

Guidance on the completion of annual return form

The purpose of this guidance is to assist Groups in the completion of the annual return form for Cross-Party Groups.

Groups are required to hold an AGM and re-election of office bearers annually on, or before, the anniversary that the Group was established or on, or before, the anniversary of the date the Group last held an AGM.

The purpose of the annual return is for Groups to demonstrate to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, and to anyone with an interest in the work of a Cross-Party Group, that—

- the Group has been active by providing a summary of the activities of the Group over the last 12 months;
- the existing office bearers have been confirmed in those roles or new office bearers have been elected; and
- the Group is open and transparent about any benefits that are received by the Group.

There is an example of a completed form attached as an annexe to this guidance

The following four sections of the form should contain information on what has happened since the previous annual return form was submitted by the Group:

DATE GROUP ESTABLISHED

The date the Group is established is the date of the initial meeting of the Group, in the current Parliamentary session, where the name and purpose is approved, the election of office bearers is held and the membership is agreed.

It is not the date that the Group was given approval by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee or the date the Group was originally convened in a previous session.

DATE OF MOST RECENT AGM

This is the date that the AGM was held.

DATE OF PRECEDING AGM

This date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 11-13 months of the previous AGM. If this is the first AGM in a new session add the date of the initial meeting, in the current session.

DATE ANNUAL RETURN SUBMITTED

This is the date that the annual return form was **received** by the standards clerks (which must be within 30 calendar days of the AGM).

GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

The information contained in this section of the form should be the date each meeting was held, a breakdown of the number of attendees at each meeting, broken down into MSP and non-MSP members in attendance and an overview of what was discussed at each meeting.

Please note that the minutes should not just be copied and pasted into this section. An overview is required so that members of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee and members of the public can see “at a glance” the general activities of the Group.

You should also note that for a meeting to be classed as a formal CPG meeting two MSP members of the CPG must be in attendance. Any meeting that has less than two MSP members present can go ahead as an informal meeting but any decisions made at that meeting must be ratified at the next formal meeting of the Group. An informal meeting will not count towards the requirement for each Group to hold two meetings per annum.

This section of the form should also include an overview of any other events/activities undertaken by the Group.

The following three sections of the form should contain information of the Group going forward after the re-election of Office Bearers:

MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

This section of the form should contain a list of all MSPs, with their party designations, that are members of the Group, including officer bearers.

NON-MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Individuals

This should be a list of all individuals that are members of the Groups, who do not represent an organisation.

Organisations

This should be the name of the organisation only. There is no requirement to list the name(s) of the individuals who represent the organisation. This ensures that standards clerks do not have to update the information if there is a change of personnel.

GROUP OFFICE BEARERS

There must be two MSP office bearers and one of these must be the Convener. The other MSP office bearer position is entirely a matter for the Group. Non-MSP members of the Group can also hold office bearer positions. It is also permissible to have more than one office bearer elected to each position.

The following section of the form should contain information on benefits received by the Group in the previous year:

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OR OTHER BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE GROUP

Details of any financial or material benefit(s) received from a **single source in a calendar year** which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretarial support.

An example of material support would be where an organisation provides the secretariat to a Group. The individual who does the secretariat work on behalf of that organisation should estimate how much this time would cost based on how much time they spend working for the Group.

The material assistance may not, in itself, be more than £500 per annum but if the same organisation also provided funds for catering, expenses for speakers, publication costs etc this may cumulatively exceed £500 and should therefore be included on the annual return form.

If Groups are not disclosing any financial information they must tick the box on the form to confirm that the Group has considered the support received, but concluded it totalled under the threshold for disclosure (£500).

Groups should also list any visits that were undertaken by members of the Group which were paid for from a single source and where the cost exceeded £500. For example if the MSP members of the Group went on an overseas visit on behalf of the Group that cost over £500 and which was paid for by an organisation, this should be listed.

The following section should contain information on fees and contact details of the Group going forward into the new year:

SUBSCRIPTIONS CHARGED BY THE GROUP

This section should include how much each member of the group is charged and the purpose of this charge.

CONVENER CONTACT DETAILS

This section of the form should always be the contact details for the MSP Convener of the Group.

Annexe: Example of completed form

CROSS-PARTY GROUP ANNUAL RETURN

NAME OF CROSS-PARTY GROUP
Cross-Party Group on SUBJECT
DATE GROUP ESTABLISHED (the date of establishment is the date in this parliamentary session that the Group held its initial meeting, where the office bearers were elected and not the date that the Group was accorded recognition. All Groups should hold their AGMs on, or before, the anniversary of this date.)
26 June 2011
DATE OF MOST RECENT AGM
30 April 2014
DATE OF PRECEDING AGM [this date is required to aid clerks in verifying that the most recent AGM has taken place within 12 months of the previous AGM]
30 April 2013
DATE ANNUAL RETURN SUBMITTED
30 May 2014
GROUP MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES Please provide details of each meeting of the Group including the date of the meeting, a brief description of the main subjects discussed and the MSP and non-MSP attendance figures. Details of any other activities, such as visits undertaken by the Group or papers/report published by the Group should also be provided.
15 September 2012 Attendance: 2 MSPs, 10 Non-MSPs Topic discussed

Guest speaker
Topic discussed

15 December 2012

Award ceremony/networking event held in the Parliament

15 March 2013

Attendance: 4 MSPs, 15 Non-MSPs

Topic discussed

Guest speaker

Topic discussed

20 June 2013

Attendance: 5 MSPs, 20 Non-MSPs

AGM

Re-election of Office Bearers

MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

Please provide names and party designation of all MSP members of the Group.

MSP, Party

MSP, Party

MSP, Party

MSP, Party

MSP, Party

NON-MSP MEMBERS OF THE GROUP

For organisational members please provide only the name of the organisation, it is not necessary to provide the name(s) of individuals who may represent the organisation at meetings of the Group.

Individuals	Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual Individual
Organisations	Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation

	Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation Organisation
--	--

GROUP OFFICE BEARERS

Please provide names for all office bearers. The minimum requirement is that two of the office bearers are MSPs and one of these is Convener – beyond this it is a matter for the Group to decide upon the office bearers it wishes to have. It is permissible to have more than one individual elected to each office, for example, co-conveners or multiple deputy conveners.

Convener	MSP
Deputy Convener	MSP/Individual/Organisation
Secretary	MSP/Individual/Organisation
Treasurer	MSP/Individual/Organisation/n/a

FINANCIAL BENEFITS OR OTHER BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE GROUP

Please provide details of any financial or material benefit(s) received from a single source in a calendar year which has a value, either singly or cumulatively, of more than £500. This includes donations, gifts, hospitality or visits and material assistance such as secretariat support.

Details of material support should include the name of the individual providing support, an estimate of the cost of the support and the name of the organisation that this individual is employed by / affiliated to in providing this support.

Groups should provide details of the date on which the benefit was received, the value of the benefit and a brief description of the benefit.

If the Group is not disclosing any financial information please tick the box to confirm that the Group has considered the support received, but concluded it totalled under the threshold for disclosure (£500).

2012-2013

AN Individual provided secretariat support on behalf of AN Organisation - cost to the organisation ££££.

AN Organisation provided documentation at a cost of ££££.

Total value of financial and material benefit provided by AN Organisation was ££££.

SUBSCRIPTION CHARGED BY THE GROUP

Please provide details of the amount charged and the purpose for which the subscription is intended to be used.

Each member will be charged ££££ per year to cover the costs of catering for each meeting **or** No subscription fee is charged

CONVENER CONTACT DETAILS

Name	MSP
Parliamentary address	SP Room number
Telephone number	0131 348 xxxx