

Committee Induction Manual

*Policy & Governance Unit
Academic Registrar's Division*

Produced and Distributed by the Policy and Governance Unit, Academic Registrar's Division, University of Wollongong.

This work is produced to assist committee members understand their role and responsibilities and as such additional copies may be made as required, subject to inclusion of the source.

**Further copies of this document available from,
<http://www.uow.edu.au/governance/>**

Comments and suggestions for improvement are welcome. Please contact:

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1. Welcome

This information package has been designed to give you all the information you need to have an active role in your Committee.

Your role on the Committee is an important one, and is outlined in this information package, along with making the most of your time on the Committee, meeting procedures, agendas, and general information about other UOW committees. You will also find information specific to your Committee, such as Terms of Reference, members, important contact numbers, and minutes of past meetings.

What is a committee?

A committee is "a group of people officially delegated to perform a function". The function of a committee can include:

- decision-making;
- investigating of events;
- performing assessments and reviews;
- consideration of reports;
- ensuring legislative or funding requirements are met; or
- overseeing the implementation of plans or policy.

What does a committee do?

At the University of Wollongong, all committees should have "*Terms of Reference*", which set out the role and function of the committee. New members should always review the Terms of Reference of their Committee to gain an understanding of the Committee's role. Members also have a duty to ensure that the Committee is acting within its Terms of Reference (see Section 3).

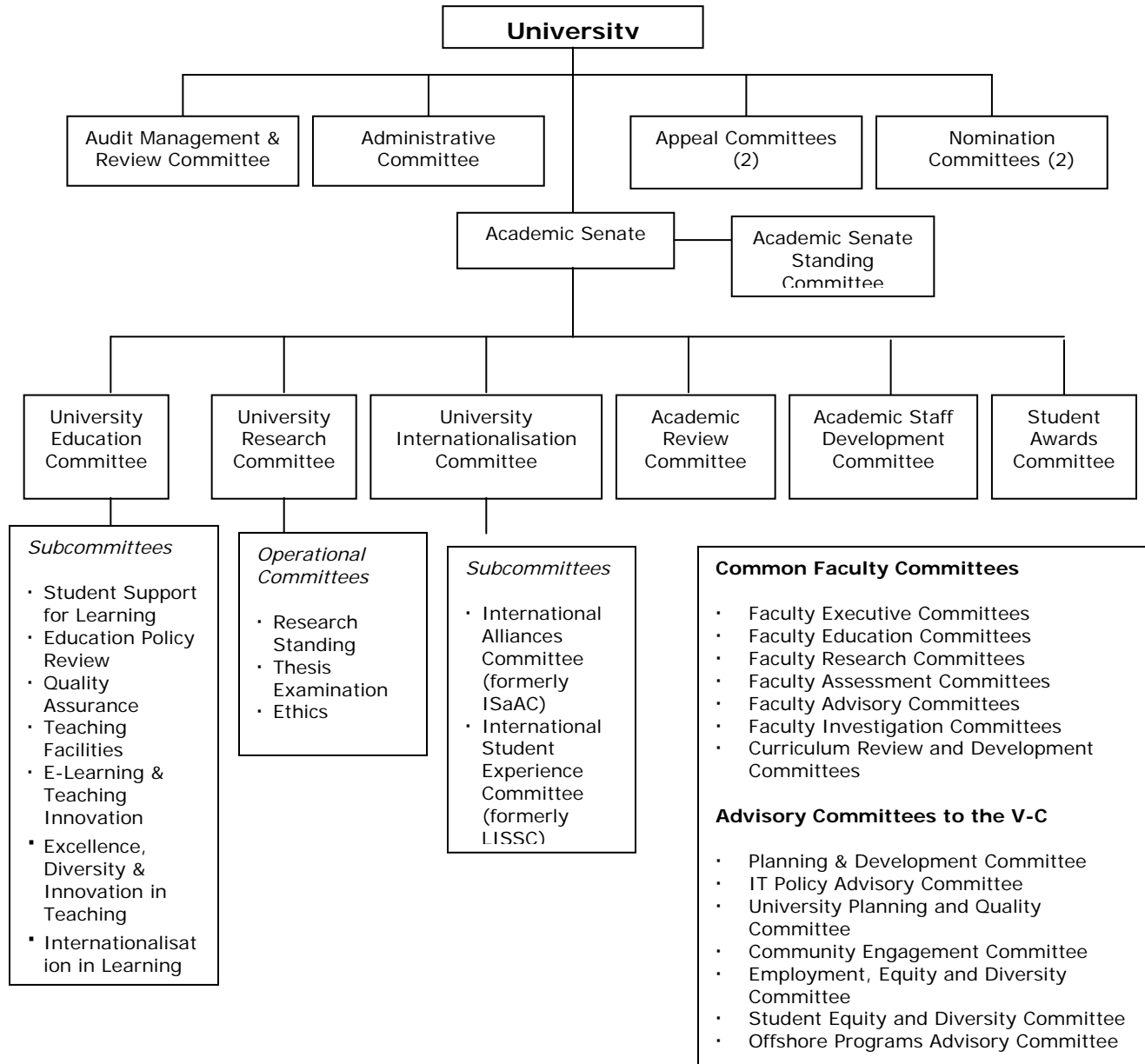
Who is on a committee?

