

## Governance and committee servicing

Decision-making at Oxford, as at many UK HEIs, is managed through the University's committees which operate at institutional, divisional and departmental levels. Many committees are established in the [University Regulations](#) and, if so, changes must be approved at all three (departmental, divisional, University) levels.

### Divisional committees

Divisional governance is overseen by Divisional Board, supported by Planning & Resources Committee. There are also a number of educational committees (Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, and Teaching Audit committees), a Research Strategy Group and an Equality & Diversity Steering Group as well as an IT Forum and an Appointments Panel.

### Departmental committees

Each department has its own committee structure. Each committee will have terms of reference, setting out its remit, and clear membership: you should familiarise yourself with these for your departmental committees when you arrive.

### Good practice in committee servicing

As Head of Administration, you will be responsible for supporting your departmental management committee and may have responsibility for supporting other departmental committees too. As a minimum, this will mean preparing the agenda in consultation with the Chair; preparing and collating papers, and circulating these to members; and writing minutes. You will also be required to brief the Chair ahead of meetings, speak to items on the agenda and respond to questions or issues that are raised.

Some tips on committee servicing are below:

#### 1. Prepare and circulate agenda a week in advance

This can be electronic only, though some academic colleagues may prefer paper copies. Ideally, you will use a secure system (e.g. SharePoint) for circulating papers, many of which may contain confidential or sensitive information. Try to avoid tabling late papers on the day.

Student members should not receive 'reserved' papers (these are papers which identify individual members of staff or students to the committee)

Combine the papers into one PDF (PDF convertor is available for this) and number each page for ease of reference

Ideally, you should make clear on the agenda the items which are for information only, which require a decision, and which are for discussion

It is helpful to number your papers using a two-digit letter reference for the committee and a two-digit number reference for the year, e.g. (for Divisional Board) SSD(16)01

#### 2. Meeting protocol

Any conflict of interest should be declared at the appropriate agenda item and the person concerned should leave the room during discussion of that item. In addition, you should consider the potential impact on equality of any proposals under discussion. There are template conflict of interest and Public Sector Equality Duty papers circulated to HoAs at the start of each academic year.

### **3. Taking minutes**

All minutes should start with a record of those present and any apologies. On each occasion, the committee should also formally approve the minutes of the previous meeting

Practice may vary on highlighting within the minutes any decisions taken or items for future action (and by whom) – consider what is most effective for you department and committee

Try to produce the draft minutes for the Chair's approval within a week of the committee. If there are items for action by members of the committee, you should circulate it to all members as soon as possible thereafter, identifying these action points. If there are no items for action, you may prefer to wait until the next meeting to circulate the minutes

### **4. Retention of records**

There are retention schedules for certain records in particular under the Data Protection Act, including for staff and student data, and financial records. The University produces guidance on data protection, at:

<https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/dataprotection/policy/#SECTION9>.

Beyond this, and with regard to now outdated governance material, your department should keep securely the material it needs for operational purposes. If your department is clear that it does not need the materials again, you should consult with Simon Bailey, the Keeper of the Archives ([simon.bailey@oua.ox.ac.uk](mailto:simon.bailey@oua.ox.ac.uk)) as to whether he wishes to retain any of the records for permanent preservation in the University Archives (in which case, he will arrange with the department for its transfer). If the Archives does not wish to acquire the material, and the department still wishes to dispose of it, that should be done securely, i.e. the records should be shredded and disposed of with the confidential waste.