corporate Vice President - Global Technology Development for McDonald's Corporation.

Jana Werner

Executive in Residence, Amazon Web Services

Jana is a global advisor in Amazon Web Services, advising C-level executives and global enterprises in transformation, digital innovation, change management and ways of working at the intersection of business and technology. She has multinational multi-sector experience, from growing a start-up acquired by Hewlett-Packard, to leading culture, organisational, and digital change in large scale multinational organisations across various sectors. She holds a PhD in management, is a global thought leader and speaker on transformation and innovation, and is actively engaged in a community of thought leaders and executive pioneers from a number of leading organisations including Harvard, NASA, Nike and Slack.

Phil and Jana co-authored 'The Octopus Organization: A Guide to Thriving in a World of Continuous Transformation' recently published by Harvard Business Review.

Session 2

The Role of Boards in Understanding ESG Compliance

Online

Thursday 24th Septemner, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speakers

Amanda Young and Dr Sarah Ivory

What you will learn

- How ESG is shifting from compliance to strategy
- How to link ESG to value, risk and performance
- How global regulatory trends affect board oversight
- How boards embed sustainability into the business model

Session Synopsis

Current thinking around Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria is shifting from a ‘check-the-box’ compliance exercise to a more rigorous, data-driven, and strategic imperative integrated into core business operations. Despite significant political backlash and “greenhushing” (reducing public, vocal commitments) in the United States, ESG is generally not viewed as dead, but rather in a state of “reckoning” or evolution with a need to improve credibility and financial justification.

From a regional perspective, Europe continues to push for high-standard, mandatory sustainability regulations while the U.S. is experiencing a retreat at the federal level, leading to a patchwork of conflicting regulatory requirements. Due to the politicisation of the term ‘ESG’ in the U.S., many organisations are rebranding their efforts, using terms like ‘sustainability’, ‘impact’, or ‘responsible business’.

There is an increased focus on results, with investors demanding clearer links between ESG initiatives and financial performance, and regulators introducing stricter rules to ensure accuracy in sustainability reporting.

The current consensus is that ESG should be embedded in the business model and those that can articulate their sustainability strategy clearly, with data-driven evidence, are expected to capture long-term value and trust.

ESG factors are now critical components of risk management, long-term strategy, and corporate reputation, so as the guardians of corporate governance, NXDs must be responsible for holding executive teams accountable for ensuring that sustainability is integrated into the business model, rather than treated as a peripheral issue. This session will examine the practical steps that NXDs need to take to achieve this.

Click here to book

£200 20% discount when registering for all six online sessions

This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speakers

Amanda Young

Board Member, Crown Estate Scotland

Amanda's experience spans nearly 30 years at the forefront of sustainable finance, bringing a unique combination of C-suite leadership and boardroom governance experience. Her career has been dedicated to embedding sustainability and impact at the heart of business and investment, helping organisations deliver long-term growth while addressing global environmental and social challenges. As Chief Sustainability Officer for Aberdeen's investment business, she drove strategy and execution that positioned sustainability as a core business driver, not a side function. Beyond the executive arena, she has served as NXD, Chair, committee executive, and task force lead, giving her extensive governance expertise and a proven ability to engage boards and senior leaders on ESG, risk, and stakeholder expectations.
She was recognised in the list of '100 Most Influential Women in Finance' and as 'Sustainable & ESG Investment Woman of the Year'.

Dr Sarah Ivory

Former Associate Professor, Executive Education - Climate Change & Business Strategy, University of Edinburgh

Dr Sarah Birrell Ivory is a former Associate Professor at the University of Edinburgh. She is a former Director of the Centre for Business, Climate Change and Sustainability, and recipient of a prestigious Aspen Institute 'Ideas Worth Teaching' Award. Dr Ivory now works independently with businesses, universities and students on her areas of expertise, including sustainability, business and climate change, and critical thinking.