Generally the main people on the committee are:

- 1) **The Chairperson:** who is responsible for running the meeting and ensuring the committee fulfils its responsibilities.
- 2) **The members of the committee:** who debate and vote on agenda items.
- 3) **The Executive Officer or Secretary:** who is not normally a member of the committee, but is responsible for recording the meeting and following up on the committee's requests (for example sending correspondence, conducting research, preparing reports, organising the meeting place and time, liaising between members and ensuring the committee's business is achieved).
- 4) **Others:** sometimes a committee meeting will involve other people who may attend to give reports and presentations (some University Committees have non-voting members who attend to give advice, and may express opinions in debate, but who can not vote on the decision of the committee). Sometimes these people are technical or policy experts capable of giving advice, other times they are present to give an information presentation or update on a committee project.

2. The UOW Committees

UOW Committee Structure



* SEE GLOSSARY (SECTION 7) FOR EXPLANATION OF ACRONYMS.

Under the University of Wollongong Act 1989 (available from the Management and Committees home page, below), the **University Council** is the governing authority of the University. The Council acts for and on behalf of the University and controls and manages the University's affairs. To manage the magnitude of University business University Council has delegated some decision-making powers to Academic Senate, it has also formed a number of advisory committees. Academic Senate has also formed various committees that perform specific functions, consider detailed issues, and make recommendations. Some of the main committees are the University Internationalisation and Education and Research Committees.

Each of the main committees has its own web page on the University website. On these pages you can access the committees' recent minutes, their Terms of Reference and membership lists.

See <http://www.uow.edu.au/governance/>

Faculty Committees

Each faculty at the University of Wollongong also makes decisions through the committee process. Specific faculty committees include:

- Faculty Committee
- Faculty Executive Committee
- Faculty Assessment Committee
- Faculty Education Committee
- Curriculum Review and Development Committees
- Faculty Advisory Committee
- Faculty Investigation Committees
- Faculty Research Committees
- Academic Unit Assessment Committees

3. Your Role on the Committee

Attendance – alternate delegates

Your role on the Committee is an important one, and as such, you should try to attend every meeting and be prepared to contribute to all debates and projects. If you are unable to attend, "apologies" should be sent to the Executive Officer before the meeting, and for some committees, you should arrange for a replacement or "delegate" to attend in your place. The Executive Officer can advise you on this.

Additionally, your role on the Committee may extend to being involved in a working party. A committee will form a working party when it needs to investigate an issue or event in-detail. By forming a working party the committee can maximise its time by having the working party report back on the outcome.

Agendas

An agenda is a written program of items to be addressed at the Committee meeting. It is prepared by the Executive Officer and Chair, and distributed to Committee members, usually prior to the meeting. Committee members should read agenda papers prior to the meeting, and note any items that they wish to discuss (see Section 5, Meeting Procedures for further information).

Members may also be able to add items to the agenda (and in some cases, meetings will only discuss what is in the official agenda). Therefore, if you would like to discuss a particular topic you should contact the Executive Officer and Chair before the meeting to add the item to the agenda.

As a Committee member, you should ensure that Committee decisions are acted upon and followed up.

Accountability and Representation

Your role on the Committee may be to represent a particular group (such as a Faculty or Students). This is particularly true if you were elected to the Committee. As a representative it is important that your decisions and input into the meeting reflect the interests of the University as a whole as well as the group. As a Committee member you are always required to act in the best interests of the University.

You should report Committee business to your group. For example, you should tell or email the members about upcoming business and the decisions once they have been made. By encouraging this discussion and communication, you will find that your representative role becomes both easier and more efficient.

