



GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR SUBCOMMITTEES OF ACADEMIC BOARD

Background

Academic Board is responsible for the effective discharge of its duties as outlined in its Terms of Reference and/or delegations from Council. In meeting its responsibilities, it is necessary for Academic Board to carry out many of its functions through subcommittees. Academic Board must ensure that the subcommittee operate effectively in pursuit of well communicated and understood goals, strengthening the effective operation of the Academic Board itself. The following best practice guidelines have been established by Academic Board to assist in the process of establishing and monitoring an effective subcommittee operation.

Overarching principles

Academic Board and its subcommittees are the primary instruments for collegial governance in the University. The collegial governance processes of the University will be enhanced in the University community by promoting thorough community understanding of subcommittee roles and operations, and the general accessibility of information about current and planned business. The effectiveness and accountability of subcommittees in performing their functions will be enhanced through the adoption of adequate planning and review cycles, business-like management of operations and regular reporting to Academic Board.

Formal Charter

Each subcommittee should have a formal charter. The charter is a 2-3 page document that contains the following information:

- Overall role and responsibility – In 2 or 3 sentences this is in effect a statement of strategic intent for the subcommittee
- Terms of Reference – Clearly stating the responsibilities and expectations of the Board for the subcommittee
- Membership – A list of all members, including details of University staff required to be In Attendance (further discussion below)
- Meetings – Minimum requirements for the number of frequency of meetings should be specified
- Accountability – The charter should include reporting requirements for the subcommittee. This should specify the frequency of required reporting.
- Committee support – Where possible, a specific officer should be identified as providing executive officer support to the Chair of the subcommittee.

It is imperative that the formal charters are widely communicated and understood throughout the University. The charters for all of the subcommittees that underpin the University's governance structure must be easily accessible. It is the responsibility of the Chair of Academic Board, supported by the Executive Officer, to ensure that up to date Charter information for each subcommittee is in place on the University intranet.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Terms of Reference for subcommittees of Academic Board should:

- Be associated with Academic Board ToR
- Clearly distinguish between issues on which they are empowered to take decisions, and issues that must be remitted to Academic Board
- Be reviewed regularly for continuing relevance.

Membership

The charter should identify the Chair, or specify the selection processes for the subcommittee to select its own Chair. Where there is not a member of Academic Board, Academic Board should consider co-option of the subcommittee Chair to its membership.

Where elected positions are involved, a standard term of membership should be established. This should be consistent with Academic Board membership terms, and implemented to ensure some continuity of membership where desirable.

Subcommittee membership will normally be specified in the charter by organisational position rather than by name, or where relevant should identify the method of selection of the relevant members. The use of the term "or nominee" should be used sparingly and only after careful consideration in the establishment of committee membership. Where the committee's role is one of providing expert advice, there are some risks in this approach. The use of alternates generally is specified in Council Policy C-4, and the charter of each subcommittee does not require any separate specification of alternates.

Subcommittee members must be committed to the goals and business of the subcommittee, and consistent failure to attend must be addressed by the Chair. Regular reviews of subcommittee performance should include reviews of attendance.

Members must be fully briefed in the role and ToR of the subcommittee to assist their effective participation. Each subcommittee must consider the nature and extent of induction required for new members. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that appropriate induction of members takes place.

Good Practice Guidelines for Subcommittee Operations

Planning and review

Each subcommittee of Academic Board should set annual goals for its operations. These should be referenced to its ToR and reported to Academic Board. The planning should be informed by self review. A review report should be submitted to Academic Board that addresses each ToR and how it was met by the subcommittee in the review period, as well as reporting on the attendance record of members.

Operational planning

Each subcommittee should have a forward work plan that identifies the expected flow of business and reports for the upcoming year. This will assist in the achievement of both the planned goals and the regular business of the subcommittee. It should also enable the Chair and Executive Officer to ensure that there is a spread of work for the subcommittee over the year and a spread of planned work across the relevant subcommittee ToRs.

Options for ground-up participation

Academic Board and its subcommittees are the primary collegial governance mechanisms in the University governance structure. It is important that relevant issues, debates and ideas flow easily through this structure to inform the broader governance and directions of the University. Each subcommittee should consider and adopt strategies that seek to ensure that it has appropriate capacity and mechanisms to foster ground up issues and debates.

Effective management

Some elements of good committee management practice are:

- Papers contain clear recommendations for consideration
- Electronic communications are used where appropriate
- Papers are issued with sufficient time for appropriate consideration and consultation
- Appropriate records management and archiving guidelines are followed
- An action sheet is prepared following each committee meeting
- Committee procedures suit the business of the subcommittee, and are not burdened by an excess of formality
- Draft minutes are produced promptly after the meeting
- Draft minutes are subjected to a content check by the Chair
- Draft minutes are subjected an editing check for accuracy
- Minutes of Academic Board can be used as a guide to the level of detail and discussion required for a set of minutes
- Minutes should be published as soon as practicable to the University intranet site.