Session 3

The Potential Impact and Opportunity for NXDs of the Global AI Revolution

Online | Thursday 8th October, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speaker | **Louise Smith OBE**

What you will learn

- How AI is reshaping sectors and competitive dynamics
- How AI accelerates innovation and strategy cycles
- How NXDs can add value amidst rapid technological change

Session Synopsis

AI is already reshaping how organisations in private, public and third sectors operate, and its influence will likely deepen over the next five years. For NXDs, therefore, the impact is both strategic and governance-related. We know that AI can automate or augment many cognitive tasks that previously required humans, leading to faster analysis and decision-making, lower operational costs and increased productivity per employee. So, companies that adopt AI effectively may dramatically outperform competitors.

AI also enables entirely new ways of delivering products and services, such as AI-powered platforms, hyper-personalised services, predictive maintenance in manufacturing and AI-assisted drug discovery in healthcare. Consequently, many industries could see new entrants disrupting incumbents.

More broadly, when it comes to innovation, AI can have considerable impact - accelerating research, design, and product development so that boards may have to move from multi-year strategy cycles to continuous strategy updates.

Ultimately AI could create winner-takes-most markets because companies with the most data, the best models and the strongest computing power can pull ahead quickly.

However, at the same time, AI introduces major risks in terms of algorithmic bias, security vulnerabilities, regulatory exposure and reputational damage. There are also potential risks in not developing and socialising entry-level employees into how AI can be used, and what it means for career and company development.

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This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

So for NXDs, AI is not just a technology issue — it is a board-level strategic issue, and boards will increasingly be expected to oversee AI strategy, data governance, ethical AI use and AI-related risk management. NXDs therefore need to be able to answer questions such as: Where will AI create the most value in our business? What data advantages do we have over competitors? What AI capabilities must we build internally? What risks does AI introduce? Do we have the right talent and governance structures?

This session will consider the impact AI is having and will continue to have on different sectors, highlighting both the benefits and risks to companies within them. It will also examine how boards should prepare for these changes and innovations and how NXDs can ensure they remain progressively relevant and continue to add value and strategic insight whilst providing compliance and risk minimisation.

Speaker

Louise Smith OBE

Chair, Innovate Finance

Louise has undertaken leadership roles across Digital, Data, Product, Distribution, Technology and Operations in leading organisations across the UK. At the cutting edge of technology, Louise has also led the FinTech Strategy on behalf of the sector and Scottish Government during the Financial Services crisis, including the establishment of FinTech Scotland. She was appointed Chair of Innovate Finance - the 'voice' of the FinTech community; and currently works with high-growth businesses supporting the next generation of innovators. She has been recognised as one of the Top 100 UK leaders in Digital, Top 25 leaders in Scotland and Top 100 FinTech Leaders globally. She is also the Global Leader at Neuron Digital Trading, Chair of Stripe UK and Chair of the Risk Committee and NXD at Stripe Technology Europe.

Session 4

Cybersecurity: A Rapidly Growing and High-Priority Risk for All Boards

Online

Thursday 22nd October, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speakers

Mandy Haeburn-Little, Dave Stewart and Calum Baird

What you will learn

- Why cyber risk is now a core board responsibility
- How threats are evolving and why humans remain the weakest link
- What Boards must oversee to ensure cyber resilience
- How NXDs assess and challenge organisational preparedness

Session Synopsis

Cyber-security is no longer purely a technical issue but a core business risk and, above all else, a human risk. As directors have a legal responsibility to oversee risk management and resilience, ignoring cyber-security risks is no longer an option and can lead to personal and corporate liability.

Regulators, ESG and governance frameworks increasingly require disclosure of cyber preparedness. In a matter of minutes without the right preparation, a cyber incident can halt operations, destroy data, or compromise safety systems. Such a breach erodes customer confidence and can take years to overcome.

This session is crucial to directors and anyone with a Board position. NXDs need to understand the nature of cyber risk; threats are evolving from criminal ransomware to state-sponsored attacks. No organisation is too small or too traditional to be targeted and human error remains the top vulnerability.

NXDs don't need to be cyber experts, but they must be informed challengers. Their role is to ensure cyber-security is integrated into enterprise risk management; demand clear metrics (e.g. time to detect, time to recover); support a culture of transparency, so issues surface early; and champion investment in resilience, not just compliance.

