Committees Handbook

Contents

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Introduction to Committee Work at the University

1   Committees are a critical part of the governance structure and decision-making processes of the University. Committee work brings together staff and students from across the University to allow consensus and ownership in decision-making and fostering collegiality at BNU. Committees combine expertise gathered from several areas and stimulate new ways of thinking, and are often required to take difficult decisions.

2   Committees ensure that BNU is operating transparently and is accountable for its activities. Lay members of committees provide external challenge and expertise in specific areas of business and, for those who are members of the University Council, also contribute to assuring Council about the effective operation of the University.

3   However, the role of the committee should not be confused with the role of staff with management responsibilities within BNU. Line managers and senior staff are responsible for the daily running of BNU, delivery of its key activities and the implementation of its policies and procedures. Relevant committees play a major role in determining and implementing overall strategy and consider decisions on major projects and initiatives. They will also be involved when changes are being considered to BNU's policies and some operational procedures.

4   This Handbook is designed to support all staff and students involved in BNU's committee work. It aims to provide an overview of committee work, identifies good practice, and details specific guidance for committee Chairs and Officers.

5   Throughout the Handbook, the term 'committee' is used to mean Board, committee or sub-committee unless the context clearly shows otherwise.

Committee structures

6   Three separate bodies have responsibility for the character, organisation and function of the University. These are: Council, the University Executive Team (UET), and Senate.

Council

7.   Council is the University's governing body and has ultimate responsibility for all affairs of the University. It's key responsibilities are:
- It is legally responsible for determining the educational character and mission of the University and overseeing its activities.
- ensuring the University's resources are used effectively and efficiently and the University remains solvent. This includes approving annual estimates of income and expenditure
- appointment of the Vice Chancellor and other members of UET
- Setting the framework for the employment of all other staff and contractors

- Corporate policies, regulations and procedures to assure the effective governance of BNU and to meet BNU's statutory and other legal obligations

8.   Council is also responsible for ensuring that the University remains compliant with the Office for Students' Conditions of Registration.

9.   To assist in its duties, Council delegates some of its powers and allocates some of its work to six formal sub-committees.

University Executive Team

10.   Under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor as the Chief Executive and comprising the Deputy and Pro Vice-Chancellors of the University as well as the University Secretary and Clerk to Council, Chief Finance Officer and the Commercial and Business Development Director, UET has responsibility for organising, directing and managing the University on a daily basis.

Senate

11.   Senate is BNU's senior academic board and is responsible to Council for general issues relating to the research, scholarship and teaching of BNU's courses; taking appropriate action to safeguard the standards and quality of BNU's awards; considering the development of the University's academic activities and the resources needed to support them. To assist it in carrying out its duties, Senate delegates responsibility for some matters relating to quality management to its sub-committees.

12   Structure diagrams and terms of reference for Council's and Senate's Committees are available in *University Committees: Constitution and Terms of Reference (Deliberative)* and *Council Committees: Constitution and Terms of Reference.*

13   The way in which these three bodies operate and connect with each other is fundamental to securing and improving quality and standards within the University. This handbook outlines how Senate and its sub-committees operate and focuses on the role of the Committee Chair and Officer in promoting effective decision-making.

University Secretariat

14   The University Secretariat, as part of the Office of the University Secretary, offers dedicated, focused support to the committees, fora and groups of Senate and Council, Health and Safety Committee and School Industrial Advisory Boards. It seeks to offer a gold standard in supporting committees and the governance structure at BNU.

15   It operates the following SLAs:

- Allowing authors a minimum of two weeks to write committee papers

- Releasing committee papers one week before meetings

- Drafting a first set of minutes within 2 days of a meeting

16   It seeks to spread good practise about committee work across BNU and is the system owner of BoardEffect, the University's committee-servicing platform (see section below). All queries regarding committee work should be directed to the Secretariat in the first instance. Information about the Secretariat team is available on the University intranet.

Guiding Principles

Purpose

17   All committees, working and advisory groups must have a clear purpose or goal which clearly defines their remit ensuring:

- They are distinct from other committees
- Their purpose is articulated to all members so that they can work collectively to achieve them.

18   A committee or group should only be constituted if delivery of the purpose / goal requires a committee or group to achieve it. A committee or group should not be created if the purpose or goal can be achieved by one or two individuals.

19   All committees and meetings should have a clear **purpose** and involve the right **people**, who are thoroughly **prepared**.

20   Committees should NOT be 'talking shops' – they should have clear objectives to be achieved, and consideration should be given by the Chair and Officer how best to enable the objectives to be met during the meeting.

Effectiveness

21   Committees should review their effectiveness annually and consider their terms of reference and membership as follows:

- At the last meeting of the academic year to propose any changes
- At the first meeting of the academic year to confirm membership and remit

Good Practice: Before the final meeting of the year the Chair and/or Officer may wish to circulate a committee effectiveness questionnaire to members to identify any gaps in the work of the committee.

22   The following should be clearly published and accessible on the University website:

- Constitutions and Terms of Reference
- Current memberships

- Open minutes (once approved by the Committee responsible at a subsequent meeting). Provisional minutes will be published internally and circulated to any employees who request them as soon as possible after the meeting.

Categories: Committees, sub-committees and groups

23   All committees and groups should be clearly defined and categorised as per the following classifications:

- **Standing Committee**: Created by Standing Orders, rules, by-laws or regulations of an organisation i.e. formal University Committee, e.g. Senate and its sub-committees
- **Non-standing Committee**: A Non-Standing Committee is a committee that meets intermittently or only when needed, e.g. Mitigating Circumstances Panel. Non-Standing Committees generally report to Senate.
- **Sub-group**: A sub-group is a subordinate entity of a Standing Committee normally set up to discuss specific topics.
- **Working Group / Task and Finish Group**: Created for a particular purpose and timeframe. The group is dissolved once the job has been completed

Standing Committees and sub-committees

24   Senate establishes its committees and sub-committees to assist it to fulfil its responsibilities and function effectively.

25   A committee of Senate may propose the establishment of a sub-committee, subject to the approval of Senate. In all cases, where the creation of a sub-committee is proposed the Constitutions (membership / terms of reference) must be provided. In preparing the constitution consideration should be given to the following:

- The functions of the committees and sub-committees should be distinguished in terms of their respective 'strategy / policy and 'operational / specialist' responsibilities
- The decision-making powers of a committee or sub-committee and general duties and responsibilities should be clearly specified
- It is advisable that the Chair of a sub-committee is a full member of the 'parent' committee
- Avoiding duplication of the work of an already-established committee or sub-committee
- Amendments that may be needed to the Constitution of an existing committee or sub-committee following the establishment of the new sub-committee

26   In approving the establishment of a committee or sub-committee, Senate should give careful consideration to the following:

- Is there really a need for this committee?
- Do the terms of reference overlap with that of another committee?
- Is the composition appropriate for the terms of reference?
- Is the membership sufficiently representative?

- Are there any omissions from the membership?
- Is the proposed membership larger than is necessary?
- Do the proposed terms of reference and membership reflect the principles of equality and diversity?

Working Groups / Task and Finish Groups

27   A committee may set up a working group to review, investigate, assess, evaluate, audit, consult, develop or implement a specific development. Where this occurs, the committee is responsible for determining:

- the remit and membership of the working group and setting a time limit for the group's existence
- the membership, which can be drawn from the wider University community, although each group should be chaired by a member of the committee
- who from the membership will have responsibility for the production of notes and final reports (working groups are not normally serviced by Officers)
- the establishment and remit of the working group to minimise the proliferation of such groups.

People

28   The University is committed to celebrating diversity and promoting equality of opportunity across all the 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This commitment underpins many of the principles outlined in this Handbook.

29   University committees should take account of equality and diversity considerations in relation to the operation of meetings. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Scheduling**: A calendar of meetings will be set and published in advance by the University to enable members to plan ahead. In the case of committees reporting into Senate, the calendar of meetings for the next academic year will be approved at Senate's summer meeting. Changes to meeting dates should not be made unless in exceptional circumstances; any changes should be communicated to the University Secretariat to ensure that the calendar can be updated.

