



Good Practice Guide for Meetings

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General Guidelines

These guidelines apply to chairs, secretaries and members. They are designed to give practical advice and should be used in conjunction with the Rules for the Conduct of Meetings, and the Service Level Statement.

Rules for the Conduct of Meetings

These are the rules that govern the composition and conduct of all meetings in the University.

Service Level Statement

This sets out the minimum service standard expected of all of those involved in a meeting.

Terms of Reference

Each meeting should have a document setting out the Terms of Reference and Membership. This document should follow the [Terms of Reference template](#), and should be reviewed annually.

Agendas

Agendas should follow the agreed [template](#).

The secretary and chair are jointly responsible for preparing the agenda. The secretary is responsible for gathering agenda items from the chair and members. The chair has final responsibility for agreeing the agenda.

Minutes

Minutes should follow the agreed [template](#).

The secretary (or where appropriate his or her deputy) is responsible for the preparation of draft minutes.

The preparation and circulation of minutes should normally be arranged as follows:

1. Draft minutes are prepared by the secretary
2. Minutes are approved for circulation by the chair and circulated by the secretary to all the members
3. Minutes become final once they have been approved by the next meeting of the committee.

Action Lists

A template for [Action Lists](#) is provided.

If required, these are prepared and distributed by the secretary. The person/group who has received notification of the action is then responsible for following up and reporting back on progress.

Meeting Papers

A [template](#) for meeting papers is provided.

All meeting papers should include the following information:

- Reference number
- Title
- Author
- Date
- Recommendation (for example: to note, for discussion, to discuss and agree recommendations, that a particular course of action is taken)

It may also be necessary to include:

- Background – brief paragraph on why the paper has been written and has been brought to the present meeting, including details of other bodies which have discussed/will discuss it
- Summary – brief paragraph on what the paper contains.

Scheduling Meetings

A number of principles should be applied to the scheduling of meetings. The principles are designed to promote:

- Good Practice
- Good Governance
- Timely, efficient communication
- Structured institutional process and policy

The principles are:

1. Where applicable, meetings should aim and schedule to meet at a minimum one week prior to paper deadlines for its parent committee.
2. Meetings should take account where possible of School/Office and institutional key working times (for example September/January/Easter)
3. Meetings should take consideration of the commitments of members when being scheduled. Meetings involving similar membership should endeavour to ensure that they are not run successively.
4. Where institutional deadlines allow, meetings should be scheduled a minimum of 6 weeks apart.
5. A meeting schedule should be drawn up annually, showing paper submission deadlines, AOB deadlines, and the distribution dates for minutes/action reports.

To assist in the delivery of the above principles, an annual University Calendar is produced in the Office of Student Affairs. This shows dates and deadlines, and enables smooth planning and the early identification of clashes or bottlenecks.

Format

The house font is 12 point Arial, text should be left aligned and all committee documents should be presented using this.

Archiving

The secretary is responsible for maintaining an archive of meeting papers. Except where individual papers are needed for further work or local record keeping, meeting papers should not be retained by other attendees. In order to ensure that no confusion could arise, there should be one definitive version of each meeting paper. Unnecessary storage is also a poor use of the University's resources as it involves the duplication of work and unnecessary use of storage space.

Appointing the Secretary

Secretaries play an important role in ensuring that appropriate business is considered, decisions are properly recorded and an archive of the meeting's business is kept up to date. Those responsible for appointing secretaries should therefore ensure that the secretary has appropriate experience, training and/or support, and where necessary, has been briefed on how to access this.

Guidelines for Secretaries

Working with the Chair

The secretary and chair should work together to ensure that:

- the meeting runs smoothly
- papers are prepared and distributed in a timely manner
- both the chair and secretary have a good understanding of the business of the meeting and the why individual items are placed on its agenda
- the meeting achieves its aims as set out in the Terms of Reference.

The secretary should ensure a good understanding of the expectations of the chair. These can vary, depending on the meeting, in aspects such as:

- Preparing the agenda – what level of involvement the secretary should have in this
- Writing the minutes – what level of detail is required,
- Following up on actions – once action lists are distributed, how proactive the secretary should be in following these up.

