



AGENDAS, MINUTES & MEETINGS

GUIDELINES

1. INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines have been developed to assist staff in the preparation of agendas and minutes for formal Notre Dame committees or informal school or office meetings. The Guidelines provide information about the skills and capabilities required for key roles in the meeting process as well as advice on preparing agendas and minute-taking.

2. KEY ROLES

2.1 Minute Secretary

2.1.1 Qualities, skills and capabilities

The Minute Secretary (also known as the “Secretary” or the “Minute-taker”) is a key contributor to the success of a meeting and its outcomes. A Minute Secretary must be a good listener, reliable, well organised and objective. He or she must also be able to analyse and record relevant information. The Minute Secretary needs to be politically aware and sensitive to information being presented and discussed.

2.1.2 Duties

The Minute Secretary may be required to undertake all or some of the following duties:

- Develop a schedule of meeting dates for approval
- Book meeting rooms
- Check facilities are available and in working order
- Arrange refreshments
- Prepare agendas in consultation with the Chair
- Circulate agendas and papers to members
- Undertake research and prepare information for members as required
- Brief the Chair on items of business and their implications prior to the meeting
- Advise the Chair and Committee on procedural matters as required
- Take Minutes

- Keep on hand information concerning terms of reference, constitution and quorum
- Prepare separate action summaries if required
- Present the draft minutes to the Chair for review and approval
- Circulate minutes to committee members
- Notify staff of follow-up action to be taken and/or information to be noted
- Maintain committee information, membership and contact details
- Maintain the records of minutes of past meetings

2.1.3 Good Practice Tips for Minute-Secretaries

- When taking minutes it helps to have background knowledge of past events relating to the Committee and its actions. If you are new to the role or assisting on an ad hoc basis, it may be worthwhile reviewing the minutes of at least two prior meetings to develop some background knowledge of the issues at hand.
- Further to the above point, it is a good idea to review the previous minutes to familiarise yourself with acronyms, technical language and/or ‘jargon’ that may be used by the particular committee/school.
- A Minute Secretary must only provide procedural advice during a meeting. The Minute Secretary does not contribute to discussion or voice an opinion about an issue at hand.
- The Minute Secretary is responsible for signalling to the Chair if he or she becomes unsure about the outcomes of a particular issue. The Minute Secretary should ask the Chair to clarify an issue at the time the issue is raised, rather than waiting until the meeting is adjourned.
- It is good practice to type up the minutes from hand written notes immediately after the meeting has been held. The Minute Secretary should consult with the Chair on any items that are sensitive and need to be worded carefully.
- In relation to the timing of circulation of documents, a good rule of thumb is that agendas and papers should be circulated at least 5 – 7 days prior to the meeting and minutes should be circulated no later than one week after the meeting.
- It is good practice to diarise the dates of meetings and the dates when agendas and minutes need to be circulated.

2.2 The Chair/Chairperson

2.2.1 Qualities, skills and capabilities

Depending on the type of meeting, staff in any position at Notre Dame may be responsible for chairing meetings. The Chair may be a senior member of staff who fulfils the position of Chair until he or she steps down from the role. Alternatively,

meetings may be chaired by staff members on an ad hoc or revolving basis. No matter what type of meeting is involved, the Chair needs to be an articulate speaker, a good manager of people and information flow, respectful, aware of the procedural requirements and protocols for meetings and able to summarize key points and decisions reached. The Chair must act with confidence, be comfortable leading a group of people, maintain objectivity and exercise good judgment.

2.2.2 Duties

The Chair is usually required to undertake the following duties:

- Approve agenda items and inclusion of papers
- Manage, guide and direct the conduct of business at meetings
- Facilitate discussion by members
- Ensure business is conducted in a timely fashion
- Summarise views
- Clarify and confirm final decisions and actions to be taken
- Note the time of adjournment
- Review and sign off on minutes for presentation at the next meeting (minutes in their final form are not approved until the next meeting)

