

ROLE OF A COMMITTEE CHAIR (Updated September 2015)

Being a committee Chair is a very important role. It will be an interesting activity and at times will be challenging. Your role is to ensure that the business which comes to your committee is dealt with appropriately, so enabling the business to be completed, or, if necessary, to move on through the committee structure. It is essential that you are familiar with your committee's Terms of Reference so that you are aware of what your committee is authorised to do. You also need to be aware of the reporting lines of your committee and where it fits in the committee structure.

The School Calendar contains a diagram showing the committee structure within the School. This will show you whether any committees report to your committee, and to which committee(s) your committee needs to report. All committees are ultimately responsible to the Board of Trustees.

You will need to work very closely with your committee Secretary. Notes have been prepared about the roles of committee Secretary and of committee member and you may find it useful to read these:

Role of a Committee Member:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/policies/37354.pdf>

Role of a Committee Secretary:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/policies/37355.pdf>

If you have difficulty accessing these documents they can be found at the web address below, where they are listed on the right-hand side of the page as downloadable documents.

www.soas.ac.uk/committees/

MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Details of the membership of all committees and their Terms of Reference are set out in the School's Standing Orders, which can be found at:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/standingorders/>

2. When the committee structure was reviewed in 2007, certain general principles were agreed. These principles form the foundation on which the committee structure is based. The principles are set out in Annex 1 of this document.

3. Along with the section of Standing Orders which details the procedures for the conduct of committee meetings (Annex XIV) the Terms of Reference should form the first item on the agenda of the committee's first meeting of each academic session. These describe the business that can be dealt with by the committee. Your committee cannot just decide to alter its Terms of Reference as this will result in a change to Standing Orders, and such changes have to be approved by the Board of Trustees.

4. You need to be aware of who the members of your committee are. Not everyone who attends the committee meetings will necessarily be a member of the committee. Some committees will have people who are 'in attendance' (this will normally be stated in the Terms of Reference). They are at the meeting to offer advice when this is required, but are not members of the committee.

5. The role of committee members is not to represent a particular group or interest, unless this is explicitly stated in the Terms of Reference of a Committee (e.g. a Trade Union representative). Members are on committees as individuals, and should be chosen because they have skills, knowledge or interests relating to the areas dealt with by the committee. While members may be from a particular group, and can bring the views of that group to the meeting, once at the meeting, the interests of the School must be the overriding consideration.

6. Given the reasons for selection, it would not normally be possible for another individual to attend a meeting in place of a committee member who was unable to attend. However, if it were known in advance that a committee member would be unable to attend two or more consecutive meetings, then an alternative member could be nominated, where someone with suitable skills or knowledge was available. The process of nomination would be as for the original member.

7. Committees may ask a non-member to attend a meeting if they feel that this individual has skills or knowledge which would enable them to make a contribution to a particular item under discussion. It is not expected that this individual would attend every meeting of a Committee.

8. It is important to remember that, whatever the item under discussion, a committee is not empowered to discuss individuals, or individual cases, unless this is explicitly set out in the committee's Terms of Reference. The School has a legal obligation to respect an individual's right to confidentiality and privacy. For further information on this, see 'Freedom of Information and Data Protection: Guidance for Committee Servicing' (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/foi/committees/>).

VENUE AND TIMING

9. Please check the date and venue of each of the meetings of your committee in the School Calendar. As Chair, if you feel it necessary you may call additional meetings of the committee during the session. You must give those who attend the meetings notice of each new meeting (see Annex XIV of Standing Orders for exact timing, as this will depend on whether the committee has lay members), and your committee Secretary will need to book a room for each meeting that is not listed in the Calendar.

PANELS

10. Some committees have Panels attached to them. These Panels are not usually part of the formal committee structure of the School. Their role is normally to advise the committee on particular issues. Each Panel should have clearly stated Terms of Reference and membership.

