

Board Assurance Brief: Panic-Resistant Governance

(For circulation to Board Directors, Chairs, and Risk Committees)

Purpose

This brief sets out a governance framework for managing high-pressure situations involving allegations, public controversy, or coordinated complaints **before adjudication**.

Its purpose is to protect institutional legitimacy, decision capacity, and board authority during periods of asymmetric pressure.

1. The Risk

Institutions increasingly incur their greatest damage **before** law, investigation, or review.

Common features include:

- allegations without findings,
- intense external pressure,
- demands for immediate action,
- and reputational escalation.

In these conditions, institutions often take “interim” actions that become permanent, setting damaging precedents and eroding legitimacy.

This risk is **structural**, not ideological.

2. The Governing Rule

Allegation ≠ Finding

No irreversible action may be taken before minimum process conditions are met.

This rule applies regardless of:

- the intensity of pressure,
- the number of complaints,
- or the moral framing of the issue.

3. The Framework

A. Panic Buffer (Mandatory)

When all three conditions below are present, the Panic Buffer automatically applies:

1. Allegation without adjudication
2. Externally amplified pressure
3. Demand for immediate action

Effect of the Panic Buffer

- No irreversible action
- Allegation language only (no implied findings)
- Escalation to governance, not consultants
- Formal board visibility
- Contemporaneous documentation

The Panic Buffer is a **constitutional constraint**, not a delay tactic.

B. LGIT (Grievance Governance)

LGIT governs how grievances are handled under pressure:

- procedural symmetry is preserved,
- legitimacy is maintained through consistency,
- decisions are anchored to institutional trajectory, not momentary outrage.

LGIT ensures that grievance intake does not become adjudication by pressure.

C. CAD (Pressure Interpretation)

CAD governs how pressure signals are interpreted:

- coordination is distinguished from representativeness,
- volume is not treated as severity,
- amplification effects are identified and discounted.

CAD prevents escalation dynamics from being mistaken for institutional consensus.

4. What Boards Must Do

Boards must:

- enforce the Panic Buffer when triggered,

- ensure proportionality between response and verified conditions,
- require documentation of interim decisions,
- retain judgment authority during the panic window.

Boards may delegate investigation.

Boards may **not** delegate judgment during panic.

5. What Boards Must Never Do

The following actions cause **irreversible legitimacy damage** and are prohibited during the panic window:

- acting before process,
- outsourcing judgment to identity or advocacy consultants,
- equating pressure with consensus,
- symbolic firings, suspensions, or cancellations,
- silence that allows reputational narratives to harden.

These actions convert panic into precedent.

6. The Defensible Position

Boards applying this framework can state:

**“We did not adjudicate the underlying politics.
We applied our governance framework consistently and in good faith,
and we did not take irreversible action before process.”**

This position is defensible to courts, regulators, funders, and stakeholders.

7. Why This Works

This framework:

- slows decision velocity without paralysis,
- restores proportionality,
- makes intimidation inefficient,
- protects individuals from scapegoating,
- preserves long-term institutional legitimacy.

Institutions that apply it become less attractive targets over time.

8. Board Assurance Statement (Optional for Minutes)

The Board confirms that during the relevant period it applied its Panic-Resistant Governance framework, did not treat allegations as findings, and did not authorise irreversible action prior to process completion.

Bottom Line

This framework does **not** decide outcomes.

It preserves the institution's capacity to decide **at all**.