2.2.3 Good Practice Tips for Chairpersons

- Arrive early
- Start the meeting at the time specified on the formal notice.
- Lead each item and identify whether they are for information, discussion or decision.
- Keep people focused on the agenda and guide members back to the agenda if discussion wanders too far. However, a balance needs to be achieved between adherence to the agenda and encouraging or allowing a free exchange of ideas.
- Be sensitive to signals from the Minute Secretary. The Minute Secretary may be watching the clock for you. The Minute Secretary may also be unsure of an outcome reached and require clarification.
- Keep an eye on the time
- Act consensually. The chair is not an autocratic ruler!
- Prior to the meeting, ensure that you are across the procedural requirements for the meeting, including voting rules, quorum issues etc

3 PREPARING AN AGENDA (Refer to examples at Appendix 1)

3.1 Information to be included (in a standard agenda):

- Name of Committee/type of meeting
- The contact details for the Minute Secretary/Secretary
- A list of members and invited guests
- A formal 'Notice of Meeting' (Date, Time, Location)
- Agenda items:
 - Opening reflection/prayer
 - Apologies
 - Confirmation of Minutes from Previous Meeting
 - Correspondence (if any)
 - Business Arising from Previous Meeting
 - Main Agenda Items
 - General Business (also known as “Other Business”)
- Next Meeting: Date, time and location

3.2 Tips for preparing agendas

- Make sure the list of members is up-to-date. It provides a record of who sat on the Committee at that moment in time. Check it if cutting and pasting from another document
- Number each individual subject item
- Number every page
- Include a “subject matter title” for each item and the name of the person speaking to the item
- Don't be afraid to space things out if it makes the Agenda easier to read
- Keep to a standard format, layout, font etc

4 PREPARING MINUTES

Minutes are the official record of what was raised and agreed and are one of the ways that a committee is accountable for its decisions and actions.

The minutes *should not be a full verbatim record of what was said* (i.e. no “he said”, “she said”). Rather, the minutes should provide a clear and succinct record of the business conducted, decisions made and action to be taken.

4.1 Information to be included

The Minutes should include the following information (and should, where possible, mirror the format and content of the Agenda):

- Name of Committee/type of meeting
- Minute Secretary/Secretary contact details
- Title: Minutes of Meeting of the X, held at Xam/pm on X in X Room
- Present: Record everyone present. Include invited guests or persons present as observers only. If someone is present for part of the meeting, indicate “part attendance” beside their name. Indicate when they left the meeting within the text of the minutes.
- Opening reflection/prayer and by whom
- Apologies: record apologies accepted and anyone not in attendance without sending an apology
- Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting: Note whether the minutes of the meeting (dated X) were accepted as a true and accurate record.
- Correspondence: Indicate whether any was received and any issues discussed.
- Business Arising from Minutes of Previous Meeting (not covered elsewhere in Agenda). Refer to previous business by including details of the item number from the minutes of the meeting in which the item was originally raised as well as the meeting number. For example:
 - “5.1. Item 6.3 of Minutes of Meeting 5/09, Admissions Strategic Plan
“
- Main Agenda items.
 - Number the items and include a subject matter title (For example: “6.1 Report of Vice Chancellor on Academic Structure”)
 - Include details of the reports or papers accompanying an agenda item.
 - Include a small amount of background information to set the scene (e.g. “The Committee considered a proposal prepared by the Staffing Office and circulated with the agenda”).
 - Provide a brief description of key issues raised/discussed
 - Provide the conclusion reached or decision made. Record it unambiguously. Use words like “it was agreed that ...” or “it was resolved that ...” If the matter was subject to a vote, note whether the decision was unanimous or, if not, provide the number of votes for and against. Any abstentions should also be recorded.
 - Set out clearly any actions to be taken, by whom and when. Use formatting to highlight the action (e.g. a separate column, bold type or a shaded box)

- General Business (also known as “Other Business”): Number the items and include a title for each subject matter
- Next Meeting: Include time, date and place
- Note the time the meeting ended/adjourned.
- Include an “acceptance/approval” section:
 - Minutes prepared by (name of Minute Secretary) on behalf of (name of Chair)
 - Space for signature of Chair “Signed as a correct record”. This is signed by the Chair at the next meeting under the item “Confirmation of Minutes from Previous Meeting”.

