

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD  
**INFORMATION FOR SECRETARIES AND ADMINISTRATORS OF COMMITTEES  
OF THE COUNCIL AND THE SENATE, 2021-22**

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## 1. Deadlines for the submission of reports and papers

1.1 Deadlines for the submission of reports and papers for Senate and Council in 2021-22 are as follows:

<b>Date of Senate meeting</b>	<b>Deadline for submission of papers</b>
Wednesday 13 October 2021	Lunchtime on Monday 27 September 2021
Wednesday 8 December 2021	Lunchtime on Monday 22 November 2021
Wednesday 16 March 2022	Lunchtime on Monday 28 February 2022
Wednesday 22 June 2022	Lunchtime on Monday 6 June 2022

<b>Date of Council meeting</b>	<b>Deadline for submission of papers*</b>
Monday 18 October 2021	Lunchtime on Monday 4 October 2021
Monday 22 November 2021	Section C: Lunchtime on Monday 1 November 2021 Section A & B: Lunchtime on Monday 8 November 2021
Monday 21 February 2022	Section C: Lunchtime on Monday 31 January 2022 Section A & B: Lunchtime on Monday 7 February 2022
Monday 25 April 2022	Section C: Lunchtime on Monday 4 April 2022 Section A & B: Lunchtime on Monday 11 April 2022
Tuesday 7 June 2022**	Lunchtime on Monday 23 May 2022
Monday 11 July 2022	Section C: Lunchtime on Monday 20 June 2022 Section A & B: Lunchtime on Monday 27 June 2022

**\* An earlier deadline (three weeks prior to the date of each business meeting) applies to the submission of information for inclusion in Section C and the President & Vice-Chancellor's report to Council. Information about the P&VC's report is circulated separately to regular contributors of content.**

\*\* The June meeting of the Council is an away day, and no reports are expected from Committee Secretaries unless specifically requested.

- 1.2 The University Secretary and the Head of Governance are responsible for the administration of the Council, Senate and UEB. The University Secretary is the Secretary to Council and Senate. The Head of Governance is the Secretary to UEB.
- 1.3 All papers should be submitted as email attachments to Kathryn Clements and Angela Davison as follows:  
  
For UEB papers please email [ueb-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ueb-admin@sheffield.ac.uk).  
  
For Council and Senate please email [governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk).
- 1.4 There will be two circulations of Council papers and one circulation of Senate papers only, and the above deadlines should be followed strictly. Reports received after the deadline will not be circulated or tabled.
- 1.5 Reports of the Estates and Finance Committees are circulated for information (redacted if necessary) to Senate following the meeting of the Council at which they were approved and in advance of the circulation of Senate meeting papers.

Please note that reports of the Honorary Degrees Committee (which is a joint committee of the Senate and the Council) should be submitted to the next business meeting of the Senate or Council, whichever takes place first.

## **PART A: KEY SECRETARIAL MATTERS**

### **2. Report-writing conventions**

#### **2.1 Content of reports**

- 2.1.1 The report of a committee to its parent body should provide clear and concise details of recommendations requiring the approval of the parent body, including the rationale and the extent, if any, of the Committees' reservations about the matter or whether it was recommended unanimously, and information concerning matters about which the parent body needs to be informed. It should **not** normally include information on ongoing or uncompleted items of business unless these are of particular significance or where the parent body needs to provide a steer and/or will be asked to make a decision in future.
- 2.1.2 Committee Secretaries should remember that, unlike Minutes, which are written for committee members, reports are written for an audience which may not have detailed knowledge of the area of business. Some matters for report may therefore require a brief additional explanation of the context. More detailed or complex proposals or those which have been subject to

lengthy discussion in other fora (e.g. sub-committees, working groups, faculty and department) could include a timeline to demonstrate to the parent body the level of prior scrutiny, and refer to alternative options that have been considered but discounted (see 2.2.2). In particularly contentious matters the report should indicate the strength of the committee's support, including whether a decision was unanimous, to inform its decision-making.

2.1.3 Reports should be kept as brief as possible (i.e. aim for a maximum of 3 sides). Where it is essential for detailed information to be included, appendices should be used. However, appendices should not be used where a brief summary of their content in the main body of the report would be more appropriate.

2.1.4 When writing reports and papers for Council and Senate it may be useful to consider some or all of the following questions:

1. To which University goal or strategy does it relate? How?
2. External and internal context?
3. Competitor analysis?
4. Clear evidence base? Should this be made available?
5. Is there a proposal?
6. Are alternative options explained?
7. Are any decisions required clearly stated at the start of a section/the paper?
8. Are formal recommendations clearly stated at the end of the item/paper?
9. What are the next steps proposed? These may include:
  - a. Actions to be progressed (by whom?)
  - b. External return or response
  - c. Communications required?
  - d. Further discussion/consultation (why and where)?

2.1.5 All reports of committees of the Council and the Senate should be prefaced by an executive summary, using the standard template. See APPENDIX 1, which includes guidance on completing each section; also downloadable from the [Council](#) and [Senate](#) webpages, respectively. Executive summaries should include:

- a summary of key issues and clear sign posts as to the action required;
- for major decisions, an outline of the full range of options available (including doing nothing), as well as details of the recommended option;
- for investment decisions or capital projects, identify the Charity Law implications of the recommended decision and justification as to its compatibility with the University's charitable objectives, 'to advance education through teaching and research'.

