

INTERNATIONAL CHAIRING SKILLS

with John Holmes
of Frontline Training Solutions



International Chairing Skills 2026

Seminar description

Thank you for your interest in this empowering chairing skills seminar, developed during our work with the European Stability Mechanism and the European Banking Authority. The seminar introduces you to practical tools to address the common issues faced by chairs as well as your specific chairing challenges.

The seminar develops your personal performance while chairing or moderating international and stakeholder meetings, and includes:

- Chair's introduction exercise - for enabling the chair to set the scene, set the rules and take control from the outset
- Language and techniques for intervening, steering and maintaining control
- Language and structure for taking control, linking and re-focusing the meeting
- Use of questions for maintaining control and handling questions and answers
- Designing, timing and structuring your meetings and ensuring all essential aspects have been addressed
- Assessment of one's personal style, emphasis and preferences
- Supporting the chair when you are a only participant at a meeting
- Chairing Chit Chat - gaining foreknowledge of the mood of the forthcoming meeting
- Handling common and specific challenges
- Facilitation skills
- Personal feedback and development plan

Seminar structure

This open seminar comprises two modules of two days for each module. You can have the modules follow-on concurrently, or complete Module 2 at a later date, either online or at a future seminar; this brochure will continue as if you will take the modules concurrently but the option remains open. There is another option that can be taken, allowing for a three-day physical course, with an online completion for 'Live Issues'. The value of attending physically with peers cannot be stressed enough but for practical accommodation this option, too, exists.

Each day runs 9am-5pm and includes one hour for lunch plus morning and afternoon breaks. Seminars are limited to 6 participants to ensure the greatest individual attention.

Following receipt of your registration form and your formal acceptance onto the seminar, we will send you a Welcome Pack with all preparatory information.

Value-added

In addition to the seminar itself each participant receives:

- Three online coaching interviews covering before the seminar starts, the period between modules and a post-seminar follow-up.
- An extensive manual covering all aspects in the seminar in greater detail
- Personal SDHC card of your work on the seminar, as a development aid
- Highly interactive low participant to trainer ratio – not exceeding six participants to one trainer, thus providing personal attention and the opportunity for each participant to try out and receive feedback on each tool
- Personalised work, exercises, simulations on Day 4, particularly useful for particular or forthcoming or on-going charring assignments

Seminar Content

Module 1

Day 1

Key tools

- Chairing structure and practise
- Chair's introduction exercise and video playback
- Language and techniques for intervening, steering and maintaining control; facilitation techniques

Day 2

Influencing

- Language and structure for taking control, linking & re-focusing the meeting
- Use of questions for maintaining control and handling questions and answers
- Assessment of one's personal style, emphasis and preferences
- Chairing Chit Chat for gaining foreknowledge of the mood of the forthcoming meeting

Module 2

Day 3

Structuring & adapting

- Designing, timing and structuring your meetings and ensuring all essential aspects have been addressed
- Supporting the chair when you are only a participant at a meeting; identifying what you need from the members of the meeting
- Cultural adaptation and other diversity issues
- Your specific challenges and individual live issues

Day 4

Specific issues and personal feedback

- Continuation of specific challenges and individual live issues
- Personal feedback and development plan

Summary of topics featured in the seminar

Chair's introductory speech exercise – A structure for managing the all-important introduction and scene setting, including who you are, why we are here and the expected outcome, how you want to run the meeting, how you expect the attendees to conduct themselves, and so on. Each participant practises their opening speech and adapts the tone, formality and language according to the nature and composition of the meeting.

Outcome – Participants learn the importance of stating expectations and setting boundaries as a way of achieving on-going control of the meeting. They also come to terms with their own needs and expectations and how clearly they assert those needs. They learn to take responsibility and plan for the outcomes they seek as chair.

Language and techniques for intervening, steering and maintaining control

– Participants practise a structure and use language that helps produce a positive emotional atmosphere at the meeting that encourages a sense of trust and valuing of contributions. The structure also helps offer an alternative view that adds to rather than replaces the comments that have gone before.

Outcome – the participants will develop greater confidence in politely taking back control from attendees who take a long time to say their piece or are emotionally attached to their views. This structure also encourages greater participation at the meeting, as it avoids negative judgement of others' comment while at the same time setting out clear benefits in supporting an alternative course. Participants learn how to quickly build alliances, resolve differences and build bridges towards consensus.

