BMA

Inclusive virtual committee meetings: a guide for committee members

Why inclusion is important

Inclusion and fairness are at the heart of the work of the BMA. It helps us ensure that we are properly representative of the doctors we speak for and on whose behalf we negotiate. Inclusiveness has also been shown to help organisations make better decisions; therefore, we aim to ensure that we are fully accessible to all and remove barriers to participation in BMA activities for our members, staff and stakeholders.

This guidance aims to help members attending remote/virtual meetings to be as inclusive as possible, to ensure that the views and contributions of all are heard and respected.

Preparing for the meeting

As a member, you will be informed before the meeting which staff member is the first point of contact to support you and other attendees who need assistance in joining the virtual meeting. If you require any technical support in advance of the meeting, please contact the committee secretariat.

As an attendee of the meeting, where appropriate, you will be briefed if any adjustments will be made in the way that the meeting is conducted. For example, another participant may ask that speakers make introductions by saying their names before speaking. Be mindful that other committee members may process information in different ways and at different speeds, so be considerate and willing to adapt to alternative formats of presentation that might be helpful for them (eg where appropriate, having a recording of an update that could be listened to rather than read).

Camera
– Where you have video capabilities, please make sure that nothing is blocking the camera and avoid sitting with your back to a window (close blinds or curtains if necessary) or other light sources.
– Aim to use a well-lit space for video meetings and avoid backgrounds that are too 'busy' so that those with visual or auditory impairments may better understand them (eg through lipreading).
– If you are experiencing broadband delays, it may be helpful to turn off your camera. You should turn your camera off during long presentations or breaks, items in which you are not participating, and if there are broadband delays that cannot be resolved.

Sound
– Your device's microphone and speaker may be sufficient where there is minimal background noise; however, a headset is recommended to ensure a good audio experience for all participants. This is particularly important so that those with auditory impairments can hear you clearly.
– Please remember to mute your microphone when you are not speaking to avoid creating feedback and echoes.
– Whenever possible find a quiet, private location for the meeting to minimise disruption and background noise, and be mindful of noises such as the rustling of papers or typing close to the microphone(s). Remember to enable silence mode or switch off your phone.

Joining the meeting

At the BMA, we use **Microsoft Teams** for remote/virtual meetings.

To access the meeting virtually, open the calendar invite sent by the organiser and click 'Click here to join the meeting'. This link will take you straight to the meeting room. If you are joining the meeting by phone, dial the number shown under 'Or in call'. Enter the conference ID and speak your name when prompted. You should note that certain functions of Teams are disabled if you join the meeting by phone.

Please read the *Checklist for joining a meeting via VC/TC* (see Appendix 1) once it is confirmed that the meeting will be held remotely.

During the meeting

Breaks
— Depending on the length of the meeting, there will typically be a standard 15-minute break. If one or more breaks are scheduled during the meeting, please be aware of what time to expect the break and how long it will be.
— Please be considerate that others may turn off their camera and/or leave the meeting for personal reasons (eg conducting prayers or other religious observances, those who have health requirements, caring responsibilities, or who are feeding or expressing milk upon returning to work after maternity leave)

Breakout rooms
— To ensure a more productive conversation, be aware of what time the breakout rooms will close and you will return to the larger meeting.
— If assigned to a breakout group, be mindful of whether other attendees in your virtual breakout room have had a chance to contribute.

Presentation and questions
— Please ensure that your presentation questions or language are respectful of the speaker and overall do not cause offense.
— If you are sharing your screen or any text, use a font like Calibri that is clear to read, consistent in size, and displays a colour contrast of dark words against a light background.
— Please ensure that if you are sharing a presentation to create slides that are not too crowded with words. Describing the content of slides can also aid those with visual impairments.
— If you are sharing/using video clips, try to use captions or audio description to aid those with hearing impairments.
— Please aim to inform the committee secretariat in advance if you wish to present or share content with participants.
— If you were not able to view the presentation clearly through screen sharing on Microsoft Teams, do ask if the presentation can be made available to you.