- 2.1.6 Executive summaries should be used routinely for all reports and papers presented to Council sub-committees. These should be based on the Council template, adapted to suit particular requirements.
- 2.1.7 Committee Secretaries should include in the executive summary an indication of any sensitive or confidential information, together with the applicable exemption(s) under the Freedom of Information Act (<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/foi/index>) and the information classification of the report. These details will to inform the publication or withholding of reports and papers under the general policy on publication of Council papers set out in APPENDIX 2 and whether the item should be marked as “Closed” in the Council or Senate minutes (see also section 4.5 for further information about FoI and closed minutes and 4.6 for further information about the information classifications).

## **2.2 Presentation of reports**

- 2.2.1 Papers and reports should be as short and concise as possible, being clear as to action required. The standard template for reports should be used. This can be downloaded from <http://www.shef.ac.uk/govern/council>.
- 2.2.2 Report authors, with the committee Chair, should consider including at the beginning of reports a brief bullet point summary of key matters being reported on or those issues to which the committee wishes to draw Council or Senate’s particular attention. Reports should then be structured as follows and each item reported should appear under one of these three sections:
- (a) Items requiring discussion, formal recommendations requiring discussions prior to approval, and items presented orally. Recommendations should be clearly set out in the report (e.g. ‘the Committee has **agreed to recommend** that...’) and refer to the appropriate reserved power.
  - (b) Formal recommendations requiring approval, but on which no discussion is required, with reference to the reserved power.
  - (c) Items presented for noting (a decision that the committee has made in accordance with its terms of reference or powers delegated by University Regulations) and/or for information only (e.g. to give assurance).

Within each section, items should appear in order of importance (which may differ from the order in which they are presented in the Minutes).

Reports to Council and Senate that seek a decision in relation to a reserved matter should include an appraisal of the range of options considered, rather than presenting a single recommended option for approval; and where an

option is preferred to recommend it with reasons. Where UEB has also considered the same matter, its view can be added.

Reporting should be prospective as well as retrospective and take into account the annual cycle of committee business. Committees should similarly consider when and how they might engage Council or Senate during the development of a given project or initiative within those business cycles before formally presenting a final proposal.

- 2.2.3 Each item within each section of the report should be given a separate number and a heading. Numbering within each Section should commence at 1. Sub-sections should be numbered 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc and given a sub-heading. Where further differentiation is required within sub-sections, use (i), (ii), (iii) or (a), (b), (c), with or without a further sub-heading.

For ease of reference during meetings, the use of bullet-points should be avoided.

- 2.2.4 Appendices to reports should carry a numerical reference (Appendix 1, 2, 3, etc), and where an Appendix in turn has its own Appendices, these should also be clearly labelled (Appendix 1/Annex A to Appendix 1).

- 2.2.5 All pages in a report, including the Appendices, should be numbered consecutively as an entire document for ease of reference during meetings. This may necessitate the insertion of blank pages so that the overall layout and pagination is correct, i.e. each new Appendix should start on a recto (right-hand/front page).

- 2.2.6 More detailed guidance on report writing is available in the [guidance on writing papers](#) for UEB and from the Governance Team in the [University Secretary's Office](#).

### **2.3 Approval of reports**

Please ensure that your report has been approved by the Chair of your committee and any other relevant officers, e.g. a UEB sponsor, before submission to the University Secretary's Office, and ahead of the deadline for papers.

## **3. Conflicts of interest and the Register of Interests**

- 3.1 The Committee of University Chair's Higher Education Code of Governance 2020 states that all Members of the governing body "have a duty to record and declare any conflicts of interest." and that "A member who has a professional, pecuniary, family or other personal interest in any matter under discussion which may be seen to conflict with the best interests of the institution must also disclose the interest in advance of any discussion on the

topic” . In order to comply with these provisions, members of the Council and the Senate, and their respective committees and sub-committees, should be asked at the beginning of each meeting to declare any potential conflicts of interest. If any interests are declared then the committee secretary must report these to the University Secretary’s Office, which maintains a central record of any declared interests for all University committees. To support members and committee secretaries in fulfilling these obligations, the University Secretary’s has developed a Conflicts of Interest in Decision Making Procedure, which explains how committee members and secretaries should identify and avoid or manage conflicts of interest, and is essential reading both for committee secretaries and members and should be brought to the attention of new members on induction. The full Procedure is available under the Register of Interests section of the Governance Documents [webpage](#).

3.2 The agenda for each meeting should include a standing item one, ‘Declarations of conflicts of interest’. . There may be certain circumstances where the committee member will need to withdraw from certain decisions or from undertaking certain roles, in order to protect themselves and the University from accusations of unfair bias or impropriety. Any conflicts declared should be included in the Minutes, together with any associated decision and/or action by the committee. Actions could include:

- Requiring the member to not attend the meeting.
- Excluding the member from receiving meeting papers relating to their interest.
- Excluding the member from all or part of the relevant discussion and decision.
- Noting the nature and extent of the interest, but judging it appropriate to allow the member to remain and participate.
- Removing the member from the group or process altogether.

3.3 In addition, lay committee members are asked annually to update their entry on the University’s formal Register of Interests, which is published online. This covers the following :

- Paid employment and nature of business;
- Self-employment and nature of business;
- Charity Trusteeships;
- Directorships held (whether paid or unpaid);
- Share/equity holdings;
- Other relevant pecuniary interests (e.g. where the member’s employer, business associates, spouse/partner or other family member has a direct pecuniary interest in the supply of goods or services to the University; or where the member or the member’s spouse/partner or other family member has a substantial beneficial interest in the securities of a company or other body that is involved in the supply of goods or services to the University.)

