MEETINGS POLICY

Approved by Council: 16 May 2012
Revised by Council: None

1 Introduction

The University of Divinity has a unique structure among organisations involved in Australian higher education and has a strong commitment to collegiality. Within the University, planning processes and reporting operate through a committee structure. Therefore, committee records (minutes, agendas and papers) are an integral record of approvals of recommended courses of action and the decision making process, and are essential for accountability. Consequently, all bodies associated with governance activities of the University must have, and adhere to these record keeping procedures.

2 Agenda and minutes of meetings

2.1 Committees transact business by holding meetings and a record must be created of each meeting by taking minutes and having them confirmed. Minutes must adequately document decisions made at each meeting and must include a copy of the agenda and all documents considered at the meeting. All agenda items must be clearly and consecutively numbered, and attachments numbered according to the agenda item to which they refer.

2.2 Agenda presented to Council must include confirmed minutes of meetings of Council committees and Academic Board, and the corresponding Chair’s reports of recent meetings, the minutes of which have not been confirmed, held by these bodies and these documents must be attached.

2.3 The minutes of a meeting serve the primary purpose of recording to the satisfaction of those present the discussion and decisions made during the meeting.

2.4 Where a decision is to accept a recommendation which is of considerable detail and is included in a background paper, that paper must be appended to the minutes.

2.5 Subject to amendments being approved and the minutes of a meeting accepted, they are to be regarded as a true and accurate record of that meeting. One copy of the minutes becomes the official, permanent copy signed and dated by the Chair and includes the agenda, its various attachments circulated, received or adopted by the meeting, and is retained as an archival record.

3 Forms of decisions

3.1 Recommendations are those matters which the committee has no delegated power to resolve. They must be presented in a way which coherently and concisely identifies the proposed course of action. It will usually be necessary to support the recommendation by providing background information which may either precede the text of the recommendation or be contained in an attachment to the agenda.
3.2 Matters for report are those decisions taken by the reporting committee acting under a delegation from the superior body. The text of matters for report does not need to provide the level of detail included in the text of a recommendation.

4 Decision issues

4.1 Where a member of Council, Academic Board, or any committee of the University considers that a draft minute is not in accordance with his or her understanding of the resolution made, action regarding that item is to be held over until the next meeting of that body.

4.2 Where a member of a body which determines policy, or where a member of a body implementing policy, considers that the implementation of a policy has been misinterpreted or implemented incorrectly, that member must communicate his or her concerns to the Vice-Chancellor in writing. The Vice-Chancellor will act as appropriate, and may request the policy in question to be reviewed by the relevant body.

4.3 Unless lack of good faith, bias, malice or prejudice is alleged, an implemented decision of a body engaged in governance activities of the University is not subject to question or review, except for reasons stated in clause 4.2. The policy applied in making the decision can, however, be reviewed for future application.
MEETINGS PROCEDURES

Approved by the Vice-Chancellor: 17 December 2012
Revised by the Vice-Chancellor: None

1. Introduction

1.1 These Procedures are designed to bring a general uniformity to the preparation for, and structure of, meetings held by the various committees and other governance bodies within the University of Divinity.

1.2 These Procedures apply to Council meetings, Council Committee meetings, Academic Board meetings, Academic Board Committee meetings, and other Committee meetings.

1.3 All meetings must use standard templates for agenda, minutes and action items approved by the Vice-Chancellor in accordance with these Procedures.

1.4 The Vice-Chancellor is responsible for ensuring each meeting has appropriate secretarial support.

2. Summary of meeting deadlines

At least two weeks prior
Draft agenda to committee Chair for approval

At least one week prior
Agenda and all attachments sent to committee members

Meeting day
Any late items tabled are recorded by meeting secretary

Within one week
Draft minutes and action items to committee Chair for approval

Within two weeks
Draft minutes and action items to committee members

3. Document format

3.1 All meeting documents should be a Word document or a PDF. Wherever possible, documents in other formats (such as spreadsheets) should be converted to a PDF prior to distribution.