Personal opinion will be balanced by the primary interests of the University, the group being represented, and informed decision-making.

Conflict of Interest

You should not allow personal interests, or the interests of any associated person, to conflict with the interests of the University. Conflicts of interest may arise when a member or member's immediate family:

- stands to make a financial gain from, or to be otherwise advantaged by, the Committee decision; and/or
- holds membership of, or ownership in another organisation likely to be affected by the Committee's decision.

Some examples of conflicts of interest that may arise on University committees include: a decision on funding for a program in which you are involved, a decision to promote a close friend of yours, a decision that affects any of your relatives.

If in doubt as to whether a conflict of interest may exist you should discuss the matter with the Chair of the Committee. The correct process to follow if you believe there may be a conflict of interest is to declare the reason and not take part in the debate or vote on the issue. For example, "Chairperson, I wish to declare a conflict of interest in this agenda item", is all you may need to say.

The University has its own policy on conflict of interest, available for viewing on the web: <http://staff.uow.edu.au/personnel/policy/confinterest.pdf>

Confidentiality & Privacy

Sometimes, but not always, items being discussed within a Committee meeting will be confidential. Members should actively ensure that confidential information is not disclosed, as there may be financial and legal penalties - not only for the University but also for the Committee member, if the information is released. Confidential matters are normally clearly marked but would include information about promotions, staff and student discipline, funding changes, and a range of personal information.

It is desirable that committee members act in a professional and responsible manner with the information they obtain as a committee member as Committees require openness and honesty to function well. Committee members should feel free to express their opinions and views without fear of recrimination. It is therefore important that committee members respect each other (often despite differences) and work together to create an open and trusting committee atmosphere.

It is essential for committee members to accept collective responsibility, and remain loyal to decisions of the Committee, even where you may not have agreed with the final decision.

Confidential items will be marked as such on the Committee's agenda.

4. Making the Most of Your Time on the Committee

In "The Book of the Board: Effective Governance for Non-Profit Organisations", David Fishell (2003) lists 10 ways to improve and 10 ways to disrupt a committee. His list is presented here as a good example of how you can effectively contribute to successful meetings and benefit the wider University Community.

Do	Don't
Attend each meeting and arrive on time	Dismiss the importance of attendance
Participate in discussion whenever appropriate	Talk too much (or cover ground that is widely accepted or not relevant to the decision)
Develop a thorough knowledge of the committee's role and responsibilities and its current activities	Expect others to know more than you – rely on experts to give you good advice, or simply agree with others because they've been there longer
Be prepared: Read agenda papers prior to the meeting and discuss them to resolve confusion and points of concern	Attend hoping that you will pick up the issues during debate
Listen carefully to debate	Hold side discussions
Be willing to question and challenge members during debate	Stay silent, or pander to the majority
Be supportive of others' contributions	Interrupt others during debate, or disagree without offering suggestions or alternatives
Accept and volunteer for special assignments and leadership roles	Believe that the committee can function without you
Retain your sense of humour	Lose your temper, be too formal, or use aggressive tactics to win the debate
Remain loyal to decisions of the board once a decision has been taken	Rehash past debates, pursue hidden agendas, or be pointlessly provocative
Avoid and declare conflicts of interest	Use your position to help friends or colleagues
Help new members, and your eventual replacement, when they are appointed	Use jargon, rush over complicated issues

5. Meeting Procedures

Understanding the rules of debate and the formal meeting procedures is often the biggest fear new committee members have. In particular, many new committee members report that they did not say or do anything at their first few meetings because they were either too nervous or unsure of what process to follow.

Set out below are some general meeting procedures that you may notice at your first meeting.

One important thing to note is that the meeting procedures can change drastically between committees. As you may expect, the higher-level committees may be conducted in a formal process, while minor subcommittees can often be informal workshop-style discussions. Significant committees will often have **Standing Orders** or **Rules**, which are the official procedures that must be followed. Where a committee does not have standing rules or orders, it is generally the role of the Chair to set the tone for each meeting, however all members have a duty to ensure that a legal and correct process is followed.

Agenda

Each meeting should have an agenda, or a list of topics to be discussed and decided upon. Formal meetings will often have large agendas, which are sent to members prior to the meeting. The agenda will be divided into items, which may have arisen from previous meetings or other committees, or may have been submitted from other areas of the University community.