- Other relevant appointments (e.g. membership of any statutory or other body of any other educational institution or organisation in the education sector, membership of a University Conference, General Council or equivalent, membership of a Funding Council, the QAA or a Research Council, membership of any validating or awarding body in the education sector, membership of any relevant governmental or institutional advisory committee.)
- An additional section covering other matters that may be harmful to the University's reputation.

3.4 Declaring conflicts of interest, and taking appropriate action in response is also one element of ethical behaviour (see section 8, Code of Ethics, below). In a committee context, ethics refer to the standards of behaviour that committee members should apply in decision-making. Like other sectors, personal and corporate ethics inform and underpin the regulatory and codified regimes applicable to higher education institutions.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (the ethical standards expected of holders of public office, including members of university governing bodies but also relevant to all committee members) are a useful guide to ethical behaviour: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

The Office for Students' [public interest governance principles](#) are a further useful guide, including the 'fit and proper persons' test. The matters listed against that test are a further guide to some specific issues to which committee members would be expected to draw the University's attention.

#### 4. **Committee Papers and Minutes**

4.1 When **writing Minutes**, committee secretaries should ensure that:

- the required text concerning the confirmation of the Minutes is included at the foot of the last page (see para 4.4)

4.2 When **preparing committee papers**, committee secretaries should ensure that:

- Appendices to papers are correctly referenced (see para 11.3.2);
- An additional copy of the committee papers is printed for Minute Book purposes;
- All papers are appropriately categorised according to the University's Information Classification and Handling Scheme (see para 4.6).

4.3 **After Committee meetings**, committee Secretaries should ensure that:

- a copy of any tabled papers is retained for Minute Book purposes (see also section 16, Content of minute books).

- Refer to the [University's Records Retention Schedule](#) available online regarding the retention of formal documents and, in particular, **the operating procedure for Committee Secretaries regarding retaining notes of formal meetings**, which is included at APPENDIX 3. Note that drafts of agendas and papers or reports, as well as draft minutes, are not required to be retained, including anything sent as email attachments or other related email correspondence or other material preparatory to the meeting and the minutes. Committee secretaries and their colleagues, including Chairs and committee members themselves, should take great care that the only correspondence and documentation retained is that required for business purposes (for as long as is necessary) or for the official record of business and decision making, i.e. that which will appear in the Minute Book and archived.

4.4 The following text should appear at the foot of the final page of the Minutes, so that the Chair can sign and date them at the next meeting, thereby indicating that they were received and approved:

These Minutes were confirmed at  
a meeting of held on .....  
..... Chair

4.5 **Closed Minutes and Freedom of Information:** If matters dealt with by the committee are commercial, otherwise confidential or contain personal or sensitive information the relevant minute or the paper should be marked as 'Closed' to inform the withholding of the minute, report and papers from publication together with the applicable exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act. <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/foi/staffguidance>

The downloadable document Guidance on Freedom of Information and Data Protection for UEB members and contributors provides further useful information and considerations relevant to committee secretaries:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ueb/meetings>

4.6 **Information Classification and Handling Scheme:**

As part of a suite of Records Management documents, the University has published an [Information Classification and Handling Scheme and associated guidance, available online](#). Further detailed guidance about information handling is also available [from IT Services](#). All papers provided to University Committees should be assigned one of the four classifications, depending on the sensitivity of the information they contain.

This approach to categorising information and papers was piloted successfully at the last meetings of Senate and Council in 2020-21, and is being rolled out

to all formal University committees and UEB sub-groups from 2021-22. It will be the responsibility of paper authors and contributors to suggest the appropriate information classification for their paper or report and committee secretaries will need to consider a prompt, and links to the guidance, in their requests for papers. Committee secretaries will be responsible for checking that the information classifications are appropriate.

Additional guidance and examples of the types of document or information to which a given classification should be applied are in development. In the meantime, further support and guidance available from the [Governance Team and the Records Management and Archive Team in the University Secretary's Office](#).

#### 4.7 **Action Logs and Matters Arising on the Minutes:**

All Committee agendas will already have a standing item to address any matter arising on the minutes of the previous meeting. In response to a recommendation in the 2020-21 Council Effectiveness Review, Council has adopted a new "Action Log" to record actions agreed at previous meetings and to monitor progress. The updated document is presented under the standing agenda item "Action Log and Matters Arising", for discussion and note. Council has requested that all Secretaries of all Council and Senate are asked to consider with their respective Chairs adopting an equivalent document for each committee. A template Action Log is provided at APPENDIX 4.

## 5. Annual Review of Committee terms of reference and membership and Annual reports

5.1 Committee secretaries are asked to ensure that committees review their terms of reference (downloadable from <http://www.shef.ac.uk/govern/committees>) on an annual basis, at the first meeting of the academic session, to ensure that these are fit for purpose and are still applicable, or whether there are broader institutional initiatives or strategies or action plans which have implications for the particular committee's role and therefore may need to be reflected in the terms of reference, e.g. the University Vision, Strategy Delivery Plans, Sustainability Strategy and Value for Money Strategy (see also Section 6, Equality and Diversity). This consideration should be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting and any proposed amendments submitted for approval – see below.

5.2 Amendments to committee terms of reference **must** remain consistent with the committee's powers and any delegated authority set out in the University Regulations and require the approval of the parent body. For committees of Senate and Council, therefore, details of the amendments proposed and the reasons for the changes should be included in the report to Senate/Council. The current terms of reference should be provided as an Appendix with the proposed amendments tracked.

