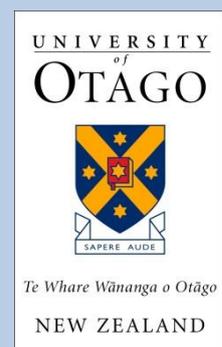


Guide to the Operation of University Committees

This Guide details the operations of committees and working parties at the University of Otago. It is intended primarily for committee secretaries, but may also be of use for committee conveners and members, and other parties involved in University committee work.



1. Overview of University Committees

1.1. Definition

A committee is a group of people with specific roles or expertise established to undertake a particular continuing function. Committees are often established by a parent body, and have a formal mechanism to report back regularly to that parent body (usually via committee minutes, which are sent to the parent body for approval).

1.2. Purpose of Committees

Committees may be formed for a number of purposes, for example they may have power to decide some matter such as admission to a programme, they may have oversight of some University process, or they may provide recommendations and advice to a parent committee. For example, the Board of Graduate Studies was established by Senate to consider policy, new paper proposals and any amendments to papers, programmes, regulations, prescriptions etc. pertaining to postgraduate study. However, the Board does not have the power to approve such proposals, but instead makes recommendations to Senate (and through Senate to Council). The Research Committee, by comparison, was established to consider all matters relating to research, to make recommendations to Senate on policies and strategies to foster and advance research, and to allocate and monitor funding within the Senate approved Research Committee schemes. This committee has specific delegated functions, and reports their decisions and funding allocated to Senate via their minutes.

2. Types of Committees

The University operates different types of committees which will have different degrees of formality and different styles and requirements for agendas and minutes.

2.1 Formal Committees include the [University Council](#) and [Senate](#), all the [Committees under the auspices of the University Council and Senate](#), and the Divisional Boards which report to Senate. These committees have clearly defined reporting requirements, and are subject to formal administrative requirements as detailed later in this guide.

- [Download a sample agenda for a formal committee](#)
- [Download sample minutes for a formal committee](#)
- [Download the University of Otago Committee Organisation structure](#)

2.2 Other Committees fall outside this formal structure, although they may still report to formal committees, use formal committee agenda and minute styles, and conduct their business in a very formal manner. For some other type of committees, a less formal approach may be appropriate.

- [Download a sample agenda for a less formal committee](#)
- [Download sample minutes for a less formal committee](#)

2.3 Working Parties are established from time-to-time by committees or senior management to consider and make recommendations on a particular matter. Working parties meet for a specified period and then report their findings and recommendations, at which time they are disestablished. Working party minutes may often be more detailed than minutes for other committees.

- [Download a sample agenda for a working party](#)
- [Download sample minutes for a working party](#)

Within these categories, various types of committees operate: for example advisory committees, standing committees, ad hoc committees and so forth. For more information on these committee types, refer to the [Glossary of Terms](#).

3. Terms of Reference and Standing Orders

3.1. Terms of Reference

The functions of a committee are set out in 'Terms of Reference' which state the composition of the committee, its responsibilities, and its decision-making powers (i.e. those aspects where the committee has the power to make the final decision on behalf of the parent body, and those aspects where the role of the committee is to make a recommendation for consideration by the parent body). Terms of Reference for most formal committees are available via the University of Otago [Council Committees](#) web page. Terms of Reference are required for all formal committees and strongly recommended for all other committees.

3.2. Standing Orders

The 'Standing Orders' of a committee are the rules as to how the committee functions, and may include rules on such matters as conduct within the meeting, administration, the quorum for a meeting (i.e. the minimum number of members required in order for a meeting to be able proceed) and procedures for decision making. The [Standing Orders of the Council](#) apply to the University Council, and (relevant sections) also apply to any other formal University committee which does not have its own specific Standing Orders.

