Academic Policy Services

Principles

Principles for the Operation of Committees

While the committee structures provide a suitable framework, it is the members of the committees who determine whether good governance and better practice standards are actually achieved and ensure that the committee is adding value.

General:

1. **Collegiality**: The Committee system is transparent and consultative, and all staff have the opportunity to provide meaningful input into decisions that significantly affect them.

2. **Working Smart**: Committee time is used in ways which make the most efficient and effective use of staff time to deliberate on significant issues and policies.

3. **Good Conduct**: Committee members abide by a Code of Conduct that requires them to be appropriately informed and prepared before the meeting so that they can contribute to the decisions of the committee.

4. **Review**: All committees are regularly reviewed in relation to both the performance of committee business and committee members.

Functional:

5. **Policy Decisions**: Committees are, wherever possible, engaged in establishing policies and rules within which individual staff can manage and administer University business.

6. **Management Decisions**: Committees are involved in management and administrative decisions as close to the activity as is compatible with legislative requirements.

7. **Communication**: Committees are used to provide a contextual framework within which University policies are developed and decisions are made.

8. **Membership**: Committee membership ensures the broad University community, in all its diversity, is reasonably represented. However, individual committees are not constituted to represent every possible interest group and the number of members should be kept as low as practicable.

*Revised on 16/02/2006*
Establishment and Review of Committees:

1. Committees are to have a constitution that clearly describes the purpose and operation of the committee including membership, Chair, function, decision-making and communication lines, quorum and conduct of meetings.

2. Mechanisms for reporting the business of each committee should be made clear at the time of establishment of the committee.

3. Committees should establish a review regime addressing the frequency and nature of the review process and the allocation of responsibility for conducting and acting on the review.

Conduct of Meetings:

4. Meetings should only commence with the appropriate quorum. If the meeting is inquorate the meeting can be cancelled and business dealt with by circulation or discussion can take place in committee mode with recommendations ratified at the next meeting or by circular.

5. Meetings should be held in accordance with constitution. However, the committee should not meet simply because a meeting has been scheduled rather only when there is important business to transact. If business is limited, consideration should be given to circulating items with the Chair’s recommendation rather than to deferring items to a later meeting.

6. Items brought to the committee for a decision for noting or for communication should be relevant to the business or role of the committee. Consideration should be given to holding a joint meeting of two committees when there is an item of interest for more than one committee. When it is clear that the committee has insufficient knowledge to add value to a decision, then other means of processing the decision should be found within existing policy and legislative provisions.

7. Where decisions are to be referred to other University committees then meeting dates should be scheduled to facilitate the efficient flow of business to these committees.

8. There should be an opportunity at the start of each meeting for members to declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest in respect of any item and where appropriate to absent themselves from discussion and/or the room while the item is being considered.

9. Documentation for committees should be written precisely, accurately, clearly and succinctly. The level of formality and detail should match the purpose and readership of the document.

10. Agendas of meetings should:

   • Contain or have attached any background material necessary to enable members to make informed decisions. If items have been discussed previously a chronology of key elements of the discussion should be attached.
   • Be divided into three parts (Attachment C):
     
     Part 1. Items for Communication to be dealt with En Bloc - only items for communication that require no decision or discussion, but are relevant to the business of the committee or its future decision-making, or require dissemination by members to staff within their areas;
     
     Part 2. Items for Decision to be dealt with En Bloc - only items for decision with clear recommendations by the Chair that are likely to require no further discussion;
     
     Part 3. Items for Discussion and Decision.
     
   • Include an Item/Business in Progress List providing an update of actions since the last meeting, where appropriate
   • At the discretion of the Chair allow items of ‘Other Business’ provided there is advance notice to the Chair and the item is not a major policy item.
   • Be distributed to members at least three working days before the meeting and items perceived by the Chair to be key issues should be highlighted. Deadlines for placing formal items on the agenda should be enforced by the Chair and the Executive Officer. Rather than delay the distribution of an agenda because one item is not ready, the use of supplementary agendas should be considered.
   • Be posted on the Web, with attachments where possible and available to all staff on the University’s intranet, unless issues of confidentiality preclude this.

11. Minutes of meetings should:

   • Contain a summary or précis of events, in dot form wherever possible, rather than a detailed account of every contribution. In general names of individuals should not be recorded in the discussion.
   • Contain all resolutions and agreements, whether reached formally through motions or through general
consensus, and a clear statement of the action to be taken in relation to each item including the person responsible for the action and a timeline for completion, where appropriate.
• Be distributed to committee members within 10 working days of the close of the meeting.
• Be posted on the Web and available to all staff on the University’s intranet, unless issues of confidentiality preclude this.