11. For those Panels which are not part of the formal committee structure (the committee diagram in the Calendar lists those Panels which are part of the formal structure) the Terms of Reference and membership should (with the exception of those listed below) be determined by the parent committee and approved each session. In these cases the committee is also responsible for asking individuals to become members of the Panel. Panel membership will often be drawn from the membership of the parent committee, although this is not a requirement.

12. The membership of some Panels is set out in Standing Orders, and these Panels appear on the committee diagram in the Calendar. In this case, Terms of Reference and membership can only be altered with the approval of the Board of Trustees, and should therefore be noted by the parent committee rather than being approved.

13. There are some Panels whose membership is determined by School policies/procedures (for example Promotion Panels), and the Terms of Reference and membership of such Panels will need to be 'noted' rather than 'approved'.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

14. The School's Standing Orders, which contain information about the School's Governance, state the following:

There is a general duty on all members of the Board of Trustees and its committees to disclose at the earliest practical opportunity any financial or other beneficial interests they or any close associate or any organisation in which they hold office of employment may have in any transaction and consideration between the University and a third party. The circumstances in which such a declaration is appropriate are when the Board of Trustees or

any of its committees has business which is relevant to those interests or when in the course of the meeting the member becomes aware that they have or may have a financial or other beneficial interest in a specific item of business to be transacted.

The proper manner of indicating a conflict or potential conflict of interest is to inform the Secretary (as Clerk to the Board of Trustees) in advance of the meeting or to draw it to the attention of the Chair of the meeting as the member becomes aware of a conflict during the course of discussion.

The non-disclosure of interest, if established as material to the business of the Board of Trustees or its committees, may lead to action by the Board of Trustees including removal from office.

15. If, as Chair, you discover in the course of discussion that you have a financial or other beneficial interest in the item of business under consideration, you should immediately end the discussion, explaining to the committee that you feel you may have a conflict of interest, and refer the matter to the School Secretary.

16. You should also draw the attention of committee members to the possible implications of these rules for internal conflicts of interest caused by sectional and personal considerations.

INDUCTION

17. The Board of Trustees has asked that members who are new to a committee should be given a brief induction into the work of the committee before the first meeting of the session. You should discuss how this is to be done with your committee Secretary. The easiest way to do this would be to have a short induction for all committee members (it is always a good idea to remind members of the purpose of the committee, and what their roles and responsibilities are) at the beginning of the first meeting of the year, before any formal business is dealt with.

18. The first item on the agenda of the first meeting of every committee in each year should be the terms of reference and membership of that committee (see below). You could use this document as part of the induction, as everyone present will have this information in front of them. This will save you the need to organise a separate meeting, and will ensure that everyone is aware of the committee's remit.

AGENDA

19. You will need to agree with your committee Secretary who should be contacted before each meeting to see whether they have items for the agenda. You may decide that the committee Secretary should only contact committee members and those in attendance (if your committee has any individuals in attendance). Alternatively, the business of your committee may be such that it is appropriate to remind others in the School of the deadline for papers, as items are more likely to come from individuals who do not attend meetings of your committee.

20. You may need to hold several meetings with your committee Secretary to agree the agenda for a committee meeting. You may find that you receive items from members which are outside your committee's Terms of Reference. If you have any doubts about whether your committee should be dealing with an item please speak to the committee Secretary in the first instance, then, if necessary, the Secretariat Manager.

Open and reserved agendas

21. Depending on the nature of the items discussed by your committee, the committee may need two agendas - an open agenda and a reserved agenda.

22. As few items as possible should be placed on a reserved agenda. If an item is put onto a reserved agenda, it is important that you know why. Reserved items will normally be (as set out in Standing Orders Annex XIV) where matters under discussion are of a sensitive nature for reasons

of protocol or commercial interest or because they relate to individual or identifiable staff or students. These provisions have to be interpreted in light of the Freedom of Information Act and related legislation such as the Data Protection Act, which now define the legal framework for rights of access to information held by the School.