3.2 Each document should be A4 with 2 cm margins and a 1.25 cm header and footer. Text in the body of the document should be in Calibri 12 point with single spacing.

3.3 The footer of each document should show the title of the document (bottom left) and the page number (bottom right) expressed as 'Page X of Y'. Text in the footer of the document should be in Calibri 10 point with single spacing. All pages should have the same footer.

3.4 High-resolution images (including stationary graphics) and scanned documents should be avoided wherever possible to assist in providing documents at a manageable size for emailing and downloading by committee members. Where a scanned document is unavoidable, the document should be scanned at a low to medium resolution.
4. Agenda

4.1 The meeting secretary is responsible for preparation of a draft agenda in consultation with the relevant Director or the Vice-Chancellor. The draft agenda must be forwarded to the Chair of the committee for amendment and approval no later than two weeks (14 days) before the meeting. The Chair must return the final Agenda to the secretary within five working days.

4.2 Each item on the agenda should be numbered sequentially (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). Sub-items, indented numbers, and alphabetical categories (1.1, 3a, etc.) must be avoided. Headings may be added to the agenda if required in bold capital letters but without a number (e.g. CORRESPONDENCE).

4.3 Wherever possible an item on the agenda should include a motion for decision by the meeting. The text of a motion should state as clearly as possible the proposed decision, the person or body responsible for its execution, and a date by which it should be completed.

4.4 Most items on the agenda will be accompanied by an attachment bearing the same number. The agenda for Academic Board or Council should include the name of the presenter underneath each item.

4.5 All meetings use a starring process to expedite business. In deciding the agenda, the Chair and secretary are responsible for starring items on the agenda not of a contentious nature and unlikely to require discussion. At the beginning of each meeting the Chair moves a procedural motion for the adoption of all starred items.

4.6 The agenda and meeting papers must be circulated by the meeting secretary to all members of the committee at least one week (7 days) prior to the meeting.

4.7 The agenda document title should be in the format '1 Agenda <Committee Name> <meeting date>' with the meeting date expressed as yyyy-mm-dd (e.g. 2013-12-31 or 2014-01-09). Do not use dates in other formats such as '31-12-2012' or '31 Dec 2012'.

5. Attachments

5.1 The assembly of attachments for a meeting is the responsibility of the secretary for that meeting.

5.2 Each attachment must be clearly labelled with the text 'Attachment #' in the top right hand corner in bold italic capital letters (e.g. ATTACHMENT 2). The number # must correspond to the number of the relevant item on the agenda. The box must not be placed in the header of the document and should appear on only the first page.

5.3 The footer of the attachment should identify the name of the document and the page numbers. There is no need to include the attachment number or meeting title.

5.4 Where an attachment is a draft regulation, policy, or similar document, the attachment must record the sequence of approvals of the document and its status (draft, revision, etc.).

5.5 Copies of all attachments circulated to a meeting must be included in the records of that meeting.
5.6 The attachment document title should be in the format '<number> <attachment name>' where the number corresponds to the number of the relevant item on the agenda (e.g. '2 Confirmed Minutes 2012-10-01'). Do not use abbreviations such as 'Att' before the number.

5.7 Where possible ensure that there is only one attachment per agenda item. This may require stitching two documents into one.

6. **Minutes**

6.1 Minutes of a meeting must record attendance (including those present but not members), the outcome of each item on the agenda including the full text of any motion carried or recommendations adopted, and, where necessary, a brief summary of any points raised in discussion relevant to understanding the outcome. Minutes are not, however, a verbatim record of discussion.

6.2 The final text of a motion must be recorded on the minutes in a box. The mover and seconder of a motion are not normally recorded, only the outcome.