  Meetings should not be scheduled on the dates of any significant or major religious festivals and feast days that fall outside holiday periods, e.g. Eid-Ul-Adha, Eid-Ul-Fitr, Purim, Yom Kippur. The University's EDI Calendar can be used to check specific dates to identify potential clashes.

- **Travel**: To reduce unnecessary travel, meetings should take advantage of hybrid and virtual conferencing capability as appropriate.

- **Accessibility**: Consideration should be given to the location of the meeting to ensure that any accessibility needs can be arranged, e.g. staircases, hearing loops etc. This should be identified during induction of a new member of the committee.
- **Filing of committee documentation**: Agenda and paperwork will normally be published electronically and made available at least five working days in advance of the scheduled meeting. Committees should seek to avoid the tabling of papers to ensure members can read them in advance. Once submitted to the Officer papers should not be amended, unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so.
- **Timing / length of meeting**: Meetings should have a clear start and end time to enable members to make appropriate arrangements to attend, and should be considerate of normal working hours.

30   The University community should accept and abide by the decision of committees with the relevant remit. This demonstrates trust in the decision-making process and in the committee structure and membership.

Good Practice: Chairs should agree a communication strategy for updating the wider university community on issues being taken forward by the committee.

31   Members and the wider University should feel that committees / groups are useful, necessary and achieve workable outcomes.

Memberships

32   Committee members make important decisions on behalf of the University. Membership of committees and groups should be derived from as wide a spectrum of the University community as possible (academic employees, professional services employees and students).

33   With the exception of ex-officio members, no individual should sit on more than two formal University-level committees. This ensures that members are able fully to contribute to the work of the committee.

34   The ex-officio membership of a committee or group will not be more in number than the other members. This ensures that the wider university community can contribute to the University's ongoing development in a collegiate manner.

35   Committee members should be carefully selected. Members need to be willing participants and interested in achieving the purpose / goal of the committee. Members should normally be somewhat knowledgeable in the area of the committee's remit and responsibility.

36   It should be clear as to the capacity in which an individual is serving on a committee or group as representing:

- Their School, Directorate, or other part of the University
- Their staff view (academic or professional service employees)

- Their informed or expert view (i.e. normally relating to their role within the University)

Requirements of Committee members

37   There is an expectation that work is undertaken by members (and others) outside the meetings, i.e. preparing policies, discussion papers etc.

38   Scheduled University meetings should be prioritised over other work commitments. Members should ensure that they have the time to commit to the work of the committee before accepting an invitation to the membership.

39   Members should attend for the meeting's published duration. Apologies for absence should be used sparingly and only in extreme circumstances.

40   All committee members are expected to prepare thoroughly for a meeting including:

- Reading all papers and familiarising themselves with the supporting material
- Discussing aspects with their colleagues in order that they can give the School / Directorate / staff view or take appropriate action prior to the meeting
- Taking notes, asking concise follow up questions, listening actively and looking for opportunities to build on the thoughts and ideas of others.

41   All committee members are responsible for proactively feeding back information from the committee to their respective School, Directorate or equivalent.

42   Members are also expected to:

- Submit agenda items and papers in line with the Standing Orders by the deadline set by the Committee Officer
- Contribute to committee discussions appropriately
- Remain fully focused on the committee meeting (it is not an opportunity to catch up on emails)
- Undertake any actions assigned to them by the committee after each meeting and provide updates on the completion of those actions to the Committee Officer or Secretary in a timely fashion.

43   Committee members should be receptive and open to new ideas and others' opinions as objectives will be accomplished through the give and take of open discussion.

44   Members should treat each other with mutual respect and allow all members to express their views on agenda items. No member should seek to dominate proceedings to the exclusion of others.

45   It is important that committee members prioritise attendance at meetings to enable proper discussion to take place. However, if a member cannot attend, for exceptional reasons, they should notify the Officer for apologies to be explained and recorded at the meeting.

Key Committee Members: the Chair and Officer

Committee Chair

46 The Chair is the Presiding Officer of a meeting, committee or board. It is the Chair's responsibility to understand the purpose and objectives of the committee and play the lead role in planning the Committee's business in liaison with the Committee Officer (also known as the Secretary) and in consultation with committee members and other BNU colleagues.

47 A key responsibility is to ensure that meetings are conducted in an orderly, open and effective manner that draws upon the full range of expertise and opinion of committee members. This can include determining who will speak and in what order; reminding members of the committee's protocols when necessary; and keeping to time.

48 The Chair must ensure that the meeting follows the agenda and that discussions extraneous to the meeting should be held separately to the meeting.

49 The Chair should ensure that there is open and constructive dialogue between committee members resulting (where appropriate) in an agreement on action that needs to be taken.

50 The Chair should ensure that an attitude of mutual respect exists between members and that all members' voices are heard and treated as equal in value. No one member should be allowed to dominate the meeting.

51 The Chair will support the Committee Officer in obtaining the required documentation, and approve agendas and draft minutes in good time.

52 The Chair should work with the Officer to ensure appropriate action has been taken based on the committee's decisions.

53 To fulfil these responsibilities, Chairs should aim to:

   • be familiar with the Committee's membership and terms of reference as well as general committee conventions, codes of conduct and reporting protocols;

   • develop a close and co-operative working relationship with the Committee Officer;

   • build good working partnerships with relevant University colleagues;

   • develop the trust of committee members and value their contributions;

   • make sure that they are well briefed on meeting items;

   • manage the business of committee meetings effectively, fairly and impartially, both encouraging participation and limiting debate as necessary.

54 Senior members of staff usually act as chair for University-level committees. The Chair has an important role to play in supporting the Officer, providing an appropriate welcome and induction to the role and providing guidance and support thereafter. The Chair should also support new members as they develop into their roles.

Committee Officer

55   The responsibilities of the Officer (also known as the Secretary) are to:

- Publish the date, time and venue of meetings, considering any reasonable adjustments required by members
- Call for agenda items and set agendas in consultation with the Chair
- Investigate the status of actions agreed at previous meetings
- Ensure that all relevant documentation is received within the agreed deadlines
- Check that committee papers are complete
- Compile and distribute agenda and supporting papers
- Record a register of all members in attendance at each meeting
- Take notes during the meeting
- Draft minutes and action sheets of meetings
- Ensure (with the Chair) that the terms of reference and membership records of the committee are upheld and regularly reviewed.

Good Practice: Officers are encouraged to liaise with other Committee Officers from time to time to ensure consistency across the University.

56   For larger committees a second Officer, or Minute Secretary, may be appointed who is responsible for some of the duties normally the responsibility of the Secretary. These can include:

- Distributing the agenda and supporting paperwork to members
- Taking notes during the meeting and drafting minutes and action sheets
- Other duties of the Secretary as outlined above if they are absent or indisposed.

57   The relationship between the Chair and Officer is key to the success of a committee. The majority of committee business and how it is conducted will be decided through the interaction between Chair and Officer. The members of staff occupying these posts will change over time, but the benefits of a solid partnership between the two should never be underestimated. Officers and Chairs must work as a team, organising, conducting and recording committee business.

