



How to prepare (great) agendas and minutes

Presenters:

Diego Rodriguez Perez

Marcelle Kancachian

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Characteristics of effective committees

1. Clear, written purpose
2. Effective committee chair
3. Thoughtfully appointed members
- 4. Well-run meetings**
5. Decisions made



- 1. Pre-Meeting —**
meeting preparation, agenda preparation
- 2. Meeting —**
provide advice, document relevant discussion and decisions made
- 3. Post-Meeting —**
prepare the minutes, follow-up actions arising from the meeting, records management

Pre-Meeting





What is an agenda?

An **agenda** is a statement of the business that:

- clarifies the objectives of the meeting
- provides direction and focus for discussions

Items normally listed on an agenda may include:

- unfinished business from previous meetings
- recurring business assigned to the committee
- matters referred by:
 - organisational units
 - the chairperson
 - executive officers and central committees



Key considerations for agenda preparation

- Matters must fall within the remit of the Committee (i.e. terms of reference)
- An agenda should be circulated at least one week prior to the meeting (referred to as the first circulation)
- Submission deadlines should be set in advance and provide sufficient time for preparation and approval
- Late submissions may be added to the agenda as additional circulations
- Tabling of items should be avoided



Composition of an agenda item

A single item consists of:

- Recommendation (motion)
- Background
- Support documentation
(Attachments/Enclosures)

A well-prepared agenda will make note-taking and minute-writing much easier



Recommendation

The recommendation must outline clearly and concisely a recommendation or action to the Committee in the affirmative.

Directional recommendations specify a course of action/decision:

- **Endorse / Approve / Note**

i.e. That the proposed changes to PPL 1.1.1 be approved

Non-directional when the matter incorporates a range of issues or being used for consultation:

- **Consider / Give feedback**

That the committee give feedback on the proposal to introduce a new policy on...



Background

Relevant background information enables committee members to make an informed decision on the recommendation.

The Background should be a statement of at least 200 words (or 2 pages max) consisting of:

- Essential background on the proposal in simple terms (assume no prior knowledge)
- The rationale for the proposal—in the case of a proposal requiring approval, justification for the approval should be provided

If additional background is necessary, it may be enclosed as an attachment or enclosure