4. Committee Membership Considerations

In deciding on the membership of a new committee, consideration needs to be given to achieving an appropriate mix of people and from what parts of the institution members should be drawn in order for the Committee to work effectively. Consideration should be given to including:

- People with a special interest or expertise – this might include particular relevant positions
- Representation from each Division and each campus (Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington); usually via the Pro-Vice-Chancellor or their nominee
- Māori representation ([please refer to the Māori Strategic Framework](#))
- Pacific representation ([please refer to the Pacific Strategic Framework](#))
- Student representation
- People external to the University, but with professional interest and expertise

Gender balance, and the optimum size of the committee, should also be taken into account. A larger committee may allow for a broader representation of viewpoints, while a smaller committee can be more efficient.

A committee's Terms of Reference usually specify the composition of the committee and how its membership is determined, for example see the Board of Graduate Studies membership.

Membership is typically either by virtue of the member's position, through appointment by the committee or by a third party (the process for which may involve consultation with relevant groups), or by election. See also the section on 'Secretarial Tasks: Assisting with Selection and Induction of Members'.

5. The Role of the Convener

5.1. Responsibilities of the Convener

The convener (or chair) of a committee has oversight of that committee, and is responsible for ensuring the business of the committee is conducted efficiently and effectively in accordance with its Terms of Reference and Standing Orders.

The convener has the following key tasks:

- Oversight of development of the agenda for each meeting (the committee's secretary will usually prepare the agenda in consultation with the convener)
- Chairing meetings of the Committee (see below)
- Checking draft minutes prepared by the committee secretary prior to these being circulated to committee members
- Signing minutes for record keeping purpose once the minutes are confirmed by the committee
- Undertaking action on behalf of the committee and reporting the outcomes of such action back to the committee

5.2. Chairing Committee Meetings

During the committee meeting the convener shall work through the agenda items in turn, this shall normally include:

- Opening the meeting
- Welcoming any new members or guests
- Announcing previously received apologies from those unable to attend
- Having the minutes of the previous meeting confirmed
- Discussing matters arising from previous meetings (as recorded in the minutes), such as actions which were to be carried out by the convener or particular members
- Introducing each item on the agenda, including:
 - inviting discussion as appropriate
 - keeping order, ensuring that only one person speaks at a time, and normally only speaking during discussion in order to impart information that will help discussion or correct errors of fact
 - briefly summing up discussion
 - ensuring there is a quorum for any decision (in cases where the committee has a stated quorum)

- formally putting any proposal arising from discussion (typically the convener will advance a motion and ask for it to be seconded (although it is permissible for a convener to advance a motion without it being seconded), or request that a member advance a motion)
- Raising any business not on the agenda under 'Convener's Business'
- Thanking any members whose service on the committee is ending
- Closing the meeting

6. The Role of Committee Members

Committee members have the following responsibilities in order to ensure the effective functioning of committees:

- Prepare for meetings by reading documentation in advance and consulting where appropriate, to ensure they are fully informed about matters to be discussed
- Be ready to offer a succinct point of view on matters to be discussed
- Inform the committee secretary in advance if they are unable to attend a meeting
- Inform the committee secretary if they wish to add an item to the agenda, prepare any documentation that is required to support their item, and be prepared to summarise the item at the meeting
- Follow up with additional actions as required by the committee
- If asked to consult or provide a view from a particular constituency, to carry this out through appropriate channels, for example through raising the matter at an appropriate Divisional Committee meeting
- Report back to their constituencies as appropriate

A committee member should not normally act as an advocate for a particular constituency. However, as noted above, there may be instances where a committee member is specifically asked to provide the view point of the group they represent.

7. Non-Committee Members 'in Attendance' at Meetings

Non-committee members may attend meetings in some cases. These may include:

- The secretary, who is not normally considered a full member of the committee
- Staff or others who are permanently in attendance at the meeting because their area of expertise means that they can provide valuable information to the committee and/or benefit from attendance at the meeting
- Staff or others who are not permanently in attendance but attend a meeting for a particular purpose, for example they have presented a proposal to the committee

Those in attendance do not have voting rights. They will not necessarily have speaking rights either, however the convener may call on them to answer questions or otherwise

provide information to the committee. In cases of those in attendance who regularly attend a committee, the convener may choose to grant general and ongoing speaking rights.