Tools
— There are many third-party tools available online that committees may use to help make presentations interactive and encourage participant engagement. Mentimeter, PollEV and Slido are a few examples of tools that facilitate live polls and Q&A.
— Committee members and staff are encouraged to consider whether allowing anonymous questions or comments via tools such as Slido is appropriate
— If you are finding using such tools challenging, please make sure to discuss this with your committee secretariat for better guidance and support on utilisation or accessibility regarding these platforms.

Voting
During meetings, it is important to be mindful of whether other participants have had the chance to contribute prior to voting.

In meetings where voting takes place, a process for voting is to be agreed upon by the chair and relevant staff member/s in advance of the meeting. Please note that the below is an example of how a vote may be taken:

1. The process for voting (agreed prior to the meeting) will be shared with participants before voting commences.
2. Attendees may be asked to email their vote to a point or contact, or a show of hands will be counted by the relevant staff member and shared in the meeting during the count.
3. In a roll-call vote, each member will be asked for their vote and the vote will be recorded.
4. In a secret vote, members will be asked to email the dedicated staff member and the total number of votes will be shared.

General meeting etiquette and considerations

Housekeeping reminders
— All participants are encouraged to join a few minutes ahead of the start time to address any technical difficulties and ensure that any assistive technology is functioning.
— The chair will start by welcoming all attendees; then, depending on the size, duration of the meeting, and how familiar attendees are with each other, you may be asked to introduce yourself as the chair works through the list of members appended within the agenda, rather than calling on participants as displayed on their screen.
— The chair will explain how they will moderate questions or comments if you and other participants wish to speak. You can indicate this by typing RTS (Request to Speak) in the chat or clicking on 'Raise hand' within Teams.
— Please note that if participants have spoken on a number of occasions they may not be taken 'in turn' if there are other members that have not yet spoken who have requested to speak. Participants can also retract their request to speak if their point has already been raised.
— If you call into the meeting by phone and cannot request to speak, please e-mail the staff point of contact for the meeting who will help you speak or contribute to an agenda item.
— You are encouraged to use your webcam when speaking as it helps to make the meeting more inclusive for those who lip read, and also benefits the meeting chair and secretariat — however turning on your camera is optional. Your personal preferences are respected if you are not comfortable being on camera.
— Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking — this applies to all attendees including the chair and secretariat.

Technical difficulties
— Be sure to wait for participants to finish speaking before replying as there might be delays on audio and video feeds.
— You will be informed who the designated contact person for the meeting is in case you experience any technical difficulties.
— Please refrain from calling in to a meeting from a mobile phone while driving, as it is not safe and possibly illegal.

Accessibility needs and inclusive chairing
— Please be mindful that other attendees may have hidden and visible conditions and disabilities, and there may be participants who have neurodivergent forms of processing information. Advice and guidance on accommodating those with all forms of neurodiversity are provided by ACAS.
— If you are unsure how to pronounce an attendee's name, be sure to acknowledge that you may be mispronouncing the person's name and ask for the correct pronunciation before addressing the person.
— Be mindful of whether other members have had the opportunity to speak and engage in a dialogue before responding a second or third time. This allows the meeting to feel more inclusive as different perspectives can be voiced.
— Be aware that speaking excessively during a meeting can sometimes enable meetings to continue outside of allocated time/business hours, which can exclude those who cannot or choose not to attend beyond the allocated time.
— If the meeting is overrunning its allocated time, please let the chair know if you are still able to continue. If the meeting must end, please feel free to request the option of continuing discussions through another means (eg an email thread or listserver) or suggest if you wish to arrange a follow-up meeting.

Captions
— Microsoft Teams has a 'Live captions' function which detects spoken language and creates real-time captions for meeting participants who may have hearing impairments or for those whose first language may not be English. Read more about this function at this link.