Members are expected to be familiar with the agenda items prior to the meeting. An effective member will have made notes on the points they wish to discuss for each item, and recorded whether they support or disagree with the suggestions or information provided.

An effective member will also discuss the agenda with other people prior to the meeting. This is particularly important if Committee members are representing a group. For example, someone representing a faculty or student group should try to talk to members of the faculty or group about the agenda so they can represent their ideas.

Starring Items

When attending meetings, it is particularly important to know what items you wish to discuss. Some committees such as Council, Academic Senate and the University Education Committee will begin each meeting with members being asked to “**star items**”. This term is used to describe a process where members call out (or star) the agenda items they wish to debate. If an item is not starred, then it is not debated and the draft recommendation is approved. It is therefore important to check that you have not missed the opportunity to raise your point or opinion on a matter. However, starring items is not necessarily appropriate for subcommittees as all agenda items will be considered.

Recommendations

Most formal agenda items will contain a draft recommendation. In most cases the draft recommendation is suggested as the best option for the Committee.

An example of a draft recommendation may be:

“That the Committee note the September 2004 Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) report as provided in the agenda and require all staff to undertake training by May 2005”

The draft recommendations are generally the starting point of debate. Members can accept the recommendation, or vote against it. If a member wants to change the recommendation they can:

“move an amendment”.

For example, an amendment to the recommendation above could be:

“That the Committee note the September 2004 Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) report as provided in the agenda and require all staff to undertake training by December 2005”

If a member wants to add to the draft recommendation they can:

“move an addendum”.

For example, an addendum to the same motion would be

“That the Committee note the September 2004 OH&S report as provided in the agenda and require all staff to undertake training by May 2005 as offered by the Workplace Co.”

Debating Agenda Items

For some issues, the Chair will begin by asking someone who has worked on the agenda item to provide a brief report on the recommendation. Members are then generally free to ask questions to clarify any uncertainty. It is particularly important for members to ask questions, as these will often guide the debate and decision. Once there is a general understanding on what the issue is, the Chair can do one of two things:

- ask if anyone opposes (disagrees with) the draft recommendation – if no-one opposes, the Chair will then declare that the recommendation is “carried” or “approved”;

alternatively;

- the Chair can ask someone to **“move”** a recommendation (which can either be the draft recommendation or a new one), someone who agrees with the **“mover”** will then **“second”** the recommendation (also called a motion). Both these people are then given a certain time to debate the **“motion”**. When they are finished, another committee member may **“speak in opposition” (disagree)** or move an amendment or addendum. The debate then continues with someone who supports the motion, followed by someone who opposes the motion, until there is no-one wishing to speak further, or the Chair calls for a conclusion. A **vote** will then be taken.

Voting

Depending on the motion, a vote can be taken by voice (i.e. all who agree will be asked to say “I”, all who disagree asked to say “nay” or “no”), or by show of hands, and at times by secret ballot (i.e. voting paper).

In some instances, when the vote is taken by voice it will be hard to determine the side with the majority number. In this case a member of the Committee has the right to ask that the vote be taken **“by show of hand”**.

Minutes

The Committee will have an Executive Officer or a Secretary who is responsible for recording the decisions of the meeting. The record of a meeting is called the minutes. Minutes can vary in style and format - some will record exactly what was said, while others will only record the final decision. In all cases, minutes should record the final decisions of the Committee.

Minutes need to be approved by the Committee at the next meeting to make them formal. Committee members should read the minutes after a meeting to ensure they are correct. Amendments can be made to the minutes at the meeting, before the Committee has formally approved them.

Approval Pathways

In many cases a committee is just a small part of the decision-making process. There may be working parties, sub-committees, and executive officers also involved in the process. Making a formal decision can therefore create a complicated chain of events and committees should be aware that their actions might impact others.

The following is an example of the approval process for an educational policy:

- created by a working party of the Education Policy Review Subcommittee (EPRS),
- referred to EPRS for consideration,
- referred to University Education Committee (UEC) for endorsement,
- referred to Academic Senate for endorsement and then
- referred to Council for approval.

This approval pathway is necessary before the policy is formally endorsed and effective. In the example above, the EPRS working party created the policy but it is not enforced until approved by Council or in some cases, Academic Senate.

Members of the Secretariat can advise committees on these issues. It is important for Committees to recognise that the formation of policy, decisions is the first step in a larger process.