8. Submitting Items for Consideration by Committees

Both committee members and those outside the committee may prepare items for consideration by the committee. If in doubt about whether an item is appropriate, advice should be sought from the convener and/or secretary. The following guidelines apply:

- It is usually preferable for an item to be accompanied by some supporting documentation, if only a memorandum to the committee outlining the nature of the issue (practice may vary across committees and in some cases documentation may not be required)
- Liaise with the secretary about the timeframe for providing documentation and submit material within this specified timeframe
- Documentation should not be tabled in formal committees, and, if possible, this should be avoided in other committees – it is better to provide material in advance
- It can be very helpful to provide a summarising cover note/memorandum which clearly includes what the committee is being asked to do, for example to approve a proposal, offer feedback, etc. – if unsure of the powers of the committee in relation to the proposal, check the committee’s Terms of Reference or seek advice from the secretary or convener
- Be prepared to speak to the item at the committee meeting and answer queries from committee members

9. The Role of the Committee Secretary

9.1 Responsibilities of the Secretary

The secretary of the committee is responsible for:

- Arranging the logistics for the meeting, including booking rooms, ensuring rooms are appropriately set up with any necessary equipment, and arranging any necessary catering
- Giving notice of the meetings, preferably at least one week in advance
- Preparing the agenda, in consultation with the convener, and circulating it to members
- Briefing and advising the convener as necessary before and during the meeting
- Ensuring that the membership list of the committee is kept up to date
- Ensuring that action is taken to fill vacancies on the committee
- Informing members of all necessary information about the committee, such as its Terms of Reference, Standing Orders, the names of other members and the term of office
- Recording the proceedings of the meeting without entering the debate (unless asked by the convener to speak on a matter)
- Being prepared to provide information on previous committee discussions or decisions in the meeting (bringing previous minutes to the meeting is recommended)

- Writing the minutes so that they are an accurate record of what happened at the meeting
- Disseminating decisions made by the committee to relevant people or bodies
- Maintaining a minute book, documents submitted to the committee, and other appropriate files ([see also 'Secretarial Tasks: Record Keeping'](#))

9.2 The Convener-Secretary Relationship

An excellent working relationship between the convener and the secretary is important for the smooth functioning of a committee. It is recommended that that the convener and secretary meet in cases where there are changes in personnel to ensure that they have a common understanding of the manner in which the committee will be run – while the formal rules are contained in the Terms of Reference and Standing Orders, each committee has its own unwritten traditions and customary practice. A briefing meeting of this sort has the added advantage of ensuring continuity for an ongoing committee.

9.3 The Attributes of a Good Secretary

The following are the key personal and professional attributes for success as a committee secretary:

- Accuracy and honesty
- Clarity
- Efficiency: prompt preparation and distribution of Agendas, Minutes and follow-up letters and other after-meeting work
- Discretion
- Helpfulness: to the convener and committee members, and to staff, students or others who are affected by the deliberations of the committee
- Establishment of mutual trust and respect with the members of the committee
- Composure

10. Secretarial Tasks: Assisting with Selection and Induction of Members

10.1 Membership – Selection

Membership is typically either by virtue of the member's position, through appointment by the committee or a third party (the process for which may involve consultation with relevant groups), or by election. In cases in which consultation is to occur, the secretary may be required to collect and collate feedback. Where membership is by election, the secretary is likely to be called upon to assist with:

- Setting the date for election
- Advertising the vacancies
- Calling for nominations
- Preparing information about candidates

- Preparing and maintaining an accurate roll of voters
- Ordering and assembling materials (e.g. information statements about candidates)
- Counting votes
- Announcing results

Elections may also be conducted via electronic means, for example through email delivery and return of pdf ballot forms or via other online systems. For elections with a very large number of staff voting, it may be worth employing an external contractor to manage the voting process. Regardless of the system used, care should be taken to ensure security and confidentiality.