Activity 1

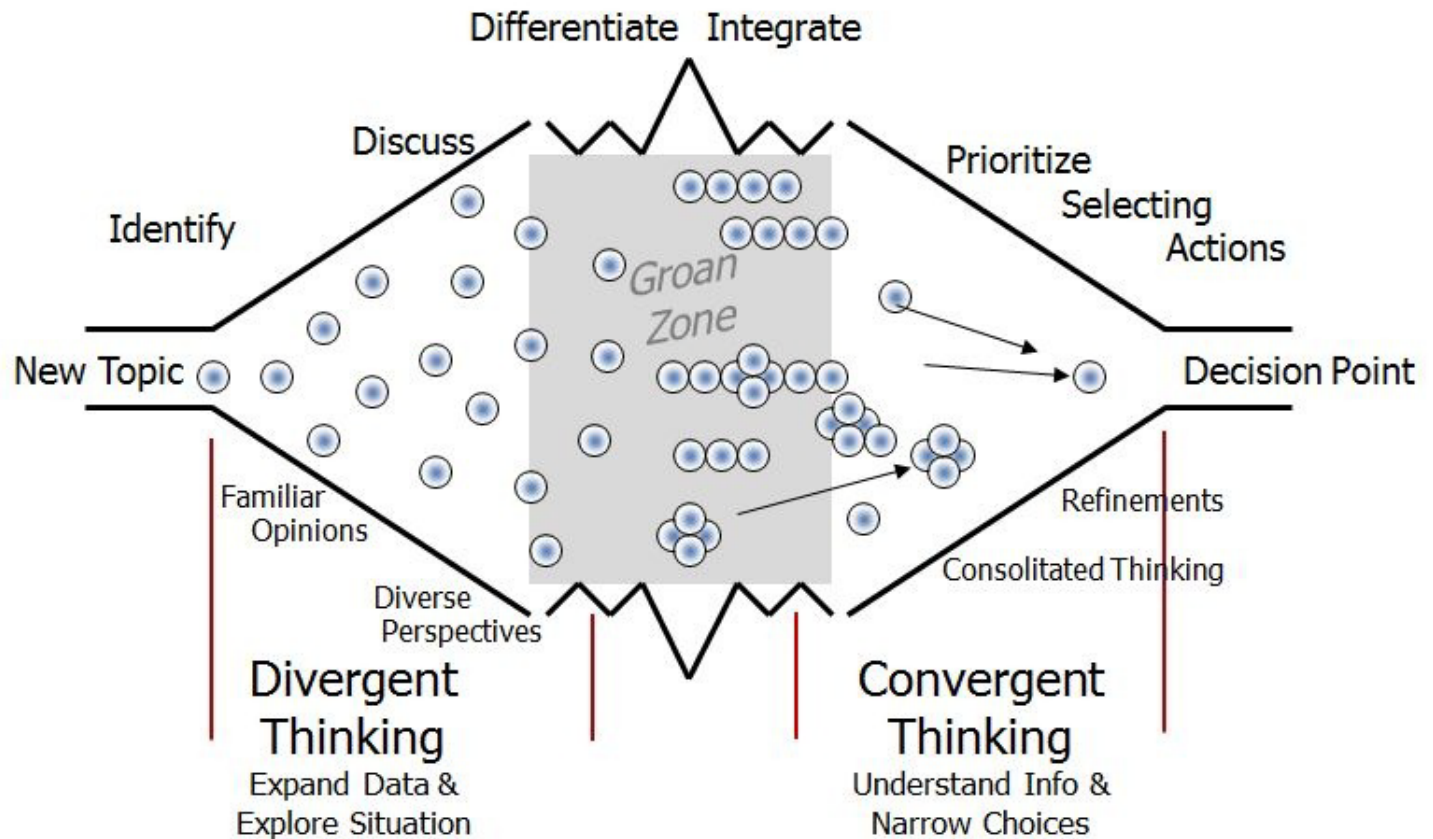
- You've been tasked by your manager to recommend a venue for an end-of-year Christmas party. The following criteria applies:
 - Up to 40 staff expected to attend
 - Budget of up to \$40 p.p.
 - Food should be included in package
 - Reasonable access to venue from UQ
- Each table has four proposals for a venue including the location, and a meal package
- **In your groups, write an agenda item for the upcoming leadership team meeting**

Meeting



"PERHAPS WE SHOULD CONSIDER THE CHOICE OF BISCUITS AS AN OPERATIONAL MATTER AND MOVE ON"

Dynamics of group decision-making





Rules of Debate

- Quorum is confirmed by the Chair
- Discussion occurs only in relation to the item, with the intent of a motion or recommendation being moved and put to a vote
- Members who wish to speak, should do so through the Chair and be invited to speak
- As soon as discussion is concluded the Chair should put the motion to a vote
- A motion may be amended, or the item withdrawn entirely



Taking notes at meetings

- Don't try to record everything verbatim – just the main comments made (using keywords or short sentences) and the final decision of the committee
- If necessary, ask members to clarify points raised in discussion and ask the Chair to clarify the decision of the committee



Activity 2

- Using the agenda item from Activity 1, in your groups you will now conduct the meeting and decide whether or not to recommend approval of one of the proposals
- Assign a Chair and a note-taker
- Discuss the item for 5 – 10 minutes, take notes during the discussion and make a decision



Post-Meeting

Writing the minutes — “A Clear Conscience”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNKjShmHw7s>



Meeting minutes

The **minutes** are the formal record of a meeting, unambiguously conveying:

- decisions made by the committee (resolutions and recommendations)
- rationale for the decisions
- actions required following the meeting to implement the decisions
- individuals or committees responsible for implementing decisions



Composition of meeting minutes

Meeting minutes consist of:

- List of members present and apologies
- List of observers and people invited to attend for discussion on a specific agenda item
- Confirmation of the previous meeting minutes
- Notification of any further business arising from the previous minutes
- Minuted items from the current meeting
- Advice on the date of the next meeting



Writing a minute item

Summarise the background —

- Use agenda item heading for minute item
- Brief statement about issue or proposal

Summarise the discussion:

- Use the ABC Principle — **A**ccurate, **B**rief, **C**lear
- Capture tenor of discussion – not individual remarks or verbatim discussion
- Using own words to convey a point is fine
- Re-order/amalgamating points
- Use sub-headings or dot-points (i.e. for/against)



Points to consider when writing a minute item

- Reading the agenda item again together with your notes may help to establish a framework
- There is a vocabulary of “committee words”
- Reading previous meeting minutes can also help with writer’s block
- If a comment has to be attributed to an individual, the speaker should be identified by their position
- It’s always better to clarify with the Chair rather than having to amend the minutes at the subsequent meeting



Recording resolutions

Resolutions:

- Specify the outcome of the discussion
- Each resolution records a single decision or recommendation
- Know who is the approval authority

Examples:

It was resolved –

that the Bachelor of Life Studies be introduced from Semester 1, 2014.

It was resolved to recommend –

that PPL 1.1.11 – *Policy on policies*, be rescinded.



Post-meeting actions

- Undertake post-meeting action directly after the meeting
- Use a post-meeting action (running) sheet
- Liaise with the Chair to clarify any issues from the meeting
- Draft documents for the Chair
- Ensure all relevant staff members are informed of decisions made at the meeting



Activity 3

- Using your agenda item and meeting notes, as a group spend up to 10 minutes drafting the minute item for your ‘meeting’
- Ensure to cover:
 - The background
 - The discussion
 - The resolution
- Feel free to use the sample minutes for reference



Mark-Ups

Mark-Ups are notes in the margin used to highlight post-meeting action

- **A = Action:**
Use initials of a person to identify who is responsible for that task (e.g. A-DR)
- **RC = Recommended for consideration**
(e.g. RC-Senate, RC-DVCA)
- **RN = Recommended for noting**
(e.g. RN-LEGS)
- * = Action item completed



Finalisation of minutes

Draft minutes should be provided to the Chairperson for approval within one week of the meeting.

Approved draft minutes may be circulated to members or held until confirmed at the next meeting. Minutes are not final until they have been confirmed.

Amendments to minutes:

- Amendments may be requested by members at the next meeting, and must be approved by the Chair
- The Amendment to the previous minutes should be recorded in the minutes of the subsequent meeting, and must include: item number, heading, page number, paragraph/line number, and statement of amendment (e.g. replace the words 'Deputy Head of School' with 'Head of School')



Flying minutes

Flying minutes may be used when a committee is required to make a decision on a matter before the next scheduled meeting of the committee.

A flying minute requires:

- The item (usually in the form of a memo) stating the matter for consideration and the resolution
- The response page (approve/dissent/abstain)
- The final minute (once all responses are tallied)



Committee records

The recommendations and resolutions made facilitate the implementation of decisions, and contribute to the corporate memory of UQ.

An effective committee secretary will appreciate and understand the link between committee activities and records management.

Ensure all original documents are filed with Records and Archives Management Services (RAMS): trim@uq.edu.au



Further information

Academic Policy and Programs: app@uq.edu.au or

Carole Tate (Manager) c.tate@uq.edu.au or x51690

Resources: Templates and guides

<http://www.uq.edu.au/academic-board/secretariat-resources>

Academic Board website

www.uq.edu.au/academic-board