58   To achieve their responsibilities, the Committee Officer should

- maintain an up-to-date Business Cycle for the Committee to ensure the Committee meets its key responsibilities (such as approving a University strategy, report, policy or external submission). This should be updated throughout the year to include new business items as identified by the Chair or Committee

- ensure regular meetings are arranged with the Chair to agree meeting agendas. Where practical, these meetings should be held six weeks before each meeting

- prepare draft agendas before meeting with the Chair to agree the agenda in consultation with committee members and other BNU colleagues

- write to members or BNU staff required to write a paper for a meeting as soon as the meeting agenda has been agreed. Paper authors should be given at least two weeks to write a paper

- aim to draft minutes within 48 hours of the meeting to ensure accuracy and the prompt communication of actions to committee members

- communicate actions to members promptly after minutes have been approved and maintain an Action Sheet to track completion of those actions

- where appropriate, provide an annotated agenda for the Chair ahead of each meeting highlighting key actions required or providing the institutional context for an item

- aim to publish papers one week (5 working days) before each meeting to ensure committee members have sufficient time to read and prepare for the meeting

- maintain an accurate membership list, which should be reviewed regularly to identify members whose term on a Committee is ending. This will enable the prompt commencement of the process to replace members and ensure there is no gaps in the membership.

59   Servicing of the key University-level Committees, i.e. Senate and its sub-committees, is normally co-ordinated by the University Secretariat within the University Secretary's Office.

60   The University Secretariat aims to publish papers on BoardEffect one week before the meeting. It also aims to ensure paper authors have at least two weeks to produce a committee paper for a meeting.

All staff and students

61   All members of staff and students can contribute to the committee structure. The University has a duty to ensure that the views of its staff (academic and PSE) and its students are represented through the relevant committees.

62   There are several ways in which staff and students can become involved in committee work including:

- Standing for election to a committee
- Encouraging colleagues and students to stand for election
- Accepting an invitation to attend
- Attending as an observer
- Submitting agenda items and papers for consideration
- Providing feedback to Chairs, Officers or University Secretariat on the effectiveness of the committee system.

Electronic management of committees

63 Major committees of the University are managed paperlessly (electronically) via Diligent BoardEffect. This enables:

- Management of agenda, annotations, documents, discussions at committee meetings, and preparation of minutes
- Real time updates to committee papers on the go from phones, tablets, computers, or even offline
- Committee collaboration in a secure environment enabling sharing of content by members with other members before, during or after a meeting.

64 Guidance on the use of BoardEffect for both Committee Secretaries and Members is published separately. Where this handbook refers to electronic management of committees this normally refers to BoardEffect. For more information on BoardEffect, contact the University Secretariat.

Meetings Protocol

65 The University has a Meetings Protocol, which is included below and reiterates many of the principles referred to above:

- **Be punctual** – meeting attendance is an indicator of the way people view the importance of others' time
- **Be prepared** – the key to a successful meeting lies in the preparation of the facilitator and the attendees
- **Be participatory** – a good meeting involves positive interaction among the facilitator and the attendees
- **Be positive** – share ideas, shape and challenge opinions, and propose new approaches to solving problems
- **Be productive** – every meeting should have goals or objectives, to work toward
- **Be polite** – show respect for other meeting attendees
- **Be proactive** – ensure the meeting ends with a successful conclusion.
- **For hybrid meetings,** Chairs and Committee Officers should attend the meeting in person if they are on campus rather than virtually out of courtesy to the members who chose to attend in person
- **For hybrid meetings,** members attending virtually should have their cameras switched on throughout the meetings and remain fully focused on the meeting (they should not be undertaking other tasks at the same time as the meeting)
- **Meetings held over lunchtime should be avoided if possible.** If a meeting is required over lunch hours, providing some catering should be considered

Standing Orders

Introduction

66   The Standing Orders described in this Handbook are intended to apply to all University committees and explain the rules of behaviour that apply to all committee members.

67   Whilst it is expected that most committees will meet these expectations, there may be occasions where a Chair feels that elements of the Standing Orders are not appropriate for their committee; in such cases, matters should be discussed with the University Secretariat.

68   The 'Constitution' of a committee refers to the composition / membership and terms of reference of a particular committee. Each committee has specific 'Terms of Reference' that determine the nature of its work, including its powers, duties and responsibilities.

Planning committee business

69   It is advisable for the Chairs and Officers of the Council and Senate to plan a co-ordinated agenda and set objectives for the University. This planning should take place towards the end of the academic year. The outcome of this planning should be reflected in the agendas and objectives of the Senate and its committees in the following academic year.

70   It is essential, as referenced above, that the Committee Officer maintains an up-to-date Business Cycle that outlines all the items a committee should receive and when. It should include Standing and Periodic Items as well as items for individual meetings (Term 1 / Meeting 1; Term 2 / Meeting 2, etc). An effective Business Cycle will enhance the committee's effectiveness and ensures it fulfils its terms of reference in full.

71   The University Committee Schedule (Calendar of Meetings) is devised and managed by University Secretariat in consultation with other directorates and Schools. The Schedule (Calendar of Meetings) is published on the University website.

Memberships

72   There are five categories of membership at any given meeting:

- **Ex-officio**: A member of staff automatically becomes a member of a committee because of their title or role within the University. Ex-officio members continue in membership as long as they hold their qualifying post.
- **Representative**: A member of staff who is nominated as a member of the committee to represent a particular area, e.g. a particular School or Directorate. A representative member is normally appointed for a period of two years.
- **Co-opted**: A member of staff is asked to become a member of a committee because of expertise in a given subject. The co-option of a member is at the discretion of the committee, and co-opted members will attend for as long as the committee deems necessary.
- **Elected**: Staff elected by other members of staff of the University. An elected member normally serves for a period of two years.

- **Student representative**: Students chosen or elected from among the student body to represent their fellow students, normally for a particular course / programme of study. Student representatives are confirmed annually.
- **In attendance**: Member(s) of staff with responsibilities in the areas of the work of the committee may choose to attend, or be requested to attend. Those in attendance do not have voting rights.

Standing invitations and occasional invites are also at the discretion of the committee to prevent the unnecessary co-option of members.

73   Membership of University Committees is managed by the University Secretariat in consultation with other Directorates and Schools. The Secretariat can provide a template list for committee memberships.

Appointment of Committee Chairs

74   The Vice Chancellor will act as the Chair of Senate and may nominate a Deputy Chair from the members of Senate to take the Chair as necessary. This role is usually taken by the Deputy Vice Chancellor.

75   The appointment of committee Chairs is informed by a set of principles agreed by Senate. In each case, there is a need to balance:

- The independence of the deliberative structure with the need to strengthen its relationship with management and executive functions. Sub-committees of Senate are normally chaired by members of UET.
- Potential conflicts of interest with the possession by a committee Chair of the expertise and experience necessary to discharge their responsibilities.
- The inclusion of a wide range of staff in the work of sub-committees with the desirability of establishing a group of committee Chairs that is capable of co-ordinating work within the deliberative structure.

76   The accountability of Chairs to 'parent' committees is secured through ex-officio membership of the 'parent' committee.

Appointment of Committee Officers

77   University-level Committee Officers are appointed from within the University Secretariat

78   A Directorate or School with responsibility for managing a Committee or sub-committee is responsible for appointing the Officer in liaison with the University Secretariat. Officers may need to delegate their responsibilities to other members of staff on occasion and this should be managed locally.

Appointment and election of committee members

79   The Committee session or term will run from 1 September to 31 August each year unless specified differently in individual constitutions. Both elected and nominated appointments will normally last for a fixed term of two years.

80   The Officer and / or Chair of the Committee will inform the committee of forthcoming ends of terms of office that are due to arise during the academic year to allow time for the

appropriate nomination process to take place. The Officer should provide administrative oversight of the election process where relevant, e.g. Senate.

81   The Chair and Officer will review composition / membership before the first meeting of the academic year and the Chair will invite nominations for co-option to be presented. Membership should be an agenda item for each committee at the first meeting of the academic year.

Induction of new committee members

82   Wherever possible, newly appointed members will be invited to meet the Chair and / or Officer before their first meeting. Each new member should be sent an induction pack. As a minimum, the pack should include the following relevant documents:

- The Committee Handbook
- Constitution (Terms of Reference and current membership list)
- Contact details for the Chair and the Officer
- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Dates and venues for future committees and meetings

83   The Officer should check whether new members have any accessibility requirements and make provision as necessary to enable everyone to fully participate in meetings.

