

GUIDELINES FOR UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE/COUNCIL OFFICERS

In all matters of parliamentary procedure (a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion) University committees/councils shall refer to Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition. According to Robert's Rules of Order, bylaws define the primary characteristics of a committee, prescribe how it should function, and include rules that are so important that they may not be changed without prior notice to members and formal vote and agreement by a majority of members. Bylaws should include expectations as well as guidelines for members. Issues such as attendance, responsibilities, and discipline should be addressed.

Responsibilities and Roles of the Chairperson

Chairing a democratically-based meeting of any committee/council can be a challenge. A balance is needed between efficient decision making and listening to divergent views. If this balance is not well cared for by the Chair, frustration with the organization often results. The role of the Chair includes:

Procedural responsibilities/roles:

- A) Lead and guide the conduct of meetings;
- B) See that committee/council rules are observed;
- C) Maintain a position of impartiality;
- D) Preserve an objective and impersonal approach;
- E) Act as official representative of the committee/council and the official spokesperson to the media when needed.

Administrative responsibilities/roles:

- A) Convene the committee/council as needed to fulfill its charge;
- B) Establish an agenda for each meeting;
- C) Oversee each committee/council meeting;
- D) Form subcommittees and delegate responsibilities as needed to fulfill the committee's mission;
- E) Annually evaluate committee/council members performance, and make recommendations for membership;
- F) Maintain a file that includes:
 - a. a statement of the charter of the committee/council;
 - b. the approved minutes of each committee/council meeting;
 - c. the annual report of the committee/council;
 - d. and documents, correspondence, data and other information that might be of continuing value to the committee/council.
- G) Also, the chairperson shall forward committee/council records to the new committee/council chair when a new one is appointed.

Responsibilities and Roles of the Secretary:

The secretary is the recording officer of the committee and should keep a record of all the proceedings, usually called the *minutes*.

Minutes

Since minutes are the “formal” record of meetings, it is important to ensure that all items presented, discussed and those in which actions are taken, are documented in a concise and timely manner. The following guidelines are provided to assist anyone responsible for the recording of minutes. They are not intended to be all inclusive.

Submission of Minutes

- Timely submission of minutes ensures that all parties are provided with information and actions taken as soon as possible; therefore, it is recommended that minutes are prepared and submitted for approval within one week of meeting’s conclusion. This timeframe helps ensure the most complete information, and will also allow time to confirm information on items for which there may be questions.
- After a draft of the minutes is complete, have another person in attendance, preferably the chair of the committee/council, proof the document. This helps ensure that all items presented and actions taken are documented properly.
- Members of the committee are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the minutes circulated, and if necessary, should request any amendments to the minutes prior to their formal approval at the next scheduled meeting of the committee. All agreed amendments must be formally recorded as part of the resolution to approve the previous minutes.

Content of Minutes

- Kind of meeting, "regular" or "special";
- Name of the organization or assembly;
- Date/time of meeting and place;
- The fact of the presence of the regular chair and secretary, or in their absence the names of their substitutes, and the presence of the committee/council members;
- Whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved, or approved as corrected, and the date of the meeting if other than a regular meeting;
- All information pertaining to items on the approved agenda and be recorded in that same order.

- Ensure that any items requiring action to be taken, such as motions and amendments, are moved, seconded and approved by vote. (especially effective dates of approved items, if appropriate)
- Discussion items should be recorded as any other items, keeping information precise and identifying the major points of interest. Include only pertinent information to the topic being discussed. (It is not necessary to include every word that is discussed, nor identify each speaker by name; use good judgment based on the item being discussed.)
- Minutes should contain mainly a record of what was *done* at the meeting, not what was *said* by the members

Distribution of Approved Minutes

Once approved by the respective committee/council, minutes of committee meetings should be forwarded to the appropriate office for posting on the governance website.

Helpful Hints

- Keep it short and simple.
- Prior to meetings, review the agenda and minutes of the last meeting with the secretary.
- Use good listening skills to know what should and/or should not be included in the minutes.
- Know the charge of the committee/council and the reporting structure (to whom the group reports or those groups which report to the group).