

Managing the membership of the board

Chair/vice chair election: model procedure and guidance

How to use this document

The guidance in this document covers

- [candidate eligibility and timing](#)
- [the election procedure](#)
- [virtual voting](#)
- [model procedure for the election of chair/vice chair](#)

It is suitable for:

- maintained school governing boards
- academy trust boards of trustees

In the case of academy trust board committees (local governing boards), chairs are usually appointed by the board of trustees; this arrangement should be outlined in the trust's scheme of delegation.

It provides guidance as to how to manage the election of a new chair and/or vice chair close to the time when this needs to happen.

However, it will have considerable additional impact if read further in advance than this as it does explore how succession can be planned to help ensure the right candidate and it may be that your board would benefit from some support from you in this area.

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Chair and vice chair election: candidate eligibility and election timing

	Maintained school	Academy trust
Who can stand for election as chair or vice chair?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All governors should be given equal chance to stand, with the exception of staff employed directly by the school (who cannot stand for election). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All trustees are eligible to stand for election, although this normally excludes those employed by the trust. Eligibility for trust employees is determined by the trust's articles of association - the DfE model articles state that trust employees cannot stand for election.
How often should chair and vice chair elections take place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is determined by the term of office set (the term of office should be decided before the election takes place). You are free to determine the term of office, but NGA recommends this shouldn't be much longer than one year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DfE model articles of association state that chair/vice chair elections should take place each school year, meaning a term of office of one year. However, each trust should check its own articles of association.
	<p>Where the term of office is set at one year, this doesn't mean that the chair/vice chair can't serve for longer than one year, simply that they will need to be re-nominated at the end of the year. This gives an opportunity to reflect on the office-holder's performance and gives the chair the opportunity to restate her/his willingness to continue or to stand down.</p>	
When should these elections happen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the position becomes vacant mid-term, an election should take place at the next full board meeting. Governing boards can decide when to carry out elections where the current chair/vice chair term is coming to an end - this could be at the first meeting of the academic year in which re-election is due, or in the preceding summer term. 	
How long should a chair serve for in total?	<p>NGA recommends that chairs do not serve for more than six consecutive years in one school or trust. This six-year period is recommended as a maximum, not as an optimum, and there may be good reasons not to re-nominate a chair within this period. There will also be times when continuity is seen as important, and the chair's term extends beyond six years; these occasions should be the exception. This could be the case when, for example, a new head has been appointed or if the school joins a MAT. These situations could present an opportunity for a fresh start or necessitate a period of stability with a known chair; this will entirely depend on the particular circumstances.</p>	

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1. The election procedure

- The procedure for electing a chair and vice chair are almost identical and both elections usually happen at the same time.
- The governing board can determine their own procedure for electing chair and vice chair. The procedure should detail the process for submitting nominations and for voting. A model procedure is included in this document and should be adapted as required. The model procedure provided indicates mandatory elements in bold.
- Those standing for election should be given the opportunity to submit a statement in support of their candidacy, but also to speak about their candidacy at the election meeting so that the other governors can make an informed decision.
- The normal quorum for voting applies - for maintained schools, half of the membership of the governing board (excluding vacancies, rounded up to a whole number) are needed. In academy trusts, it's usually three or one third (if greater) of the trustees in post, but each academy will need to check its own articles.
- We recommend that the clerk to the governing board arrange for voting to take place via secret ballot. Candidates should not be present when voting and discussion takes place.

2. Virtual voting

Where required, voting for chair or vice chair can normally be completed using the virtual meeting platform that the board has in place (eg Microsoft Teams or Zoom). Academy trusts should check that their articles of association do not prevent them from conducting a virtual election. In addition to the normal procedures that the board has in place, the following should be taken into account:

- Candidates must not be present when the rest of the governing board discuss or vote on the position they are standing for. In practice, the candidate could leave the virtual meeting and return once voting is complete (virtual waiting rooms or 'hold' functions are useful in this scenario).
- Where the governing board chooses to vote using a secret ballot, the clerk should ensure that governors vote during the meeting, with only one vote cast by each governor. Votes could be sent to the clerk by email.

3. Further reading

[Preparing your board for the future](#): a guide to succession planning

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Appendix

Model procedure for the election of chair / vice chair

Procedure adopted by [insert school / trust name] for the election of chair/vice chair

*Note: text in **bold** denotes a legal requirement*

1. **The governing board will elect a chair and vice chair** from its number when either the chair/vice chair's term of office has ended, or s/he has resigned the position.
2. *<Delete as appropriate>*
 - The governing board of xx school has decided that the term of office for chair and vice chair will be (x) year(s). The precise end date of the term of office will be determined before an election takes place.
 - The trust's articles of association state that the term of office for the chair and vice chair will be (x) year(s). The precise end date of the term of office will be determined before an election takes place.
3. The clerk to the governors shall give governors at least three weeks' notice prior to the meeting at which the election is due to take place and request written nominations. These should be submitted to the clerk at least one week before the election and circulated to the governing board with the papers for the election meeting. Candidates may submit up to 250 words in support of their nomination. Nominations on the day will only be accepted where no written nominations have been received prior to the meeting. Governors who are employed by the school **cannot stand for election**. Governors may self-nominate, but if you are nominating another governor, please seek their approval prior to submitting the nomination.
4. The clerk will act as chair during the election of the chair and **will ensure the meeting is quorate**. Each nominated governor will be invited to speak to the governing board setting out her/his reasons for standing. Candidates will be limited to three minutes. Candidates **must not be present** while a discussion and vote takes place. This will be the case even if there is a single nomination.
5. A vote by secret ballot will be held, even if there is only one nomination.
6. The clerk will count the votes and announce who has been elected as chair (the candidate who has received a majority of the votes). In the case of a single nomination, the candidate must still receive votes from the majority of the governing board in order to be elected chair. The successful candidate will be invited to take the chair and will oversee the election of the vice chair.
7. In the event of a tie, the nominees will speak again, and another vote will follow. If votes remain tied, the governing board must attempt to reach collective agreement. If agreement cannot be reached, the candidates will draw lots.

The governors may reject all nominees for chair if they choose. If no candidate has the support of the majority of the governing board, another candidate will be sought from the floor. If this candidate does not receive majority support, the vice chair will take on the role of acting chair until the next full governing board meeting, at which the election procedure will be repeated. Where a vice chair must also be elected, and the governing board has the quorum to do so, it will proceed with the election.