23. Committee Secretaries will need to take account of Freedom of Information factors when setting open and reserved agendas. Essentially this involves:

- Identifying items which match certain categories, and placing them on the reserved agenda. These items should go on the reserved agenda because they would be likely to generate information that would be exempt if they were to be requested under Freedom of Information. The record of the discussion of these items should go in to reserved minutes.
- Placing **all other items** on the open agenda. The record of the discussion of these should appear in the open minutes.

24. Detailed guidance has been produced by the Information Compliance Manager on what types of item should go into open and reserved business: see 'Freedom of Information and Data Protection: Guidance for Committee Servicing' (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/foi/committees/>).

It is important that all committee Secretaries and Chairs read this guidance. Failure to draw the correct distinction between open and reserved business could not only lead to access to information being restricted unnecessarily; in some situations, disclosing information incorrectly could be unlawful (e.g. because doing so violates the Data Protection Act), or could lead to legal action against the School by a third party.

Confidentiality

25. It is essential that all committee members recognise that items which appear on a reserved agenda should be dealt with in the strictest confidence. It is possible that to reveal such information could, in some circumstances, be unlawful or lead to legal action.

26. Student members of committees are treated in the same way as all other committee members, and receive all papers.

Format of agenda

27. There may be items which appear on every agenda (standing items) or ones that appear at particular times of the year. The committee Secretary should keep a note of the latter ones for future reference.

28. At the first meeting of the committee in each session, the first item on the agenda should be the committee noting its membership and Terms of Reference along with the procedure for the conduct of meetings (Annex XIV of Standing Orders), followed by approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. For every other agenda the first item should be the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

29. The next item on the agenda should be 'Action Taken'. At this point you should run through each of the action points from the last set of minutes (these are listed on the final page of the minutes), as this allows the committee to receive information about what has happened since the last meeting. It is important, for audit purposes, that we can show that action points have been completed. Having this item on the agenda ensures this information is recorded in the next set of minutes.

30. This should be followed by 'Matters Arising'. This allows updates to be made about any items which were discussed at the last meeting, which did not result in action points, and which do not appear anywhere else on the agenda.

31. You will need to agree with the committee Secretary the order of the remaining items on the agenda, and how they are to be presented to the committee.

32. If your committee is responsible for agreeing the terms of reference and membership of any Panels, it would be appropriate to approve the Terms of Reference and decide on who will be members of the Panel for the following year, at the last meeting of each session. This ensures that members are in place for the start of the following session.

33. If the membership and terms of reference are outside your committee's control (for example, Promotions Panels), then you may choose to note membership and terms of reference at the first meeting of each session.

34. You might find the following definitions helpful when determining how papers are to be presented to the committee:

- **To note:** to acknowledge information given. There is generally no need to discuss the item in question
- **To receive:** to formally receive the document or information. The committee is not being asked to make a decision
- **To consider:** to discuss the topic/document. The committee is not being asked to make a decision about it but is being asked for its views
- **To approve:** to discuss and reach a decision about something wholly within the committee's remit
- **To recommend:** to discuss an issue and recommend action to another body
- **To endorse:** to support a decision made elsewhere

Any Other Business

35. School agendas no longer have 'Any Other Business' listed as the final agenda item. Standing Orders clearly states that committees can only discuss items that appear on the agenda, except for 'any matter of which the Chair has been advised in advance, which he/she considers urgent, and which has arisen too late to be specified in the agenda'.

36. Having 'Any Other Business' on the agenda had led to some committee members assuming that it was OK to raise any issue that they wished to at the end of the meeting, whether this fell within the remit of the committee, and irrespective of whether or not the matter had been discussed with the Secretary/Chair.

37. This does not mean that issues cannot be raised which do not appear on the agenda, but these issues must be discussed with the Secretary/Chair in advance, so that you can decide whether the items are of an urgent nature and fall within the remit of the committee. You can then raise appropriate items at the meeting, once the rest of the agenda has been dealt with.