Cyber-security is ultimately about protecting trust, continuity, and value. So NXDs who understand that, and insist on visibility, accountability, and testing, strengthen the organisation's resilience and its reputation.

This session, led by experts from across the UK, will highlight the key issues NXDs need to consider from their own Board positions, how to challenge and support their own organisations and above all else, to have confidence in their own preparedness.

Click here to book

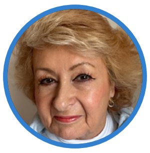
£200 20% discount when registering for all six online sessions

This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speakers

Mandy Haeburn-Little



Chair, Business Resilience International Management

Mandy is the Executive Chair of BRIM (Business Resilience International Management). She and her team have designed and delivered the first national network of ten Police Cyber Resilience Centres for Policing and the Home Office across England and Wales. She is the Vice Chair of the first National CRC Group company which supports all of the Cyber Centres, the creator and presenter of CyberVersed, an in-depth podcast series, and was recognised as Cyber Woman of the Year in 2021 by the Cyber Security Industry Awards. She received the Editor’s Choice for Outstanding Contribution to the Cyber Industry and received a Commendation from the National Police Chiefs’ Council for her work. Outside of work, Mandy is an artist.

David Stewart

CISO, DCC plc

David is an experienced Information Security Professional with a history of working in multiple industries in a global setting. He is skilled in Training and Awareness, building penetration testing and vulnerability management programs, Incident Response, PCI DSS, IT Operations and Microsoft Products. David is also a Board member within the Education Sector, managing and advising on the scale of risk.

Calum Baird

Senior Consultant, Systal Technology Solutions

Calum is an experienced Digital Forensics and Incident Response professional with a background in law enforcement and specialist cybercrime investigations. He has led technical forensics work, supported complex incident response cases internationally, and provided expert testimony. Skilled in digital forensics, cyber incident response, and security operations, he holds multiple industry certifications and is committed to improving cybersecurity understanding across legal and community sectors.

Session 5

What Are the Main Criteria of an Effective Board?

Online

Thursday 5th November, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speakers

Angela Seymour-Jackson and Niamh Corbett

What you will learn

- What makes boards effective
- Key questions NXDs should ask
- What good board papers look like
- How to spot and fix poor Board information

Session Synopsis

An effective Board is critical to the success of any organisation as it provides oversight and guidance to the management team, sets the strategic direction, and ensures that the organisation is managed in the best interests of its stakeholders. What makes a Board truly great, however, is that whenever challenges or unexpected events occur, the Board can function at its best and ensure that the organisation is effectively led.

A vital part of an effective board is the production and use of high-quality Board papers, the key source of information for directors. Good board papers play a crucial role in supporting the board's decision-making processes, fostering effective communication and collaboration, and ensuring sound governance practices within the organisation. Too often, the focus is on the decisions that boards make, but those decisions are shaped by the quality of the Board papers, something that is the responsibility of the Chair and NXDs.

This session therefore will discuss those aspects that lead to Board success including structure and composition of the Board; the role and management of committees; accountability and responsibility; diversity of thought; financial stewardship; effective communication, Board evaluation, and other key criteria that lead to Board success. We will also focus on what good board papers look like to enable sound decision making, whilst covering what key questions NXDs should be asking, how to ensure priorities are reflected in the board agenda and in the supporting papers; the typical pitfalls of poor board information, and the role committees have to play in board effectiveness.

Click here to book

£200 20% discount when registering for all six online sessions

This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speakers

Angela Seymour-Jackson

Chair, PageGroup

Angela Seymour-Jackson has extensive experience in corporate governance. She is Chair of the Board at Page Group, Senior Independent Director at Trustpilot, and a NXD at Janus Henderson. Angela was Deputy Chair at GoCompare Group and joined the Board of Future plc, an online and print media and publishing business, when it purchased GoCompare. She was an NXD at Rentokil Initial for 9 years. Thus, Angela's Board experience spans both listed firms in the UK and the US, and private Venture Capital-backed businesses. In her Executive career, Angela held senior sales and marketing positions at Aviva and Aegon and was CEO of RAC Motoring.