Membership

The secretary should work with the chair to arrange for the election or nomination of members at set out in the Terms of Reference. The secretary is also responsible for maintaining an up-to-date list of the names and contact details of members, including their [term of office](#) and length of tenure.

Induction

Where new members are appointed, the secretary should ensure that they have received at least the Terms of Reference, calendar of meetings, Rules for the Conduct of Meetings and Service Level Statement. Additionally, new members may receive a one to one briefing from the chair or secretary about the purpose of the meeting and its business.

Setting Dates

This should be done in discussion with the chair. Where the body will be reporting to Executive or Academic Council, dates should be notified to the Director of Student Affairs who is responsible for creating the University calendar and can advise of any clashes. The dates of parent or dependant committees should also be taken into account.

Once dates for the year are finalised, the secretary should distribute them to all the members, along with a deadline for receipt of the papers for each meeting.

Meeting Venues

The chair should advise on which campus each meeting should be held. Room bookings for Executive and Academic Council are made by the Director of Student Affairs. In the majority of other cases, it is the responsibility of the secretary to book rooms.

When setting venues, it is good practice to take into account the travel miles involved in calling a meeting at a particular campus. If a majority of the staff involved work at Avery Hill, it may be better to hold the meeting there. Where staff attend a regular meeting from across campuses, it is good practice to rotate the location around the campuses. [Video-conferencing facilities](#) are available on all three campuses. These save travel time, and provide an excellent alternative to face-to-face meetings.

Terms of Reference

The secretary will normally work with the chair to draft this document. It should be approved at the first meeting. The secretary should work with the chair to ensure that it is reviewed and revised annually, and that, where appropriate, the secretary of the parent body has an up to date version.

The Role of the Secretary

In preparing agendas and papers and participating in the meeting, the role of the secretary is:

1. Initiating Business

Identifying policy areas which should be considered, and when. This requires an awareness of:

- the regular schedule of business, and any modifications to this made necessary by recent developments
- items specifically referred to the meeting by colleagues
- discussions by related University bodies
- current external developments in the area of the meeting's scope, including related trends in other universities.

2. Providing Information

Identifying and assembling, in consultation with appropriate colleagues and/or external bodies, all the information necessary for decision-making or, where appropriate, ensuring that this is done by others

3. Overseeing the Flow of Business between Meetings

- Developing a view in advance of the intended or possible outcomes of the consideration of particular business
- Taking an informed view of the way in which this interacts - both in substantive policy terms and logistically - with consideration of the same or related business by other bodies
- Monitoring and facilitating the passage of the business through any related meetings, by writing reports to them and ensuring that information and reports from discussions at preceding meetings are available.

Before the Meeting

Preparing the Agenda and Meeting Papers

Set a deadline for the receipt of meeting papers, and inform members of this.

Prepare a draft agenda, and work with the chair to finalise it, ensuring that it uses the appropriate template.

Items submitted after the agenda has been agreed should only be included or tabled with the permission of the chair.

Papers

Prepare a 'pack' of meeting papers. This will normally consist of:

- Agenda
- Notes of the last meeting
- Meeting papers related to items on the agenda

Ensure that papers are appropriately referenced, using the [Referencing System](#), and labelled so anyone receiving them will know what they are looking at, whether they receive papers electronically or on paper.

Send out the pack to members. Practice varies on this between meetings, and options include:

- Email with attachments
- Email document with papers embedded
- Paper copy
- Via a Portal Group

Catering

Organise catering arrangements for the meeting. The chair should let the secretary know what it is appropriate to provide.