38. Major items which require the committee to make a decision should not be raised in this way. Committee members will not have had an opportunity to consider such items before the meeting, so limiting the effectiveness of any decision. If such an item is so urgent that it cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting, it may be necessary to hold an additional meeting to consider it.

39. The same order of business applies on the reserved agenda.

Format of papers for the committee (Appendices)

40. There are School guidelines for producing committee papers and these can be found at:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admin/governance/policies/file72069.pdf>

41. It is important that committees receive an appropriate level of information and detail, in an easy to follow format, to enable them to complete their work effectively and efficiently. Papers need to be focused and as short as possible, setting out only the facts that the committee needs in order to do whatever is being asked to do.

42. Your committee secretary will be able to give advice to you, and committee members, about producing committee papers.

Knowing the agenda

43. You must make sure that you have read papers carefully before agreeing to their appearance on the agenda. At the meeting you will need to be both well informed and impartial, so you may wish to discuss a paper with the originator in advance of the meeting. Along with the committee Secretary, you will need to decide whether a paper contains information which means it should appear on the reserved rather than the open agenda. You also need to make sure that you are familiar enough with the business on the agenda so that you will not be surprised by the contents of any of the papers at the meeting.

Items to note

44. Routine items which the committee is being asked to note would not normally be discussed at the meeting. The committee Secretary may, with your permission, put an asterisk by such items. In this case there should be a note at the top of the agenda stating that such items will not be discussed at the meeting unless the Secretary is informed by 9am on the day before the meeting that a member wishes to discuss this particular item.

To follow/tabled papers

45. Someone submitting a paper may ask that the item be put on the agenda, but the paper itself be sent out after the agenda has been distributed, but before the meeting, as the paper will not be ready in time to distribute with the agenda. Your permission is required for this to happen. **It is not good practice, as committee members will only have a limited time to consider the paper**, so should be strongly discouraged unless absolutely necessary. This item would be listed on the agenda as 'to follow'.

46. Sometimes people will ask to 'table' a paper. This means that the item is put on the agenda, but the paper is not circulated to individuals until they arrive at the meeting. This can only happen with your explicit approval. Again, **this is not good practice**, as it does not allow committee members the opportunity to consider items in advance of the meeting, and should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. This item would be listed on the agenda as 'to be tabled'.

47. As Chair, you have the final say on which items appear on the agenda (assuming they come within the remit of the committee).

Distribution of papers

48. Agendas should be sent out, under confidential cover in advance of the meeting. Please see Annex XIV of Standing Orders for full details. This means that the agenda will need to be finalised at least a week before the meeting. Agendas cannot be altered once they have been sent out. Please ensure that you have time to meet with the committee Secretary in the weeks running up to the meeting, as the committee Secretary will be working to tight deadlines.

Speakers

49. Having considered the papers, you may decide to invite someone from outside the committee to speak to an item on the agenda, particularly if they have written the document concerned. The committee Secretary will need to make the arrangements and to agree a time for the person to arrive at the meeting. The individual should leave after their item has been discussed, or before this if the committee needs to discuss the matter without them being present.

50. You should try to meet with the committee Secretary before the committee meeting, to discuss how items are to be handled and to identify items that may generate considerable discussion.

Chair's Action

51. Occasionally there may be items that your committee is asked to deal with which are so urgent that a decision has to be made about them before the next scheduled meeting of the committee. Depending on the item, you may decide to call an additional ordinary meeting of the committee to discuss it. Alternatively, such items can be dealt with by Chair's Action. This is when you make a decision on behalf of the committee. This should only happen when it is absolutely necessary.

52. Sometimes, under the committee's Terms of Reference, an item has to be passed to another committee once your committee has dealt with it. If you have taken Chair's action the committee Secretary of your committee will need to provide the paper to that committee along with a coversheet explaining any action that you have taken. The paper will also need to appear on the next agenda of your committee, so that members may note the action you have taken.

MEETINGS

53. At the meeting itself, ensure that you and the committee Secretary sit next to each other. You may need to speak to each other during the meeting.