Status of members, members' nominees and student representatives

84   Subject to the exception below all committee members have equal status, regardless of their membership category. With the approval of the Chair a member may nominate a substitute; any such substitute will attend with full membership rights.

85   The only exception to this rule is where student representatives may be required to withdraw for some items of reserved business, particularly items that relate to the consideration of individual students.

Termination of membership

86   There are occasions when a Committee Member will need to be replaced part-way through a term of office (including sabbatical, maternity leave, illness, change of circumstances or teaching pattern, leaving the employment of the University). If the filling of the vacant position requires elections to be held this should be done as soon as possible. Otherwise the Head of the Directorate or equivalent can put forward a suitable nomination. The new Committee Member will only serve until the end of their predecessor's term of office, and will then need to be replaced, or renewed.

Observers

87   Observers may attend committee meetings at the discretion of the Chair but must withdraw from the meeting room during discussion of reserved business (see paragraph 118 below).

88   Observers will normally remain silent for the duration of the meeting and may only contribute at the invitation of the Chair.

Organisation of meetings (including rules on quoracy)

Regular and extraordinary meetings

89   Senate and its committees will meet as often as necessary to execute their powers, duties and responsibilities. This will be at least once every term. Regular committee meetings will normally commence at 1.00 or 2.00pm. The Officer should email notice of a committee meeting to members at least five working days before the date of the meeting, unless the Chair decides that the circumstances justify shorter notice.

90   Cancelling, postponing or changing the scheduled date and time of planned meetings will be avoided wherever possible, especially where meeting dates are approved by Senate or Council. On the rare occasion where it is deemed essential to change a meeting date or time, members will be given as much notice as possible.

91   The Officer will convene an extraordinary meeting at the discretion of the Chair and the agenda for such meetings will only include the specific items for which the extraordinary meeting has been convened. Extraordinary meetings will not consider and approve the minutes of the previous regular meeting and will not take any other business.

Length of meetings

92   It is advisable to plan meetings for periods of up to three hours. Meetings in excess of three hours may occasionally be necessary but should be subject to members' agreement and the Chair should provide the opportunity for a break.

> Good Practice: Meetings in excess of three hours should be avoided wherever possible as they can become ineffective.

Format of meetings

93   The format of a meeting may be specified as one of the following:

- **In person**: where members attend the meeting in the stated room location
- **Online**: where members attend the meeting virtually via video conferencing facility, normally Microsoft Teams
- **Hybrid**: where members have the choice to attend the meeting in-person or online.

94   Hybrid attendance will depend on video conferencing support in the room assigned to enable members fully to contribute to the meeting.

95   Scheduling meetings online or in hybrid format enables the University to meet its commitment to becoming more environmentally sustainable as it reduces the need for members to travel to meetings.

Attendance at meetings

96   If a member cannot attend, they should submit apologies and reasons for absence to the Officer prior to the commencement of the meeting.

97   The Chair and Officer should review attendance at the end of each academic year. The Chair should deal with individual concerns over attendance as they arise during the academic year.

Quoracy rules

98 A quorum is the minimum number of people required to be present at a meeting in order to conduct the business of the meeting.

99 The quorum for all committees is 50% of the membership excluding Committee Officer(s). If a quorum is not present after 30 minutes of the meeting have elapsed:

- The meeting will be adjourned; OR
- The meeting will go ahead but no decision can be ratified.

100 If during the course of a meeting attendance falls below quorum the meeting should be adjourned. The Chair should consider whether remaining business can be dealt with by Chair's Action.

101 If a meeting proceeds on an inquorate basis, official minutes cannot be written. In this case, **notes** are prepared which inform the next quorate meeting. The notes should be careful not to record any decisions, but to 'suggest' and 'advise' the next meeting or 'support' or 'recommend' a Chair's Action as appropriate. Notes should be approved by the Chair as an accurate record of the inquorate meeting, but they will only be published internally. Numbering of items should carry on from the previous set of minutes.

Delegated authority of sub-committees

102 Provided they are acting within the remit of their terms of reference, sub-committees (but not working groups or other groups) have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of their 'parent' committees. Decisions taken by sub-committees should be reported to 'parent' committees. Each sub-committee must be able to provide evidence (through the minutes of meetings and other documents as appropriate) to show that it has exercised its delegated authority.

Agenda setting and preparation

Agenda setting

103 In consultation with the Chair, the Officer will prepare an agenda for each meeting in line with the committee's terms of reference. Other matters may be introduced and considered at the discretion of the Chair.

104 Members should normally receive the agenda and papers at least five working days before the meeting. Where it is practicable, committee agendas and papers should be made available electronically, normally via the University's committee-servicing software.

105 The order of business for a regular meeting shall be as follows:

Standing items (which appear on every agenda)

- To welcome members to the meeting
- To receive apologies for absence
- To declare any conflicts of interest

- To receive, correct if necessary, and approve the minutes of the previous meeting
- To consider any matters arising from the minutes which do not appear elsewhere on the agenda
- To note the action sheet from the previous meeting and the status of actions
- To note any decisions approved by Chair's Action since the previous meeting
- To confirm the date and time of the next meeting.

Non-standing items (which may appear at particular meetings only)

- To receive a report from the Chair on any news of significance (as necessary)
- The bulk of the agenda items can then be ordered by themes or categorised as follows:
  - Items for approval, recommendation or endorsement
  - Items for consideration (and occasionally approval) through debate and resolution
  - Items for note and receipt, e.g. minutes from sub-committee, advisory groups and / or working groups
- To consider any other business (at the Chair's discretion)

106   The order of the items on the agenda may be changed with the consent of the meeting.

107   The University Secretariat can provide a template for meeting agendas. It is also available on the University intranet.

Good Practice: Where items are for receipt only, e.g. minutes for a sub-committee, it can be good practice to identify these at the outset and take those items as read unless any member has a specific comment in relation to their content. They can be referred to as Starred Items to indicate that they will not be discussed unless the Chair of Committee Officer (Secretary) receives a comment or query about them from a committee member before the meeting commences.

Proposing agenda items and submitting papers

108   Call out for items: for Senate and its sub-committees, the Officer will ask members for agenda items, and provide a deadline for the submission of papers, at least three weeks before the meeting. Members should send proposed agenda items to the Officer no later than two weeks prior to the meeting to enable the agenda to be set in good time.

109   Agenda setting meeting: the Chair will decide which items are to be included during an agenda setting meeting with the Officer. When making this decision the Chair will bear in mind the committee's terms of reference, existing business, planned priorities, and the strategic aims of the University. If a Chair rejects an agenda item, the Committee Officer will report the reasons for this to the individual concerned. The agenda-setting meeting should occur at least two weeks before the meeting.

110   The submission of late papers is bad practice and should be rejected by the Chair under normal circumstances. In exceptional cases, however, late papers should be made available to members as soon as possible and confirmed by email. The agenda should clearly state which papers are attached and which are 'to follow'.

111   Tabled papers will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. If a paper is tabled, the Chair should either allow suitable reading time or ask the presenter for a detailed introduction.

112   Items of 'any other business' must be approved by the Chair before the start of the meeting. Consideration is at the Chair's discretion.

113   Papers should include a coversheet summarising the key issues and specifically the action required from the committee. A committee paper template is available from the University Secretariat. It can also be found on the University intranet.

114   To provide consistency across the University, the following actions should be used for agenda items:

Action	Definition
To note	To acknowledge information given. Generally there is no need to discuss the particular item
To receive	To formally receive the document or piece of 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 and any follow-up actions
To approve	To discuss and reach a decision about something wholly within the committee's remit. This may take the form of straightforward acceptance, or it may involve substantial discussion
To recommend	To discuss an issue and recommend action to another body
To endorse	To support a decision approved elsewhere by an authorised body. Endorsement signals reinforcement and full support for the decision to approve.

