Practice Makes Perfect!

Committee Secretaries
Skills Development Workshop

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the role of committees in University governance

- Understand the purpose of meetings

- Know the roles of committee members

- Provide a system for effective listening, note taking and writing

- Identify what to record & what not to record in a set of minutes

- How to convey meeting decisions to ensure action

Program Structure

- Introductions and expectations / sharing of experience

- The purpose of committee meetings

- The role of the committee secretary

- Importance of effective preparation

- Effective listening, note taking and writing skills

- Preparing a minute item

- Developing your note taking and minute preparation skills

Purpose of committee meetings

- **A meeting is a gathering of important people who individually can do nothing but together decide that nothing can be done! Fred Allen**

- **When the outcome of a meeting is to have another meeting, it has been a lousy meeting. Herbert Hoover**

Purpose of committee meetings

- Committee meetings are where people come together to accomplish specific purposes

- Committee meetings are used to canvas wide ranging & diverse views in regard to an issue so that the most informed decision can be taken

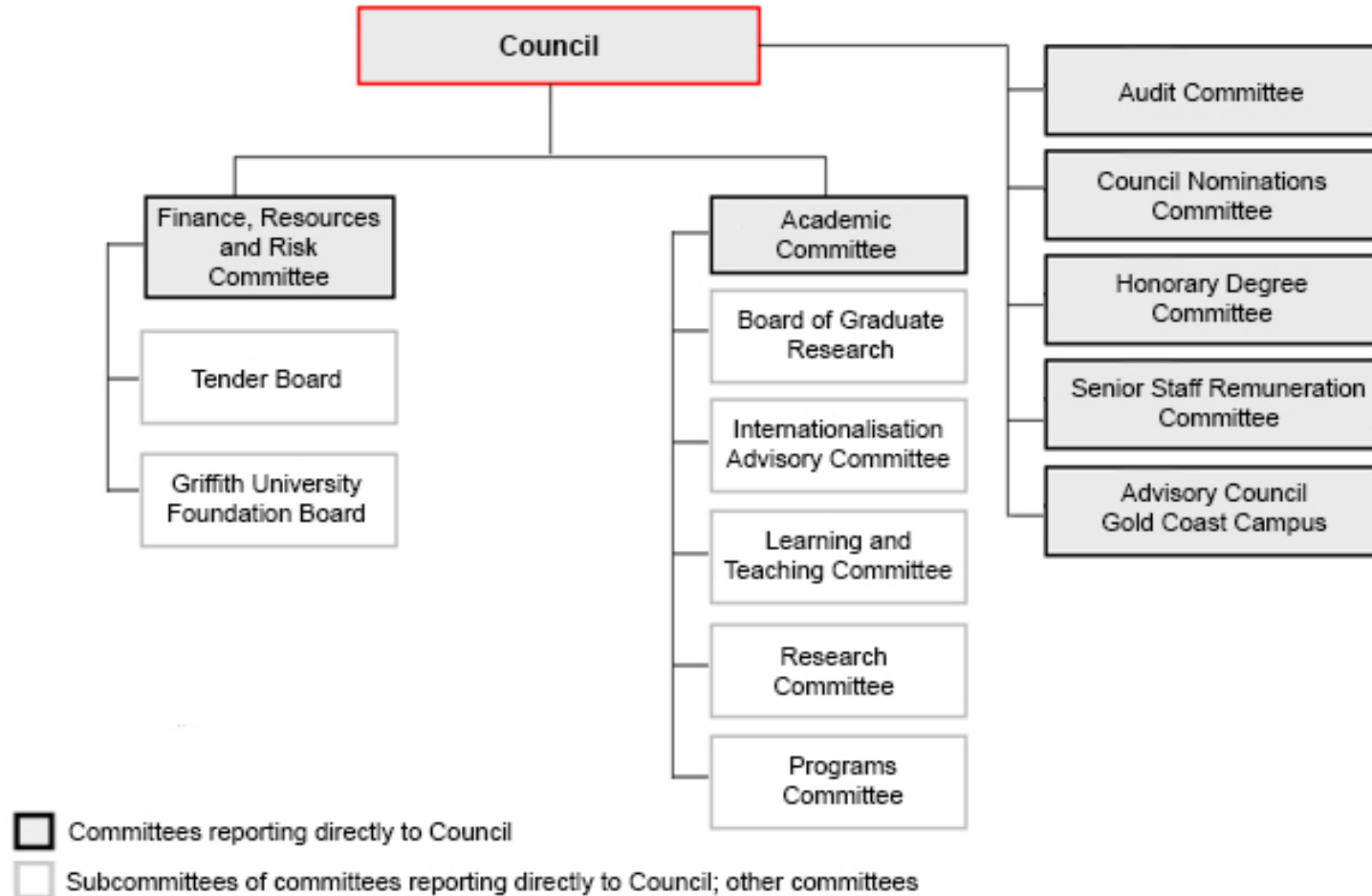- Committee meetings transact business in a consultative & collegial manner

