

Members Panel

1. Terms of Reference

Purpose: Feeding into the General Secretary's Group, which is the formal mechanism by which a single coherent report on EDI issues is presented to Council, the Members Panel is responsible for providing input to Society activities which focus on membership engagement and inclusion in support of the Society's three main strategic objectives:

- 1. Through a better understanding of the diversity of our members, we will enable them to strengthen their existing relationships and gain access to new communities, unlocking the potential for international collaboration and global knowledge exchange.*
- 2. By harnessing local knowledge for worldwide impact, we will advance understanding of microbiology and champion the contribution made by microbiology, our members and their work in addressing global challenges.*
- 3. By recognising global differences in accessing opportunities at the Microbiology Society, we will build on existing strong financial and governance foundations to reinforce long-term sustainability and resilience through diversifying income streams, increasing efficiency and ensuring robust mechanisms for decision-making, monitoring and evaluation.*

The Panel will provide advice and expertise to Council, via the General Secretary's Group, regarding the engagement and inclusion of all members, including all historically marginalised groups. In addition to formally meeting virtually and/or in-person, the Panel will work over email to provide advice. To facilitate active feedback on activities and issues to improve EDI across Society activities, a Members Panel representative will attend each meeting of the four activity Committees of the Society; Building Communities Committee, Impact and Influence Committee, Sustainability Committee and the Early Career Microbiologists Forum Executive Committee and feedback to the Members Panel as appropriate.

The Society is committed to creating an inclusive culture that supports equality and diversity and fully reflects both its membership and the global microbiology community across all protected characteristics. The Society seeks to actively encourage all practices that reflect a diverse society.

By participating in Panel meetings, all Panel members agree to respect other members' opinions and give all present a chance to contribute. The Chair is responsible for running the meeting, please support them to keep to time. Certain topics discussed will be confidential, therefore Panel members are asked to be mindful not to repeat such information outside of the meeting.

2. Duties

The Members Panel will advise and support the implementation of the following:

1. Fair and transparent processes in line with the Society's policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

- Proactive support for engagement of the full breadth of members at the Society through consultation on the development of activities and wider promotion of Society benefits, with the aim to develop, expand and strengthen the networks available to our members so that they can generate new knowledge about microbes and ensure that it is shared with other communities.
- Review of the Society's annual equality, diversity and inclusion data, to include identifying areas of concern and making recommendations for improvement.
- The proper reporting of relevant advice and recommendations to the General Secretary's Group and holding the Society to account on progress on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

3. Meeting schedule

The group will meet virtually or in-person at least twice a year to facilitate discussion however will primarily function on an *ad hoc* basis over email. Members may also attend a meeting of one of the activity Committees of the Society as representatives. It is expected that Panel members should not be required for more than one activity (email or meeting) per month, although some points in the year may be busier than others.

Between May and the end of June, the General Secretary will Chair a meeting of the General Secretary's Group, which consists of the two co-Chairs from each of the Committees. Members of the General Secretary's Group will be required to report back on their respective Committees, feed into budget proposals and produce a single Equality Diversity and Inclusion report for consideration at the July meeting of Council. The Members Panel co-Chairs will sit on the General Secretary's Group and the Member Panel will contribute to this process by bringing the perspective of a diverse range of members to the table.

Panel members will also be circulated relevant opportunities to represent the Society at networking events and conferences in order to support their Panel work and personal professional development.

4. Membership

The membership requires a balanced portfolio of skills, knowledge and personal backgrounds to be able to fully support and engage with the remit of the Panel. The Panel comprises of:

- Two co- Chairs, who will attend two meetings per year of the General Secretary's Group and be invited to attend Council as appropriate.
- up to 15 participants from different personal backgrounds, scientific expertise and work experience. Membership is actively sought from members from underrepresented groups.
- Ad hoc advisors can be requested to attend certain meetings to address specific knowledge requirements or assist in certain projects.

Unless otherwise stated, the term of office for all positions is three years. If a current member of the Panel is nominated as Chair-Elect, their term will extend accordingly.

Quorum:

One Chair and seven members of the Panel must be present at any of its meetings to make the proceedings of that meeting valid.

The Panel is supported by the Member Engagement and Communities Manager and the Chief Programmes and Partnerships Officer.

Other members of staff attend virtual meetings as appropriate.

5. Role of co-Chairs

The role of the co-Chairs is as follows:

- Organise two meetings of the Members Panel per year.
- Attend two meetings of the General Secretary's Group per year and attend Council when invited, as appropriate, to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion matters continue to be appropriately considered at the highest level of Society governance.
- Represent the Members Panel to the Society and act as liaison between Council, Society staff and the wider membership.
- Ensure the effective functioning of the Members Panel and seek replacement of inactive or non-productive members if required.

Members Panel co-Chairs will be:

- A member from a historically marginalised group, with an understanding of the range of different needs and challenges affecting members and the microbiology community.
- Enthusiastic about inclusion, with the willingness and ability to devote the necessary time commitment to the Panel.
- Keen to share ideas for helping the Society to be welcoming to anyone interested in microbes, their effects and their uses.
- An excellent facilitator with the ability to bring people along with them and effect change.

Time commitment: The Members Panel meets for formal meetings twice a year – once in person and once online. In person meetings usually take place at the Microbiology Society offices in London. Formal papers are circulated to all Panel members one week before each meeting and Panel members are expected to read the papers and come prepared to participate in discussion where relevant. There may be other ad hoc business that takes place between meetings. In total, the time commitment for co-Chairs is approximately 15 days per year, including meetings.