54. You should consider carefully where you sit in the room, and the layout of the tables. It is important that you can be clearly seen by everyone in the room, and that you can see everyone, so that you are aware of which members wish to speak. If several wish to do so, it is your job to decide the order in which they speak. As far as possible you should be the focal point of those present.

Visitors

55. As mentioned earlier, and as set out in Standing Orders, a non-member may be asked to attend a meeting if the committee feels that an individual has skills or knowledge that would enable them to make a contribution to a particular item under discussion. It is not expected that this individual would attend every meeting of committee.

Quoracy

56. You are responsible for checking with the committee Secretary that the meeting is quorate. Quoracy is defined in Standing Orders (one-third of the membership, except for the Board of Trustees, Audit Committee, Executive Board, Resources and Planning Committee and Academic Board). You should be aware of which people in the room are members of the committee, as only members count towards quoracy. No formal business can be transacted without a quorum of members present.

General

57. Part of your role is to ensure that the meeting starts on time, and that all items on the agenda are covered. Agenda items will normally be taken in the order in which they appear. You may have a good reason to alter the order, and, if so, you should explain the changed order of business to the committee. For example, you may have asked someone from outside the committee to attend the meeting at a particular time to speak to an item on the agenda, so that item will need to be discussed when the individual arrives. Alternatively, there may be an item on the reserved agenda which it would be appropriate to discuss alongside an item on the open agenda.

58. Generally the first item on either an open or reserved agenda should be the approval of the previous set of minutes. Committee members should have raised with you before the meeting any issues they have concerning the accuracy of the minutes. They cannot object to minutes if they simply do not like what was agreed. It is your decision as to whether a suggested amendment to the minutes is put to the committee for approval. If you think an amendment is appropriate, you should agree with committee Secretary and the individual committee member a revised form of words.

59. After the minutes of the previous meeting have been approved, the next item should be 'Action Taken'. To ensure that everything is covered, it is important that you ask for a brief update on each of the items on the Action Sheet (final page of the minutes) at this point. Items should only be removed from this list once the action has been completed.

60. As mentioned earlier, the agenda item headed 'Matters Arising' is to enable committee members to receive updates on items discussed at the last meeting which did not result in action points, and which do not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

61. You are responsible for the flow of business through the meeting and for determining when the committee should move on to the next item on the agenda. Before moving on to the next item, it is good practice to summarise any discussion and its outcome, so that the committee Secretary and the others present are fully aware of what has happened.

62. Your role as Chair means that you are there to facilitate discussion, and to ensure that everyone has a say where appropriate. There is a fine line to be drawn between allowing someone to express their views and allowing someone to monopolise the meeting. Annex XIV of Standing Orders outlines general rules relating to the conduct of meetings. You are there to help the committee to work efficiently and effectively, to provide background information where necessary, and for ensuring decisions are reached (in situations where the committee is being asked to make a decision). You need to maintain the pace (and peace!) of the meeting, and ensure that the committee does not get involved in discussions that are irrelevant to the agenda item. It is your place to see that responsibility for any agreed action is allocated appropriately and recorded.

63. Even if a member wishes to comment directly on something said by another member, their comments should be made through the Chair. It may be necessary for you to ask members to observe this rule.

64. As mentioned earlier, while committees may talk about situations in general, they must not discuss individuals, or individual cases, except where it is specifically the business of the committee to do so.

65. On very rare occasions (perhaps because, before completing the agenda, the committee runs out of time, or is about to become inquorate) you may decide to adjourn the meeting and reconvene it at another time. This is not good practice, as all members may not be able to attend the second part of the meeting, and extending the meeting will delay the passage of items through the committee structure.

66. If the meeting is adjourned and reconvene, there is no need to produce separate minutes after the first part of the meeting and a new agenda for the second part of the meeting, as (for committee purposes) they are the same meeting. Members should therefore be asked to bring all of their papers to the second part of the meeting, whenever that takes place. A certain amount of notice must be given when reconvening a meeting - please see Annex XIV of Standing Orders for details.