Referencing papers

115   All reports and papers, except for the agenda, minutes and action sheet of the previous meeting, should be given a reference number. This should be quoted on the agenda, on the paper coversheet and in the minutes. For committees supported by BoardEffect, the reference number should be the same as the agenda number assigned to it by BoardEffect (e.g. 2a)

116   For committees not supported by BoardEffect, reference numbers indicate the committee initials, the calendar year and a unique sequential number, e.g.

Committee	Calendar Year	Sequential No.	Paper No.
Senate (SEN)	2023	01	SEN23.01

117   At the start of the new academic year the sequential numbering of papers will continue. A new series of sequential numbers will recommence at the start of the following January.

> Good Practice: Officers may wish to maintain a spreadsheet of papers and the meeting to which they relate for clarity.

118   Papers should normally be numbered sequentially through the agenda to avoid confusion. Any papers received late, i.e. after papers have been distributed, will be given the next number in the sequence.

Format and accessibility of documents

119   All documents should be circulated electronically using the University's committee management software. Paper authors and Committee Officers should ensure that papers follow accessibility guidelines to ensure that they are digitally accessible to members.

During the meeting

Participation

120   Subject to the Chair's duty to manage the meeting and make sure it is conducted properly, committee members can speak freely and openly on any subject of discussion. In carrying out their duties on behalf of the committee, members are expected to act in the interests of the University.

121   Members may speak on more than one occasion on any item. The Chair may, however, with the consent of the meeting, impose a time limit on any item or speech.

122   Members are expected to behave respectfully and courteously to one another and to make sure that their behaviour and contributions respect the purpose of the meeting. See the Meetings Protocol above).

Speaking for the Committee and Chair's authority

123   No-one apart from the Chair should speak on behalf of a committee without the committee's permission. On matters of procedure or conduct, the decision of the Chair will be final.

Members' interests

124   If a member has an interest in an item being discussed that is greater than the interests of other members of the committee, they should tell the Chair. The other members at the meeting will decide whether the member in question should withdraw from the discussion or decision.

Reserved business

125   Reserved business is any business that is of a sensitive nature that is likely to cover one or more Freedom of Information exemptions, i.e. typically items which have been received in confidence, refer to commercial interest or relate to individual or identifiable staff or

students. See paragraph 158 for more information on Freedom of Information exemptions and the consideration of Reserved Business.

126   The agenda will indicate if a committee is likely to consider reserved business for part of the meeting. This will be recorded separately, and the reserved minutes will be withheld from general circulation.

127   If reserved business is discussed, the Chair will ask any observers to leave the meeting. Depending on the nature of the reserved business, student representatives may also be asked to leave.

Decision-making, voting and Chair's action

128   All papers, motions and amendments will be formally proposed and seconded by a member present. A paper, motion or an amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the consent of the meeting.

129   For most meetings decisions will be taken by consensus with no need for a formal vote. Where there is no obvious consensus, or where there is a particular reason, decisions will be agreed by the majority of members present who will be asked formally to vote on the proposal. The Chair will be able to vote normally.

130   Votes will be by show of hands for all Committees except Senate where a ballot may instead be requested by at least five members.

131   The Officer(s) and any observers or those in attendance are not entitled to vote.

132   Abstentions do not count as votes cast against. Where votes are equally split the Chair has a second, or casting, vote.

133   The Chair may, on occasions, make a decision on behalf of the committee by taking **Chair's action**. This would normally only take place if a decision on a matter was needed urgently or in the case of routine business delegated to the Chair by the committee. In all cases, the committee should be asked to note the Chair's action at its next meeting.

134   The Officer should maintain a formal record of decisions taken by Chair's action using the relevant template.

135   Business not completed at a meeting will either be adjourned to the next meeting or the Committee will determine whether to hold an additional meeting.

136   At any time during a meeting a point of order may be raised. Points of order will be dealt with immediately and the ruling of the Chair will be final.

After the meeting

Preparation and approval of minutes

137   The Officer should aim to prepare draft minutes for the Chair's approval within two working days of each meeting. Chairs should approve the minutes no later than five days after receipt.

Following approval by the Chair, the status of the minutes changes to **unconfirmed**. At this point the Officer may distribute the minutes to committee members, those on the circulation list and non-members as appropriate.

Good Practice: Officers should aim to publish minutes within five working days of each meeting.

138   The unconfirmed minutes remain the responsibility of the Officer until they are **confirmed** by the committee at the following meeting.

139   Members will be asked to confirm whether the minutes are an accurate record of the discussion and outcomes at the next meeting of the committee. Minutes should not be published via the University website until they are confirmed.

Numbering and ordering of minutes

140   Minutes are numbered consecutively throughout the calendar year, i.e. 23.01, 23.02, 23.03…24.01. Within each set of minutes the order of minutes should reflect the order of the agenda for that meeting.

141   Templates for Open and Reserved Minutes are available on the University Intranet or from the University Secretariat.

142   'Matters arising' are recorded individually under a 'matter arising' sub-heading. For each item, the previous minute number should be listed to allow staff to refer back to earlier discussion on the issue.

143   'Any other business' items, where applicable, should be recorded separately and have their own minute number.

Action Sheets / Notice

144   It is considered good practice for the Officer to circulate an Action Sheet to members (and any other staff who have a specific interest in the discussion) shortly after the meeting. The Action Sheet should provide a record of the outcomes and action required by members / other staff. This will ensure that urgent action is taken swiftly. The Officer is responsible to updating the status of each action and reporting to the next meeting.

145   A template for the action sheet is available from the University Secretariat. It is also on the University intranet.

146   Committee members and general members of staff have a responsibility to investigate the actions allocated to them. If individuals do not understand the action allocated to them clarification should be sought from the Officer and / or Chair. Individuals should be prepared to report back on progress at the next meeting of the Committee.

Delegating business to other committees

147   Items delegated to committees and sub-committees must receive appropriate consideration at the next meeting. In most cases, the receipt of minutes from the committee or sub-committee will provide evidence of the consideration and the outcomes reached. It is the

responsibility of the Chair and Officer to ensure that delegated business is dealt with in good time, and that outcomes are provided to the Officer of the delegating committee.

Terminology

148   The non-gender specific term 'Chair' should be used at all committees. The use of the term 'Chairman' as a generic term for both Chairmen and Chairwomen is inappropriate.

Freedom of Information and Data Protection

Legal background

149   The University is subject to the <u>Freedom of Information Act (FOI)</u> and the <u>Data Protection Act</u>. The Legislation applies to recorded information held by Bucks, including information produced by committee work: minutes, agendas, supporting papers and tabled papers. Consequently:

- Information in committee records can be requested under the Freedom of Information Act, by people who submit FOI requests
- Individuals can use the Data Protection Act to request access to personal information relating to themselves held in committee records
- The Data Protection Act has created privacy rights which have to be respected in how the University handles committee records. For instance, the University should not release committee information into the public domain if that would release personal data about individuals in a way which would violate the Data Protection Act.

150   The access rights created by the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts are subject to several exemptions and limitations, which serve to balance the right of access against the legitimate interests of the University and other organisations and individuals. Where exemptions apply, committee records do not have to be made available – and in some cases, it would be unlawful or actionable to do so. The right of access covers both electronic and paper copies of committee records.

Publication of documentation

151   The University's aim is to make as much committee information as possible accessible, taking into account confidentiality and privacy requirements. Where necessary, committee proceedings should be structured into open business and reserved business as follows:

- Information should normally be placed into open business as a default
- Information which is likely to be sensitive and subject to an FOI exemption should be placed on the reserved agenda for the meeting and the discussion recorded in reserved minutes

152   Currently the University publishes on its website open minutes for Senate and Council. The University does not publish agendas, supporting paperwork or reserved minutes. Reserved minutes will be kept by the Officer.

153   Committee minutes will contain information about committee members and other persons (including student representatives and external members) attending meetings (their attendance, reports of their views and opinions, actions upon them), and information about third parties who are mentioned in discussions. Such information will be published in open minutes as it does not represent personally sensitive data and members are attending meetings in a professional capacity.