Role of Members:

12. Members are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the University’s Code of Conduct and the University Committee Members’ Code of Conduct.

13. Members are required to participate actively in committee business and provide appropriate contributions to decision making for the betterment of the University as a whole.

14. University members should only nominate for committees for which they feel they are well placed and appropriately informed to contribute to the business of that committee.

15. Members who represent constituents on a committee should make every attempt to canvass the views and opinion of that group to bring back to the discussion of the committee and report committee decisions back to their constituents.

Role of Chair and Executive Officer:

16. Chairs and Executive Officers are responsible for ensuring these rules for the operation of committees are followed including the appropriate recording of decisions and actions.

17. Chairs should conduct meetings with the degree of formality appropriate to the committee. Generally, greater formality is needed with major committees, committees with a larger membership and where it is required by constitutional and statutory provisions.

18. Chairs should ensure meetings are conducted fluently so members understand the matters at hand and have the opportunity to discuss them, and the voting processes and resolutions are clear. Chairs should try to ensure the active participation by all members of the committee.

19. Chairs and the Executive Officers have a responsibility to ensure the business of the committee is either referred for a decision to the relevant committee or is communicated effectively to relevant areas of the University.

20. Committees should make provision for delegating responsibilities to the Chair and Executive Officer as far as possible, ensuring accountability for these delegations.

21. Chairs and Executive Officers should meet to discuss the draft agenda so both understand the purpose and possible outcomes of the meeting.

22. Executive Officers should familiarise themselves with the working of the University committee system as a whole, and as much as possible work with Executive Officers of other committees to ensure smooth transition of business through the committee system.

23. Executive Officers should work with the Chair to provide all new members with induction briefing material and appropriately induct new members into the committee. Where possible, this should occur well before the member’s first attendance at a meeting of the committee. It is recommended that briefing material provided to new members includes:

• The constitution of the committee including information on the position of the committee in the University committee structure (namely maps with pathways for decisions and communication).
• The Principles and Rules of the Operation of Committees.
• The Code of Conduct of committee members.
• Committee meeting dates.
• Major items of business of the committee of the previous year.
• Commonly used acronyms and abbreviations which might be used in the conduct of the committee’s business.
• Effective Meetings - A Guide to Good Practice

Any enquiries relating to the rules for the operation of committees may be directed to the Academic Policy Services.

Revised 16 February 2006
Academic Policy Services
University Committee Members' Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct

Membership of a University Committee is an important role and brings with it key responsibilities and obligations. The specific membership requirements for University Committees have been prepared to promote good practice and give committee members a summary of their obligations and provide guidance on ethical conduct.


1. **Personal Conduct:** All members of University committees are required to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the University’s Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. A copy is available at: http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/publications/code_of_ethics

Members of committees are also required to:

- Understand the committee’s role and purpose within the University.
- Stay informed about relevant matters affecting the committee’s business.
- Attend all committee meetings or where attendance is not possible, submit an apology.
- Participate actively and work cooperatively with other committee members and University staff.
- Prepare for all committee meetings by reading and considering the agenda items, papers circulated and other relevant documents.
- Not improperly influence other committee members.
- Make new points succinctly without reiterating at length points already made.

2. **Accountability.** All members have a responsibility to ensure efficient and effective operations of the committee, avoid extravagant and wasteful use of resources and ensure actions are consistent with the role and purpose of the committee.

Members of committees are also required to:

- Participate constructively in committee activities in a lawful, ethical and justifiable manner.
- Ensure decisions are consistent with any statutory and legal requirements.
- Ensure resources, funds and staff are used effectively and economically for committee business.

3. **Record Keeping and Use of Information:** All documentation produced by the committee forms part of the University records and should be maintained in accordance with University’s Record Keeping Plan (http://www.archives.uwa.edu.au/information_about/uwa_record_keeping_plan).

In conjunction with specific responsibilities of the Executive Officer, members of committees are also required to:

- Ensure adequate procedures are followed for documenting decisions and actions of the committee.
- Maintain confidentiality of committee business where necessary, ensuring confidential records are subject to appropriate storage and access procedures.
- Respect confidential discussions and not misuse any information obtained through membership of the committee.
- Openly declare any matters of private interest and record any issues with the potential for conflict or perceived conflict to ensure they are transparent and capable of review.
- Where appropriate, disqualify themselves from committee discussions and decisions where a conflict of interest occurs.
- Be aware of the FOI Act 1992 and that access may be sought to all records under this legislation

Where members are unsure of their obligations or responsibilities under the University Committee Members’ Code of Conduct, the member should contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the Committee for assistance.

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