6.3 Do not record action items in the minutes. These are recorded in the separate Action Items document.

6.4 Minutes of a meeting must record the start and end time of a meeting, and the arrival or departure of any members after the meeting has commenced.

6.5 Where a meeting has been held by email circulation or by telephone conference, this should be clearly recorded in the minutes.

6.6 Draft minutes of a meeting are to be assembled by the meeting secretary and forwarded to the Chair no later than one week (7 days) after a meeting for revision. The Chair must return the draft minutes to the secretary within one week (7 days).

6.7 Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting as approved by the Chair must be circulated to all members within two weeks (14 days) together with the updated list of action items.

6.8 Unconfirmed minutes must be presented to the next meeting of the committee for confirmation. Where any changes are made, the final confirmed copy of the minutes must be distributed to members at the meeting after the one at which changes were made.

6.9 The secretary is to ensure that the Chair signs a hard copy of the confirmed minutes of each meeting.

7. **Action items**

7.1 The secretary of a committee is responsible for maintaining a separate list of action items which is to be reported to each meeting of the committee for noting.

7.2 The action items document must record the date of the meeting and item number of each item, a short description of the item, the person or group responsible, the due date of the item, and the status of the item. Wherever possible use the words of a motion from the minutes in the description of the action item.
7.3 The action items are circulated with the draft minutes, with any completed items noted at the meeting removed, and new or amended items agreed at the meeting added.

7.4 The action items are updated prior to the next meeting and circulated with the agenda. Any completed items are to be noted as 'completed' to ensure a record of action on each item is recorded in the meeting papers.

8. Chair’s Report

8.1 The confirmed minutes of a meeting are reported to the parent body of that Committee (usually Academic Board or Council).

8.2 Unconfirmed or draft minutes are not reported to the parent body. Instead a Chair’s report is prepared by the meeting secretary. This should be done at the same time as draft minutes are prepared and sent to the committee Chair for approval.

8.3 Confirmed minutes and Chair’s reports should be forwarded by email to the meeting secretary of the parent body for inclusion in the meeting papers.

9. Records management

9.1 Secretaries may use their discretion to employ the most appropriate method by which to record discussions occurring, and decisions arrived at, in meetings. This may include written paper-based notes, use of laptop computers for taking electronic notes, use of audio or video recordings. Significant or historical occasions, such as signing of Memoranda of Understanding, may also require photographs or video recordings to be taken. All records of a meeting must be retained until the minutes of that meeting have been confirmed.

9.2 All papers for a meeting must be filed on the server in a single folder with no other material. Any late items tabled at the meeting must be filed electronically in the same folder after the meeting.

9.3 Each Committee must have its own folder on the server, where applicable under the relevant parent committee (e.g. Learning and Teaching Committee will be a folder under Academic Board). Within each Committee folder, there should be a single folder for each year, and in that folder a separate folder for each scheduled meeting entitled '<Committee name> <meeting date>' with the meeting date expressed as yyyy-mm-dd (e.g. 'Learning and Teaching 2013-12-31' or 'Finance and Investment 2014-01-09'). Do not use dates in other formats such as '31-12-2012' or '31 Dec 2012'.

10. Meeting preparations

10.1 The meeting secretary is responsible for ensuring the venue for a meeting is booked and available and that the venue is appropriately set up for the number of people attending.

10.2 The meeting secretary is responsible for ensuring appropriate hospitality is provided and that any equipment required is available and in working order.

10.3 The meeting secretary is responsible for ensuring that correct contact details have been provided to members joining a meeting by telephone or video conference, taking special note of any time differences.
10.4 Except for Council meetings, where papers are mailed out to members, there is no need to provide a hard copy of meeting papers unless this is specifically requested by a committee member. Tabling of late papers at a meeting is to be avoided.

10.5 The meeting secretary is responsible for recording apologies prior to a meeting. The meeting secretary must inform the Chair of the committee of apologies in advance of the meeting date to ensure a quorum is present.