What to Take

As a minimum the secretary will need appropriate equipment for making a record of the meeting, whether this is a notebook and pens or a laptop. On occasions, the secretary may also need to bring briefing notes for the meeting and papers for tabling. The secretary may also choose to take a spare set of committee papers for the person who forgot or did not receive them. Looking back at the previous minutes should give an indication of what else may be required. For example:

- papers from the previous meeting
- an attendance list for people to sign against (especially useful if it is the secretary's first time servicing the meeting and s/he does not know everyone by sight)
- background correspondence or reference documents
- the Terms of Reference and membership
- [Rules for the Conduct of Meetings](#)
- a minute book or copy of the minutes for signature.

Other

Where someone who is not a member is attending to present an item, the secretary should ensure that they know the approximate time that their item will run and the meeting location.

The secretary should read the meeting papers in advance to ensure that they can follow the business of the meeting.

At the Meeting

The secretary should:

- Sit beside the chair in order to be able to brief her/him and receive any instructions.
- Circulate an attendance list if this is being used
- Read out the list of apologies received.
- Take notes.

The secretary may also wish to request copies of any presentations given for later distribution to the members or as an aid to minute writing.

Writing the Minutes

After taking notes during the meeting, it is the responsibility of the secretary to produce a draft set of minutes.

Purpose

The purpose of minutes is to:

- Fulfil the requirements of audit
- Provide a brief record of the discussion that took place
- Record the decisions taken
- Record actions arising from the discussion and decisions, and who will take responsibility for these actions

As well as carrying out internal audits designed to check on the systems and processes of the institution and make recommendations for their improvement, the University is also subject to audit by a number of external bodies such as funding bodies and the Quality Assurance Agency. In each case, auditors will seek assurance that where decisions have been made, these have been properly recorded, disseminated and adhered to.

Minute takers should therefore consider:

- How and why minutes might be needed after the meeting
- That minutes can be disseminated across the University as well as seen by external auditors
- That minutes may be valid for a long period, for example where a policy decision has been recorded

Content

To ensure that minutes fulfil their purposes, secretaries should use the agreed [template](#).

Minutes should contain:

- The name of the committee together with the time, date and venue of the meeting.
- A list of who is present at the meeting. Both names and job titles of all of those present should be given.
- An accurate record of all business done. This should include a brief summary

- of matters discussed, rather than the detail of the discussion.
- A record of what was decided.
- Clear identification of the actions arising from decisions, including who is responsible
- A record of items the committee noted.
- A record of items the committee referred or recommended to another committee, or deferred to another meeting.

The date of the next meeting *may* be recorded, this is not always appropriate.

Minutes should not contain:

- A verbatim report of proceedings
- Detail of all comments made during the course of a discussion.
- A summary of the reports of other bodies which report into the meeting.
This should not be necessary as they are contained in the meeting papers.

Minutes should not normally contain:

- The names of individuals, for example in action points. Job titles should normally be used in preference to names. For example, 'Professor B stated that the candidate had not shown sufficient innovation to quality for a first' is inadvisable because it contains personal information about Professor B. A better option would be, 'It was suggested that the candidate had not shown sufficient originality'. For informal meetings, or where job titles are the same, the use of the initials of the individual is permissible.

Style

Minutes must be as concise as the circumstances permit. They must be phrased in non-emotive language and be impartial.

The past tense should be used to record the discussion in the meeting. The Passive Voice is useful as it is used to focus on actions and does not require the speaker to be identified. Examples:

Spoken	Written
"Graduation ceremonies will be in January this year"	It was decided that graduation ceremonies would be held in January.
"Does anyone have any questions about this document?"	Members were invited to ask questions
"I want to hold a Christmas party"	An interest was expressed in holding a Christmas party
"We can't admit all the applicants to the science programme"	All the applicants to the science programme could not be admitted.