67. Please note that no changes can be made to the agenda between the two parts of an adjourned meeting. During the second part of the meeting the committee should not revisit items dealt with in the first part.

68. Alternatively, you may decide to end the meeting and to call another meeting for a later date. This will mean that minutes need to be produced for the first meeting, and a new agenda provided for the second meeting.

Extraordinary Meetings

69. Occasionally, it may be necessary to call an Extraordinary Meeting of the committee. Details of how this can be done are found in Annex XIV of Standing Orders. It is important to note that the purpose of an extraordinary meeting must be clearly stated when the request for it is made. The agenda for the meeting should only contain papers directly relevant to the issue(s) under discussion. The meeting is not asked to approve minutes, deal with matters arising, nor will other matters be discussed.

MINUTES

70. The committee Secretary should draft minutes (one set for open business and one for any reserved items), which should include an action sheet showing those responsible for taking any necessary action, and the deadline for completion. Please note that the committee may only have

an open agenda, but if during discussions items arise which fall into the categories mentioned under the guidelines relating to Freedom of Information then the Secretary will need to produce two sets of minutes, one open and one reserved.

71. You need to approve the minutes before they are sent out.

Circulation of minutes

72. The minutes should be circulated as soon as possible after the meeting preferably within a week of the meeting. You should make sure that you have time to consider the draft minutes as soon as they are completed.

73. Committee members may raise with you (usually through the committee Secretary) issues concerning the accuracy of the minutes. They cannot object to the minutes if they simply do not like what was agreed. You will need to decide whether you agree that an amendment is necessary.

74. **If your committee meets more than once a term**, the Secretary should send out the minutes (open and reserved, if there are any of the latter) as soon as they can. These will then be considered at the next meeting of the committee, and any amendments needed will be reflected in the minutes of that meeting.

75. **If your committee meets once a term**, then it is suggested that the Secretary sends out the draft minutes electronically, once they have been agreed by the Chair, and asks members for any comments. Members should be given two weeks to respond. The Secretary can then either confirm to committee members that no changes have been made to the minutes they were originally sent, or send an electronic copy of the revised minutes which include any changes you have agreed (whichever is appropriate), letting them know that these minutes will be presented to the next meeting of the committee for approval.

76. This means that members do not have to wait an entire term to propose any changes to the draft minutes, and hopefully means that they are able to make comments while the meeting is still fresh in their minds.

OPEN PAPERS ON THE WEBSITE

77. In September 2013, the Information Commissioner's Office updated its guidance on information it would expect universities to publish proactively in order to meet their publication scheme commitments under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

78. To ensure compliance with this Act, it has been agreed that the open agenda, open appendices and open minutes of any committee meeting should be published (by the committee Secretary) on the School website after the minutes of that meeting have been approved at the following meeting of the committee.

Further action

79. You should agree with the committee Secretary whether any papers need to be referred on to other committees, and also agree what should be said on the coversheet that should go with each paper.

80. At the meeting you may have been asked to take some action concerning matters on the agenda. The minutes and the Action Sheet, which should be attached to them, should act as a reminder to you of what you need to do. You should also receive an email reminder from the committee Secretary of the action you need to take. When you have carried out the required action please let the committee Secretary know, as the committee Secretary is required to keep a record of it. Items will remain on this list until confirmation has been received that they have been completed. You should report back to the next meeting on what you have done.

81. Your committee may need to produce an annual report for its 'parent' committee. If so, the committee Secretary should produce a first draft for your comment.

Jan Airey
Secretariat Manager

Principles on which the committee structure is based

1. Committees should be strategic, not operational.

It has been agreed that the role of most committees is to develop School strategies and to monitor their delivery. Committees are not expected to assume responsibility for operational areas which are the responsibility of others (such as the Professional Services Directorates, or the Deans). This enables a group of individuals, with a range of experience, expertise and responsibilities, to contribute towards establishing the direction in which the School is heading, whilst leaving those with particular operational skills and knowledge to determine how we get there.

