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# Guidance on co-chairing committees

## Introduction

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Co-chairing committees, subcommittees, and other groups can be an effective way of sharing a heavy workload and using the strengths and expertise of two people. The arrangement is obviously different to the usual one of having a single chair supported by a deputy chair with specific allocated responsibilities. As responsibilities are neither assigned in the standing orders nor delegated from a chair to a deputy. It is therefore important that it is clear to everyone involved how the co-chairing will work in practice.

### Positions eligible for co-chairing

The elected officer positions that may be shared are chair, deputy chair and chair of conference. Individual committee standing orders will set out which of these is allowed.

The references to co-chairs below also apply to deputy chairs and chair of conference.

### Number of co-chairs

There can be a maximum of two joint post-holders for each elected officer position.

### Nomination

Prospective co-chairs must stand together and be proposed jointly by a voting member of the committee (as required by standing orders). Individuals may not be proposed for one half of a co-chairing arrangement in the hope that they will find a co-chairing partner before the election.

The names and BMA membership numbers of both co-chair nominees should be submitted on the same nomination on the ONE (online nominations and elections system). If the nominee is unavailable, the person nominating must indicate in writing that they have authority to say that the candidate is prepared to stand, and that they are being jointly proposed for a co-chairing partnership. For sole chair or deputy chair nominees, only one proposer is required. A candidate standing as a co-chair with another member may not also stand for sole chair.

### Election

Joint candidates will have the same time limit between them to present their case to the electorate and same number of words in their candidate statement as a single candidate.

### Replacement or additional representatives on committees

Some committee standing orders say that a body entitled to appoint a representative to the committee can appoint an additional or replacement representative to be a member of the committee during any period for which a representative appointed by that body holds office as chair. For example, a region can appoint a replacement representative to the committee if the chair is a regional representative.



If the chair is elected to the committee by the representative body at the ARM, the replacement representative will be the person who polled the next highest number of votes at election.

There will be a replacement representative for each co-chair ie a co-chairing partnership will have two replacement representatives on the committee.

### **Voting**

Each co-chairing partnership has one vote ie both co-chairs have one vote between them. Their replacement representatives have one vote each.

In the event of a tie, the chair has an additional casting vote. Two co-chairs have one casting vote between them.

### **Division of duties**

It is essential that there are clear lines of communication between the co-chairs and the secretariat to ensure that the both co-chairs speak with one voice on committee and association matters.

Ideally, candidates for the position should consider working arrangements when agreeing to stand together. At the start of the term of office, both co-chairs must agree working arrangements including allocation of duties.

As a minimum, the following points should be agreed and clearly documented:

- both co-chairs have equal status
- decision-making and how that will be split appropriately to avoid delays in getting sign off from two people and whether both co-chairs will authorise or sign letters
- how co-chairs will communicate and update each other and plan next steps
- how information is shared with the secretariat
- arrangements for chairing meetings for example whether they will chair alternate meetings
- arrangements for attending other internal and external meetings (see paragraph below on attendance at meetings)
- if a co-chair attends a meeting alone, how and when they will provide a report of the meeting to the other co-chair
- how to manage situations where there is a difference of opinion, avoiding public disagreement and conflicting statements – it is a good idea to agree a resolution process with the committee officers and secretariat to manage differences (see paragraph below on managing conflict)

The role profile of the [committee chair](#) and [chairing a meeting](#) documents contain further guidance on the wider roles of the committee chair and co-chairs.

### **Attendance at meetings**

To manage committee costs, the meetings that the co-chairs attend together should be limited to meetings of the committee they are elected to as co-chairs, negotiating meetings and only meetings that both co-chairs are entitled to attend in their own right. As mentioned above they will have one vote between them.

Attendance at BMA internal meetings, as reps on other BMA committee meetings, external conferences and business meetings should be divided between the co-chairs according to their responsibilities. There may be occasions when there are benefits in having both co-chairs present such as meetings with ministers and other senior figures specifically about the committee's priorities. In all cases, pre-approval must be obtained from the committee's secretariat in line with the honoraria policy.

Generally, efforts should be made to ensure that a co-chair arrangement does not incur additional costs. It should not be more expensive than a standard chair and deputy arrangement.

### Managing conflict

If the co-chairs are unable to agree on a course of action having followed the agreed resolution process, they should, in the first instance seek the advice of the deputy or deputies. If this fails to resolve the situation, they should consult the committee's executive, and if that does not resolve the issue, they should consult the committee. The decision of the committee will be binding on both co-chairs. It is the responsibility of the officers and ultimately the committee, not the secretariat, to resolve any conflict but the secretariat will offer advice and facilitate discussions.

If any member of the committee is concerned that the situation is damaging to the business or reputation of the committee, they should report these concerns to the secretariat, who will consider and advise the member as appropriate. If the member is still concerned, they will be invited to raise the issue at the next committee meeting.

### Relationship breakdown

It is essential for the effective and efficient running of the committee that both co-chairs work together. If the working relationship between co-chairs breaks down or is perceived to have broken down, and the situation risks damaging the business or reputation of the committee, these concerns should be reported to the secretariat, who will consider and advise, involving chief officers as appropriate.

There are a few potential scenarios which can follow a breakdown in relationships, including:

- both co-chairs resign, and elections are set up for a new chair or co-chairs
- one co-chair resigns, leaving the remaining co-chair in post until the election of a new chair or co-chairs
- a vote of no confidence in the co-chairing partnership is called and, if successful, elections are set up for a new chair or co-chairs being elected

A final decision on the best course of action should be taken in collaboration with the committee secretariat and elected officers. This may require discussion with chief officers or directors.

In the event that committee and other meetings need to go ahead in the absence of a chair or co-chairs, consideration should be given as to who is best placed to chair. For example, a member of the executive team could take the chair, or a chief officer. For executive and other meetings if there is a need for neutrality and this is agreed by the committee, a member of the secretariat could be an option.

### Resignation

If one co-chair resigns before the end of the term of office, a new chair or co-chairs must be elected at the next ordinary meeting of the committee. An extraordinary meeting of the committee to elect a new chair or co-chairs may be called at the discretion of the remaining officers if there is a risk that waiting for the next ordinary meeting would prevent the committee from operating effectively.

The remaining co-chair will continue as sole chair until the election of a new chair or new co-chairs is held.

If the remaining co-chair wishes to continue in post as sole chair, they must be proposed and stand for election. If the remaining co-chair wishes to continue in post with a new partner, both potential co-chairs must be proposed and stand together for election.

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### British Medical Association

BMA House, Tavistock Square,  
London WC1H 9JP  
bma.org.uk