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# COVID-19:

# Example virtual meeting protocol

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| National Governance Association The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and clerks of state schools in England.  We are an independent, not-for-profit charity that aims to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning.  We represent the views of governors, trustees and clerks at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies. |

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## How to use a virtual meeting protocol

Governing boards should have approved their arrangements for participating and voting in virtual meetings using the provision within maintained school governance [procedures regulations](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1624/regulation/8/made), academy articles of association and academy committee terms of reference.

A simple protocol or set of ground rules (agreed by the board and documented by the clerk/governance professional) should be in place to cover virtual meeting practices. The protocol could acknowledge existing policies relating to data protection, appropriate use of ICT and maintaining confidentiality etc.

The below example protocol is also provided as an appendix to [NGA guidance on COVID-19: continuity and recovery.](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Covid-19/Ensuring-continuity-and-building-recovery-plans.aspx)

## Example virtual meeting protocol:

**When using alternative (virtual) arrangements to hold meetings:**

Where the governing board decides that a meeting should take place using alternative arrangements (e.g. by telephone or video conference) that have been previously agreed then following will apply:

* the usual (statutory) notice and arrangements for issuing papers except where the chair has exercised their right to waive the usual notice;
* all participants to receive clear instructions regarding how to access the meeting including where they can access support if they experience difficulty;
* all participants will note and follow any instructions given on how to manage their participation at the meeting. For example, confirming attendance, speaking through the chair of the meeting, voting on matters etc;
* the governing board will abide by their normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board and give regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality;
* governors/trustees will contribute towards a safe and secure environment for the meeting by giving due regard to the school’s policies relating to data protection and the appropriate use of ICT, and
* the minutes of the meeting will be taken by the clerk to the governing board and the meeting should not be recorded by any governor/trustee or the clerk without the approval of the governing board and for a specified purpose.

**When using alternative (virtual) arrangements to participate and vote in meetings**

Where the governing board has approved and has in place alternative arrangements for governors/trustees to participate and vote in meetings (e.g. by telephone or video conference) and a governor/trustee wishes to use these alternative arrangements they should:

* restrict themselves to using the arrangements agreed by the governing board;
* inform the clerk to the governing board that this is their intention as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours before the meeting is due to take place (subject to the meeting being convened giving the normal notice period);
* communicate and co-operate with the clerk to the governing board, school or trust as necessary to ensure that the alternative arrangements can be put in place and work well for all concerned, and
* abide by the normal rules, procedures and code of conduct adopted by the governing board and give regard to the duty to maintain confidentiality.