



## Co-chairing in practice

Governing boards may experience difficulties in persuading governors and trustees to stand for chair for a number of reasons. Perhaps individuals who have the necessary skills do not have the time to act solely as chair; maybe those who would like to stand for election are put off by their lack of experience or confidence.

In either case, adopting a co-chair arrangement where two individuals share the role may prove a pragmatic, useful and effective solution. This information sheet explores this approach and the practical arrangements that need to be considered.

## Electing or appointing co-chairs

In maintained schools, the procedure for electing co-chairs would be the same procedure set out in the regulations and best practice guidance such as NGA's [model procedure for electing a chair](#).

Trust boards determine how chairs are elected or appointed to academy committees and so it will be for the trust board to decide if co-chairing at local tier level is possible. Any arrangements should be detailed in the trust's supporting documentation, for example, the academy committee terms of reference, role description for chairs, and the process for electing or appointing chairs at local tier level.

Where electing co-chairs, it should be made clear that the two candidates are standing together as a joint candidate and that a vote will be for the two together not for each individual.

If one of the chairs resigns mid-term, a new election or appointment process should be organised as the previous vote will have been for the two individuals whose separate candidature may not have been supported.

## Agreeing co-chairing arrangements

In order for co-chairing to work, there needs to be a clear understanding of what is required from both co-chairs. As with any job-share, both parties need to decide how the work will be divided and ensure that that the division is fair. Co-chairs may wish to agree a simple document which addresses how they will work together, and with colleagues and stakeholders.

We recommend that chairs work together with stakeholders to discuss and agree the following:

Consideration	Details and recommendations
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How will co-chairs communicate with each other and with the governing board, headteacher and clerk?</li> <li>■ Keeping in touch meetings with the headteacher could be alternated.</li> <li>■ A rota may be helpful so that the headteacher and clerk know which co-chair is the first point of contact at any given time.</li> <li>■ Make sure the headteacher is happy with the arrangements and does not feel the need to repeat themselves.</li> </ul>
Meetings and other events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Decide who will chair which meeting (only one person should chair each meeting).</li> <li>■ How will the co-chairs share attendance at other events such as training sessions and networking events?</li> </ul>
Chair's actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This is only required in limited circumstances – will co-chairs attempt to make a joint decision in these cases?</li> <li>■ Either co-chair should be able to make the decision effectively if required.</li> </ul>
Working with the governing board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is the governing board willing to accept the authority of both co-chairs and ready to champion this arrangement with stakeholders?</li> <li>■ Take time to discuss the arrangements with the rest of the board and answer any questions.</li> </ul>
Joint responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Both co-chairs need to accept and stand by actions taken by the other co-chair.</li> <li>■ Consider how each co-chair will maintain general oversight of each other's contributions – both will be equally responsible for all of the chair's duties.</li> </ul>
Short or long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Is this a short-term solution or intended for the longer term?</li> <li>■ There is no reason why a job-sharing arrangement cannot work in the long-term. However, NGA recommends that chairs serve no longer than six years in any one school – this would include both co-chairs.</li> </ul>

## Reviewing the arrangement

We recommend an initial review of the co-chairing arrangement, perhaps after two terms. In order to conduct a robust evaluation of how the arrangement is working in practice, the review should include consultation with all parties and with the headteacher and the clerk in particular.

The arrangement can be curtailed or continued when the position of chair comes up for election or appointment – this usually happens annually. This process may be preceded by a more formal review of the arrangement and this should be considered by the governing board each year.

**Thank you for reading this information. If you have any feedback you'd like to share, please email [kcfeedback@nga.org.uk](mailto:kcfeedback@nga.org.uk).**

## Further reading

- [Chair's role description](#)
- [Model procedure for electing chairs and vice chairs](#)
- [Time management tips for chairs](#)
- [About the role of vice chair](#)

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