University Governance

The University's Committee structure may be categorised as follows:

- The Council and its sub-committees

- Other central committees

- Group Boards and other group-level committees

- School Committees

Griffith University Council and its committees

Council

Finance, Resources and Risk Committee
- Tender Board
- Griffith University Foundation Board

Academic Committee
- Board of Graduate Research
- Internationalisation Advisory Committee
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Research Committee
- Programs Committee

Audit Committee

Council Nominations Committee

Honorary Degree Committee

Senior Staff Remuneration Committee

Advisory Council Gold Coast Campus

☐ Committees reporting directly to Council

☐ Subcommittees of committees reporting directly to Council; other committees

Academic Services

The know list

- know your committee constitution

- know the place of your committee in the University's structure of committees

- know the people who will attend the meetings

- know the rules of procedure

- *See www.griffith.edu.au/committees for Committee Constitutions*

Committee membership types

1. **Ex officio** - person is a member due to the position they hold

2. **Elected** - an appointment made in accordance with the University's election procedures

3. **Appointed** - an appointment made by a designated position or committee

4. **Coopted** – an appointment is made to provide specialist expertise to a committee

• *Note: Proxies are not permitted at any University committee meetings. Ex officio members who are on approved leave may be represented by another person when that person has been appointed to act in their position.*

Chairperson – role and responsibilities

- call, cancel and adjourn meetings

- set agendas and timetable discussion time for each item

- approve attendance of visitors and observers

- request that a complicated question be divided and put in the form of a number of motions

- have a second or the casting vote (when there is a tied vote)

Members – formal role and responsibilities

- request the inclusion of an item on the agenda (the Chair may decide whether it's included or not)

- request an amendment to the minutes on the grounds they are inaccurate

- familiarise themselves with agenda items in preparation for discussion

- have their dissension, abstention or vote recorded in the minute action sheet

Role of the committee secretary

- Prepare discussion papers for consideration by the committees

- Prepare summaries of material referred to the committees to make it clear and easy to consider

- Prepare accurate and concise agendas and minutes

- Communicate decisions of the committees to all relevant stakeholders quickly and in the most effective manner

- Undertake associated administrative and logistical tasks related to the work of the committees

- May have rights of audience and debate, contributing to discussions and providing policy advice, depending upon the Committee

Pre-meeting activity

- book or confirm meeting room and equipment

- order refreshments

- prepare draft agenda

- discuss draft agenda with Chairperson

- circulate agenda

- brief chairperson and any invited speakers

Preparing an agenda item

1. **Background and context** – Where is the item coming from? What is the committee's authority in this area?

2. **Problem** - What is the committee required to do with the issue? Is there any supporting documentation in the form of attachments?

3. **Issues and implications** - What issues should the committee consider? What are the implications of each issue?

4. **Recommendation** – Include on the Agenda what would be an appropriate resolution; this may change as a result of discussion at the meeting.