Quorum

Quorum is a word that describes the number of members needed for an official meeting of the Committee. Many Standing Rules will stipulate that a quorum is, for example, one half of the total number of members. This means that if less than half of the members are present, the meeting cannot proceed and no decisions can be made.

6. Common Order of Agenda

The following is a typical example of how a committee meeting at the University of Wollongong will run:

BEFORE MEETING	
The printed agenda will be sent to members one week before the meeting	
Members arrive at pre-organised meeting room	
AT THE MEETING	
1. Chair declares meeting open	After checking that quorum is reached
2. Membership checked	The Executive Officer will record who is in attendance
3. Apologies	Members who are not present can have their apologies recorded in the minutes
4. New Members and Guests	Any new members and/or guests will be introduced
5. Chair's Welcome/Report	The Chair may comment on activities and events since last meeting or other relevant business
6. Approval of previous minutes	Last meeting's minutes are confirmed as true
7. Business arising from minutes	A member may request an update or report on the outcomes of a decision from last meeting
8. Starring of Items	Some committees, particularly larger committees, may star the items they wish to discuss
9. Agenda Items (<i>Debate & Decision</i>)	In order and as starred
10. Late business	There may be some items not on the agenda which need to be decided at this meeting
11. Other/General Business	The Committee may allow members to raise any other topic for debate and decision
12. Meeting Closed	
AFTER THE MEETING	
13. Minutes Prepared	The Executive Officer will write the minutes for the meeting and may send them to members
14. Actions Taken	The decisions from the meeting will be implemented
15. The next Agenda prepared	The cycle starts again

7. Glossary of Abbreviations & Common Terms

ARC	Australian Research Council
ARD	Academic Registrar's Division
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CDU	Career Development Unit
CEC	Community Engagement Committee
CEDIR	Centre Educational Development and Interactive Resources
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
COGNOS	Integrated Data Collection and business reporting system
CRDC	Curriculum Review and Development Committee (formerly an ECAC)
COP	Code of Practice
DET	Department Education and Training (NSW Government)
DEST	Department Education Science and Training (Cth Government)
DVC(A)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
DVC(O)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations)
DVC(R)	Deputy Vic-Chancellor (Research)
EduStream	System for recording and transmitting lectures online
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ELT	English Language Teaching
ELTIS	eLearning and Teaching Innovations Subcommittee (of UEC)
EPRS	Education Policy Review Subcommittee (of UEC)
ESDF	Educational Strategies Development Fund
ESS	Equity and Student Support Subcommittee (of UEC)
FAC	Faculty Assessment Committee
FC	Faculty Committee
FEC	Faculty Education Committee
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
GDS	Graduate Destination Surveys
HDR	Higher Degree Research
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
ILIP	Information Literacies Introductory Program
IRIS	Illawarra Regional Information Service
IAC	International Alliances Committee (of UIC)
ILT	Internationalisation in Learning and Teaching Subcommittee (of UEC)
ISEC	International Student Experience Committee (of UIC)
ITC	Illawarra Technology Corporation
MRP	Minimum Rate of Progress
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OCTAL	Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning
PVC(I)	Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
QA	Quality Assurance
QAS	Quality Assurance Subcommittee (of UEC)
R&D	Research and Development
SAI	Student Administration Interface
SEQ	Subject Experience Questionnaire
SES	Subject Evaluation Survey
SMP	Student Management Package
SOLS	Student Online Services
SPU	Strategic Planning Unit
ToR	Terms of Reference
TFS	Teaching Facilities Subcommittee (of UEC)
UEC	University Education Committee
UIC	University Internationalisation Committee
UOWD	University of Wollongong in Dubai

URAC	University Recreation and Aquatic Centre
URC	University Research Committee
VPA	Vice Principal Administration
WAC	Workplace Advisory Committee
WIC	Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (formerly Aboriginal Education Centre)
WCA	Wollongong College Australia
WUPA	Wollongong University Postgraduate Student Association
WUPA	Wollongong University Postgraduate Association
WUSA	Wollongong University Undergraduate Student Association (formerly SRC)

8. References

Fishel, D., (2003), The Book of the Board: Effective Governance for Non-Profit Organisations, The Federation Press, Sydney

Version Number	Date	Authorised By	Change Details
1	3 April	Theresa Hoynes	The UOW Committees flowchart Starring of Items
2	July 2007	Theresa Hoynes	Updating of Glossary with new Committee names
3	Feb 2009	Senior Manager PGU	Updating of Glossary with new Senior Executive Position General Review and update to contents