

STEERING GROUP CHAIR

ROLE DESCRIPTION



PURPOSE OF THE ROLE OF A STEERING GROUP CHAIR

- To represent the challenges of being an author within a specific interest group or nation group of the SoA.
- To direct and contribute to strategic decision-making and planning group activities of the steering group.
- To develop meeting agendas for the Steering Group in collaboration with the Staff Coordinator and in line with the strategy decided upon by the Group members.
- To effectively chair meetings and allow all Steering Group members to have a voice in meetings.
- To represent the plans of the Steering Group to the Board and other meetings as appropriate. The Chair may nominate a representative or representatives from within the Steering Group to perform these duties.
- Members of the Steering Group should be Full members of the Society of Authors.

At times, this role may be shared between two members acting as **Co-Chairs**. Ideally, they would be elected as a pair and be comfortable working with each other collaboratively. The Co-Chair option can work well if the Committee and each co-chair agree to the arrangement. Where Co-Chairing is considered by necessity (through illness or persistent unavailability) please discuss the options with your Staff Co-ordinator.

TERM OF APPOINTMENT

Steering Group members are elected into post by members in the appropriate special interest group or nation group. Although the exact term is defined by the groups' own Terms of Reference (or equivalent), the suggested terms are for two years, with the option to renew twice for a further two-year term by agreement with the rest of the Committee. After a two-year gap in service, Committee members can be re-elected to serve another two-year term, with potential for re-election twice more. Therefore, in a period of 14 years, it would be possible for a member to serve on the Committee/Steering group for a maximum of 12 years.

Committee/Steering group members will take part in an induction programme at the start of their term.

Although the Committee members are not Directors of the Company, they may attend Management Committee (board) meeting as a non-voting nominated representative of their committee, and in doing so will be bound by the Management Committee [Code of Conduct](#).

DUTIES OF THE ROLE

- To attend Steering Group meetings which occur at regular intervals as defined by the Group. For the frequency of meetings, please refer to the Terms of Reference (or equivalent document) as agreed by the relevant Steering Group/Network/Nation Group.
- To draw up meeting agendas with the support of the Staff Coordinator.
- To chair steering group meetings fairly and effectively.
- To attend an annual training session/refresher course.
- To represent the Steering Group at Management Committee level through contributions to discussions. This post is a non-voting position, but the Chair will be subject to the Board Confidentiality Agreement and Code of Conduct. A representative can be nominated to attend Management Committee meeting if appropriate.
- Steering Group Chairs should encourage other members of the group to contribute ideas towards shaping the strategy of the group for the next twelve months, and support those who would be prepared to take ownership of one or more of those strategic areas, such as EDI, or representing the group at Board Sub-Committee meetings, or attending a local chapter as a representative of their Group.
- In addition to attending Steering Group meetings, Steering Group Chairs are encouraged to attend networking and local group meetings to connect with members. Attendance at meetings with members may provide a helpful means to connect with members and gather informal feedback to help keep Steering Groups connected with members' concerns. This activity can be shared with the Staff Coordinator, other Steering Group members and, when appropriate, with the Management Committee (board) and the Chief Executive.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Steering Group Chair's point of contact within SoA shall be with their Staff Coordinator. If there is an issue with the Staff Coordinator, the Steering Group member can approach the staff members' line manager (if known), Head of Membership and Author Communities, the Chief Operating Officer or the Chief Executive Officer, as appropriate.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Steering Group Chairs may not communicate any confidential information known to them by reason of their position that has not been made public, except with the permission of the Head of Communications, or the Chief Executive Officer. More information about this can be found [here](#).

EXPENSES

The role of Steering Group Chair is a voluntary role and is not remunerated. Out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed in line with the [SoA Expenses Policy](#).

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Steering Group Chairs are elected from within the Steering Group, who are themselves elected from within the relevant section of the Membership.

VALUES

- To represent all members within a specific interest group or nation group from every background and career stage.
- To uphold the highest ethical standards of integrity and probity. See: the Book and Publishing Industry Professional Values (add link) and the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](#).
- To listen sensitively to the views of others.
- To gain the trust and respect of members, Management Committee and staff.
- To seek best practice wherever possible.

ESSENTIAL

- Excellent communication skills: a talent for communicating clearly and with the confidence to speak in front of groups of all sizes.
- An approachable personality with the desire to meet with members from a range of different communities, backgrounds and career stages.
- Capacity to attend Steering Group meetings, group events, meetings, etc. as appropriate – in-person or remotely – throughout the UK.
- Good understanding of the issues faced by authors within a specific interest group or nation.

DESIRABLE

- Experience of handling sensitive, complex or confidential issues with integrity.

WORKING WITH THE GROUP

We would anticipate the Chair or Co-Chairs of the Committee to have closer links with staff co-ordinators, especially when setting dates for the next meeting and

drawing up the agenda. If the staff co-ordinator is writing up the minutes, or action points, it may be circulated in draft form to the Chair of the committee prior to being circulated with the whole committee. However, any work expected of the staff co-ordinator(s) should be dictated by the action points coming out of the committee/steering group meeting. This is important as any action points should be agreed by the majority of the committee as representatives of the whole group, rather than at the will of one committee member – whether chair or not.

IF THINGS GO WRONG

Queries with your staff co-ordinator: you can view our Complaints procedure [here](#). Any informal issues or queries can be raised with the staff co-ordinator's line manager. If you are uncertain about who this is, please contact the Head of Membership and Author Communities in the first instance, or the Chief Operating Officer.

Queries with other committee/steering group members or Chair: the best route is to raise issues during a committee/steering group meeting as this will be minuted. It is worth re-reading our [Dignity and Respect policy](#) to effectively challenge any unacceptable behaviour.

You might also find [these notes](#) helpful regarding the conduct of those in public office. Although Committee members are not in “public” office, they are elected from within the membership of the Society of Authors and this is a good base level of acceptable standards of behaviour.