School board
Web meetings

This factsheet provides information and advice about how school boards can effectively and efficiently carry out their roles and responsibilities through web meetings. Many boards may have already been conducting web meetings, and for them, this factsheet may provide some additional guidance or considerations.

# taking part

The *Education Act 2004* supports school boards to operate and meet in a location and manner that the board considers appropriate. This includes ‘alternative’ means of meeting, communicating and making decisions, such as via the web.[[1]](#footnote-1)

When participating in web meetings, there are a few useful considerations:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Approach web meetings with the same professionalism as face-to-face meetings.
* Stick to the agenda, and prioritise essential matters (remember everyone’s time is valuable).
* Before the meeting begins:
	+ Choose a quiet and private location to attend your meeting from;
	+ Charge or plugin your device; and
	+ Test your equipment.
* Say your name each time before speaking: eg “This is Barbara …”
* Speak up and speak clearly.
* Focus on the meeting, no ‘multitasking’.

### Voting during meetings

Voting on a motion during a virtual meeting can be done by each person stating their vote, or via a chat function. The chair is to tally the votes.

### Quorum

A meeting can only carry out business if a quorum is present.[[3]](#footnote-3) For most boards this is at least three members, with at least one of those being a staff member and one of those being a parent member. A person is present at a school board meeting if they are participating in real time via the web, telephone or in person.

### Technical and Visual tips for web meetings[[4]](#footnote-4)

* Login early.
* Put the call on mute when you are not speaking.
* Put your device on a steady level surface.
* Put your camera at eye level, and sit 30cm – 60cm away – be aware that this is closer than you would normally sit in a meeting, so expressions and gestures will be more obvious.
* Check what can be seen in view of the camera.
* Sit with a wall/plain background behind you (you may decide to apply background effects).
* Avoid reflective backgrounds such as windows, glass, TVs or mirrors.
* Have good lighting.
* At the end of the meeting: Hang up or disconnect completely.

# Organising Web meetings

Meetings conducted via the web should be conducted using Google Meets or Microsoft Teams. These platforms are supported by ACT Government. Use of Zoom is not recommended due to a number of security weaknesses in the Zoom application.

### Hosting

The meeting should be hosted by the chairperson. However, the principal or business manager could host the meeting if the chairperson does not have access to outlook with either Google Meets or Microsoft Teams. The chairperson will then chair the meeting once people have logged in.

### Google Meets

***Process:***

1. The host should create a meeting through their Outlook calendar.
2. In the meeting window, use the Hangouts Meet button at the top right hand side to add the Google Meets link to the outlook calendar invitation.
3. At the time of the meeting the attendees will open the meeting in their calendar and click on the Google Meets link.
4. As many board members are likely to be external users (outside the edu domain), they will need to be admitted by the host. A pop up window will display to the host with the message ‘Someone wants to join this meeting’ and the person’s name. The host then selects ‘admit’ or ‘deny entry’.

### Microsoft Teams (MST)

***Process:***

1. The host should create a Microsoft Team (MST) meeting using their Outlook calendar and send this to all attendees via email. This can be sent to anyone with a valid email address.
2. At the time of the meeting, the attendees will enter the meeting via the appointment in their calendar, clicking on the link embedded in the invite.
3. If you don’t have a Teams account you, then you will have the option to enter your name to join the meeting as a guest and go into the lobby where the host of the meeting can admit you.
4. Participants can apply a ‘background effect’, if they choose to, before entering a meeting.

Note: You can use many of the MST functions through your browser, without having to download the application on your desktop or device.

A Basics Guideline for MST can be found [here](https://actedu.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-Education/COVID-19/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FIntranet%2DEducation%2FCOVID%2D19%2FShared%20Documents%2FMS%20Teams%20User%20Guide%20%5FBasics%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FIntranet%2DEducation%2FCOVID%2D19%2FShared%20Documents).

# Access to documents

Board members participating via the web will need to continue to access and maintain relevant board papers and documents including:

* Agendas and minutes
* Financial statements
* Policies
* School documents and strategic plans including the Annual Action Plan, Impact Report, and Strategic Risk Register

These will need to be sent to board members to access at home for the purpose of fulfilling their duties. Board members need to keep these documents secure and only access them for the purpose of board activities. If board members are asked to return certain documents, they should delete the documents and send written confirmation that they have to the chairperson and the principal.

### Signatures

For **documents that need to be signed** it is appropriate for the person signing to type their name into the relevant signature location and type the date into the date spot. The person should attach the document to a cover email with a relevant explanation, such as: ‘I have typed my name into the attached [name of document] as my signature as [position] of the [school] school board on the [name of document] for [the relevant time period]’.

# election of Chairpersons and deputy Chairpersons

Boards may need to **elect board chairpersons and deputy chairpersons** during web meetings if that has not already occurred during a face-to-face meeting. There is general guidance on this process in the [*School Boards Handbook – Operations*](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/get-involved-in-your-childs-school/school_boards), page 9 and the flowchart for ‘[Election of board chairperson and deputy chairperson](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1224891/00005_3.10-Election-of-Chairperson-and-Deputy-Chairperson-Flowchart.PDF)’.

In an ideal world electing these positions would be via secret ballot, but a secret ballot is not a legal requirement. As such, if there is more than one nomination for chairperson or deputy chairperson, and a vote is required during a web meeting, then voting members are to vote via the chat function or stating their vote in turn on the call, and the results tallied.

# More information

Related information is also included in the [School Board Handbook - Operations](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/get-involved-in-your-childs-school/school_boards). For more information or assistance, please contact Governance and Community Liaison Branch of the Education Directorate on 6207 6846 or by email EDUSchoolboards@act.gov.au.

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1. For more information about the conduct of meetings [see *School Board Handbook – Operations*](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/get-involved-in-your-childs-school/school_boards), pages 16-19; Method of meeting in [*Education Act 2004*](https://legislation.act.gov.au/a/2004-17/), sections [47](http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/act/consol_act/ea2004104/s47.html) and [48](http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/act/consol_act/ea2004104/s48.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. South Carolina School Boards Association (2020) ‘Remote Meetings: Tips for school board members to look and sound their best online’ (Online) <<https://www.facebook.com/SCSBA/photos/a.299712900105443/2834377089972332/>>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For information see [*Schools Handbook – Operations*](https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/get-involved-in-your-childs-school/school_boards), page 17; [*Education Act 2004*](https://legislation.act.gov.au/a/2004-17/), section [48(4)](http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/act/consol_act/ea2004104/s48.html): Disallowable Instruments for schools in special circumstances [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)