**Note:** that the requirement for changes to be approved includes any substantive changes to the committee membership, i.e. those that involve the addition or removal of a category of membership or ex-officio position.

5.3 Where the committee does not already do so each sub-committee secretary is requested to consider preparing a brief annual report, on a timing which fits its cycle of business, summarising the decisions taken by that committee within its delegated powers, or recommendations made and the outcome reached where the powers are retained by Council or Senate. This report should be presented to Council or Senate, as appropriate. Please contact the Governance Team to agree when in the cycle of business, if appropriate, an annual report from the sub-committee can be presented. The report should also inform the sub-committee's annual consideration of its terms of reference, for example to confirm that the sub-committee is operating in accordance with its terms of reference/delegated authority or in highlighting where some amendment may be required.

## PART B: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SECRETARIES AND COMMITTEES

### 6. Equality & Diversity

6.1 During 2017/18 Council approved a number of proposals from its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, two of which affect other committees:

## 6.1.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)

Legislation requires full consideration of equality issues in any significant decision-making process. Committees should be asked to consider, at each meeting, whether any decisions or recommendations made could adversely affect staff or students on the basis of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. If so, the Committee should seek to identify whether any mitigating measures can be put in place to reduce impact.

Where a committee is considering a significant decision, change or policy review it may be appropriate to the proposal to include an EIA for members to take into account in their deliberations, and provide additional assurance. This is referred to in the executive summary.

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/equality/eia/index>

## 6.1.2 Terms of Reference

As part of the annual review of terms of reference (ToR) (see para 5) all Council and Senate committees should ensure their ToR include reference to how they will progress ED&I within their remit. Note that at the highest level, Council has recently approved the following additional 'primary function' under University Regulations:

“to promote equality and diversity throughout the University, including in relation to its own operation.”

It is for each committee to decide how to reflect ED&I matters in its ToR, which will vary depending on the committee's remit.

Note: With effect from 2021/22 references to gendered pronouns in the Calendar and Committee terms of reference and membership have been removed. This action forms part of a broader ongoing initiative intended to promote greater diversity and inclusivity around committee memberships and participation, and in response to feedback from some committee members and advice from HR,

## 6.1.3 Accessibility for meetings and papers

When considering the practical arrangements for committee meetings, whether they are being held virtually or face to face, committee secretaries should ensure that all members are able to access the meeting itself and participate fully in discussions. Committee secretaries will need to consider the particular requirements of their members when booking rooms, planning agendas and preparing papers. Members should be given the opportunity to

highlight any requirements or issues in order that reasonable adjustments can be made where needed, particularly on induction. As a matter of routine, committee secretaries should consider including additional wording in communications to the committee, e.g. the Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee has introduced the following, as standard:

*If you have any questions about the papers or the meeting arrangements, or if there is any way we can improve the accessibility of the meeting or the meeting papers, please do not hesitate to get in touch.*

In response to feedback and broader work around inclusion, led by HR, including as part of the Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, guidance has been developed to ensure increase the accessibility for all members where meetings are held virtually, and papers are provided electronically. This guidance, with links to additional information, is included as APPENDIX 5.

## **7. Reportable Events**

- 7.1 The Office for Students acts as the principal regulator for universities, including those like TUOS that are exempt charities. OfS provides a list of 'reportable' events that require notification. The full list is available in Annex A to [OfS Regulatory Notice 16](#) with additional guidance in Annex B.
- 7.2 If the committee is considering actions or matters that are reportable, materially affect the University's legal form and/or its ability to comply with its conditions of registration this **must** be reported by the committee Chair or Secretary to the University Secretary as soon as possible to ensure that the University is not at risk of sanction for breaching the OfS' requirements. The University Secretary's Office maintains an OfS Conditions Compliance Register which is reported to UEB and Council through the UEB Risk Review Group to facilitate monitoring of institutional compliance.

## **8. Code of Ethics**

- 8.1 The University has established mechanisms by which informed decisions can be taken on matters relating to ethics (and the associated risks managed) within the appropriate policy or procedural context. Where appropriate, the policies and procedures referred under the University Code of Ethics should be monitored and reviewed by the committees responsible and any substantive findings or changes escalated through reports to their respective parent bodies.
- 8.2 The operation of the overarching Code of Ethics is reviewed periodically by the University Secretary's Office for report to Council via its Audit Committee.

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/ethicscode>

## **9. Compliance and Assurance Framework**

- 9.1 In 2020, following analysis of governance and regulatory reviews elsewhere in the sector, Council agreed to the development of a Compliance and Assurance Framework to complement the existing Office for Students' Conditions Compliance Register. The Framework was developed, and is updated, on the basis of advice and information from UEB and Professional Services Directors and provides a comprehensive overview of institutional responsibilities for ensuring compliance with the full range of legal and regulatory obligations to which the University is subject and which create obligations on the Council, and how each is discharged. The Framework is reviewed and updated annually for agreement by Council and the latest version has been provided separately.
- 9.2 The breadth of responsibilities captured in the attached Framework covers the University's charitable status, and its compliance with the Office for Students' (OfS) Regulatory Framework, but importantly also covers legislation (including on areas such as the Prevent duty, bribery, public interest disclosure, tax, procurement, immigration, copyright, modern slavery, equality, employment, health and safety, freedom of information, and data protection) and other regulators duties. While the Framework is new, the content intends to record the existing arrangements for the distribution of accountabilities, making these explicit and simpler to monitor.
- 9.3 Committee Secretaries should, where applicable, work with the named individuals to ensure assurance reporting on the duties listed, in accordance with the business plans of each committee. This should mean that in each case where a statutory duty exists the appropriate assurance is sought and given. If anything is missing or incorrect, please contact Edward Smith and Kate Sullivan in the [University Secretary's Office](#).