> Good Practice: The Information Commissioner's Office has indicated that it may not always be fair to attribute specific comments or opinions to named individuals. Instead, it is generally considered good practice to depersonalise minutes as much as possible.

154   Information in committee records which is not published on the website can still be requested under FOI or Data Protection; such requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the University's Freedom of Information Policy.

155   Open minutes for a particular Committee will be made available after they have been approved at the next meeting of that committee. This gives the Committee the opportunity to check the accuracy of the minutes before they are made more widely available.

Reserved Business

156   If you are a Committee Chair or Officer, this section outlines what you should consider as a Committee Chair or Officer when deciding what should go on the open agenda and what should go on the reserved agenda for a meeting, taking into account the overall aim to make as much business as possible accessible.

157   An item should only go on the reserved agenda if it is likely to cover areas that correspond to one or more FOI exemptions. This will ensure that only genuinely sensitive information goes into reserved business. Where papers are produced, these will be clearly marked as Reserved Business.

158   The FOI exemptions which are likely to be relevant are section 40 (Personal information), section 41 (Information provided in confidence), section 42 (Legal professional privilege) and section 43 (Commercial interests).

159   Items will generally be of a sensitive nature where they refer to commercial interest or relate to individual or identifiable staff or students.

160   If, during the course of an open part of a meeting, information arises which should not be released because it is likely to be exempt the Committee Officer should place the record of the discussion in the reserved minutes. The open minutes should indicate that an item has been moved to the reserved minutes; the reserved minutes should indicate the item on the open agenda to which the record of the discussion relates. This may require producing reserved minutes for a meeting where there was originally only an open agenda.

161   In the majority of instances a meeting will only deal with open business, in which case there is no need to produce a reserved agenda or reserved minutes. Similarly, some meetings will deal

only with reserved business. In both instances the resulting minutes should record that no open / reserved business (as appropriate) was transacted.

Abbreviations and Glossary

Abbreviation/Term	Explanation
Action Sheet	An Action Sheet is a list of actions agreed by a particular committee and which indicates who is responsible for undertaking those actions. Actions are generally taken outside the meeting and are updated at the following meeting.
Agenda	An agenda is a list of items to be discussed at a particular meeting. A typical agenda is made up of standing and non-standing items. Standing items appear on the agenda for each meeting, while non-standing items represent individual items within the committee's remit.
Chair	The Chair is the Presiding Officer of an assembly, meeting, committee or board.
Chair's Action	Chair's Actions are actions taken by the Chair on behalf of the committee outside meetings, normally to approve or reject a particular document or decision. All Chair's Actions are subject to noting at the next meeting.
Committee	Committees are an integral part of every organisation. They are formal bodies with defined membership which act in accordance with and make decisions relating to their remit or terms of reference.
Constitution	The constitution of a committee consists of its membership and terms of reference.
Data Protection Act	The Data Protection Act is a piece of government legislation relating to data and the use thereof. The University is bound by the Act in the way in which it reports data, e.g. through the committee structure.
Executive Summary	An Executive Summary is a report of a meeting completed by the Chair, normally for reporting to another part of the committee structure. Executive Summaries do not represent the complete record of the meeting which is contained within the minutes.
FOI	Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act is a piece of government legislation relating to information which should be released into the public domain. Information in committee records can be requested under FOI following the receipt of a formal FOI request. See also Reserved Business. |
| Meetings Protocol | The University has published a Meetings Protocol which it expects its staff to exhibit during all meetings, formal or informal. |
| Minute Secretary | A Minute Secretary may be appointed to larger Committees to support the Secretary or Officer. The Minute Secretary's primary responsibilities will be to distribute paperwork ahead of a meeting, take notes during the meeting, and draft minutes after a meeting. |

Abbreviation/Term	Explanation
Minutes	The minutes are the official record of the meeting in question and should record at a minimum the decisions taken and actions agreed.
Officer	The Officer of a Committee (also known as the Secretary) is responsible for the administrative side of the committee business. The Secretary may be supported by a Minute Secretary.
PSE	Professional Service Employee within the University. PSEs will normally function as Officers within the committee structure
Quorum	A quorum is the minimum number of people required to be present at a meeting in order to conduct the business of the meeting.
Reserved Business	Reserved Business relates to information within the committee business which is intended to be withheld from publication. Information is normally placed under reserved business or 'reserved cover' if it relates to one or more defined Freedom of Information exemptions.
Secretary	The Secretary is the main Officer of a meeting. The Secretary may be supported by a Minute Secretary.
UET	University Executive Team
Standing Orders	Standing Orders are the set of rules defined in this handbook which govern how a committee is managed.
Terms of Reference	Terms of reference define the remit and membership of a particular committee. The Terms of Reference, together with the actual membership, function as the constitution.

Appendix 1: Guidance for Committee Chairs and Officers

162 This guidance is offered in the spirit of good and best practice, and contains recommendations for conventions that should result in reasonable consistency in practice, with some necessary discretion to adapt to circumstances.

163 The skill of being a good Chair or Officer primarily develops from two things: the ability to think clearly, and a commitment to learn from experience and continuously improve. The theme of this guide is that Chair and Officer need to work as a team organising, conducting and recording the meetings of their committee.

Planning is key

164 The key to a successful meeting is the planning, organisation and structuring of the meeting. This includes considering the scope of the meeting, the aims of the meeting, the volume of business, commissioning the papers required to ensure informed discussion, clarity of tasks for those attending the meeting and the ordering of business. If a meeting is well planned and chaired there is an excellent foundation for useful minutes.

165 It is a good principle to require that all substantive items have a supporting paper. Oral reports are usually difficult to absorb unless they are short and well delivered. In addition, the Officer should ensure that the agenda, including all papers, is received by members well in advance of the meeting. Adoption of this practice gives participants the opportunity to prepare their contribution and reasonable confidence that the meeting will be productive. Failure to deliver papers to members on time can seriously undermine the prospects for an effective meeting.

Call for items

166 Members value being given the opportunity to be fully participative. The Chair may choose to have a final agenda item requesting business for the next meeting, or the Officer may invite items from members in advance of the meeting. The Chair or Officer should be proactive and commission papers from members (or others with specific responsibilities or interests) well ahead of the meeting. A call for items at least three weeks before a meeting has the further benefit of reminding members of the forthcoming meetings.

Structuring the meeting

167 It is advisable to structure meetings to bring cognate items together. A pattern with a natural flow of items helps the participants and improves the effectiveness of the business. The Chair is advised to identify the most important items that require committee time and place them early on the agenda so that the members devote their time to the consideration of the item. A committee may evolve a series of thematic headings that can be followed at each meeting. The order of the thematic headings can be varied according to circumstances. The agenda should indicate who would lead the item.

168 It is advisable to minimise the lead from the Chair – it is all too common for a Chair to overpower the committee and restrict open discussion. The Chair may wish to pass the Chair role to another member of the Committee in instances of personal interest.

169   The greatest risk for a committee is to be overburdened with business. It is therefore essential for the Chair to ensure that there is a realistic schedule. Members expect the meeting to start on schedule and have some indication of the length of meeting. Meetings of 2-3 hours are normally acceptable and effective. Meetings in excess of 3 hours may begin to diminish in effectiveness. A planned meeting of 3 hours probably needs a short mid-meeting break.

170   Many Chairs keep a private schedule for the items of business so that they can move the meeting on through the business purposefully. It is necessary to use such schedules with discretion so that the Chair can respond positively to circumstances where participants have deeper concern or where the matter is more straightforward than envisaged. The effectiveness of the meeting depends on the clarity of purpose of each item.

Type of action required

171   The agenda needs to be perfectly clear as to what the task of the committee is for each item. It is not sufficient to just list the project or the subject. Members need to know it they are to receive information, give advice, accept and recommend, approve or endorse a paper or report.