- [Download a sample call for nominations for a committee election](#)
- [Download a sample covering memo for a committee election](#)
- [Download a sample ballot paper \(with biographical statements\) for a committee election](#)
- [Download a sample notification memo following a committee election](#)

10.2 Filling Vacancies – Annual Vacancies

Some memberships are for a set period of, for example, three years. The convener and the member should be reminded that their term is due to expire around three months before the end of their term (usually the end of a calendar year). The appropriate selection process needs to be set in motion so that the committee is not left with a vacant membership.

10.3 Filling Vacancies – Casual Vacancies

A 'casual vacancy' exists if a member of a committee resigns before their term of office expires, or informs the secretary that they plan to resign. The secretary should inform the convener and then set the appropriate selection process in motion as soon as possible. The term of office of the replacement member will normally be the balance of the time between their selection and the expiration of the original member's term of office.

10.4 Induction

Whenever a convener or a new member of a committee is appointed, the secretary should formally welcome the new member to the committee, informing them of upcoming meeting dates and their length of tenure on the committee, and providing them with the committee's Terms of Reference, Membership and (if appropriate) Standing Orders. Directing them to this Committees Guide is also recommended.

- [Download a sample welcome email for a new committee member](#)

If the new member is the convener, it is recommended that the secretary also meet with the new convener to discuss how the committee has previously worked in practice, and any changes to established practice the convener may prefer.

10.5 Updating Information

Any membership details held on the [University's Committees webpage](#) (or on other local University webpages for non-central committees) should be updated as soon as a new member is appointed and takes up their position. For updates on the Committees webpage email Jane Hinkley, the Academic Committees Administrator at jane.hinkley@otago.ac.nz

11. Secretarial Tasks: Setting Dates and Arrangements for Meetings

11.1 Established Committees that Meet Regularly

For perpetual committees with regular meeting dates, the dates of meetings for the following year should be drafted by the secretary, who should then consult the convener before placing them on the Agenda of the final meeting of the year.

In setting dates, Public Holidays need to be taken into account (in terms of agenda deadlines, as well as meeting days), as should the meeting dates for other relevant committees, as these may have some members in common, or the same convener. In particular the secretary should ensure there is sufficient time following a meeting to allow for the minutes to be written and sent to the secretary of any parent committee for inclusion on that committee's agenda. The date setting process is often aided by an established practice, such as meetings occurring on the last Tuesday afternoon of each month.

The dates of meetings for the following year for Council and Senate and other key committees (the Board of Undergraduate Studies, the Board of Graduate Studies and the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee) are established centrally at the end of each year. The Academic Committees Office then liaises with secretaries of the committees that report to Senate and Divisional Board Administrators about the dates of the meetings of their committees for the next year. In establishing these dates, care should be taken to avoid clashes with the key committees scheduled centrally.

11.2 Working Parties, Limited-Term Committees and Committees that Meet Irregularly

Some permanent committees meet irregularly or at long intervals (for example annually); similarly, working parties may be set up at relatively short notice. In such instances:

- Meetings should be set up well in advance if possible (for an annual meeting with senior or very busy attendees, setting up months in advance is not unusual)
- Check the convener's availability first at a range of times, to ensure they can attend the meeting
- Contact the remainder of the group with potential dates and times to attempt to find a time which suits everyone
- If it is very difficult to find a time when everyone can attend, the secretary may liaise with the convener to see if all members need to attend and/or whether it may be appropriate for members to send representatives in their place

11.3 Arrangements

Meeting rooms should be booked in advance, around the same time that the dates for the year are set (in which case the venue may be able to be booked for the entire year) or when dates are otherwise established. If meetings are scheduled around tea or lunch times consideration should be given to providing refreshments; it is the secretary's responsibility to organise this.