Language and structure for taking control, linking and re-focusing the meeting –

Participants practise a powerful structure that focuses on priorities through a hierarchy of needs. The structure enables the chair to make their point quickly and precisely and suggest clear action to be taken.

Outcome – Participants uncover the true message they wish to put across and adapt that message for the best effect with the people before them. They will also be quicker, clearer and more influential. The structured approach will give the participants greater confidence and credibility and help avoid confusion or unnecessary speech.

Culture exercise – We explore intercultural communication in the context of managing dissent during an open discussion and examine the impact of cultural traits for handling differing positions on the desired outcomes of discussions. We will refer to the book *The Cultural Map* and focus on the dimensions of *Confrontational language v. Avoids Confrontation* and the dimension of *Emotionally Expressive v Emotionally Inexpressive*.

Outcome – The exercise acts as a mirror to differing cultural approaches to achieving positive outcomes from meetings. Participants acknowledge their own preferred style, particularly when under stress and look for ways to embrace the differences while keeping a firm idea of their overall objective and needs. They learn that culturally instinctive and culturally valued behaviour, that feels natural, clear and safe, can have a style that when working inter-culturally produces negative or undesired outcomes.

Use of questions for maintaining control and handling questions and answers

– Competent handling of questions and answers is a great opportunity for increasing influence and persuasion but Q&As also hold many risks that can diminish the chair's credibility This session helps participants field challenging questions and provide inspiring answers.

Outcome – Greater confidence in facing questions in a controlled and positive way; helping the chair avoid a negative spiral of questioning that can de-rail a meeting; reduced risk of tripping oneself up in attempting to answer a complicated question; avoids appearing unsure, defensive or attempting to hide something; helps cope with the shock when asked what appears to be an aggressive question; how to ask a question that has value for the whole meeting.

Designing, timing and structuring your meetings and ensuring all essential aspects have been addressed

– Using our CLAD model participants learn about four essential ingredients that make up a well-balanced and rigorous meeting. Participants consider the order these ingredients should be introduced to the meeting and how this will affect the setting and structure of the agenda. In this session participants have to apply timings to each of the sections of the meeting and consider how they will manage overrun on a particular topic or agenda item. They also have to consider how they will end satisfactorily the discussion and move on to the next point, this ensuring there is time for the meeting to be properly concluded. This requires a realistic expectation of what can be achieved in the time available.

Outcome – Participants come away with knowledge of their own unconscious default approach and emphasis they use when chairing. They develop a realistic appreciation of the relationship between desire and achievement and how to avoid the pitfall of hoping for too much in the time allowed, thus losing the goodwill of the attendees.

Assessment of one's personal style, emphasis and preferences

– Applying our own SWAG personality model, we use colours to provide a simple yet very effective way of seeing where you place your emphasis and what others think about you. Are there gaps in how you see yourself and how others see you and what might be the implications of these gaps? Participants create badges for themselves and each other to identify gaps between how we see ourselves and how others see us.

Outcome - This fascinating study allows you to proceed to designing an influencing strategy and adapting yourself for greater impact in your role as chair. It also gives the insight into how you are seen perhaps by others and what you might need to start doing in order to change others' perceptions of you.

Supporting the chair when you are only a participant at a meeting

– It is important to know how you can support a meeting and the chair when you yourself are not chairing. Such occasions might occur generally but more specifically when there is an inexperienced chair or what might be considered to be a 'weak' chair. How can you be a positive member of the meeting by demonstrating a more productive approach in your own behaviour and treatment of others? How can you help to rescue a negative and antagonistic meeting? How can you try to ensure that there is time to reach a clear outcome? How can you do all these things without undermining the chair's confidence and authority?

Outcome – You will be sensitive to mood and needs and develop a discretion that will allow you to make effective interventions and contributions without appearing to take over from the chair. You will also come away with the confidence to engage personally with the chair and ascertain her/his needs and gaps in competency. You will also be able to assess critically their behaviour at the meeting and predict likely shortfalls in planning and control.

Chairing Chit Chat - gaining foreknowledge of the mood of the forthcoming meeting

Planning and control of a meeting can be done from a distance but it is much better to find ways of engaging beforehand with members attending the meeting, firstly to ease dialogue and stiffness at the start of the meeting but more importantly still to uncover values, rocks and hot-spots that can de-rail or accelerate the meeting towards greater efficiency and productiveness. This is a delicate operation and there are certain golden rules that need to be followed if you are to get the knowledge that can steer you and sustain trust and credibility during the 'chat'.