## **10. Legal advice**

- 10.1 If the committee considers that it requires independent external legal advice other than that which may be obtained by the responsible area of the University in the usual course of business, e.g. to comply with law or regulation, then the Chair or the Secretary should contact the relevant colleague authorised to issue legal instructions and/or the University Secretary's Office to discuss their requirements and anticipated costs. Authorised personnel and USO contact details, along with additional information and guidance, are available at:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/uso/legal>

## **11. Council and Senate Standing Orders**

- 11.1 In response to a recommendation from the 2020-21 Council Effectiveness Review, Council has introduced Standing Orders to more clearly explain its working practices and supplement the constitutional provisions set out in the Charter, Statutes and Regulations. The Standing Orders cover matters including membership and quoracy, meetings, order of business, agendas and papers, confidentiality and interests, conduct and decision-making and reporting. Senate has also introduced its Standing Orders which cover largely the same points. These are available to view on the [Council](#) and [Senate](#) web pages.
- 11.2 While individuals are NOT required to produce standing orders of their own, in the case of queries or uncertainty regarding how to approach a given matter, committee secretaries should refer to the applicable constitutional provisions and those of the standing orders for their parent body for guidance. In the case of queries please contact the University Secretary's Office.

## **12. Guidance for external committee members on the Use of Personal Electronic Devices and Email Accounts**

- 12.1 In 2020, the University introduced a new policy for lay members of Council and University Committees relating to the use of personal electronic devices and email accounts. This guidance was endorsed by the senior University Officers, based on legal advice and advice from the University's Data Protection Officer and IT Services. It is intended to inform members' choice and has been added to Council induction packs. It is recommended induction material for all new lay members. [The guidance is available from the Council Induction webpage.](#)

If your committee includes any external members who are not otherwise a member of Council please share this information with them. If any member requires a University account and you are unsure of how to obtain one, please contact [governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk) in the first instance.

## **13. Governance Web Pages**

- 13.1 The Governance pages on the [University of Secretary's Office website](#) contain a range of information and reference material about the University's governance and management arrangements and related policies and procedures, and further information about regulation and compliance. The USO is in the process of developing a dedicated committee secretaries "hub" to act as a single point of reference and to signpost useful material.

- 13.2 The [Governance Documents](#) pages list a range of key institutional and regulatory policies, procedures and general information, much of which may be of use to committee secretaries in the course of their role.

## **PART C: PRACTICAL MATTERS**

### **14. Virtual or In Person meetings**

- 14.1 The 2020-21 Council Effectiveness Review included the recommendation that *Council should reflect on the changes to its practices necessitated by COVID-19 and determine which, if any, it wishes to continue or adapt on a longer term basis. In particular, Council should consider the format of and frequency of its meetings.*

Committees should similarly reflect on whether previously normal practices could be changed or enhanced on the basis of lessons learned during the period of remote working and virtual meetings. In particular, Council has agreed to pilot holding two of its formal business meetings virtually, e.g. to maximise attendance and reduce travel time.

- 14.2 In addition, the University's [guiding principles on hybrid working](#) state that:

- Formal University Committees and Groups are likely to meet in a hybrid pattern, with some meetings wholly on line and others wholly in person, depending on the annual cycle of business and the need to induct new members. The University Secretary's Office will work with Chairs and Secretaries to determine the calendar of meetings and which will be online or in person.
- It will be for each manager/chair and team to determine how and when other internal meetings should be undertaken and for these arrangements to be shared and widely known within the team and participants.
- The importance of team collaboration and bonding should be considered in determining the approach, i.e. online or in person.

- 14.3 Committee Secretaries should liaise with their Chair, in the first instance, to agree the approach that they will take, recognising that circumstances and specific requirements may change during the year. While the University is maintaining social distance requirements, committee secretaries should ensure that any rooms booked for face to face meetings can accommodate all attendees within their reduced capacity.

- 14.4 In order to ensure that the Almanac of University Committees and associated Almanac Google Calendar are up to date, committee secretaries should advise the University Secretary's Office (via [governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk)) of any meetings that will be held virtually. This will also enable any pre-booked rooms to be released if they are no longer required.

14.5 In planning meetings during a period of ongoing relative uncertainty, committee secretaries should have regard to the latest available guidance regarding campus based activity. The latest [Health and Safety Guidance regarding face to face meetings](#) is available via Google Drive. In the case of any queries please contact Health & Safety for further advice.

## **15. University Secretary's attendance at sub-committee meetings**

15.1 In its response to a previous effectiveness review, Council agreed that more regular attendance by the University Secretary at meetings of sub-committees would be beneficial, and with this in mind, the sub-committee details on the Governance web pages include the University Secretary as 'in attendance' (though in most cases this will be occasional rather than routine). The University Secretary's Executive Assistant, will be in touch in advance of meetings he would like to attend to make the necessary arrangements.

15.2 To support the University Secretary in maintaining effective oversight of the sub-committees on behalf of Council, you are asked to include him on the circulation list for sub-committee agenda and papers as well as any other information routinely provided to committee sub-members.