12. Secretarial Tasks: Preparation and Distribution of the Agenda

12.1 Collecting Items for Consideration

Normally this will be a self-evident process, with regular items and regular contributors established. The secretary should:

- Make sure the date for submission of material is made clear, typically through a call for agenda items to committee members and/or publication of the agenda deadline on the University webpage
- Check with the convener in case there are particular items they would like on the agenda
- If there are items from non-committee members, check with the convener as to whether these people should be invited to attend the meeting
- Ensure all submitted material meets the requirements under the Preparing Items for Consideration by Committees section of this guide, and ask for revisions if necessary
- Be aware of the timing of the meeting within the year, and of the business that needs to be conducted in relation to that timing in order to fulfil the function of the committee and assist in the workflow of any parent body

Inclusion of late items is at the discretion of the convener. In considering late items, thought should be given to the urgency and complexity of the item and the impact of inclusion on the committee members. Only in exceptional cases, where urgency exists, should items be added to the agenda after it has been distributed.

12.2 Style and Format of the Agenda

The content of the agenda and supporting documents should be as clear as possible and provide members with sufficient content detail and clarity on any action or decision which needs to be made. Number pages, including all supporting documents, for ease of reference.

The items in the agenda should follow a logical order. Items requiring discussion should be placed together, usually before or after items which need only to be noted or received, however sometimes it may be more appropriate to group items by subject matter.

A simple numbering system for each main item should be used (e.g. 1, 2, 3 etc.). Sub-items should be preceded by small letters in brackets (e.g. (a), (b), (c) etc.) Any further subset should be identified by the use of roman numerals in brackets (e.g. (i), (ii), (iii) etc.). Correct, clear and consistent numbering allows members of committees to quickly identify the part of the Agenda they want to discuss. This also makes follow up after the meeting easier.

The following sections are commonly included in agendas as appropriate:

- **Minutes of the previous meeting** – to allow for confirmation of the minutes and/or corrections where necessary

- **Intimations** – where a committee reports to and makes recommendations to another committee (i.e. the parent body) this section reports on what action has been taken by the other committee/parent body on the recommendations previously submitted
- **Matters arising** – discussion of items with actions from the previous meeting(s)
- **General business/Convener's business** – usually the penultimate item on the agenda; for discussion of items not listed on the agenda
- **Date of the next meeting** – usually the final item on the agenda for committees that meet regularly

A distribution list showing the names and initials of members of the committee should appear at the end of the Agenda. It should also include the names of any officers who are expected or entitled to attend the meeting, and of any staff who receive the agenda papers for their information. This list should be in alphabetical order by surname and identify the convener in brackets.

- [Download a sample agenda for a formal committee](#)
- [Download a sample agenda for a less formal committee](#)
- [Download a sample agenda for a working party](#)

12.3 Distribution

The agenda, and all its accompanying documents, should be sent to members well in advance of the meeting. Agendas and papers should be distributed electronically at least 3-5 working days prior to the meeting.

In the case where a document is not available at the time the agenda is to be sent out, the agenda should be sent with an indication that the document concerned will be distributed before the meeting. The document should be hand-delivered and/or emailed in order to give members the maximum time possible to read it prior to the meeting. Documents should only be made available at the meeting itself ('laid on the table') in exceptional circumstances, and this practice should be avoided if at all possible.

In the rare instances where items are added to the agenda after it has been distributed, a Supplementary Agenda should be provided to members before the day of the meeting.

12.4 Committees that are Open to the Public

Councils of Tertiary Educational Institutions are subject to the requirements of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987, Part VII. This legislation requires Council and Council Committee meetings to be open to the public (this excludes Senate and its sub-committees). The meeting schedule must be advertised and agendas made available at least two working days prior to the meeting.

Meeting Agendas for this type of meeting are separated into two parts – Part 1 being "Open Committee" and Part 2 being "In Committee". Unless there is good reason (which must be specified), items should be included in Part 1. An agenda item "Exclusion of the Public" should be included as the last item in Part 1. This provides the mechanism whereby the

convener moves to exclude the public from the remaining meeting proceedings. Brief details of the Part 2 agenda items must be specified under this item, with corresponding reference to the specific sections of the Official Information Act noting the reason for exclusion e.g. commercial sensitivity.