Useful Language

Meetings make the following types of decisions, and these words can provide a useful 'toolkit' for minute writers:

Word	Definition	For example...
Agree	To come to a common viewpoint which may or may not be unanimous	The Committee agreed the recommendations as set out in the paper.
Approve	To accept or agree a matter for which authority is required	The Committee approved the budget for the next academic year.
Authorise	To grant authority to a person or transaction	The Committee authorised the Facilities Manager to investigate the matter on its behalf. / The Committee authorised the expenditure of £3000 from the Staff Development budget for this activity.
Confirm	To verify something is correct or accurate	The Head of Planning confirmed that the information has not yet been received from HEFCE.
Consider	Describes what was talked about, particularly useful for proposals and recommendations	The Committee considered a set of proposals from the Office of Student Affairs.
Debate	Describes what was talked about, particularly useful where different views are given	The merits of both courses of action were debated.
Defer	To put off until another meeting	In the absence of complete information, the Committee deferred a decision until the next meeting.
Discuss	Describes what was talked about	Following discussion, the Committee agreed the recommendations.
Endorse	To support the decisions or proposals of another body	The Committee endorsed ongoing work by Human Resources to develop guidelines for visiting academics.
Note	To record an event	The Committee noted that the Office of Student Affairs have begun a project to address this issue.
Ratify	To confirm an action taken on a body's behalf which was not pre-authorised	The Committee ratified the action taken by Chair on its behalf.
Receive	To be given sight of notes/papers	The notes of Student Retention Working Group (give paper reference number) were received.
Refer	To pass a matter to another meeting, body or person	The Committee agreed to refer the matter to the Vice-Chancellor's Group for their consideration.
Resolve	To agree a formal resolution or a course of action	Following discussion, the Committee resolved that in future budgets will be agreed by the Vice-Chancellor's Group.

Following up the Minutes

Once the secretary has drafted the minutes, they should be passed to the chair for checking and amendments.

When the minutes have been agreed by the chair, the secretary should distribute them to all the members using the preferred circulation method of the meeting (email, paper, portal etc.).

For many meetings, the secretary will also produce Action Lists and send these out after the minutes. Action lists give details of who is responsible for each of the actions that have been decided upon. They should also give deadlines for the action to be completed. A [template](#) for action lists is available.

Where applicable, the agreed minutes must be sent to the secretary of the parent body. Where minutes, agendas or meeting papers appear on the web, they should be sent to the person responsible for updating the web.

Archiving and Storage

The secretary is responsible for the storage of meeting agendas, notes and papers, and should discourage other members from keeping the papers, for the reasons outlined under 'Archiving' above. Storage systems vary across the University. As a minimum, papers should be filed electronically in a shared area, with agendas, minutes and meeting papers clearly distinguishable. The [Referencing System](#) provides a unique identifier for meeting papers.

There is information and guidance about managing records available at: <http://www.gre.ac.uk/governance/rmo>. Secretaries are expected to familiarise themselves with the information on these pages, and to act in accordance with the guidelines they set out.

Referencing System

Each meeting paper should have a unique reference number for the following reason:

- Ease of identifying what the document is
- Ease of finding it
- Ease of filing
- Ease of reference by and across meetings and through the University's governance system

See the [templates](#) for information on how to use the referencing system to identify papers and minute items. See the full list of meeting [abbreviations](#).

Agendas

Agenda items should be numbered sequentially from 1 onwards for each meeting.

Minute Item Referencing

The reference should indicate: **Meeting** + **Academic Year**+ **Item number**

- **Meeting** - all meetings will be denoted by abbreviation or acronym. A [list of abbreviations](#) is available.

- **Academic Year** - to be 11 as an abbreviation for 2011/12, 12 for 2012/13 etc.
- **Item number** - to be sequential throughout the academic year

For example:

CRT/11.37 = Committee code (CRT for Court), academic year (2011/12), minute item (37)

AC/09.42 = Committee code (AC for Academic Council), academic year (2009/10), minute item (42)

Papers

All papers must contain a reference number at top right hand corner. Some will include a cover sheet.

References should indicate: **Committee** + **Academic Year** + **Paper number**

- **Committee** - as above, all committees to be denoted by abbreviation or acronym
- **Academic Year** - as above to be 11 for 2011/12
- **Paper number** - to be sequential throughout the academic year and preceded by letter P

For example:

CRT/11.P26 = Committee code (CRT for Court), academic year (2011/12, paper number (P26)

EC/10.P17 = Committee code (EC for Executive Committee), academic year (2010/11), paper number (P17).