Outcome

You will learn how to engage quickly and effectively with different types of people (age, gender, culture, personality, etc) and gain key knowledge that will help you design your meeting, whom to invite to speak, and assign the timings appropriately. You will learn how to use this knowledge to apply a greater realism over what can be achieved and what else needs to be talked about in the corridors before the meeting starts.

Handling common and specific challenges

– In this session we look at a number of common challenges that face chairs and their possible solutions. Participants are invited to share their own ideas on how to resolve these challenges and practise the suggested solutions. Connected with this session is a live issue session that takes a case study from your own working life. It is developed with your personal trainer before and/or during the seminar and you identify an objective and your desired outcome. You play out the scene with your trainer in a small sub-group and apply the SWAG influencing model in order to achieve your objective and outcome. You receive feedback from your colleagues and have the opportunity to make repeated attempts to revise your approach. You take responsibility for choosing your approach and selecting which tools from the seminar to use to help you.

Outcome – *Participants are empowered to use the learning from the seminar in their working lives and to learn from each other's Live Issue. They also learn to give and receive constructive feedback and to apply it to improve their own performance.*

Facilitation Skills – Sometimes, either in the role as chair or a role that has been given to you, you need to simply draw out, consolidate and codify the views of those present. This is a sort of chairing but there are other skills that need to be applied and practised and pitfalls to avoid.

Outcome – *You will develop the confidence to think on your feet and engage informally with people in a less structured and more dynamic and fast-paced environment.*

Learning methods

Small group learning - The seminar will be highly interactive. The seminar only recruits small numbers of participants for maximum personal attention and practise time. The seminar has a maximum intake of six participants.

Highly interactive - By highly interactive we mean that not only do you get a chance to try out the tools for yourself, you also get deeply involved in giving positive feedback to your colleagues on the seminar. This combination of practising, observing and coaching/mentoring really reinforces the lessons most relevant to you and ensures you will continue to remember those lessons when they become relevant in your working life.

Role-play & simulations - The key learning method is role-play. The trainer is also a professional actor who is a specialist in role-play in training. Please be prepared to use role-play to help increase your understanding of the tools and how to apply them in a number of generic situations under the guidance of the trainer. L&D research shows that we behave and respond in role-plays the same as in real life. We can only exercise conscious control of ourselves for short periods before we are forced back to our unconscious usual behaviour. Hence role-play is the ideal medium for exploring unconscious bias, breaking habits and holding a mirror up to ourselves for us to learn how other people see us.

Awareness and skills the training will help you acquire

- Identification of the personal and unconscious values that shape your choices and those of others and how they impact on your chairing
- Awareness of agreement and dissent in a diverse working environment
- How to establish expectations and draw out responses
- Manage timing, discipline, and keeping the meeting on-track
- Explore personal case studies and challenges in a chairing role

Target population for course

The seminar is aimed primarily at those relatively new to a chairing or moderating role, or aspiring to that role. The seminar will also offer value to experienced chairs who seek the extra development that is provided by current thinking and feedback from peers.

Location and dates of the training

Location

We have a variety of locations we can use such as Florence, Frankfurt, Vienna, Munich and London and we are open to any suggested location that works best for the majority. Indeed, different modules could be taken in different cities but this depends on the wishes of the group. We will work on the assumption that we run it at just one location for four days.

Dates

This is perhaps the hardest decision to make, as it requires that everyone is available at the same date. Therefore I will not state a clear date at this time but suggest we aim for a course around the mid to end of May. July, August and December are also suitable for some. Please make your own suggestion or preference clear as soon as possible.

Here are some dates and locations to have in our minds and use as a basis of moving forwards:

Frankfurt or Florence

- Tuesday 19th to Friday 22nd May 2026

or

- Tuesday 26th to Friday 29th May 2026

Booking and paying for accommodation is the responsibility of the participant. For those registering early, we can share our recommendations.