Niamh Corbett

Head of Pop-Up Boards, Nurole

Niamh has advised the boards of some of the world's largest organisations, across all sectors, on board materials and boardroom effectiveness. Earlier in her career she worked with Morgan Stanley, where she spent 10 years advising UK companies on their capital market transactions, before moving to Board Intelligence as Global Financial Services Practice Lead and Head of Americas. More recently she has joined Nurole, an innovative board search specialist, changing the way organisations hire NXDs.

Session 6

Geopolitik or Realpolitik? Geopolitical Literacy as a Core Boardroom Skill

Online | Thursday 19th November, 6pm - 8pm

Guest speaker | Bill McCall

What you will learn

- How geopolitics impacts markets and supply chains
- How to embed geopolitics into strategy and risk
- Key global risks boards must track
- How NXDs assess vulnerabilities and readiness

Session Synopsis

Geopolitical risk has become one of the core strategic issues with which boards must now grapple.

For NXDs, however, the goal is not to become foreign-policy experts, but to ensure the board has the right awareness, frameworks, and responses in place. They should maintain a high-level understanding of Great-power competition, especially US–China relations, and their impact on trade, technology, and capital flows. Regional instability, such as Middle East conflicts, the Indo-Pacific and Eastern Europe also have major implications in areas such as energy cost and supply chain security.

Boards must also consider economic fragmentation, sanctions, export controls, tariffs, and localisation pressures, together with national security-driven regulation including data sovereignty, supply chain security, critical technology protection, national elections and the rise of populism. Political volatility has been shown to alter regulatory and trade environments extremely rapidly.

So, regardless of sector, size, listed or private, NXDs have a major role in ensuring management is horizon-scanning and integrating these macro risks into strategic and operational planning.

The key questions are: do we understand how geopolitics affects our business model; where are our vulnerabilities and dependencies; is geopolitics embedded in strategy, risk and decision-making; are we ready to respond to fast-moving geopolitical shocks, and do we have the right information, expertise and partners?

This session will address all of these issues and guide NXDs in this crucial part of their responsibility on the Board.

Click here to book

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This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speaker

Bill McCall

Principal, McCall & Partners

Bill McCall has been advising companies for 35 years and chairing them for 25, in the UK, Nordics and North America. A chartered banker and past president of that institute, he was a Member of the London Stock Exchange, a market analyst, a corporate adviser and is a Fellow of CISI. He is a Freeman of the City of London, Liveryman of WCIB, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and FRSA.

In the last 5 years he has covered the shifting sands and seas of geopolitics as an analyst and adviser for Private Equity partnerships, corporates and professional services firms.

Bill is the author of 'Coffee House Economics', a weekly review of the business, macro, and GeoPolitical happenings and will bring an acute and fascinating insight into the challenges and opportunities affecting companies globally from a geopolitical aspect, including his ideas around the 'New Great Game' and hegemony under threat. 'There are three types of organisations: those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who wonder what just happened.'

Session 7

Surviving the Vacuum: The Art of Making Lasting Improvements to Your Organisation

In-person Thursday 3rd December, 6pm - 9pm

Guest speaker John Watson

What you will learn

- How organisational pressures shape behaviour
- The NXD's role in driving change
- How to create a "change vacuum"
- What enables lasting organisational change

Session Synopsis

Your role as an NXD may be to initiate change, lead change or support executives through the journey. Change is rarely easy and overcoming the inertia of organisations requires personality and skill at all levels, especially in mandating the Board.

Every second of every day, the people in your organisation are absorbing the world in which they work. They are part of it, but more importantly, it is a part of them, and you. Organisations can often feel more disorganised than organised - it's often hard to reconcile what the organisation states it wants to achieve, and how it wants to do it, with what is apparent in the Board Pack.

Each organisation is different, and the stimuli, or pressures, vary in their strength and direction, but they all combine to define the organisation. To change the organisation, you need to change its systems, and to do this you need to establish a change vacuum – often described as a "change programme" or "task force" or "special project". When led effectively, such changes will eventually consume the rest of the organisation and create a new way of working.

