



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH

# PROTOCOLS FOR COMMITTEE CONDUCT

April 2018

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| Protocols for Committee Conduct April 2018                                   |             |   |                |
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# Protocols for Committee Conduct

## SUMMARY

The University's governance and management arrangements are conducted through a committee structure which can offer:

- clear transparent decision-making
- democratic, inclusive, civilised discussion
- opportunities for freedom of speech: voices may be heard.

These Protocols for Committee Conduct are derived from the principles of operation set out in the Standing Orders of the Board of Governors and its Committees. Should you have any queries, please refer to the Clerk to Board of Governors, [adrian.parry@port.ac.uk](mailto:adrian.parry@port.ac.uk)

### 1. Conduct of committee members

- 1.1 Committee members should be aware of the Terms of Reference of the committee(s) they are members of, and the accountability of that committee – what it is responsible for and who (and/or which committee) it is accountable to.
- 1.2 The Chair of a committee must be aware of his/her role and responsibilities. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the committee adheres to its Terms of Reference and discharges its responsibilities, and for ensuring that information is communicated appropriately and accurately through the University Committee Structure. Where committees have a role in managing risk (in accord with the University's Risk Register) the Chair should seek positive confirmation that risks within their remit are being managed effectively, and report any exceptions/concerns.
- 1.3 The Constitution and Terms of Reference of each committee should be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. Committee Secretaries and Chairs are responsible for making sure that happens.
- 1.4 Committee Secretaries are responsible for keeping the constitution, membership and terms of reference for their committees up-to-date on the website, observing the 'one document, one URL' rule.

### 2. Committee communication

- 2.1 Far-reaching and substantial decisions taken within the University's Committee Structure, for example, restructuring of faculties, may be best disseminated by a variety of means in consultation with Internal Communications. However, the regular business of each committee and its decisions are communicated through the formal record of the minutes. To that end, committee Secretaries and Chairs must work together to ensure timely provision of draft minutes as soon as possible after the meeting has been held.
- 2.2 As soon as the draft minutes have been confirmed by the Chair, they can be uploaded to the web immediately: a watermark and the footer should make clear that the status of the minutes is draft at that stage.

- 2.3 After the minutes have been confirmed formally by the full committee at its next meeting, the confirmed minutes (with the watermark removed and the footer amended as appropriate) will be uploaded to replace the draft, observing the 'one document, one URL' rule.
- 2.4 As soon as the draft minutes are uploaded to the web, a notice to that effect can be published in the weekly staff essentials bulletin by emailing details to Internal Communications at [staffessentials@port.ac.uk](mailto:staffessentials@port.ac.uk).

### 3. Categories of committee membership

- 3.1 Ex officio: membership as a result of the office held. For example, Dean, Head of Department, Associate Dean (Students).
- 3.2 Elected: membership as a result of election. For example: to represent the support staff or student community in the University.
- 3.3 Nominated: membership as a result of nomination by an individual or committee. For example, 'nominated by the Students' Union' or 'the Dean or his/her nominee'.
- 3.4 Co-opted: membership as a result of co-option where a committee agrees that a person or persons not already included in the committee's constitution should be a member, in order that the committee may fulfil its Terms of Reference.

Note to Chairs of committees: Co-option is at the discretion of the committee. Whilst all committees have powers of co-option, these powers should be used only with due care and consideration. If a committee should seek to co-opt more than three additional members, or co-opt for lengthy terms of office, then it may be more prudent to review the substantive constitution of the committee to ensure that it remains appropriate to fulfil its Terms of Reference.

- 3.5 In attendance: a person or persons may be included in a committee on the basis of 'in attendance' at the discretion of the Chair. This allows contribution to discussion and may be limited to particular items. It does not extend to permit voting rights held by members of the committee.

#### 4. Term of office

The normal term of office for membership of those committee members who are not Ex Officio is three years. Therefore, committee secretaries must record dates of appointment and review/re-appoint as necessary.

#### 5. Quorum

- 5.1 The normal quorum for committees is in line with the Standing Orders of the Board of Governors and its committees (Standing Order 5), that is, 40 per cent of the overall membership. However, if any specific members must be present, this should be identified in an individual committee's Constitution, Membership and Terms of Reference details.
- 5.2 Chairs are required to ensure a meeting is quorate. If within ten minutes after the time appointed for a meeting, a sufficient number of members to form a quorum is not present, or if any meeting becomes inquorate before the business is completed, the meeting shall stand adjourned without a day being set, and a special meeting shall be convened as soon as may be convenient.
- 5.3 Any quorate meeting may be adjourned by resolution of the members present.

#### 6. Reaching agreement

- 6.1 The procedures to be followed in securing a resolution from committees are as follows:
  - A simple majority of members present in a quorate meeting is sufficient as a basis for agreement.
  - This majority may be established by a method chosen at the discretion of the chair (for example, show of hands, secret ballot).
- 6.2 Committees operate on the basis of collective responsibility (Standing Order 15): by members taking majority decisions at quorate meetings. Postal decisions are not permitted, nor is voting by proxy allowed.
- 6.3 Any decision of a committee, even when it is not unanimous, is a decision taken by the committee collectively and each member has a duty to stand by it, whether or not he/she was present at the committee meeting when the decision was taken.
- 6.4 In the event of disagreement:
  - i) If a member disagrees with a decision taken by the committee, his/her first duty is to have any disagreement discussed and minuted.
  - ii) If a member strongly disagrees with a decision, the matter should be discussed with the Chair and, if necessary, raised at the next meeting of the committee.
  - iii) Alternatively, the member may decide to resign from the committee, after consulting the Chair.
- 6.5 If a minimum of four members believe that the committee has committed a major error either procedurally or in terms of its judgement, they may seek review by the parent committee.

#### 7. Committee planning

- 7.1 Chairs are required to ensure the appropriateness of meeting dates, taking into account the agreed frequency of meetings and the need to coordinate timings between parent committees and lower level sub-committee meeting dates.
- 7.2 A schedule of committee meetings should be drawn up at the start of the academic session to ensure that meeting dates are well disseminated and maximum attendance is encouraged.
- 7.3 Meetings should not normally exceed two and a half hours.
- 7.4 With the exception of urgent business brought before a meeting by direction of the Chair, no business shall be transacted at a meeting other than that specified in the Agenda: there is no provision for 'any other business' (Standing Order 9.4).

#### 8. Attendance

- 8.1 Members who have to send apologies for absence may not nominate a representative to attend the meeting on their behalf except:
  - i) in exceptional circumstances, and only with the agreement of the Chair;
  - ii) where an ex-officio member is absent for a lengthy period and an alternate is appointed to the membership in his/her stead with the agreement of the Chair.
- 8.2 Non-attendance at 50 per cent of the meetings to which a member is committed will prompt discussions with the Chair to discuss the individual circumstances and how they may best be accommodated (Standing Order 2.6).



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