

# chair and vice chair

## **introduction**

This sample role profile for a chair and vice chair is used by one general further education (FE) college to provide information to candidates interested in standing for election for either role. Very little reference is made in regulations to the role of the chair, therefore it is useful to define it in terms of the individual governing board and statutory responsibilities and good practice.

It may also be used as part of the board's self-assessment to review the performance of the chair or vice chair.

These are the factors that define the role.

## **standing orders and statutory framework**

The governing board is required to appoint a chair from among its number.

The principal and staff or student members are not eligible for appointment. The chair and vice chair will each be elected for a period of up to three years or until the end of their term as a governor, whichever is the shorter time. The chair and vice chair are eligible for re-election at the end of that period if they are still eligible as members.

The governing board must appoint a successor at any meeting, up to and including the last meeting before the expiry of the term of office, or following the resignation of the chair or vice chair. Appointment of the chair will usually be decided at the July governing board meeting and office starts from the beginning of the academic year. If more than one nomination is received for the office of chair or vice chair, an election will take place at the meeting.

If both the chair and vice chair are absent from any meeting of the governing board, members present will choose one of their number to act as chair for that meeting. The member chosen will not be the principal or a staff or student member.

The chair or vice chair may, at any time, resign by notice in writing to the clerk.

If at any time the governing board is satisfied that the chair or vice chair is unable or unfit to discharge their function, the governing board may remove him or her from office by giving notice in writing and the office will be then become vacant.

Before the chair or vice chair can be removed, a resolution shall be put to the governing board by a member not personally involved, and the chair or vice chair concerned should have the opportunity to reply in writing or in person at a meeting of the governing board. The resolution will be passed on a simple majority vote of the members present.

The chair of the governing board may not be a member of the audit committee.

### **role specification - chair**

The governing board fulfils its duty as a collective decision-making body based on majority decisions by those present at meetings. The chair's main function is to provide leadership to the governing board in carrying out its responsibilities.

The relationship between the principal and the chair is very important in order to ensure that the chair is kept informed about the college between meetings and that the views of the governing board are represented to the principal so that business can progress.

The chair's relationship with the clerk is also important to facilitate the smooth and efficient operation of the governing board's business and to support governing board members' development needs.

The main duties of the chair include:

- chairing governing board and relevant committee and other meetings
- calling special or additional meetings where necessary
- exercising a casting vote at meetings
- ensuring the governing board's focus on major strategic issues
- making sure that there is a supportive working relationship between governors and managers through continuous dialogue with the principal
- maintaining awareness of the distinction between governance and management
- appraisal of the principal
- appraisal of the clerk and maintaining a three-way dialogue with the clerk and principal
- ensuring regular self appraisal of the governing board's performance
- fostering effective governance through leadership and good practice
- developing the governing board as a team, encouraging representation of a variety of skills
- acting as a spokesperson and ambassador for the college
- checking that actions are followed up between meetings and acting on behalf of the governing board between meetings where prior approval of the governing board has been given, including the signing and sealing of relevant college documents - any chair's action should normally be agreed in advance and must be reported to the next meeting
- leading on arrangements for selecting a new principal, and ability to suspend from duty, or refer to a special committee for dismissal, a designated senior post holder.

The personal characteristics of an effective chair include:

- integrity
- ability to influence without domination
- decisiveness with an insistence on getting things done
- capacity for understanding, thinking and reasoning
- authoritative - but being engaging and respectful at the same time
- capacity to engage others in debate
- capacity to challenge
- ability to 'steer' not 'row' and to recognise the difference
- ability to take a financial overview.

### **role specification - vice chair**

The role of the vice chair is to support the chair and act in the chair's absence. This means more than stepping in to chair occasional meetings, but to maintain a strategic overview and be prepared to lead with authority on key issues when the chair is not present.

The same personal qualities that make an effective chair, make a good vice chair.

### **committee chairs**

Each committee will appoint its own chair whose term of office will be reviewed with committee membership. Where a committee has external co-opted members, the chair will normally be a member of the governing board. A committee may also appoint a vice chair.

The role of the committee chair is vital to the effective governance of the college, which operates through a framework of advisory committees. The committee chairs work with the relevant member of the executive team and the clerk and, as well as steering their committee, serve as a link between the committees and full governing board. In addition, committee chairs are an important source of support for the chair and principal, and of advice and development for all governors - particularly for new members.