## **16. Content and maintenance of minute books**

16.1 The responsibility for maintaining Minute Books for the following committees rests with individual committee secretaries:

Council Audit Committee

Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Council Estates Committee

Council Finance Committee

Council Nominations Committee

Council Senior Remuneration Committee

Honorary Degrees Committee

Military Education Committee

Research Ethics Committee

Senate Academic Assurance Committee

Senate Budget Committee

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

Senate Research and Innovation Committee

Senate Nominations Committee

16.2 The binding of Minute Books for permanent archive purposes is co-ordinated by the University Secretary's Office (contact: Kathryn Clements, [governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk); ext 21716).

16.3 Minute Books should comprise, in chronological order, the signed Minutes of meetings of the Committee, to which should be appended all papers received by the Committee (including tabled papers and papers from second and subsequent circulations). Despite the requirement to operate on a largely remote/virtual basis from March 2020, Minute Books must still be compiled for all meetings of all committees, including signed copies of each set of minutes. As part of a broader project, consideration is being given to digital archiving of committee records to replace Minute Books and further details will be provided when this has progressed sufficiently.

#### 16.3.1 Minutes

- (a) Minutes should be copied double-sided on grey paper. They should not be stapled or clipped.

#### 16.3.2 Appendices to Minutes

- (a) Each paper received by the committee (including any tabled papers or papers issued in second or subsequent circulations) should be appended to the Minutes. Appendices should be double-sided, and should not be stapled or clipped.
- (b) Each Appendix should be clearly marked, at the top right of each right hand (recto) page, with its alphabetic reference.

#### 16.3.3 Minute Books

- (a) Minutes and their Appendices should be filed, in chronological order, in a temporary binder.
- (b) The Minute Book may be taken to each meeting of the Committee by the Secretary. If the Minute Book is very large, and the venue for the meeting is not close, the grey copy of the Minutes can be used on its own.

- (c) When the temporary binder is full (5-6cm thick), the contents should be checked for completeness, order and referencing and forwarded to Kathryn Clements in the University Secretary's Office for permanent binding.

#### 16.4 Archive Minute Books

- 16.4.1 The University Secretary's Office will arrange for Minute Books to be bound and deposited in the Library. Please note that USO's role is essentially a co-ordinating one, and that **responsibility for the content, order and referencing of Minute Books rests with individual committee secretaries.**

#### 16.5 Checklist

Many aspects of the compilation and maintenance of temporary Minute books can, and should, form part of the normal preparation for and follow-up to Committee meetings (e.g. when writing minutes or preparing committee papers), and should not be seen as tasks to be completed at a later stage.

- 16.6 Further guidance and information can be obtained from Kathryn Clements ([governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk); ext 21716).

## 17. Annual review of committee membership

- 17.1 Details of the terms of reference and membership of University committees can be found on the web at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/govern/committees>.
- 17.2 An annual review of committee membership is coordinated each year by the University Secretary's Office. Committee secretaries will receive full details of the 2021-22 review in the Autumn, including additional measures to increase the diversity of the University's committee memberships, but may at this stage wish to note the main elements of the provisional annual schedule, as follows:

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
January	University Secretary's Office (USO) liaises with committee secretaries to:  check membership details, including information on anticipated vacancies, and provide person specifications for those vacancies.  submit details of other changes to the membership of their committees (i.e. those not relating to Senate/Council representation).	End of February
Mid-March	USO circulates Call for Expressions of Interest in serving on University committees to all members of staff.	End of April
End of April	USO supplies details of expressions of interest received and requests committee secretaries to liaise with their Chairs to bring forward recommendations for the appointment to vacancies of new representatives of the Senate/Council or the re-appointment of existing representatives.	Mid-May

May/June	Senate Nominations Committee meets to agree recommendations concerning Senate representation on committees and sub-committees, for approval by the Senate in June.	
June	Council Nominations Committee meets to agree recommendations concerning Council representation on committees and sub-committees, for approval by the Council in July.	
June/July	USO issues letters of appointment and re-appointment in respect of Council and Senate representatives on committees.	
July/August	Updated committee membership details published on web.	
August	Committee secretaries provide details of meeting dates etc to committee members.	

17.3 Committee Secretaries are asked to notify any changes to committee membership arising outside the annual review to Kathryn Clements in the University Secretary's Office ([governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk)).

## 18. Almanac of meetings

18.1 The preparation and publication of the Almanac of meetings of central University committees (not Faculty committees) is co-ordinated annually by the University Secretary's Office. This process includes the initial booking of rooms (where specified), but not catering and AV arrangements, which are the responsibility of individual committee secretaries.

18.2 For committees where the University Secretary's Office make the initial bookings: Committee secretaries will be asked to confirm the dates/times of meetings in 2021-22 by early May 2021, as well as to provide an indication of the preferred venue and number of members normally attending. Details of

the rooms booked will be notified to Committee Secretaries in July/August and then published on the Almanac Google Calendar (<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/committees/almanac>).

For all other committees:

Committee secretaries will be asked to confirm the dates/times of meetings in 2021-22 by early May 2021, and then make the relevant room bookings and confirm venues with the University Secretary's Office by June 2021.

## **19. Parking for lay members**

### **19.1 Lay member parking provision**

The University Secretary's Office are currently liaising with Parking Services regarding the provision of lay member parking for 2021-22.

With parking on campus more limited than usual this year, lay members of central University committees are being asked to use Durham Road Car Park as a rule when attending committee meetings. Parking Services are currently working on a system for use of Durham Road Car Park which would enable these lay members to park for free on days of committee meetings using a follow-on ticket system (see 19.3). Further information to follow in due course.