Using inclusive language
— All language should be respectful, inclusive and solution-focused.
— If possible, please avoid using too many subject-specific acronyms or explain any acronyms you commonly used in discussion to avoid difficulty and help other attendees understand.
— Using gender-neutral language allows people of all genders to feel included, for example, using 'they' instead of 'he' or 'she'.
— When introducing yourself, please consider including your pronouns (eg 'My name is X and my pronouns are she/her'). For more information on pronouns and using gender-inclusive language, visit mypronouns.org.
— Please use consistency and sensitivity around attendees' pronouns and titles, and use attendees' preferred titles or forms of address, such as Ms, Dr, or Professor.

Feedback
— At the end of the meeting, you may be asked for feedback to improve the running of the meeting (eg 'What is your overall assessment of the meeting?' 1 = inadequate - 5 = excellent, 'Which topics or aspects of the meeting did you find most interesting or useful?'). These questions may be presented in a form or a Slido poll. Please respond to enhance the quality of meetings moving forward.

Meeting behaviour
It is the responsibility of BMA members to role model and promote positive behaviours, and to encourage a culture of inclusion and respect at the BMA. The BMA's behaviour principles set out how all BMA members should conduct themselves whenever they engage in BMA business or represent the BMA. They have been created by members for members with the purpose of providing a shared understanding of expectations for behaviour.

The behaviour principles are:
— Be professional
— Be accountable
— Be kind
— Be representative
— Respect others

Be professional   Be accountable   Be kind   Be representative   Respect others

During meetings, all members must behave in line with the BMA code of conduct and behaviour principles and observe the BMA's confidentiality policy.

The role of the chair includes challenging any inappropriate behaviour or language within a meeting, following up with attendees that demonstrate inappropriate behaviour and de-escalating when necessary. Please familiarise yourself with the BMA's behaviour principles to avoid such scenarios. For more information on these principles, please contact the corporate equality, diversity and inclusion team at corporate.edi@bma.org.uk.

Support from staff

If you require any support, please contact the BMA staff member responsible for the meeting or your committee secretariat so that any requirements are sent through well in advance of the meeting.

If you have any queries about this guidance, please contact the BMA corporate equality, diversity and inclusion team at corporate.edi@bma.org.uk.

BMA locations

National offices

BMA House
Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
Tel: 020 7387 4499

BMA Scotland
14 Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1LL
Tel: 0131 247 3000

BMA Wales
5th Floor, 2 Caspian Point, Caspian Way, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF10 4DQ
Tel: 029 2047 4646

BMA Northern Ireland
16 Cromac Place, Cromac Wood, Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 2JB
Tel: 028 9026 9666

Additional resources

Axtell P (2016), What Everyone Should Know About Running Virtual Meetings, *Harvard Business Review.*

Edmondson A and Daley G (2020), How to Foster Psychological Safety in Virtual Meetings, *Harvard Business Review.*

Ferrazzi K (2015), How to Run a Great Virtual Meeting, *Harvard Business Review.*

Frisch B and Greene C (2020), What It Takes to Run a Great Virtual Meeting, *Harvard Business Review.*

Hale J and Grenny J (2020), How to Get People to Actually Participate in Virtual Meetings, *Harvard Business Review.*

Molinsky A (2020), Virtual Meetings Don't Have to be a Bore, *Harvard Business Review.*

Appendix 1

Checklist for joining a meeting via VC/TC

1. Is your internet connection reliable? Connecting via a home or business network is recommended as public networks are often slower.

2. Have you got a device with webcam and headset?

3. Do you have the meeting link? It will look like this:

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app
Click here to join the meeting

Or call in (audio only)
+44 20 3787 4277,,894722089#   United Kingdom, London

Phone Conference ID: 894 722 089#
Find a local number | Reset PIN

BMA

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http://www.bma.org.uk

Learn More | Meeting options | Legal

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4. Are you in a private location?

5. Can you join the meeting 10 minutes early?

6. Have you confirmed which staff member will be responsible for remote joining and voting (if applicable)?

7. Are you clearly visible on video?

8. Do you know how to mute your microphone/speaker? Remember to turn this on at the beginning of the meeting and turn it off each time after you have spoken.

9. If you intend to share visuals, is your text at least 12-point font size or above, in Calibri or Arial?