Committee Handbook 2019/2020

A Brief Guide for Secretaries

This Guide is a condensed version of the full **Committee Handbook** *[add URL link]*. Its purpose is to provide a handy day-to-day reference guide for secretaries of all levels of experience on the key elements of the role.

Throughout this document, references are included to the relevant sections of the full Handbook, which provide further information on the topic under discussion. These are indicated in bold and prefixed with the letter "CH" (e.g. [**CH 3.1]).**

Contents

1. Secretary

The role of the Committee Secretary is much more than just taking the minutes and has a considerable influence on the effectiveness of the committee. The responsibilities and skills required are set out in the Committee Handbook **[CH 4.3]**.

2. Preparation

The timeline below provides a guide to the deadlines in preparing for and following up a committee meeting, based on a committee which meets approximately every other month.

5 weeks before meeting	• Check annual work schedule to ensure that business is being dealt with at the appropriate point in the cycle
4 weeks before meeting	• Seek items from the Chair, regular contributors and other areas that feed into the committee
	• Check actions from previous meetings that are still outstanding and chase again if required
2 weeks before meeting	• Deadline for receipt of papers by Secretary
	• Agree final agenda with the Chair
6 working days before meeting	• **Circulate papers electronically (and in hard copy if required)**
3 working days before meeting	• Circulate papers marked "to follow" on agenda if exceptionally required
0-1 day before meeting	• Update the Chair on developments since the distribution of the agenda and papers, including the receipt of apologies from any key members
	MEETING _
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As soon as possible	• Email draft minutes to Chair for approval
No more than 1 week after meeting	• Follow up on any *urgent* actions agreed at the meeting
No more than 2 weeks after meeting	• Chair approves minutes
	• Email unconfirmed minutes (or hyperlink to where they are stored electronically) to all committee members (to be formally confirmed at the next meeting)
	• Send (extracts of) minutes to relevant members and other interested persons for information or action.
	• Initiate any actions required on behalf of the committee, including report to parent committee
No more than 4 weeks after meeting	• Follow up on any outstanding actions on behalf of the committee

3.   **Agendas**

Work done in preparing the agenda will help the meeting run efficiently; members will know what they are expected to do with the times in front of them and will have sufficient information to be able to make decisions.

The normal order of an agenda is set out below; items marked with an asterisk (*) should be included for the first meeting of an academic year and, where changes are being made or reported, may be included for other meetings:

- *Membership
- Apologies for absence
- *Terms of reference
- Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting
- Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda
- Report of any Chair's actions since the last meeting
- Chair's Statement (usually oral and can include discussion of the order in which agenda items are to be taken)
- *Annual Schedule of Business
- Business referred from parent committee (where appropriate)
- Business from sub-committees (where appropriate)
- Items generated by the committee itself for discussion and decision
- Items for information only
- Closed business
- Any Other Business (AOB) **[CH 6.4.5]**
- Date of next meeting

(N.B.: these are general headings, not necessarily the ones you would use in an agenda)

Each item should be carefully and accurately titled and given an objective to clarify what the Committee is expected to do under that item heading.

All papers should be clearly and consecutively numbered and it should be made clear what action the committee is expected to take. The numbering should follow the notation: [committee code]/[last two digits of the calendar year]/[reference number of paper], e.g. ASQAC/15/6. The first paper at the first meeting of the committee in a *calendar* year is number 1, so ASQAC/15/6 is the sixth paper presented to ASQAC in 2015. If a paper is modified it becomes ASQAC/15/6 (revised).

The agenda should state which papers are being despatched or made available simultaneously with the agenda (e.g. Doc ASQAC/15/6 attached) and which papers will follow at a later date (e.g. Doc SEN/16/11 to follow).

Agendas and papers should be circulated at least one week before the meeting. For late papers see **[CH 6.4.8]**.

4.   **Servicing the Meeting**

The Secretary should verify that the meeting is, and continues to be, quorate if a quorum is prescribed and, if the appointed Chair is not present, arrange for the Deputy Chair, where identified, to Chair the meeting. For guidelines on quoracy see **[CH 6.5.2]** and Section 3 of the Standing Orders.

The Secretary should begin by recording the names of those present, take notes of proceedings and record committee decisions. If the outcome of a discussion is unclear the Secretary should ask the Chair to clarify before moving on to the next item.

5.   **Minutes**

It is usually good practice not to identify contributors in minutes but where it may be necessary to identify a named person in relation to specific action points, this should be recorded by office held if

possible. All minutes should be written so that they can be open even if the matter discussed was confidential.

The minutes should be formatted as follows:

- the title of the committee and its parent committee and date should be on the top left hand side of the first page in capitals and bold.
- the Chair should be listed first in the list of those present followed by other members in alphabetical order. Names should be listed with their first name and surname, preceded, where applicable, by their academic or other relevant title.
- each minute should be numbered, incorporating the committee code, the calendar year and the sequential minute number for that year, e.g. ASQAC.16.3 = Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee, calendar year 2016, third minute of the year
- number and title should be in bold for each minute.
- written in the third person and past and conditional tenses, mixing use of the passive and active voice.

The following words are recommended for use in the minutes, with key decisions highlighted in bold:

- Considered: used to invite discussion of a report, proposal or recommendation
- Noted: used to summarise significant points arising from discussion which led to a particular conclusion
- Reported: used to provide facts or information on the agenda
- Received: used to record the formal receipt of a document
- **Approved:** used to indicate a decision to endorse a document or course of action
- **Confirmed:** used to indicate that the minutes of previous meetings are accurate
- **Resolved:** used to show decisions or actions made by a Committee wholly within its remit
- **Recommended** used where a decision is not within the remit of the committee but lies with a parent committee

Once the draft minutes have been approved by the Chair their status becomes "unconfirmed" and these should be circulated to all members of the committee and associated recipients.

6. Follow up action

The Secretary should ensure that those responsible for any actions are notified **[CH 6.6.9]**.