### **19.2 Responsibility for making parking reservations**

#### **(a) Parking for Chair of Council, Treasurer and Pro-Chancellor's**

The University Secretary's Office will continue to reserve spaces on the Crescent for the Chair of Council, the Treasurer, the Pro-Chancellor's and several other specified senior lay members attending central University committee meetings (according to meeting details confirmed in the Almanac). However, please note that prior to each committee meeting, it is the responsibility of each committee secretary to keep the Firth Court porters informed of any changes throughout the year (e.g. changes to meeting dates or when a space is no longer needed and can be released).

#### **(b) Parking for other lay members**

Unless otherwise indicated, all other lay members of central University Committees should park in Durham Road Car Park. The University Secretary's Office (USO) will liaise with Parking Services at the beginning of the academic year with details of expected parking needs (according to meeting details confirmed in the Almanac and lay members noted on central University committee membership documents). The USO will

subsequently liaise with relevant committee secretaries to provide further information and guidance.

**19.3 Lay member follow-on ticket system (Durham Road Car Park)**

The proposed follow-on ticket system for lay members to park for free at Durham Road Car Park will require Parking Services to be provided with the car registrations of the relevant lay members. The University Secretary's Office (USO) will contact lay members of central University committees at the beginning of the academic year to request this information. Please note that it will subsequently be the responsibility of individual committee secretaries to make sure that the USO (via [governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:governance-admin@sheffield.ac.uk)) are kept updated with any changes.

David Swinn  
Head of Governance  
University Secretary's Office

September 2021

**Executive Summary template**



Resource implications	<b>If relevant, provide brief details.</b>
Stakeholder Impact and Engagement	<b>Briefly state which stakeholders are affected, how their interests have been taken into account and any further engagement or communications planned.</b>
Information Classification and Fol & Data Protection implications	<b>State the information classification applicable to the report/paper in accordance with the University's Information Classification and Handling Scheme and associated guidance.</b> <b>If relevant, provide brief details of sensitive or confidential matters, and any relevant exemptions under the FOIA, including any personal information, data or other identifiers covered by the Data Protection Act. If appropriate, refer to the relevant section of the paper. For guidance see: <a href="https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.697556!/file/FOI_datataprotectionguidance.pdf">https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.697556!/file/FOI_datataprotectionguidance.pdf</a></b>
Equality and diversity implications	<b>Significant reviews, decisions or changes of University policy should be accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).</b> <b>If relevant, provide brief details, including the outcome of any EIA.</b> <b>If appropriate, refer to the relevant section of the paper.</b>
Charity law implications	<b>If relevant, refer to any Charity Law implications for the Council to consider when making its decision. The University's objects are 'to advance education through teaching and research', and therefore what is proposed must either further this objective, be a means of generating income to further the objective or be a mix of the two.</b>
Consultation	<b>If relevant (and definitely) for proposals requiring approval/decision, state briefly what consultation has been undertaken. This might include other committees, groups or stakeholders.</b>
Future actions	<b>If relevant, briefly summarise any next steps, eg in terms of implementation, future review, further Council approvals, further consultation or engagement with stakeholders, including students.</b>
Effective date of introduction	<b>If relevant, provide the date when the proposal, if approved will take effect, eg with immediate effect or a date in the future.</b>
Recommendation	<b>If the paper includes a recommendation for which Council approval is sought, briefly summarise the recommendation here and refer to the relevant section of the paper.</b> <b>If the paper is for information, state this, and that there are no recommendations for which Council approval is sought.</b>

### **Public Availability of Council Papers**

Council is asked to confirm at the end of each business meeting those papers which are to be published via the University website in addition to the Minutes of the meeting, categorised as:

- Publication on the Council webpages under the existing policy;
- Publication on the Council webpages (ad-hoc items, policies, reports);
- Publication separately on the website (e.g. Estates Masterplan);
- Non-publication (i.e. confidential).

The following routine classifications are used as the starting point for publication or non-publication:

#### **Non-Publication (Confidential – Internal, Restricted or Highly Restricted)**

Report of the Audit Committee

Report of the Finance Committee\*

#### **Publication (non-confidential, unless specifically indicated, - Public)**

Report of the Council Nominations Committee

Report of the Health and Safety Committee\*

Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

Report of the Senate

Minutes of the Senior Remuneration Committee

Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Annual Report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Annual Report of the Military Education Committee

\*Edited versions of these reports are circulated to the following meeting of Senate.

**Operating Procedure for Committee Secretaries regarding retaining notes of formal meetings to create the Minute of the meetings**



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

University  
Secretary's  
Office

## University Secretary's Office

### Internal operating procedure for Committee Secretaries regarding retaining notes of formal meetings to create the Minute of the meeting

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document provides additional detail for the USO and other Committee Secretaries regarding the retention and disposal of material relating to the creation of the official record of formal University meetings. This operating procedure expands on the provisions of the University's Document Retention and Disposal Schedule (in particular Section 8, Governance and Corporate Affairs). The University's Document Retention and Disposal Schedule provides for the confirmed Minutes of formal committees to be retained permanently in the University Archive. The Schedule does not provide for the retention of notes (or recordings) of meetings preparatory to creating the Minute for any period whatsoever as they do not form part of the formal record.
- 1.2 The confirmed Minutes are the official record of business at meetings of UEB, Council, Senate and their committees and sub-groups. The purpose of minutes is to provide an accurate, impartial and balanced internal record of the business transacted at a meeting. Minutes are normally written in 'reported speech' style in a past tense; they should not be a verbatim record of the meeting.
- 1.3 Minutes serve a historical purpose, but also an administrative purpose - documenting the group's adherence to the proper internal regulations and procedures and to external requirements, e.g. legal or regulatory, and setting out actions to be taken. Minutes of a meeting are discoverable. Any supplementary material held by an organisation are also discoverable and may be the subject of a Freedom of Information request, subject to any applicable exemptions.
- 1.4 The Committee Secretary is responsible to the Committee Chair for the preparation and retention of minutes; the Chair and the other members of the Committee are responsible for confirming their accuracy.
- 1.5 The steps below set out the status of minutes at various stages in the approvals process and related information about retaining or disposing related material.