172   Some committees find it useful to cluster the 'decision items' high on the agenda so that important matters are taken first. However, a Chair may wish to structure the agenda with a thematic cluster.

Conduct of the meeting

173   It is a matter of courtesy that everyone present should either know each other or be introduced. A round of introductions is usual when a new member joins or the committee welcomes a visitor or observer.

174   Normally all papers should be circulated before the meeting. There may be occasions when the tabling of papers is necessary, but this should be rare. If a paper is tabled it is good practice to allow a few minutes reading time or ensure that the presenter makes a thorough introduction.

175   Chairs should ensure that matters arising are no more than brief matters of report. If there is a possibility or expectation of substantial discussion, then the matter should be an identified item on the agenda.

176   Much time can be lost in committees if the presenter re-iterates the contents of a paper. Chairs may inform participants that they should read the papers in advance of the meeting. This enables Chairs to instruct presenters that they should only highlight critically important points or information which post-dates the paper. Introductory comments should be no more than a couple of minutes. The Chair may wish to focus attention on particular points. If the committee is to consider a recommendation from a sub-committee of the committee this should be evident on the agenda. There should be sufficient time for members to question the recommendations but with the exception of core items of primary concern, the committee should not normally need to discuss such recommendations at great length. The purpose of a

sub-committee is to ensure that items relating to its remit have received a full and balanced discussion, thus performing a task on behalf of the parent committee.

177 Following introduction of the item for discussion the Chair should invite comments from members. It may be useful to gather several comments or suggestions before inviting the presenter to respond. This is more efficient than a response to each question. It is helpful for the Chair to keep a record of those who wish to speak and invite members to speak in turn.

178 At the conclusion of each item it is essential for the Chair to summarise the discussion and to announce the action agreed. This should match the original task indicated on the agenda.

Recording the meeting

179 The task of the Officer to the committee is to make an informative record of the meeting and the outcomes. Minutes should be concise, informative and accurate but they should not be a verbatim record. The Officer should understand the general purpose of each business item. This enables the Officer to ensure that for each substantive item, the minute outlines what the issue was, the principal aspects considered at the meeting and the action agreed. The individual / group responsible for implementing the action should be clearly identified.

180 The minutes should enable the reader to understand the issues that were discussed and why the particular outcome was reached. The minutes may attribute views expressed by individuals acting in roles responsible for the business under discussion, e.g. 'the Course Leader, Dean, Chair stated that...' etc. However, minutes should not normally attribute other views expressed by member by name. General discussion should be recorded in terms of the views of committee members, e.g. 'the committee agreed that...'

181 The written style and presentation of minutes is important. Minutes should be accessible and digestible. The members presented should be listed on the front page of the minutes, as well as any absences with or without apologies being received.

182 Further guidance on the University's minutes protocols is included in appendix 6 below.

Good Practice: It is good practice to keep an attendance record so that members' attendance can be easily tracked and changes made to the membership if necessary. This can be facilitated by BoardEffect.

This record may form part of a committee effectiveness review undertaken prior to the final meeting of the year and used to identify any patterns or trends in attendance.

Summary Guidance

183 The Chair and Officer need to work as a team to plan, conduct and record meetings:

- The agenda should be structured to cluster cognate business
- It is essential for the Chair to indicate the task for the committee in regard of each item of business
- Committee members should receive the agenda and papers five working days before the meeting
- The Chair is advised to prepare an approximate (private) schedule for the meeting

- Minutes should be concise, informative and an accurate record but not verbatim notes
- Minutes should outline the issue, the main concerns and the action outcomes
- Minutes should identify who is responsible for implementing an action.

Appendix 2: Advice for authors of papers / reports for meetings

184   Papers should be concise and purposeful. One to two pages are normally sufficient. Long papers are often counterproductive.

185   When the Chair commissions a paper it may be helpful to give the author a guide length.

186   A report on a project needs to focus on the issues and outcomes. It is advisable to provide a summary followed by recommended actions. The outcomes and the proposed actions must be clear.

187   If a report contains several appendices or includes other documents, it may be appropriate to make these available separately to members on request to reduce the amount of paperwork being provided to members to read for a meeting.

Appendix 3: Training for Committee Chairs and Officers

188   Training for Committee Chairs and Officers is available via the Human Resources Directorate, whatever the level of prior experience. Please contact HR for more information on courses that may be available.

189   Training for Officers on using committee software is available via the University Secretariat.

Appendix 4: Templates

Note: Templates are available from the University Secretariat via the Intranet

- Action Sheet
- Agenda
- Chair's Actions for report
- Committee Membership
- Membership List
- Open Minutes
- Paper Template
- Reserved Minutes

Appendix 5: University Minutes Protocols

The University's formal committees should be characterised as much as possible by a consistent style. The following protocols are designed to support secretaries / minute secretaries across the University when writing minutes.

Font, margins and spacing

- The font used should be Gill Sans Nova
- All paragraphs should be justified
- Spacing should be 1.0 or 1.15.

Recording attendance

- Use bullet-pointed lists for the attendees as shown below:
    - Professor Nick Braisby (Vice-Chancellor [Chair])
    - Professor Damien Page (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
    - Ellie Smith (University Secretary and Clerk to Council)
- Check membership and people's titles are correct
- Check attendance / apologies are recorded correctly (don't include someone who wasn't at the meeting!)
- Use bullet-pointed lists for apologies as well:
    - Dr Emma Tomsett (University Secretariat Manager)
    - Wendy Binmore (Committee Officer).

Titles

- Role titles should be used through minutes rather than names (e.g. Academic Registrar, Head of School: Art, Design and Performance, the Vice-Chancellor, etc)
- If a member of staff must be named (which should be by exception only), titles (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms) are not to be used **unless** the title is academic (Professor or Dr)

Style and tone

- Minutes should be written in the past tense using a formal tone
- Less is usually more – try to summarise discussions (record the key points)
- Do not include verbatim recording of what each person said. (However, a complex or contentious issue may be worth summarising in greater detail.)
- It can be helpful to use phrases such as "The Committee held a robust discussion of the report, with the following points agreed:
    - The report contained notable omissions in its financial data which should be rectified

- The report was unclear about the final outcome of the survey"

OR

"The Vice-Chancellor drew Senate's attention to the following key points:
- BNU was awaiting clarification on fee requirements from the Office for Students (OfS)
- AdvanceHE would be running a sector consultation on the requirements"

- Avoid informal language e.g.
  - use 'pleased' or 'gratified' etc instead of 'was happy'
  - 'excellent' or 'welcome' instead of 'great' or 'really good', 'unbelievable', etc
  - 'the Committee expressed concern' instead of 'the Committee was very unhappy'
- Always write a title in full before using an acronym for the first time – e.g. "the Office for Students (OfS) confirmed" or "the outcome would depend on the allocation of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for 2022-2023"
- Consider using a thesaurus to find alternative words to make the tone more formal or vary the vocabulary
- Proofread for typos, missing words etc before sending to the Chair
- Be consistent between sets of minutes so the style follows through all minutes – look at past sets of minutes to get a sense of the tone / style required.

Minute numbering

- Minutes should be numbered sequentially
- Each minute number should start with the final two digits of the calendar year in which the meeting was held followed by a decimal point – i.e. if the meeting was held in 2021, each minute should start with '21.'
- The first two digits of the minute number will change each January – i.e.:
  - Meetings held January – December 2023: minutes will start '23.'
  - Meetings held January – December 2024: minutes will start '24.'
  - Meetings held January – December 2025: minutes will start '25.' etc
- The final part of each minute number should start from 01 - i.e. 22.01, 22.02, 22.03 etc until the calendar year ends; the minutes will then restart from 01 to reflect the start of a new calendar year: 23.01, 23.02, 23.03, 23.04 etc
- You can use Microsoft Word Multilevel lists to number minutes for you if you are exporting them from BoardEffect and suggested settings are in the screenshot below.