Guidelines for Chairs

At the Meeting

The chair of a meeting should:

- Start the meeting on time
- Make introductions. At the inaugural meeting the chair should introduce him/herself and ask each member to introduce themselves, possibly with a brief comment on their role
- Ensure that the agenda is followed, or that deviations from it are agreed by members
- Discourage the use of mobile devices for purposes other than those related to the meeting
- Listen to all contributions while keeping members focused
- Facilitate a balanced discussion: 'Encourage the reticent, support the reasonable, suppress the overbearing'
- Work for consensus, steering the meeting towards a decision
- Sum-up at the end of each an item, so that members are clear about what has been decided
- Make clear what is to happen next and who will be responsible.
- Discourage major items in 'Any Other Business'
- Clarify arrangements for the next meeting.

Length of Debate

Enough time should be allowed for constructive debate of an item. Nonetheless, no contribution should be excessive. The chair has the power to determine the length of any discussion and curtail discussion where s/he considers necessary. The chair may adjourn further debate on a matter to a future meeting when protracted discussion seems necessary.

After the Meeting

The chair should ensure that actions you taken are reported to the following meeting, and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

Working with the Secretary

The chair should work with the secretary to ensure that:

- the meeting runs smoothly
- papers are prepared and distributed in a timely manner
- both the chair and secretary have a good understanding of the business of the meeting and the why individual items are placed on its agenda
- the meeting achieves its aims as set out in the Terms of Reference.

Guidelines for Members

In addition to the General Guidelines, the attention of meeting members is drawn to the following:

Sending Apologies

When a member is unable to attend, apologies should be conveyed to the secretary in advance of the meeting.

Sending a Deputy

The Terms of Reference document will set out if the sending of deputies is allowed and who can be sent when a member is unable to attend. If this is possible, the secretary should be informed of who the deputy will be.

Meeting Papers

Papers should be thrown away after the meeting. See the note on 'Archiving' under 'General Guidelines'.

Appendix I: Meeting Abbreviations

Name	Abbreviation
Academic Appeals Committee	ACC
Academic Council	AC
Academic Planning Committee	APC
Academic Quality & Standards Committee	AQSC
Approval and Review Group	ARG
Audit Committee	AUD
Campus H&S Committees	AHHS, GHS, MHS
Court	CRT
Equality and Diversity Committee	EDC
Executive Committee	EC
Faculty Boards	FB + Faculty *
Fees and Financial Support Group	FFSG
Finance Committee	FC
HR Committee	HR
Principals' Strategic Planning Meeting	PSPM
Professors and Readers Appointment Committee	PRA
Research and Enterprise Committee	REC
Research Degrees Committee	RDC
Research Ethics Committee	UREC
Space Management and Timetabling Group	SMTG
Student Experience Committee	SEC
University Health & Safety Committee	UHS
Commercial Activities Group	CAG
Greenwich University Enterprises Ltd	GUEL
Vice-Chancellor's Group	VCG
Greenwich Property Ltd.	GPL

- Many Faculties have meetings that feed into Faculty Boards. Abbreviations for these can be determined at Faculty/Department level.
- Secretaries to short life working groups should decide upon an appropriate abbreviation that does not duplicate any item on the above list.
- Secretaries to new University-wide meetings should contact the University Secretary (c.hallas@gre.ac.uk) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office for inclusion in this list.

*Faculty Abbreviations

Faculty	Code
Architecture, Computing and Humanities & GMI	ACH
Business	BUS
Education and Health	EH
Engineering and Science &NRI	ES

School Abbreviations

School	Abbreviation
Architecture, Design and Construction	ADC
Business	BUS
CMS	CMS
Greenwich Maritime Institute	GMI
Partnership Division	PDV
Engineering	ENG
Education	EDN
Health and Social Care	HSC
Humanities and Social Sciences	HSS
Medway School of Pharmacy	MSP
Science	SCI
Natural Resources Institute	NRI