13. Secretarial Tasks: During the Meeting

The secretary's primary tasks during the meeting are to:

- Inform the convener of apologies received, members who will be late or who may need to leave early, new members, and members for whom this will be their last meeting serving on the committee
- Record the decisions made (see [Preparation of the Minutes](#)) – it is not usually necessary to record discussion in detail unless there are exceptional circumstances or the format of the committee requires it (for example working parties will often record discussion in more depth)
- Ensure the minutes of the previous meeting of the committee are signed by the convener (assuming there are no corrections noted at the meeting; if so the formal copy of the minutes will need to be amended and signed subsequently)
- Be conversant with the items under consideration, including any background information which is not made explicitly available to the committee (e.g. urgency)
- Be familiar with the history and workings of the committee, including having at the meeting the committee's Terms of Reference, membership and Standing Orders, together with the formal Minute Book
- Have a thorough understanding of the powers of the committee including when the committee can receive or note information, when it can agree to an action, when it can approve an action, and when it needs to make a recommendation to another body
- Be prepared to act as administrative support, for example if material needs to be copied

Some secretaries use recording devices in meetings to assist with minute preparation. In such cases committee members should be informed of the recording. Care should be taken to ensure any recordings are securely stored and disposed of.

14. Secretarial Tasks: Preparing and Distributing Minutes

14.1 Style and Format

Minutes are the formal and lasting record of the meeting, and the decisions made. They should therefore be written in a formal way and be clear, concise and unambiguous. Wording should be carefully chosen to accurately reflect decisions made. It is also useful to have a consistent style, so that all those who are expected to read the papers can do so more quickly and easily.

Minutes should start by listing the titles, names and full initials of the members of the committee (in alphabetical order by surname) who are present, those who have made an apology, and those who are not members of the committee but are in attendance.

Any significant corrections to the minutes from the previous meeting should be noted. The formal copy of those minutes, to be signed by the convener and stored

for record-keeping purposes, should also be updated to reflect any such amendments. See the Minute Keeping Guidelines for Council, Senate and their Committees.

In order to highlight significant matters, and distinguish the levels of decision-making, the following words should appear in bold, and in capitals at the left hand side of the page:

RESOLVED or AGREED	that a decision be made or action be taken (if the committee has the power to do so)
APPROVED	a recommendation (if the committee has the power to do so)
RECOMMENDED	that a proposal be approved or an action taken (to be referred to the parent body who has the power to approve)
DECLINED	a recommendation/proposal/request (if the committee has the power to do so)
DEFERRED	a recommendation or decision until a future meeting, dependent on further information or another action
REFERRED	a recommendation/proposal/request back to the recommending committee, to another body for further consideration, or to another committee if that committee has more appropriate authority to consider the matter

There is no need to highlight the words 'received' or 'noted', and these should appear in the main body of the text, rather than being separated in the style above. For example: "The Senate received and noted the minutes of the Research Committee dated 1 June 2013."

Where follow up actions are required this should be noted in the text of the minutes. It is helpful to highlight such actions by including the initials of the person or people responsible for the follow up action in bold to the right of this text (this allows committee members to easily scan the minutes for the actions they need to perform). For example:

Professors Sam Smith and Jane Brown to seek feedback from their departments on this issue to report at the next meeting. **SS/JB**

Discursive minutes are not normally required, however at times it may be necessary to specify the main points made during discussion to illustrate why a particular decision was made.

In many cases it is possible and efficient to draft minutes prior to the meeting and then adjust if necessary in light of the meeting. This practice can reduce any delay in finalising and distributing the minutes after the meeting.

- [Download sample minutes for a formal committee](#)
- [Download sample minutes for a less formal committee](#)
- [Download sample minutes for a working party](#)

14.2 Distribution

On completion of the draft minutes the secretary should forward them to the convener for approval. Once this has been received the minutes may be distributed to committee members. Minutes should normally be distributed within three days of the meeting, or as soon as possible after this. They should be distributed to all those who receive the agenda and may also be sent to other relevant parties, including to parent committees.

15. Secretarial Tasks: Subsequent Actions

Within three working days of the meeting the secretary should:

- Clarify any points as required with the convener, including any actions to be taken and members responsible for taking that action
- Write and send any communications as required, and copy those for whom the information is necessary or of interest
- Arrange for a formal copy of the minutes to be included in the formal Minute Book
- Maintain an index of the items considered by the Committee
- Ensure that material relating to the business of the meeting, including follow up letters, is filed appropriately

16. Secretarial Tasks: Record Keeping

16.1 Records of University Committees

Committee records are recognised as a 'vital' group of records. Vital records are the ones necessary for the continuity of operations during a disaster or which would have serious long-term consequences for the organisation if the records were not able to be produced. Many committee records, particularly minutes, have long-term value to the University and will be retained permanently as part of its archives.

All committee records in the University must be managed in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005 and the University's [Records Management Policy](#). Maintenance of University records is overseen by [Corporate Records Services](#).

Key committee records include:

- Terms of reference
- Agendas and agenda papers
- Minutes
- Reports
- Supporting documents
- Correspondence (to/from the committee)
- Records related to its establishment
- Records related to membership (appointments, lists)

Most working records related to committees (e.g., copies of catering orders and room bookings, apologies sent by email, documents related to the setting up of meetings, and draft notes from meetings) are of short term value and should be destroyed or deleted once they are no longer needed for current work in accordance with the University's [Records Destruction Guidelines](#).

16.2 Approved Minutes

For formal committees a folder of approved minutes (signed by the convener as an accurate record) should be kept in a binder in accordance with the University's [Minute Keeping Guidelines for Council, Senate and their Committees](#); this process can also be used for other committees if considered appropriate. Where a committee maintains its records electronically, the minutes should be converted to PDF and/or digitally signed in order to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the record.

16.3 Retention and Access

Committee records are typically retained for 10 years after the date of last action and then archived. Committee records that contain confidential information are restricted for 25 years from the date of closure to protect the integrity of the University's governance and administrative processes. This restriction is outlined in the University's [Access Framework for University of Otago Records](#).

17. Useful Links

[Academic Committees Office](#)

[Committees of Council](#)

[University of Otago Committee Structure](#)

[Standing Orders of the Council](#)

[Minute Keeping Guidelines for Council, Senate and their Committees](#)

[Corporate Records Services](#)

[Records Destruction Guidelines](#)

18. Sample Documents

- [Sample agenda for a formal committee](#)
- [Sample minutes for a formal committee](#)

- [Sample agenda for a less formal committee](#)
- [Sample minutes for a less formal committee](#)

- [Sample agenda for a working party](#)
- [Sample minutes for a working party](#)

- [Sample welcome email for a new committee member](#)

- [Sample call for nominations for a committee election](#)

- [Sample covering memo for a committee election](#)

- [Sample ballot paper \(with biographical statements\) for a committee election](#)

- [Sample notification memo following a committee election](#)

19. Glossary of Terms

Agenda

The list of items of business to be considered at the meeting in the order in which it is proposed to deal with them. The secretary may call for items for the agenda, relevant to the particular committee. Some items will always be on the agenda, such as the minutes of the previous meeting, convener's business, and date of the next meeting.

Agenda item

A heading and brief description of what is to be done. Relevant papers will usually be attached or available from the secretary.

Composition

The composition of a committee details the number and the positions and/or particular groups which are represented. Composition is not the same as membership.

Convener

This is the term used at the University of Otago for the person who chairs a committee meeting.

Ex officio

This means 'by virtue of one's position or office'. Some members are on a committee ex officio, and serve as long as they hold that position.

Executive action

The convener may take executive action, if s/he is authorised by the committee, on behalf of the committee. This is an action that would normally be taken by the committee but it is unable to do so because a meeting does not reach a quorum, or may be taken between meetings because no meeting is scheduled in time and the matter does not warrant a special meeting. All executive action must be reported to the next meeting of the committee on whose behalf it is taken.

In attendance

Those people who come to the meeting to provide advice on specific matters (advisers) and the secretary of the committee.