51. Council also agreed that the University needed to reflect on how it could allow staff more time to undertake research. It noted the benefit of recruiting more PhD students who could teach, which in turn would

52. The Chair th

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    over the pas
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Inclusive Language

Language should be inclusive and non-discriminatory. Inclusive Employers recommend using the following terminology in 2023:

Historically used	Preferred in 2023
BAME	People of colour, ethnic minorities, global majority
People with _____ disability/ abled bodied	Disabled person
LGBT	LGBTQ+ (considerations with queer)
Gender reassignment	Trans / Transgender (Cisgender)
Homosexual	Sexuality / LGBTQ+
Elderly	Older person / people aged over ___

Ellen Edenbrow (They/Them)

Inclusive Employers

Actions

- Actions: details of the action should be contained in the minute, including a deadline for the action as much as possible, with only the person's job title appearing after 'Action' (e.g. **Action: University Secretary and Clerk to Council**). The action should be highlighted in bold.
- For example:

"22.34 The Committee agreed that the University Secretary and Clerk to Council would confirm the OfS requirements regarding attendance monitoring for the November meeting of Senate.

Action: University Secretary and Clerk to Council

22.35 The Committee discussed….."

- Indent the action text underneath the action as shown above
- The action taken for each agenda item should be recorded in the minutes, e.g. "The committee received a report on the status of 2022-2023 applications."
- Underline the action verb: received, noted, considered, etc
- All actions should be recorded on the action sheet, including as much detail as possible about what the action is. You can find the Action Sheet template on BEN or saved here in the S drive: S:\VC\Deliberative Committees\Committee templates.

Headers and Footers

- Minimal information should be included in headers and footers. If information is consistent in the headers and footers, make sure it is consistent between sets of minutes
- Information about meetings should be formatted as 'Education Committee: Open Minutes' etc.

File Naming conventions

- Once finalised, minutes should be saved on the S drive as Word and PDF files
- Minutes should be saved as 'YEAR-MM-DD [of meeting] FIRST THREE LETTERS OF COMMITTEE NAME Open / Reserved Minutes'
- Examples:

Senate Open Minutes of the meeting of 18 September 2022 = file name '2022-09-18 SEN Open Minutes.pdf'

Academic Planning Committee Reserved Minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2023 = file name '2023-12-12 APC Reserved Minutes.pdf'

Committee Abbreviations:

Council	COU
Audit Committee	AUD
Industrial Advisory Board	IAB
Resources Committee	RES
Student Experience Committee	SEC
Governance Committee	GOV
Honorary Awards Committee	HAC
Senate	SEN
Education Committee	EDU
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	EDI
Sustainability Committee	SUS
Research and Enterprise Committee	REC
Student Experience Forum	SEF
Health and Safety Committee	HSC
Academic Planning Committee	APC

Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What is changing and why?
The Committee Handbook has been reviewed to reflect current practise in committee servicing and governance at BNU (such as the establishment of the University Secretariat and the move to hybrid meetings following the COVID-19 pandemic) and to spread best practise across BNU for all committees, working groups and panels not supported by the University Secretariat (for instance, maintaining a business cycle, releasing papers one week before the meeting, drafting minutes in 2 working days)

2. What do you know?
Committees are a critical part of the governance structure and decision-making processes of the University. Committee work brings together staff and students from across the University to allow consensus and ownership in decision-making and fostering collegiality at BNU. Committees combine expertise gathered from several areas and stimulate new ways of thinking, and are often required to take difficult decisions. The handbook is designed to support all staff and students involved in BNU's committees to ensure staff are confident and comfortable in this work, that committees are inclusive and that committees are effective.

3. Assessing the impact

	Could benefit	May adversely impact	What does this mean? *Impacts identified from what you know (actual and potential)*	What can you do? *Actions (or why no action is possible) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations*
a) How could this affect different ethnicities? *Including Gypsy, Roma,*	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one ethnicity dominates, that no ethnicity is excluded and that

Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.			from different ethnicities can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members from different ethnic groups can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives. The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce discriminatory treatment of staff and students from different ethnicities. Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	the membership reflects the ethnic diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds. The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
b) How could this affect cisgender and transgender men and women (including maternity/pregnancy impact), as well as non-binary people?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures cisgender, transgender and non-binary staff and students from different ethnicities can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one gender dominates, that no gender is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body.

			should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members of all gender identities can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives. The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce discriminatory treatment of transgender and non-binary staff and students from different gender groups. Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one ethnicity dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds. The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
c) How could this affect disabled people or carers? *Including neurodiversity, invisible disabilities and mental health conditions.*	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students who are disabled or carers can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body.	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds.

			The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that disabled members and those who are carers can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives. The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce discriminatory treatment of staff and students from different ethnicities. The Handbook also outlines how the location of the meeting should be carefully considered to ensure any accessibility issues can be mitigated e.g. through hearing loops or giving ramp/lift access. This should further help committee members with accessibility needs attend a meeting that is not deemed hybrid. Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
d) How could this affect people from different faith groups?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students from different faiths can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of

			should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body.	members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds.
			The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members from different faith groups can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives.	The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse.
			The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce discriminatory treatment of staff and students from different faith groups.	Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees.
			The Handbook clearly states that meetings should not be scheduled on the dates of any significant or major religious festivals and feast days that fall outside holiday periods. It directs staff to the BNU EDI Calendar to check specific dates to identify potential clashes. This should ensure that staff or students should not be made to choose between the meeting or their faith and that their faith does not lead them to missing a meeting.	Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
			Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of	

			discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	
e) How could this affect people with different sexual orientations?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students with different sexual orientations can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members with different sexual orientations can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives. The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce discriminatory treatment of staff and students with different sexual orientations. Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds. The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
f) How could this affect different age groups or generations?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the

			from all age groups can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members from all age groups can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives. The Handbook also provides guidance to members about treating each other with mutual respect. This could help reduce any age-based discriminatory treatment of staff and students. Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this.	membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds. The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or incidences of discrimination or harassment against a particular group on BNU's campuses they should ensure this is escalated appropriately and action taken to stop it.
g) How could this affect those who are married or in a civil partnership?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students of any marital status (single, married or in a civil partnership) can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds.

			reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body.	The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse.
			The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members from all groups can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives.	Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees.

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| | | | Hearing from diverse voices on committees could also help BNU identify any patterns of discrimination or harassment on its campuses and take action to stop this. | |
| h) How could this affect people from different backgrounds such as: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers. | ☒ | ☐ | The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students from all different backgrounds can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body.

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i) How could this affect people with multiple intersectional experiences?	☒	☐	The Handbook outlines how committees should consider equality, diversity and inclusion of membership. This ensures staff and students with multiple intersectional experiences can take part in BNU decision making and governance. Memberships should reflect the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. The Handbook provides guidance to Chairs on ensuring that all members are treated with mutual respect and that all voices are heard. This should ensure that members with multiple intersectional experiences can comment on agenda items from their own perspective. It should help to foster and strengthen a collegiate approach to decision-making at BNU that reflects all experiences and perspectives.	Committees should review their memberships annually to ensure that no one group dominates, that no group is excluded and that the membership reflects the diversity of BNU's student and staff body. Recruitment of members should seek to encourage applications from staff and students of all backgrounds. The University Secretariat can also undertake reviews of committee memberships to ensure they are diverse. Committees should also review their effectiveness annually to ensure all voices are heard. This is already done by Council and its committees. Committees should ensure that where discussions of agenda items identify a pattern or

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4. Overall outcome			
No major change needed ☒	Adjust approach ☐	Adverse impact but continue ☐	Stop and remove ☐

5. Details of further actions needed
Instigation of regular committee effectiveness reviews at Senate level

6. Arrangements for delivery and future monitoring

7. Completed by:	Emma Tomsett	University Secretariat Manager	Date	12/10/2023
8. Signed off by:	Ellie Smith	University Secretary and Clerk to Council	Date	13/10/2023

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