4.2 Tips for taking minutes during the meeting

- Use the agenda to maintain focus on each item
- Use numbering to match discussion with agenda items
- Concentrate (sometimes hard during lengthy, less exciting discussions!)
- If you don’t have shorthand skills, use your own abbreviations to make note taking easier/quicker
- Take summary notes of key points
- It is OK to jot down key statements critical to the debate
- Remember that the minutes are an official record. Do not include information that may be sensitive and is not required to reflect decisions reached and action to be taken. For example: if someone is critical of an individual’s performance or actions during a meeting, do not include identifying details and even then, the Chair should be consulted as to what information, if any, is included in the Minutes

4.3 Tips for after the meeting - typing up minutes

- Type up the minutes as soon as possible following the meeting (i.e. within 24 hours)
- Write minutes in the third person and in the past tense (e.g. “it was agreed...”, “the Committee raised...”, “the Chair commented that...”)
- Write actions in future tense (e.g. “B Brown to write to VC...”, “item 6.2 to be raised at next Dean’s Meeting on ...”)
- Use plain English
- Number each individual subject item
- Number every page
- The full name of a committee/body/document should be included before an acronym is used. This applies to both agendas and minutes. Thereafter,

throughout the document, the committee/body/document can be referred to by its acronym.

- Check spelling
- Check for any grammatical or typographical errors
- Imagine you are new to the committee – could you understand what business has been conducted by reading the Minutes? If not, you may need to provide more explanatory detail.

Audio Recording of Meetings

In some circumstances audio recording of meetings may be approved. Audio recording may be an option where the meeting is likely (or known to be) long and complex. In addition, audio recording may be an option where it is important to capture each member's contribution to the discussion or the exact wording of resolutions. For example, in the "*Planning Guide for Executive Officers of Course Reviews*" the Executive Officer may consider that the Minute Secretary should be supported by audio recording of the meeting.

However, if the Minute Secretary intends to audio record the meeting, the consent of each member present at the meeting must be obtained before the meeting proceeds. The Minute Secretary should bring this point to the attention of the Chair who should seek approval from members present.

Please find following excerpt from the *Planning Guide for Executive Officers of Course Reviews* :

- There are no parameters around taping meetings other than courtesy advising that they will be taped and why it is being done.
- Nobody has a right to record a meeting; however, anyone requesting that a recording takes place is entitled to a reasonable explanation if that request is declined.
- If the request is refused, then the person who refuses should give an explanation for the refusal;
- Taping of meetings should only be permitted where all participants are entirely happy for taping to take place. Nobody should be placed under any pressure to agree.
- Taping a meeting is not a passive, neutral act; it can and usually will significantly affect the dynamic of the meeting. Some people do feel uneasy or even threatened if they are conscious that what they say is being preserved on tape. As a result they may well say things differently or not at all.
- There are also technical issues surrounding taping. Achieving reasonable sound quality can be a challenge and identifying who says what on an audiotape is not always easy.
- The taping process must not be allowed to interfere with or impact on the smooth running of the meeting. It would not for instance, be reasonable to require everyone to state their name each time they start to speak.

Meeting Evaluation

It is important for the Chair to receive feedback regarding the administrative aspects of a meeting. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to include a "Meeting evaluation" item in the Agenda. When this item arises in the meeting, a member, who has advanced notice of this role, is asked to critique all aspects of the meeting: standard of papers presented, quality of discussions, whether the meeting ran according to time etc. The aim of this process is continuing improvement. Other members can comment on whether there were too many issues for consideration, not enough background paperwork, the quality of presentations etc.

Example: Draft Agenda



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

ACADEMIC COUNCIL AGENDA

Minute Secretary: Ingrid Dias

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NOTICE OF MEETING (6/09)

A Meeting of the **Academic Council** will be held at **2pm** on **Friday 20th November 2009** in the Helen Lombard Room.

Members who are unable to attend are asked to notify Ingrid Dias at the above address. Enquiries concerning this meeting may also be directed to Ms Dias.