As an NXD, you will have a pivotal role in establishing, leading or supporting the creation of the change vacuum. We all know to be careful when playing with anything containing pressure, and the same is true of organisational pressure systems. This session will examine firsthand the experience of leaders who have a track record of isolating the success factors needed for creating lasting organisational change and outline some of these that leaders will find useful to initiate or deliver the sustainable organisational change they need.

Click here to book

£50 20% discount when registering for all six online sessions

This session includes:

- A 2-hour expert-led session with practical tools and real board examples
- Interactive discussion and case work.

Speaker

John Watson

Group Executive Chairman, Robertson Group

John has been leading organisational transformation for most of his 30-year career, most recently within the highly respected Operating Team at Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) where he has spent 13 years leading teams at airports including Edinburgh, Sydney and Kuala Lumpur. He is currently Executive Chair of the Robertson Group, Executive Chair of IGS and Chair of FOR:EV. He was formerly Chair of the IOD, Senior Independent Director of SEC Ltd and Founding NXD of BGF plc. He has been at the forefront of organisation change and improvement in many sectors around the globe.

Prior to joining GIP, John was Managing Director of Lloyds Banking Group's $50bn SME Lending portfolio during the banking liquidity crisis. After qualifying as a Chartered Accountant with PwC Corporate Finance, John joined 3i plc. Beforehand, he studied Mechanical Design Engineering as well as gaining a MSc IT. In 2025, John was presented with a Fellowship of the IOD.

Testimonials

Our programmes consistently resonate with NXDs and board leaders who value practical insight, strategic clarity and real-world relevance. Below is a selection of feedback from participants who have experienced these sessions firsthand and shared how the content, delivery and challenge have strengthened their impact in the boardroom.

The programme gave me an insight to a breadth of scenarios and settings that would otherwise be unreachable for most.

The programme acts not only as a refresher course, but also as the generator of ideas, challenges and new thinking: shared experience is central to the sessions and provides endless food for thought from some of the best NXDs operating in this country today.

This programme provides exposure to real-life insights from very experienced NXDs and an awareness of the breadth of issues facing boards.

This is a great programme from which I gained quality insights from experienced leaders across a variety of current and topical business matters that are being discussed around most Boardroom tables. The programme is valuable for all stages of the NXD journey with knowledge sharing amongst participants contributing significantly to the learning experience.

FAQ

Q1: How do I register for this programme?

You can register for single sessions or the full online programme (at a discounted rate) via the registration website here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/non-executive-director-programme-2026-tickets-1989296535488

Q2: Who is this programme for?

This programme is designed for individuals who are developing an NXD portoflio, however experienced, or aspiring to take on NXD roles as part of the next stage in their executive or professional journey. It is suitable for participants from all sectors and organisation types.

The sessions are led by experienced Chairs and NXDs and are highly practical, making the programme valuable for both new and experienced directors who want to strengthen their governance capability, broaden their boardroom insight, and build confidence in contributing effectively at board level.

Q3: When are the sessions held?

Sessions run every second Thursday from 6pm - 8pm, starting on 10 September. The final in-person session runs from 6pm - 9pm.

Q4: How is the programme delivered?

The programme consists of six online sessions and one in-person session held at the University of Edinburgh. Delegates may register for individual online sessions or book all sessions at a discounted rate.

Q5: Are the sessions recorded?

The programme sessions are held under Chatham House Rule and are not recorded.

Q6: Is there any additional work outside of the sessions?

Some sessions include pre-reading linked to the session content or group activities. Delegates are encouraged to complete this in advance to get the most value from the programme.

Q7: How much does the programme cost?

The cost of the programme depends on the sessions you choose to attend. Individual online sessions are priced at £200 each, or delegates can book all six online sessions at a discounted rate of £960 (20% off the full price). Those wishing to attend the complete programme - including all six online sessions and the in-person session - can do so for £960, which includes 20% off online sessions and 20% off the in-person session. Delegates can register for the in-person session seperately for £50.

Q8: Do I receive a certificate for completing the programme?

Delegates who complete all six online sessions will receive a certificate at the end of the programme. All attendees will also join the NXD Academy alumni community of 600 professionals and be invited to relevant events hosted by the University of Edinburgh Business School and FWB Executive Search.









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