

The Role of Secretary

Colleagues are encouraged to utilise the following role descriptor for the Secretary which has been adapted from the role descriptor included in The Faculty of Humanities Handbook on Committees and Groups.

Preparation at the beginning of the beginning of the academic year

- Ensuring that the committee's membership and terms of reference are reviewed at the first meeting of the academic year,
- As early as possible, and taking account of reporting requirements to parent and superior committees, agreeing the schedule of meetings with members/the Chair for the academic year, considering the dates of meetings to which the committee reports.
- Where appropriate, agree a plan of business for the meetings with the Chair, based on items discussed at various points throughout the year in previous years, and other priority issues that are likely to arise. It is important to be aware of current, relevant issues within the University and higher education, and how these might influence the committee's agenda. Agreeing any 'standing items' which should be placed on the agenda, ie items which will require discussion or update at every meeting.
- Agreeing where the paperwork for the committee (including minutes) are to be stored. This might be via a shared network or intranet/internet area.
- Ensuring that publicly and internally available web-based information regarding the committee is kept up-to-date, including information on forthcoming meeting dates, membership and minutes of previous meetings.
- Agreeing the format and the level of detail to be provided in the minutes with the Chair/committee at the start at the academic year.

Planning of Meetings

- Alongside the Chair, briefing any new members, including students members, to the committee (as agreed between the Secretary and Chair) and ensuring that they are aware of their role in the committee
- Meeting with the Chair in advance of the meeting to discuss the draft agenda and brief the Chair on any developments since the last meeting. This is will involve being aware of any standing items which should be considered every meeting/annually etc.
- Agree with the Chair the order of items on the agenda (as a general rule major decision-making items should be prioritised in terms of ordering and time allocation)
- Requesting agenda items from committee members at an appropriate point in advance of the meeting.
- Requesting that papers are submitted in good time so that they can be collated, copied if necessary and sent to members in good time to allow them to read them. arranging a venue for meetings, and necessary equipment and refreshments. Or, if the meeting is being conducted via video-conference, ensuring that members are attendees have the necessary details and guidance to participate
- Considering if any colleagues or external visitors to the committee are to be invited to attend, and liaising with the Chair as appropriate.

Tasks during the meeting

- Ensuring that relevant paperwork is available at the meeting. At a face to face meeting this might include having spare copies of the committee papers and supplementary papers that may be required for reference.
- Ensuring that the minutes are agreed at the start of each meeting.
- Asking for clarification of points/committee decisions during the meeting to ensure that an accurate minute can be taken.
- Keeping an accurate record of attendance at the meeting, and monitoring the threshold for the meeting to remain quorate, particularly if members cannot stay for the entire meeting

Actions following the meeting

- Reviewing with the Chair any actions that have been agreed and ascertain whether they are within the powers of the committee or should be referred elsewhere.
- Communicating to members the expected timeframe for writing up the minutes of the meeting and actions arising.
- Draft the minutes and send them to the Chair for review before circulation to members and any other interested parties. Ensuring actions are communicated to members, or followed up with others as promptly as possible. When drafting minutes the Secretary should consider the following themes:
 - confidentiality, especially with respect to personal data regarding specific individuals which is covered by the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#);
 - the requirements of the [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) with regard to minutes;
 - ensuring that records and archives are maintained in accordance with the [Records Retention Schedule](#) published by the University's Information Governance Office;
 - 'reserved' business (ie business from which student members are excluded, as it relates to individual staff members or students), which should normally be recorded in special 'starred' minutes. This might include matters affecting the appointment, promotion and personal affairs of individual members of staff of the University and matters affecting the admission of individual students, their academic assessment and the consequences thereof, or their personal affairs or circumstances.
- Following up on progress with actions (including ensuring that 'return to' items are monitored) with the action owner in advance of the next meeting. Keeping a running log of actions throughout the year where appropriate.
- Ensuring that an electronic set of agreed minutes is kept alongside an electronic set of committee papers for transfer to the University Archives upon request.
- Ensuring that agreed minutes are added to the appropriate place online.

Archiving of committee papers

Colleagues are advised to consult the University's [Records Retention Schedule](#) regarding committee records. Committee records (agenda, minutes and papers) will normally be of archival value, and provide the complete and authentic record of the committee's business and operation.

Further guidance regarding the archiving of committee records is available from the University Archivist, James Peters james.peters@manchester.ac.uk