RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES

to conduct an effective formal committee or meeting

RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING CAN BE CHALLENGING – EVEN FOR THE MOST EXPERIENCED LEADERS.

The following guidelines are intended to provide a few tips on how to get the most from your meetings.

The University is committed to creating a culture where everyone is valued, respected, and included. We can all contribute to this by following these "good practice" tips below.

1. Why do I need a meeting?

Prior to organising a meeting, ask yourself what the purpose of the meeting is and whether a meeting is necessary.

Practical tips

Sometimes there are more efficient ways to accomplish what you need to do (e.g. phoning or emailing relevant people).

Good practice

- Avoid having meetings just because they are "recurring" meetings. To maximise engagement, ensure that a meeting is organised when there is something to discuss and/or approve.
- Last minute meetings are sometimes necessary, but they should be an exception.

2. Am I the right convenor?

The skill and appropriateness of the convenor is a key element of an effective meeting.

Practical tips

If you are not the most appropriate convenor, select the best leader for it.

Good practice

- Revolving the convenorship on a regular basis reduces the burden on one person, allows fresh inputs, and is a great development opportunity for others to hone their own skills in meeting management.

3. Create an agenda

Create an agenda with a logical sequence and realistic times.

Practical tips

- Include the purpose of the meeting to ensure that participants are aware of what to expect and are ready to contribute to each item.
- Ask participants to provide input to the agenda and add any relevant items. Calls for agenda items should be sent out in timely fashion.
- Ensure that the agenda contains clear information about the meeting (date, time, indication of the venue). It can also be helpful to indicate the expected duration of each agenda item.

Good practice

- It is good practice to circulate the agenda and papers to participants at least one week prior to the meeting. This means that the agenda setting consultation will need to take place at least two weeks before the meeting.
- If some attendees are only expected to attend part of the meeting, it is often best to schedule the item involving them at the start of the meeting so that they can plan their attendance accordingly.

4. Invite the right participants

Ensure that all relevant people are invited.

Practical tips

To make the best use of everyone's time, do not invite people who do not need to attend the meeting, or indicate if attendance is optional.

Good practice

- When organising an 'open' meeting, be sensitive to the fact that some people may not feel that they are really invited and may need encouragement to attend.
- Encourage participants to send apologies in advance if they are unable to attend and make clear to attendees whether an alternate may attend in their place.

5. Day and time of the meeting

Inclusion is one of the University's top strategic priorities. Ensure that the date and time of the meetings maximises the attendance.

Practical tips

University committee meetings must be organised within core hours (10am-4pm), with all other meetings also adhering to this where practicable.

Good practice

- Varying the day of the week each time will facilitate the attendance of people with important commitments, (child) care, and part-time workers.
- Avoiding lunch times will allow staff members to enjoy their break.
- For meetings longer than two hours, the convenor should ensure the provision of water and arrange for a short break at a suitable point in the meeting.

6. Start the meeting

It is essential that meetings start and end on time. The convenor welcomes participants, invites individual introductions, sets the tone of the meeting, makes sure the agenda items are followed in the correct order, and guides the overall process, setting out the action points from the meeting.

Practical tips

- As a matter of courtesy check if anyone needs to leave by a certain time and if necessary, adjust the agenda to ensure that they are able to have input to items of most relevance to them.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of fire alarms, how to find a toilet, how to find a water dispenser, can hear and see presentations.
- The use of mobile phones should be allowed only in an emergency/urgent situation or for taking a note of the meeting.
- Laptops and iPad should only be used for taking a note of the meeting, not for replying to emails while attending the meeting.

Good practice

- Invite people to specify their preferred pronouns when they introduce themselves. Guidelines can be found **here.** The use of name tags is also strongly recommended, particularly when external colleagues are invited to a meeting or if the composition has recently been revised.
- Discourage interruption unless e.g. a presenter signals that they are open to comments or questions at any time.
- Ensure everyone gets the opportunity to give an opinion, being sensitive to the power balances in the room and the possibility that certain members at the meeting may need additional encouragement to participate. Don't allow one or two individuals to dominate discussion.
- Keep the atmosphere positive. Do not criticise colleagues during meeting or allow others to do so. If discussion becomes heated, politely remind all to respect each other's/differing views and if necessary, invite participants to take a break.
- Remind people to be mindful of body language.
- As a convenor try not to dominate, allow members of the group to interact with each other, and encourage flow of debate.
- Ensure that breaks are taken during longer meetings, noting especially the impact of long meetings on the clerk to the committee or members who have health-related conditions.
- Ensure meetings are accessible to everyone. Guidelines can be found **here.**

7. Taking minutes

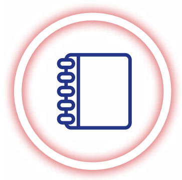
Ensure a note of the meeting is being taken by the clerk or a nominated individual where this rotates.

Practical tips

- Minutes should be accompanied by a summary action log, which forms the basis of the matters arising at the next meeting to check progress.
- Actions must be recorded with clear deadlines and assigned to a named individual.

Good practice

- At the end of the meeting, summarise the main points of the discussion, and reinforce action points/deadlines.
- Thank all participants for their attendance and contributions.
- For recurrent meetings, periodically invite discussion at the meeting and feedback individually on the conduct of meetings and how it could be further improved.



8. Follow up

Minutes of the meeting and action arising should be distributed for everyone's reference in timely fashion.

Practical tips

- Minutes should be provided at least one week prior to any meeting.
- Minutes and their layout should be screened for accessibility issues. Guidelines can be found **here.**

Good practice

- Ensure that the people responsible for specific actions are contacted between meetings to check progress and agree how progress will be reported.
- The use of acronyms without explanation should be avoided.

If you have any comments on how to improve these guidelines, please contact
Karl Leydecker (University Senior Vice-Principal, **karl.leydecker@abdn.ac.uk**)
or Maria-Grazia Cascio (University Athena SWAN Co-ordinator, **m.cascio@abdn.ac.uk**)

Please note that Staff Development Team can also provide information on how to run effective meetings.

For more details, please contact
Max Hope-Stone Bell, by email **max.hope-stonebell@abdn.ac.uk**
or Clare Trembleau, by email **clare.trembleau@abdn.ac.uk**