

General Secretary of the Microbiology Society

Role Description

Key facts:

Background and time commitment: Our governance structure is made up of several different groups, each of which has a specific remit within the broader Society strategy. The General Secretary is one of three Executive Officers (with the President and Treasurer) and a key member of the Trustee Board and Advisory Council. The Trustee Board meets for formal meetings four times a year, two in person usually at the Microbiology Society offices in London, and two remote.

The overriding role of the Executive Officers (President, Treasurer and General Secretary) is to work together to monitor the affairs of the Microbiology Society so as to support the Trustee Board in deliberations and decision-making.

The General Secretary is specifically responsible for chairing several [panels](#) which consider and make recommendations for Prize Lecture or Honorary Membership awards or governance appointments to the Advisory Council or Board of Trustees for decision or ratification. The General Secretary is also a member of the [Finance Committee](#) which meets four times each year, usually one week before the Advisory Council meetings, with some in person and some online meetings.

Formal papers for all meetings are circulated one week before each meeting and members are expected to read the papers and come prepared to participate in discussion where relevant. There will be other ad hoc business that takes place between meetings and other interactions with staff. In total, the time commitment is between 25 - 30 days per year, including meetings.

Remuneration: The role of the General Secretary is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although reasonable expenses for travel may be claimed.

Term and process: The General Secretary is appointed by the Advisory Council following a shortlisting process from the Appointments Panel.

What is the Trustee Board?

The Microbiology Society is a Company Limited by Guarantee and a Registered Charity. It is governed by a Board of Trustees who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006. The Board of Trustees operates in compliance with the Society's Articles of Association and Charity Commission guidance on good governance. The Board is comprised of the Society's three Executive Officers (President, General Secretary and Treasurer) and three elected members, plus up to three external experts. The role of the Board is to govern the organisation provide the strategic direction of the Society and ensure its long-term financial sustainability.

What is the Advisory Council?

Working with the Society's staff, the Advisory Council is responsible for delivering active engagement and insights on behalf of the microbiology community. The Advisory Council reports to the Board of Trustees who bear the legal responsibilities of Trustees of the Charity and Directors of the Company. The governing document for the Advisory Council is the Society's Bye-Laws. The Advisory Council of the Society consists of up to 20 members. Of these, seven representatives are elected by the membership of the Society, two are elected by the Early Career Forum, eight are appointed as co-Chairs of our Committees, and three are appointed as Executive Officers: the President, General Secretary and Treasurer, who also sit on the Society's Board of Trustees.

Executive Officers

The overriding role of the Executive Officers (President, Treasurer and General Secretary) is to work together to monitor the affairs of the Microbiology Society so as to support the Trustee Board in deliberations and decision-making.

The Executive Officers maintain close and regular contact with the Chief Executive. This approach allows the Chief Executive to oversee general operational and management affairs between Trustee Board meetings. The Executive Officers, in turn, maintain close and regular contact with other members of the Trustee Board and Advisory Council to keep them abreast of issues as and when appropriate.

The Executive Officers maintain an oversight of the roles of the relevant Advisory Council co-Chairs and senior staff members so as to ensure effective and appropriate communication with the Society.

1. Trustee duties

1.1 Statutory duties

Trustees and Directors of the Company are collectively responsible for:

- setting and overseeing delivery of the Society strategy in furtherance of our aims, vision and mission and in the best interest of our members,
- ensuring compliance with the Articles of Association, Charity and Company Law and governance best practice to effectively deploy their duties, and
- ensuring the Society's resources are managed responsibly and ensuring the financial sustainability of the Society.

1.2 Generic duties

- To provide leadership to the Trustee Board and the Society as a whole. This includes working with the rest of the Trustee Board on the development of strategy and the delivery of Trustee Board policy, including working with partners.
- To attend Trustee Board and Advisory Council meetings plus the Annual General Meeting.
- To attend meetings of relevant committees plus any working parties or task forces, as determined by the Trustee Board.
- To represent the Society at other events or functions (e.g. dinners and receptions), as determined by the Trustee Board.
- To contribute to Society publications and other communications activities.
- To sit on search committees for senior staff appointments and members of the Trustee Board or Advisory Council.
- To liaise with relevant staff, particularly in relation to strategy, planning and implementation activities.
- To liaise with external bodies, stakeholders and partners of the Society.

1.3 Specific duties as General Secretary

- To Chair the Appointments Panel which considers nominations for those positions which are directly appointed by Advisory Council
 - To Chair the Applications Review Panel which reviews applications for elected positions
 - To Chair the Prizes Panel, reporting back to Advisory Council with nominations for winners
 - Collate and present nominations for new Honorary Members and convene the Honorary Membership Review Panel if required
 - If required, convene and Chair the Professional Standards Panel
 - Be an ally for matters relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across Society activities
 - Serve as a panel member for certain Society grant schemes, as required
 - Point of contact for the Chief Executive, along with the other Executive Officers, with regard to staff matters, including HR issues such as grievances, disciplinary issues etc.
-

- Overall responsibilities for co-ordinating and delegating international interactions: when requested by the Chief Executive liaison with the Society's representative on FEMS Council, liaison with IUMS officers, alerting Advisory Council and the Trustee Board to any relevant issues/required actions
- Serve as a member of the Finance Committee.

2. Attributes for the role of General Secretary

Essential attributes

1. Understanding of the range of different needs and challenges affecting members and the microbiology community.
2. An ability to process a range of information, participate in discussion and a willingness to constructively challenge where necessary.
3. A willingness and ability to devote the necessary time commitment and to respond to tight deadlines where necessary.
4. Experience of participating in Committee or equivalent leadership meetings, this may be through membership of a Microbiology Society Committee or other similar body within an alternative organisation.
5. Demonstrable commitment to the Microbiology Society activities, this may be through a number of years membership and/or involvement in other Society activities.
6. Willingness to act in the overall best interest of the Society, without conflict of interest and conflict of loyalty.
7. Ability to communicate with tact and diplomacy and foster a welcoming and collaborative environment.
8. A good committee Chair

Desirable attributes

1. An interest in policy and membership engagement activities

3. Additional comments

The panels that the General Secretary chairs can often have challenging remits (e.g., recruitment of a President or appointments). The incumbent therefore needs a degree of sensitivity and diplomacy in handling awkward issues and in interacting with people having widely differing opinions.

The time commitment and responsibilities are not inconsiderable. Therefore, the General Secretary would need self-motivation, enthusiasm and commitment to meet the needs of the role.