Cost

Includes:

- 4 days of training
- Small group - up to six participants
- Three personal online sessions, before, during and after the seminar
- Course manual

Not included:

- Travel to/from location of training
- Refreshments
- Lunch and evening dinner
- Taxis to/from the airport/railway station

€4.750 per person

Payment terms

- Full payment of the fee is expected 30 days before the start of the seminar, or immediately if registering within 30 days of the seminar start
- Those organisations which choose to pay after delivery has commenced, may do so with the prior approval of Frontline, for an extra 5% of the total fee
- Those organisations who choose to pay outside of these terms, and without prior approval, will be charged 10% of the seminar fee

Cancellation Policy

If no replacement participant is found for a cancellation

- Cancel 45 to 31 days prior to the seminar - **20% of the module fee module of €4.750 payable by the participant**
- Cancel 30 to 14 days prior to the training - **40% of the module fee**
- Cancel 13 to 7 days prior to the workshop - **60% of the module fee**
- Cancel 6 days or less prior to the workshop - **80% of the module fee**



About John Holmes and Frontline Training Solutions Group

John is founder and director of Frontline Training Solutions Ltd (GB) and its Czech subsidiary, Frontline Training Solutions s.r.o. (CZ). For a quarter of a century the group has been offering leadership, meetings and communication skills training to national and international public sector bodies, specialising in the public financial and defence sectors.

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Other courses available in 2026

- International meeting skills
- Team leadership
- External stakeholder management and strategic networking
- Negotiation skills

Testimonials (organisations and identities anonymized for security)

“I have never participated in such an interesting and practical training in soft skills.” – *Kristina, Belgium*

“Taking the course has been a great experience. John and Ben (the trainers) have been superb throughout. They have listened to all comments and always answered any questions enthusiastically and to the point. They provided concrete steps to deal with difficult situations and to build good relationships from the start. These steps are clearly described and explained and the role-playing provides a platform to practice and to observe others in order to understand what adjustments need to be made when applying these techniques.” – *Hilde, The Netherlands*

“I really feel the benefit of the practical application of the theory through the role plays, observations and discussion. It has provided me with a tool set to deal with challenging international meetings. More importantly, it has increased my confidence to deal with these challenges head-on!” – *Markus, Austria*

“I would like to thank you for organizing such a useful training. I am sure others will find it as interesting as I have.” – *Brenda, Ireland*

“I have already given to the head of my department very positive feedback concerning the seminar and you for being a really nice personality. I suggested you to give a lecture to the whole department, as we would benefit by improving our communicating and meeting skills. We would be very glad to see you in person, talk and have fun in Athens!” – *Dimitri & Sophia, Greece*

“I just wanted to say that the course was fantastic and I really mean it.” – *Cedric, France*

“I would like to thank again you and Ben for the excellent course - as I told several colleagues already, it is the best course on so-called "soft skills" I ever attended. I found it very useful and I am sure that this experience will be beneficial for my future professional life.” – *Christoph, Germany*

“I think this course is useful independently of whether a person attends international meetings. This course is really about developing effective ways to communicate with others, be they peers, superiors or team members. The main value added of this course is the training method. Other courses adopt a more traditional approach and one tends to forget the notions acquired after a short period of time. In this course, one learns by doing and by observing others, and this has a strong impact on how the notions are assimilated. This course challenges the participants and makes them actively participate in a series of activities which resemble daily life situations. Furthermore, through personalised sessions, the course is tailored to the needs of the participants and helps them reflect upon past situations and better ways to handle them. I already recommended it to colleagues and will be very happy to sponsor it further at [our organisation]!” – *Sandra, Poland*

“The clarity and approach of the trainers was simply outstanding. I cannot think of anything that could have been explained better. Both John and Ben are very clear and catch the attention of the participants. I found the preparatory sessions extremely useful and that the information I provided was used to full extent during the sessions and the live issues.” – *Barbara, Italy*

“Many thanks also from my side for yet another wonderful course and great interaction, now we are officially alumni.” – *Bogdan, Romania*

“I just want you and Ben to know how much I enjoy your training. I wish I'd had this knowledge when I started my professional career; everything would have been much easier then.” – *Pär, Sweden*

“Believe it or not but I've been working in financial supervision for 7 years and, during this time, have experienced different and difficult situations when it comes to meetings and relationships with other people. Thanks to you, I got an opportunity to learn how to handle them. You and Ben are so professional and you have such a good contact with the group.” – *Robert, Czech Republic*

“I can conclude how important so-called 'soft skills' are, and how they can improve your interaction with others. This is particularly important, when you have to struggle with 'difficult people,” – *Miles, UK*

Registration Form

International Chairing Skills Training

Please complete this registration form and send by e-mail to John Holmes at john@frontlinetrainingsolutions.com

ICS 2 - 2026:

19-22 May

or

26-29 May

My organisation/directorate/division agrees to the payment terms on page 9

My organisation/directorate/division agrees to the cancellation policy on page 9

Signed.....

Date

Name

Job title

Organisation & Division.....

E-mail address.....

Telephone number office

Telephone number mobile