

British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG) Proposal: Transition to an Elected President-Elect / President

Executive Summary

The BSG currently appoints its President-Elect through an internal selection process. Following feedback from the membership and a broader review of governance best practices, this proposal recommends piloting a transition to an election-based process. This pilot will allow the Society to test the approach, gather feedback, and refine the process before confirming a long-term model.

The change aims to enhance transparency, improve member engagement, and ensure that the selection process is fair, robust, and aligned with the Society's governance framework. The proposed election process will balance the Society's democratic principles with safeguarding leadership integrity by ensuring that only suitably qualified, experienced, and values-driven candidates are presented to the membership. This document outlines the proposed framework, eligibility criteria, and election process while considering alternative approaches and justifying why they have been rejected.

Recommendation

BSG should implement a pilot election process for the role of President-Elect / President, ensuring clarity, fairness, and engagement from the membership while testing the approach before confirming a long-term model. The pilot election process should include:

1. Formation of a Nominations Committee

- A Nominations Committee to be established, comprising of two Lay Trustees (one to act as Chair), two Elected Councillors (selected by the Elected Councillors), the Chief Executive Officer, two Executive members (excluding the President and any Executive member standing for election; nominees to be agreed by the Executive).
- All members of the Committee will hold full voting rights.
- The committee will be responsible for reviewing nominations, ensuring candidates meet the eligibility criteria, shortlisting if required, and conducting interviews as part of the selection process.
- The Nominations Committee will assess all nominations against the eligibility criteria, leadership competencies, and the values of the Society. The Committee reserves the right to decline to progress a nomination where the candidate does not sufficiently meet these standards, ensuring a robust 'fit and proper person' evaluation.
- This committee will ensure the process maintains governance integrity while providing transparency to members.

2. Clear Role Description and Eligibility Criteria

- A formal role description and person specification to ensure that candidates understand the responsibilities and possess the necessary experience.

Eligibility criteria including length of BSG membership (10 years), leadership experience, and alignment with the Society's strategic goals.

3. Nominations Process

- **Call for nominations** issued to all eligible members.
- **Nomination form** requiring candidates to provide:
 - A personal statement (max 500 words) detailing their vision and priorities.
 - A short CV
 - Responses to set questions focusing on leadership experience, governance understanding, and strategic aims for BSG.
 - A current photograph
 - A completed Declaration of Interests form
 - A signed commitment to adhere to the Election Code of Conduct, including rules on appropriate campaigning and social media use.
 - A letter of support from the candidates' employing organisations (e.g. NHS Trusts / Universities), confirming support for participation in the role and its associated time commitment.
 - Confirmation of professional good standing must be provided by the candidate's Responsible Officer, Medical Director, Nursing Director (or equivalent).
 - Candidates must confirm that they are not currently the subject of any disciplinary or professional conduct investigation.
 - Candidates must also declare that they are not subject to any significant civil proceedings or criminal convictions, except for those that are considered spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended). Any past matters that have been fully resolved by a professional regulator will not ordinarily preclude a candidate from standing to serve as President-Elect / President.
- **Endorsement** from a minimum of five current BSG members.

Submission of a completed nomination form does not automatically guarantee progression to the interview or voting stage.

4. Candidate Assessment and Interview

- Following initial review of nominations, the Nominations Committee will determine which candidates proceed to interview. It should be noted that nomination does not automatically guarantee progression to interview, and interview does not guarantee inclusion on the final ballot.
- Each Committee member will cast a yes/no vote on whether a candidate should proceed from nomination to interview, and interview to ballot.
- Progression will be determined by a simple majority of votes cast; in the event of a tie, the Chair's vote will be final.
- The names of the 'NO' voters will be recorded, along with their reasons for so voting.

- Where a candidate is not progressed at any stage of the process, the reasons will be documented and communicated in writing.
- The interview will explore leadership capabilities, governance understanding, and alignment with the Society's values and strategic aims. Only candidates deemed suitable will progress to the voting stage.

All candidates will be informed in writing of the outcome and, if unsuccessful, provided with written reasons.

5. Election Process and Timeline

To support informed member voting, all candidates proceeding to the election will be required to submit a short video presentation responding to member-submitted questions coordinated via Elected Councillors.

- **Nominations open** (5 December 2025)
- **Nominations close** (19 January 2026)
- **Nominations Committee reviews candidates** (January 2026) to ensure eligibility and shortlist candidates if necessary.
- **Candidate interviews** (February 2026) for final validation.
- **Nominations Committee confirms final candidate list for election** (February 2026)
- **Candidates will be invited to record a short video with responses to pre-set questions** (on which the Elected Councillors will be consulted)
- **Civica Election Services to facilitate the voting process**, ensuring integrity and confidentiality.
- **Voting invitation emails sent to all eligible members**
- **Voting period open for set duration** (March – April 2026)
- **Voting closes, results verified by Civica**
- **Public announcement of results** (May 2026)

Successful candidate takes up post as President-Elect (June 2026 (post-AGM))

6. Pilot nature and evaluation

The 2026 election process will be run as a pilot, combining elements of the current appointment approach with a democratic vote by the membership. This approach will enable the Society to test the process in practice while safeguarding leadership integrity through values-based assessment, confirmation of good professional standing and adherence to the Election Code of Conduct.

Evaluation measures will include voter turnout, number and diversity of candidates, member feedback, and the effectiveness of the positive campaign approach. The Nominations Committee will oversee the evaluation and present recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Following this review, the Board will determine whether to adopt, adapt, or revert to the previous appointment model for future cycles, ensuring the final approach is effective, fair, and sustainable for the Society.

APPENDIX: Alternative Options considered – included for completeness

Option 1: Simple Membership Vote Without Eligibility Review

Summary: Any BSG member could nominate themselves and be voted for by the membership without an eligibility review or shortlisting process.

Pros:

- Maximises democracy and member involvement.
- Simplifies process administration.

Cons:

- Risks electing a candidate without the necessary experience or competencies.
- Could become a popularity contest rather than a skills-based selection.
- No safeguard against conflicts of interest or reputational risks.

Reason for Not Recommending: Concerns over suitability and governance oversight.

Option 2: Nominations Committee / Board of Trustee Selection Only

Summary: A Nominations Committee of sorts selects the President-Elect / President internally without an election.

Pros:

- Ensures suitability and maintains governance oversight.
- Less administrative burden.

Cons:

- Lacks transparency and democratic engagement.
- Potential for perceived bias in selections.
- Does not reflect best governance practices or member feedback