Effective meetings don't happen by accident, they happen by design

Effective agendas

- Sufficient background and context information

- Guidance on what the committee is to do

- Items are within the committee's ambit of responsibility

- Include an outline of policy relating to the item

- Clear, unambiguous expression

- Appropriate use of attachments – not too many or wrong attachments

- Timely distribution of papers

Format of the agenda

1. Name of Committee & meeting number for the year is positioned on the top right hand corner of every page of the committee agenda.

2. First items on an agenda are: Apologies, Confirmation of Minutes, Business Arising from the Minutes, Declaration of Conflict of Interest, Any presentations.

3. These items should be followed by a statement on the ordering of the agenda, at which point, members of a committee may propose to change the order of the agenda.

Business of the agenda

- The business of the agenda is divided into three parts:

- Section I: Matters for Debate and Decision

- Section II: Matters Requiring Ratification of Executive Action

- Section III: Matters for Noting and where Appropriate Acceptance of Recommendation

Where papers are included they are listed on the Agenda under the relevant item.

Source: A network MCI Conferencing White Paper. Meetings in America: A study of trends, costs and attitudes toward business travel, teleconferencing, and their impact on productivity

During the meeting

- Assist the Chair during the meeting

- Know the *Committee Meeting Procedures* document

- Contribute to the discussion

- Through the Chair to guide the meeting discussion and facilitate decision-making (this might be done via notes rather than actual participation in the meeting)

- Manage the length of meetings

- Use of guest speakers

- Know how to undertake voting processes

After the meeting

- review meeting notes to determine matters requiring urgent action

- debrief the chair

- write minutes/action sheet

- gain approval of the minutes by the chair

- circulate minutes

- all committee papers are to be stored in SharePoint

Effective listening

- Familiarity & analysis of the background material
- Position yourself to see all the people in the room
- Listen for the structure and themes of the discussion
- Listen with understanding & determine what is relevant
- Take notes to facilitate effective listening and record facts and ideas of each speaker

