

Guide to being a Branch Chair

1. Role of a branch chair

All RSB branch committees must consist of the following:

- a) the honorary officers: chair, vice-chair (optional), secretary and treasurer, nominated from the individual voting members of the branch
- b) up to 12 ordinary members, nominated from all grades of membership of the branch
- c) up to three additional members of the branch, co-opted by the committee

The main roles of the branch chair are to:

- Lead and motivate branch committee to create a programme of public and member events
- Help develop and drive forward new event ideas
- Consider ways in which the branch can reach new audiences and raise its profile in the area
- Consider ways in which the branch could become more sustainable, for example through additional recruitment or fundraising
- Involve new people/organisations/partners within branch initiatives
- Delegate tasks/roles/responsibilities appropriately amongst the committee
- Chair committee meetings and the AGM; lead the informal annual review of branch committee roles
- Represent the branch within the RSB and externally

2. Tips to chair a meeting

The chair should ensure a discussion at meetings flows by involving all members present and ensuring no one dominates discussion. Summarising during meetings can help by:

- Indicating progress
- Refocus discussion
- Conclude one point and lead on to the next
- Highlight important points
- Assist the secretary
- Ensure the meeting is running to time

At the end of the meeting the chair should review what has been discussed, including action points and look to set the date of the next meeting. Using websites like doodle (https://doodle.com/en_GB) are useful for coordinating meetings dates.

3. Finances

The branch treasurer will manage finances but the chair will need to authorise any expenditure incurred by the treasurer.

4. Outside of the meeting

A chair may need to do the following:

- Provide leadership and direction to the committee
- Ensure the work of the committee is consistent with its agreed remit
- Ensure committee are fulfilling actions points and responsibility in properly allocated
- Consult with other committee members and provide advice and support
- Ensure that decisions reflect the collective view of the committee
- Support, on completion of term of office, an incoming chair
- Report chair's actions at the next committee meeting

5. Support for the branch chair

First point of contact for any queries are the events officers, who you can contact at regions@rsb.org.uk

The branches are also supported through the Royal Society of Biology Council, who act as the Trustees of the Society and consist of three Honorary Officers: President, Secretary and Treasurer. Four members are elected from the College of Individual Members and four are elected from the College of Organisational Members. Another four members can be appointed by Council to ensure coverage of the breadth of the life sciences based on skills gap amongst Council.

The chair of the College of Individual Members, Nigel Brown CBIol FRSB, supports the regional branches and chairs the Branches Working Group.

6. Testimonial of a branch chair



I joined the RSB committee because I love being able to explain my research to people and I thought it would be a great opportunity to organise some events in my field. I intended to put myself forwards as a committee member to engage with younger people and universities but I was elected as chair because of my previous experience establishing a biology society at my undergraduate university.

The opportunities from my involvement with the RSB have been great, from grants (successful grant applications are an excellent addition to an academic CV- the money helps too!) to getting all sorts of experience in the wider field of biology by attending events that I never would have had access to, without the society.

My role as chair involves: supporting other committee members, ensuring the branch is hitting its targets, being present as a face of the branch, preparing and delivering a yearly speech at the AGM and planning events. One thing I really love about the role is hearing about events that people would love to attend and then making it a reality for them. I like to try and plan events that are a bit new, a bit different from lectures, to get a wider range of people coming to the events and engaging with the RSB. Overall, it's a great way to meet people, get more involved with the RSB and give something back to biology.

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