Ingrid Dias
For
Prof. Mark McKenna
Provost
18 November 2009

MEMBERS

Prof. S. Red [Chair], Provost, Mrs M. Yellow, Registrar, Prof. R. Black, Associate Provost, Prof N Green, Dean, Arts & Sciences, A/Prof S Blue, Dean, Business, Prof. N. Brown, Dean, Medicine & Ms L. White, Ms I Dias (Minute Secretary)

Invited Guests: Prof. C Indigo, Vice Chancellor & Mr L Purple

AGENDA (Meeting 6/09)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Opening Reflection/Prayer | Chair |
| 2. Apologies | Chair |

Apologies have been received from Prof. N. Brown & Ms L White

- 3. Confirmation of Minutes from Previous Meeting** Chair
- Minutes from meeting of 10 October 2009 to be presented.
- 4. Correspondence** Chair
- Email from S Erickson dated 3 October 2009
- 5. Business Arising from Previous Meeting (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)**
- 5.1 Item 6.3 of Minutes of Meeting 5/09, Evaluation Forms R.Black
- 6. Main Agenda Items (New Business)**
- 6.1 Student Audit. *Refer Report dated 11 November 2009, attached* M. Yellow
- 6.2 2010 Planning. *Refer draft calendar dated 3 November 2009, attached.* N. Green
- 6.3 AQUA Update S. Red
- 6.4 Vice Chancellor's Confidential Report C. Indigo
- 7. Other Business**
- 8. Next Meeting**
- 2pm on Monday 14th December 2009 in the Helen Lombard Room (ND1)

Example: Draft Minutes



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

ACADEMIC COUNCIL MINUTES

Minute Secretary: Ingrid Dias

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Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Council held at 2pm on Friday 20th November 2009 in the Helen Lombard Room (Meeting 6/09)

Present

Prof. S. Red [Chair], Provost, Mrs M. Yellow, Registrar, Prof. R. Black, Associate Provost, Prof N. Green, Dean, Arts & Sciences, A/Prof S Blue, Dean, Business, Prof. C Indigo, Vice Chancellor, Mr L Purple, Ms I Dias (Minute Secretary)

Note: A symbol "C" beside an item in the Minutes means that the item was confidential and remains confidential after the meeting.

- 1. Opening Reflection/Prayer** Chair

- 2. Apologies** Chair

Apologies were received from Prof. N Brown & Ms L White

- 3. Confirmation of Minutes from Previous Meeting** Chair

The Minutes of the previous meeting (5/09) held 10th October 2009 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

- 4. Correspondence** Chair

Email from S Erickson dated 3 October 2009 was noted. No further action required.

5. Business Arising from Previous Meeting

- 5.1 Item 6.3 of Minutes of Meeting 5/09, Evaluation Forms R.Black

RB advised that evaluation forms have now been printed and are ready for circulation in week 8.

Action: RB to provide a report on progress at next Academic Council Meeting.

6. Main Agenda Items (New Business)

- 6.1 Student Audit. *Refer Report dated 11 November 2009* M. Yellow

MY tabled the report dated 11 November 2009. N Green queried whether the Audit could be conducted within timeframe specified. It was confirmed that it could be done providing staff were aware of responsibilities. The Chair drew members' attention to other Student Audit publications on the Universities website.

Action: MY to advise Executive Directors and Deans of timeline and School/Office responsibilities.

- 6.2 2010 Planning. *Refer Draft Calendar dated 3 October 2009* N.Green

NG discussed need to settle 2010 Academic Calendar. The Committee noted timetable for events listed and resolved that the following events/items, should be included in the calendar:

- Public Holidays (where NOTRE DAME both open and closed)
- Study week XX

Action: NG to update calendar with amendments and circulate to members for sign-off.

S. Red

- 6.3 AQUA Update

SR advised that the supplementary report had been well received by AQUA. Some additional information had been sought in relation to X,Y,Z and SR will be contacting the relevant Schools and Offices for this information. NOTRE DAME is likely to be contacted again in mid 2010 for a further update on action items as detailed in the AQUA report dated 8 May 2009.

Action: SR to obtain additional information required and provide final report to AQUA by 20 December 2009.

- 6.4 Vice Chancellor's Report (C) VC
Confidential to members only. Refer to Confidential Minutes of Meeting 6/09.

7. Other Business

No other business was raised at the meeting.

8. Next Meeting

Council noted that the next scheduled meeting of Council would be held at 2pm on 16 December 2009 in the Helen Lombard Room.

The meeting closed at 3:10pm.

Signed as a correct record

Chair

Date