#### 2. Minute Takers Own Notes

- 2.1 Minute takers may make handwritten or typed notes during meetings to assist them, as an aide memoire, in producing the draft unconfirmed minutes for comment and approval by the Chair.
- 2.2 Great care should be taken with the secretary's notes of the meeting, both in terms of content and retention. In line with best practice and advice and guidance from, amongst others, the Chartered Governance Institute, secretary's notes should not be retained once the minutes for the meeting to which they relate have been approved. The approved minutes form the only formal record of the meeting and should express the singular version of truth for regulatory, legal, audit and other requirements. Care should be taken in deleting or destroying notes that they are appropriately disposed of

depending on the information classification given to the item.

If you have been notified of a Freedom of Information request relevant to the material (see section 1.2, above) then it should not be disposed of until the Data Protection Officer has seen the material and assessed whether or not it should be released and dealt with the request. In the event that you are notified of a request for any notes or draft minutes of a meeting under the Freedom of Information Act at any point during the process of preparation and approval of meeting minutes, you must not delete or destroy any material otherwise referred to under this protocol without seeking the advice of the University's Data Protection Officer.

### **3. Draft Unconfirmed Minutes**

- 3.1 The draft minutes produced by the minute taker are labelled "draft unconfirmed" when they are sent to the Chair for approval. Once the Chair indicates their approval, the minutes become "Unconfirmed" and any personal notes of the meeting or other material/recordings made may be deleted or destroyed securely – e.g. permanently deleting electronic files, shredding or placing hard copies in confidential waste, and deleting emails with attachments in accordance with the University's Email Retention Policy, subject to their not being a relevant FOI request at the time.

### **4. Unconfirmed Minutes**

- 4.1 The unconfirmed minutes are the minutes as approved by the Chair which are presented to the Committee's next available business meeting. Once these are approved, either with or without enhancement or amendment, the minutes become "Confirmed" and all copies of the Unconfirmed minutes may be deleted or destroyed securely, subject to their not being a relevant FOI request at the time.

### **5. Confirmed Minutes**

- 5.1 The Confirmed Minutes are those which have been approved by the Chair and the Committee itself and form the formal institutional record of the meeting in question. A copy signed by the Chair and printed on grey paper is included in the Committee's Minute Book, to be placed in the University Archive for permanent retention. Electronic versions of the Confirmed Minutes may be retained at the discretion of the Committee Secretary and Chair for working purposes/reference. The final approved minutes should be the only record of the meeting that is distributed (as appropriate) and retained.
- 5.2 Once the minutes are approved, any remaining notes or recordings of the meeting (and audio or video recordings should be deleted or destroyed, subject to there not being an FOI request for the relevant material at the time. The final approved minutes should be the only record of the meeting that you distribute and retain.

**Template Action Log**



## Guidance on accessible online meetings and papers

This guidance includes some tips but is not a comprehensive list. Some elements may already be standard practice. Accessibility is something we need to address and implement more widely particularly for staff as part of the Disability Inclusion strategy and action plan.

### Ahead of the meeting

1. If meeting is more than an hour long, incorporate a 5-10 minute comfort break and include this in the agenda.
2. Ahead of the meeting (e.g. when sending out the agenda) ask attendees if there are any accessibility requirements that we may be able to accommodate for the meeting - and manage expectations.

### During the meeting

3. Make it optional for people to turn on the camera.
4. Encourage and explain how to use the much improved captioning function on Google Meet (Note: Blackboard does not have this): bottom right hand corner of google meet screen, click on 3 vertical dots to bring up the menu; click on 'cc Captions' to turn on.
5. Consider turning off / discouraging use of the chat function (if necessary) – this can be distracting and inaccessible to those with visual impairments.
6. Give everyone a chance to speak and invite participation.

### Accessible Documents

Given the volume of papers submitted for many committees, the following should help to improve accessibility:

1. Create a document structure to make it significantly easier to navigate with a screen reader / if someone can't use a mouse. Important to do this when producing documents in either Microsoft Word or Google Docs if you are intending to export these as PDF files. More information at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/apse/digital/digital-accessibility/accessible-content>

2. Minimum font size of 12 in document text
3. Use sans serif fonts (eg Ariel, Calibri, TUOS Blake) which are clearer to read and have better readability for people with dyslexia
4. Avoid italics, CAPITALS or underlining. Bold text is a preferred method of emphasising content.
5. Avoid using colour to indicate important information
6. Ensure the contrast between text and background is well-defined. Black on white is the strongest but the Office Accessibility Checker will flag up any colour contrast issues in your document.
7. Text should be left-aligned to assist readers with a restricted visual field to locate the beginning of the line
8. Lists should be created as numbered or bulleted lists to aid screen reader users. Numbers are easier to reference.
9. Links to webpages and other documents should always be descriptive - so avoid click here, but rather hyperlink the key wording and add instruction in brackets e.g. visit our accessibility pages to find out more (click link to open)