The University of Western Australia

The Executive Officer
Preparation of Agenda and Minutes
Top Hints

If you are providing support to a University Committee, you are strongly advised to enrol in the Role of Committee Executive Officer Workshop. Parts 1 & 2 Course will be offered in both Semester 1 and 2, 2015 (Dates TBC), via OSDS

1. Why have meetings?
Meetings are the forum for Committee members to make crucial decisions.

2. Meeting formats
The formats of meetings vary depending on the dynamics of the individual committee. For example, some could be organized as part of a formal Committee system. Others could take the form of a working party or working group. You need to understand the place of your committee within the University Committee system.

3. Understanding your role as EO in relation to Agenda and Minutes Preparation
- Primary and authoritative role
- First point of reference
- Background reading is vital – you must be prepared!

4. Tips to write an agenda
- Work with the Chair to produce the agenda
- Consider the order of items, ensuring important topics are discussed first
- Don’t put more items on the agenda than there is time to discuss them
- The committee should easily understand what it is being asked to do.
- Ensure that your agenda is electronic device friendly
- Circulate the agenda, with papers, at least three working days before the meeting.

5. Importance of minutes
- Provide an authoritative source and permanent record of proceedings for future reference
- Provide formal evidence of decisions, e.g. appointments, financial allocations, authorised actions
- Provide a record of policy decisions made and the basis for them
- Provide a starting point for action to be taken in future
- Create an official record which can be used in legal proceedings
- Inform members not present at the meeting and any others of the actions of the body concerned
- Assist in the conduct of subsequent meetings
- Set out precedents for future occasions, in the case of rulings from the chair

6. Minutes should cover four basic things:
- Where and when the meeting took place
- Who was there and who was not
- What was discussed, decided
- Who has agreed to do what

7. What should you write down?
The main things to remember when you are taking minutes in a meeting are:
- Don’t try to write everything down – key points of discussion, key words, themes
- Concentrate on writing down what has been decided and who is going to do it.
- Give each item a separate heading.
- Write your rough notes up soon after the meeting.

8 What constitutes a good minute and resolution?
- A good minute is: brief; self-contained; and to the full extent that the discussion allows, decisive
- A good minute should also have clear and succinct resolution, where relevant. Resolutions are recording of decisions and they must be written in a format using the subjective form of the verb.

See samples of Agenda and Minutes: Academic Council; Board of Coursework Studies; Teaching and Learning Committee

Other references: Guide to Effective Committee Meetings:
http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/commconst/effective_meetings/navigating_the_guide

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19-Aug-14