Lie on the table (or deferred)

If a matter has been moved, seconded and discussion commenced (or in a less formal meeting discussion has commenced) but it is considered the matter will not be resolved at the meeting it may be agreed to let the matter 'lie on the table'. This is usually used to allow time to obtain more information or to allow members to further consider the matter. The matter will normally be discussed at the next meeting.

Membership

This differs from composition and lists the actual people on the committee. There may be different classes of membership including:

- **Elected member:** A member chosen by ballot from the group being represented
- **Appointed or nominated member:** A member nominated for particular skills or to represent a certain group. The specific nominee is recorded as the member and is not interchangeable with another nominee on an ad hoc basis
- **Ex officio member:** A member who is on the committee because of the position held. The position, and not the person, is the member. When an ex-officio member is absent and another person is formally appointed to act in that position, then the person acting is a full member whilst in the acting position
- **Co-opted member:** A member included to add skills or bring particular information to the committee
- **Alternate member:** With the permission of the convener, an alternate member may be able to attend a meeting when the normal member is absent.

Minutes

Minutes are a formal record of the proceedings at the meetings. The minutes are 'draft minutes' or 'unconfirmed minutes' until the committee confirms them.

Motion

A motion is a proposed resolution before it has been passed or rejected by the meeting. A recommendation is a proposed written resolution. Once a recommendation has been verbally 'put' to the meeting it is described as a motion.

Point of order

A point of order is taken when a person officially draws the attention of the convener to an alleged irregularity in the proceedings.

Quorum

The minimum number of members who must be present that make the proceedings valid. The quorum specified in the Standing Orders of Council (which specifies a majority of the members) prevails unless the quorum is specified in the establishment of the committee

Resolution

A resolution records how an item is dealt with. A resolution usually commences with "that" and concludes with a specific action such as "be received and noted", or "be approved", or "be agreed", or "be endorsed". If the committee is receiving and noting a report it does not mean that it has adopted the recommendations contained in the report.

Special meeting

Special meetings may be convened from time to time to discuss an extraordinary or special matter. The agenda usually consists of the special item only.

Standing Orders

Standing Orders are the operating rules whereby the business to be considered is brought before the committee, dealt with by the committee, and the result of the committee's deliberations communicated to those who need to know. The majority of University of Otago

committees operate under the Council's Standing Orders, while Terms of Reference may contain some of the operating instructions of a particular committee.

Substantive motion

This is a motion ordering something to be done, authorising some action, expressing the meeting's opinion in regard to some subject, or otherwise dealing with the organisation's general activities. Only one substantive motion can be before the convener at any one time.

Tabled paper

This refers to a paper that is handed out (tabled) at the meeting. Most agenda papers are distributed in advance with the agenda but conveners may decide if it is appropriate for a paper to be tabled. In general, tabling a document should be avoided.

Term of office

This is the period of time for which a member is appointed to a committee.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of a committee describe the purpose and function of a committee. They indicate reporting responsibilities and decision making powers.

20. Further Information

The following staff have extensive experience with University Committee work, and are willing to assist with committee-based enquiries not covered by these Guidelines:

Gary Witte

Manager, Academic Committees Office

Secretary to: Senate, Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS), University of Otago Human Ethics Committees

Phone: (479) 8256

Email: gary.witte@otago.ac.nz

Jane Hinkley

Academic Committees Administrator

Phone: (479) 6531

Email: jane.hinkley@otago.ac.nz

Judith Thompson

Executive Officer, Office of the Registrar

Secretary to: Foundation Trust, Ethical Behaviour Committee

Phone: (479) 8250

Email: judith.thompson@otago.ac.nz

Ruth Taylor

Executive Assistant, Academic and International

Secretary to: Honorary Degrees Committee, DVCs/PVCs Group, Quality Advancement
Committee, Policy Management Group

Phone: (479) 8241

Email: ruth.taylor@otago.ac.nz

Tracey Sim (for record keeping enquiries)

Head of Department, Corporate Records Services

Phone: (479) 5794

Email: tracey.sim@otago.ac.nz