

Presentation of business to the Council and other committees

The review of governance completed in 2014 brought into sharp relief the need to ensure that business is presented as effectively as possible to the Council: and the guidelines on the presentation of business to the Council set out below are now updated and circulated annually. They are based on the guidelines issued in 2005, and, although specifically directed to the presentation of business to the Council, are relevant also to the Senate and other University committees.

In 2013, the Council endorsed the view of the Group of Governance that these guidelines should be rigorously enforced for all Council papers; and also agreed that, as a rule, Council papers should be circulated two weeks before the meeting at which they are to be considered. It follows that any paper which does not comply with the guidelines below will be returned to its author for revision and may be withdrawn from the agenda.

1. In general, papers should begin with an ***italicised introduction*** which clearly indicates the subject matter and any action required of the Council; in particular, it should make it clear whether the paper is brought forward for decision, for comment or for information. (Such an introduction is not required, however, when the paper itself occupies no more than a side of A4 – though in such a case the paper itself should specify what is required of the Council.)
2. Papers should present business as clearly – and therefore as ***simply*** – as possible. They should set out the bones of the issue, presenting an easily-digestible overview (in the style of the better ‘executive summaries’), and should not get lost in the detail. Authors must avoid the temptation to over-elaborate: the Council needs to see the shape of the wood, and we should avoid drawing it into the trees unnecessarily.
3. Papers should be written in ***plain English***. Jargon is to be avoided, and acronyms should only be used either if they are genuinely in common currency (for example, MP, HEFCE) or if they are spelt out in full when they first occur in the text.
4. In line with 2 above, ***papers must be short***. As a general rule, papers should be no longer than two sides of A4 (with reasonable margins and a font no smaller than 11 point). Exceptionally, and where the issue is more complex, papers may be as long as four sides. Any necessary supporting material should be included in annexes. That said, the proliferation of annexes is also to be avoided! Where appropriate, papers can point to further, more detailed, information that can be made available either on the *BoardPacks* application (via the Secretariat) or on request from the relevant office (or both).
5. In any event, papers should be sufficiently clear, simple and short such that they need ***little or no oral presentation*** at the meeting: the Council has agreed papers will either be taken as read or the subject of an oral presentation that does not exceed two minutes.
6. When a paper sets out a proposal for approval, or options for evaluation, it should address ***strategic fit***, indicating how a proposed course of action contributes to the current University strategy (or, if it does not, explaining why such a course of action might still be appropriate). The ***resource implications*** too should be addressed; the

paper should indicate, for example, whether or not a proposed course of action is within previously-agreed budgets (and, if not, how it is to be funded).

7. In general, papers proposing a particular course of action should include an **assessment of risk**, an assessment which should cover the risk of *not* proceeding as well as risks associated with proceeding with the course of action in question.
8. Proposals for strategic investment and other major projects should include a date for post-implementation review of the success of the project, for subsequent report to the Council.
9. Formal **recommendations** (and for that matter formal resolutions) need to be clear, precise, unambiguous and self-contained; they are a form of legal record.
10. All papers should conform to a uniform **house style**, as outlined in the annex.
11. As a general rule, the above precepts apply to **reports from committees** to their parent bodies. Although there are some agreed exceptions, a committee¹ should forward business to its parent body by means of specially-prepared *reports*, and not by sending forward its *minutes*. Reports provide more focus than minutes, and the guiding principle in their preparation is 'fitness for purpose'. They should cover only those matters which need to be brought to the parent body's attention, and should include neither more nor less information than the parent body needs in order to be able to do its job. As a rule of thumb, 'need' is to be assessed according to the relevant terms of reference and authority levels. A report from a committee to its parent body only needs to be made when it has something material to say; otherwise, there is no requirement to report on each and every meeting.
12. **Minutes** themselves are best regarded as terse domestic and legal records. In general, they do not normally need to do more than record the date of the meeting; those present; the topics discussed and the papers received; and any decisions reached. (The printed Senate and Council minutes are an exception to this rule.)
13. As a general rule, the **circulation of** papers should be effected a fortnight before the meeting. It follows that, in general, papers should reach committee secretaries at least 12-13 working days before the meeting.
14. Any questions on the above precepts may be referred to Melody Mellor², from whom further advice is available.

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University Secretary

September 2016

¹ The term 'committee' is used in its widest sense to cover boards, sub-committees, groups, and so on.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

House style for committee papers

This annex sets out (and illustrates) the precepts of the house style for committee papers.

General

1. Papers and minutes should be produced in Arial 11 or 12 point font, aligned left (rather than justified).
2. There should be no more than four title lines at the top of the paper – the name of the University and the name of the committee (in capitals, centred) followed *either* by
 - (a) the title of the paper itself (in 13 point bold upper and lower case) *or*, in the case of minutes, by
 - (b) the date of the meeting (on one line) followed by the word MINUTES (in capitals) on another.
3. Subsequent sub-headings should be aligned to the left-hand margin; they should normally be in bold upper and lower case, as shown in this paper (with upper-and-lower case italic being available for a second tier of sub-headings if one is needed). Sub-headings are not numbered (except perhaps in the case of agendas).
4. All paragraphs should be numbered. In the case of papers, numbering should normally be a simple numerical notation (1, 2, 3, etc); minute numbers should be in the form 16/111 (where 16 denotes the academic year 2016-17 rather than the calendar year 2016). The form of enumeration of items on the agenda for a committee may vary slightly depending on the complexity of the business. Indented sub-paragraphs should be enumerated alphabetically, as illustrated in 2 above.
5. Minutes and reports from committees should normally record not only the names of members present but also the names of officers formally in attendance at the meeting in question (though not usually the names of those present as observers 'at the back').
6. Papers may be printed in colour when (and only when) that aids clarity of presentation.

Papers

7. The first-page header for a committee paper should show the name and date of the meeting at which it is to be considered, and a unique paper reference (in the form, for example, CL/16/77). The header may (but need not always) specify the agenda.
8. A paper should identify its author; if that is not practicable (for example, if a paper has multiple authors), then the paper should instead give a contact name and details.

Agenda

9. Depending on the complexity of the business, agenda may be divided by bold sub-headings (with or without enumeration). Agenda should, where practicable, show clearly which matters are for discussion and decision, which for information etc. In general, agenda should go out over the name of the committee secretary.