Where committees have responsibility for dealing with specific operational issues (for example LTQC), this is set out in the Committee's terms of reference.

2. Membership

a) Committees should be as small as practicable

Committees need to be a size which will allow discussion and debate to flourish, in order that consensus can be reached. It is pretty difficult to ensure that this happens when numbers get into double figures, let alone when the committee numbers 30+. Large committees are also wasteful of people's time.

b) Committees contributed to the governance of the School.

The role of committee members is not to represent a particular group or interest. Members are on committees as individuals, bringing their skills and expertise to help with the overall governance of the institution, to the benefit of the School as a whole. While members may be from a particular group, and can bring the views of that group to the meeting, once at the meeting, the interests of the School must be the overriding consideration.

The only exception to this non-representative role is where committees (such as Health & Safety) have, for example, Trade Union representatives on them, and are required to do so.

This view of committee membership is supported both in the School's Standing Orders and in the guidance produced by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), which the School is required to follow.

c) Given the strategic nature of committees, membership should include those who are responsible for ensuring delivery on strategies at senior level.

Much of what committees do is about devising, proposing and refining strategies for the School, and then monitoring its implementation. Directors of Professional Services on a committee need be able to take an overview of what is achievable, and then (where appropriate) to ensure that the colleagues for whom they are responsible actually deliver. It is not necessary for every operational manager whose area falls within the remit of a committee to be a member of that committee or to attend every single meeting. They may attend for items where they have specific responsibility if the committee feels this would help with its work.

Directors of Professional Services should only be members of those committees at which their areas of responsibility are discussed on a regular basis. Otherwise, they should be invited to attend particular meetings where specific items are discussed.

Some academic committee members will be there because they have been nominated by their Faculty in order to bring certain experience or expertise to meetings. However, depending on the committee, for the reasons outlined above, it may also be necessary to have senior academic managers as members as well.

That is not to say that committees cannot ask for reports from individuals who are not members (they can, and have always been able to do this), and individuals can be asked to attend parts of meetings to speak to any papers they may have written, or provide advice where this is required. However, they would not be expected to attend every meeting, and should only attend for a specific item.

3) Committees can invite specialists to attend parts of meetings

In the past, the number of people 'in attendance' at some committee meetings outnumbered the members. When the current committee structure was put in place, it was agreed that it was wasteful to have people who were not members attending every meeting of the sub-committees of Academic Board and Resources & Planning Committee, so these committees do not have people 'in attendance'. This should not stop these committees inviting individuals with particular expertise to attend parts of meetings to speak to papers if they can make a valuable contribution, and committees currently do this on a regular basis.

4) Communication

a) The 'owners' of information are best placed to ensure that this information is communicated to those who need it

Committees are not suitable vehicles for the effective communication of information across the School, and it would be wrong to expect them to fulfil this function for which they are clearly not designed. It is the responsibility of the Committee Secretary to ensure that if someone provides a paper for a committee, and is not then at the committee meeting to hear the outcome of any discussion, they are told what has happened.

However, the owner of a policy/procedure etc is by far the best person to know who else in the School needs to be informed about it, and is therefore responsible for making sure that this is done.

b) Committees with Chairs and membership in common

Where more than one committee has an interest in a particular area, the membership of committees is designed to ensure that there is some level of overlapping membership. It is reasonable to expect members who are on both committees to share with one committee the outcome of any discussion at the other committee.

In addition to this, Chairs of committees have been chosen for the same reason. Wherever possible, committees that have areas in common are chaired by the same individual. It is intended that this should ensure the exchange of information between, and continuity across, committees which deal with related business.

Committee Secretaries also have a responsibility to liaise with Chairs and other Committee Secretaries to ensure that papers move through the committee structure in an appropriate way, and that there is clarity in relation to which items are dealt with by each committee.

5) Negotiation

School committees are not a mechanism for negotiating with the senior executives of the School. There are formal mechanisms in place for such negotiations, and committees are not one of them.

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