

# Role of the First Minister in Northern Ireland

## How is the First Minister selected?

- Under the Good Friday Agreement the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly, be they Unionist or Nationalist chooses a nominee for First Minister.

## What is the role of the First Minister in decision making?

- Despite the names the First Minister and deputy First Minister share equal responsibilities within government, and their decisions are made jointly.
- The First Minister greets official visitors to Northern Ireland and so in that way is the has an equivalent standing to the First Ministers of Scotland or Wales.
- The First Minister co-chairs meetings of the Northern Ireland Executive, co-ordinates the work of the Executive, and the response of the administration to relationships with other countries.
- The First Minister and deputy First Minister agree the agenda of Executive meetings and can jointly determine "significant or controversial matters" to be considered by the Executive.
- The First Minister's other areas of responsibility include:
  - \* economic policy
  - \* equality before the law
  - \* European Union issues
  - \* human rights
  - \* the machinery of government (including the Ministerial Code)
  - \* public appointments policy
  - \* standards in public life

## Who has held the role of First Minister?



David Trimble UUP  
1998-2002



Ian Paisley DUP  
2007-2008



Peter Robinson DUP  
2002-2016



Arlene Foster DUP  
2016-2017

Leaving Certificate Politics & Society

Stand 1: Power and Decision Making

Topic 2: Power and Decision Making at National and European Level.

Learning Outcome 2.2: Describe the way in which the Northern Ireland Executive is selected, and the ministers' roles .