for discussion

for information
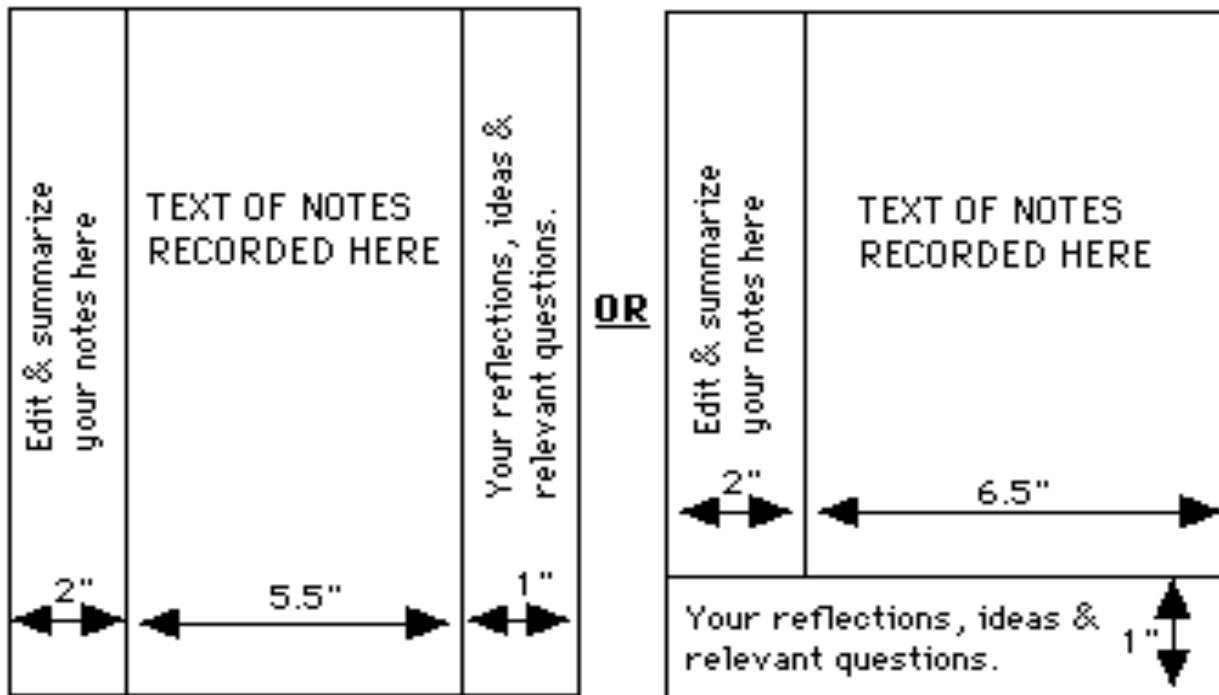
Effective note taking

Effective note taking

- Notes should provide the basis for developing a concise record of the most important ideas

- Structure your notes into main ideas, secondary points and important concepts/principles

- Use a range of abbreviations and symbols in your note taking

- Never use a sentence when you can use a phrase to capture an idea

- Motions proposed at the meeting should be recorded verbatim

- Encourage the Chair to summarise the discussion

Effective writing

- **Considerate of readers** – they may not have been present at the discussion

- **Accurate and objective** - factual and uninfluenced by emotion and prejudice

- **Clear and coherent** - it can be understood and not misunderstood

- **Simple and economical** – it says only what needs to be said

- **Cohesive** – all words contribute to the central idea

- **Review and rewrite** – proof read!

Turning notes into a business transaction

- Reflect from memory on the key outcomes of the meeting

- In your own words write a draft of the key outcomes of the meeting

- Review your notes to check the accuracy of your recall

- Reduce the material in your notes to the facts that led to those key outcomes

- Restructure the key facts in terms of main ideas, secondary points and details

- Summarise all the arguments for and all the arguments against a solution in a coherent manner

Preparing a minute item

1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

   - background to the item: who sent it, for what purpose? What papers did the committee have?

2. DISCUSSION

   - what opinions were expressed?

3. RESOLUTIONS

   - what was the outcome of the committee's discussions? Where is the decision to go? What does the committee want the receiving committee or officer to do with the recommendation?

   - be very clear & specific about the resolution for each item

Business of the minutes or action sheet

The transaction of business via minutes or an action sheet is set out in four sections:

Section A: Recommendations and Reports to the Parent Committee

Section B: Action Under Delegated Authority

Section C: Recommendations and Reports to Other Committees

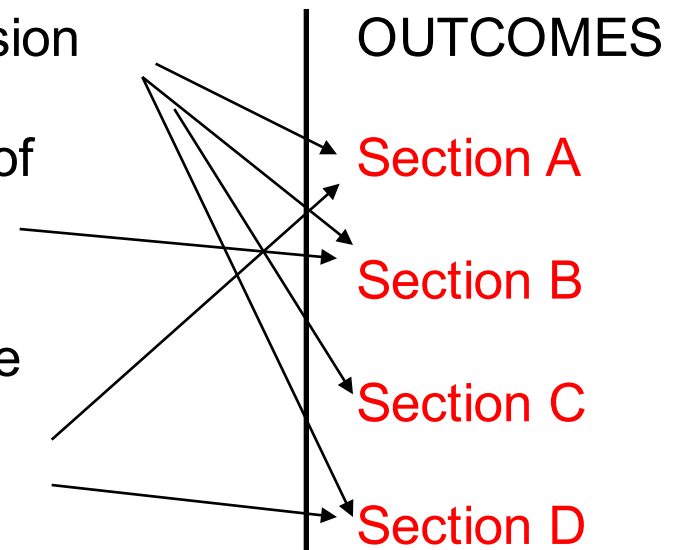Section D: Matters noted, Considered or Remaining Under Discussion

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Other resources

- **Griffith Committees Website**
  www.griffith.edu.au/committees

- **Corporate Records and Digitisation Services – Committee Records**
  https://intranet.secure.griffith.edu.au/records-management

- **University Committees' SharePoint**
  https://committees.griffith.edu.au/Pages/Home.aspx

- **Academic Policies can be found at**:
  www.griffith.edu.au/policylibrary

- **Campus Maps**
  http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith