

Department of Pathology house-style minutes guide

1. Template

Agenda and minutes template to be used for all minutes

2. Format

- Departmental font is Arial pt 11 with exactly pt 14 line spacing.
- The University header appears on both agenda and minutes with the crest on the left-hand side
- The list of who's present runs in the order of academic title followed by alphabetical order
- The agenda includes the Secretary's name, title of committee and date of circulation in bottom left-hand corner of the footer

3. Agenda and minutes index numbers

Starting from 2009-10 all committees (with the exception of the teaching committees) will start with 1. The first meeting of your committee will be No. 1 and this should be recorded on the top right hand corner of the agenda as follows:

Executive Committee
Agenda No.1

The minutes recorded from this meeting will have No. 1 in the top left hand corner (see template)

4. Paper numbering

All papers circulated with the agenda (even if tabled) should have a number and referenced on the agenda eg.

1. Minutes of the meeting of 1 June 2009 (Paper A)
2. Revised committee structure (Tabled Paper B)

The relevant letter should then be put in the top right hand header (see example) with the committee name and date of meeting as follows:

TTC Part I
26 October 2009
PAPER A

5. Headers and footers

Headers and Footers should be in Arial Pt 10.

6. Tense

All minutes written in the past tense (they are a record of a meeting that has happened in the past) eg. *was / were* instead of *is / are*; *had* instead of *has*; *should* instead of *shall*.

7. Grammar

- Ensure minutes are grammatically correct and typos have been removed. Do not rely solely on the spell check to pick up errors (it won't pick up missing words,

scientific terms, words pronounced the same but spelt differently). It is the responsibility of the minute secretary to ensure the highest level of accuracy. Spell checks should be by default on English (UK).

- Full sentences must be used and abbreviations avoided. Where necessary the full title should be used in the first reference with the abbreviation in brackets afterwards eg. Human Tissue Authority (HTA). Thereafter the abbreviated form can be used.
- References to the Department, the University, the School of Biological Sciences, the Committee (eg. organisations or bodies) etc should be written as singular rather than plural (ie. they are a collective of individuals): *The Department of Pathology is one of the largest departments* (not 'are').
- The general rule regarding the use of initials is reference to a specific facility or title use caps but if it is a general reference then no caps required eg

Department of Pathology (uc) but departments(lc)

University of Cambridge (uc) but universities (lc)

University Lecturers (uc) but lecturers (lc)

References to the 'Department' should always be uc, even if not followed by 'of Pathology'

8. Unreserved or reserved minutes

The business of committees will usually be 'Unreserved'. If the Committee is likely to be discussing sensitive items this should be labelled as 'Reserved' on both the agenda and minutes. The agenda template shows how this should be set out. 'Reserved' items will be the discussion of individual students or individual staff which would remain confidential to committee members. The relevant text would be removed from the minutes which goes on the departmental website or if sent for wider circulation. If in doubt speak with the Committee Secretary.

9. Numbering

- Agendas should be numbered for reference purposes in the following order:

1. Agenda item (bold)

1.1 Sub agenda item

1.2 Sub agenda item

Sub agenda items would only be used where there is more than one category for discussion within the agenda item

eg.

1. Committee membership for the Executive Committee

This is an item in its own right and there would need to be no sub categories

or

1. Committee membership

1.1 Recruitment of members to the Executive Committee

1.2 Recruitment of members to other committees

1.3 Meetings calendar

- Minutes numbering should correspond with the numbering on the agenda. Even if items are not discussed at the meeting in the order on the agenda, they should still be written up in this order.
- Paragraphs should be numbered only if there is more than one paragraph under the item heading as follows (i), (ii), (iii)
- Matters arising should be listed on the agenda – as a general rule Matters arising includes any action from the previous meeting or anything that requires an update.

10. How to record discussion

- Minutes are not a verbatim record of everything discussed at the meeting – they summarise the discussion of the meeting
- They should provide some contextual information so that the reader knows the background to the discussion, but this should not be lengthy (1 or 2 sentences)
- Minutes should assume that the reader was not at the meeting and should be written so as to make sense (all minutes will be published on the departmental website)
- As a general rule individuals sitting on a committee should not be identified and specific points should not be attributed to individuals. Instead of writing *Jo Bloggs said...* use the following terms: *It was noted...* *It was advised...* *The Committee heard...* *The Committee received an update...* The exception would be when an individual with a specific area of expertise offered information to the committee eg. *The Chair of the BSU Management Committee gave an update on recent developments in the Department's facility*
- Wherever possible names are not used, only titles and formal minutes should not use initials eg. AHW said...
- Anything that is 'Agreed' needs to be written as clearly in the minutes under the discussion eg. *The policy was agreed*
- Action points are listed at the end of discussion (irrespective of where they arise in the discussion). If there is more than one action point they should be numbered as follows: (i), (ii), (iii) etc.

11. Practicalities

- Agendas and papers to be circulated **one week** before the date of the meeting. The Committee Secretary will send out an email to all committee members **two weeks** in advance of the meeting date to request agenda items and / or papers. As a general rule committee papers can be circulated by email but some prefer a hard copy to be left in their pigeon hole so this should be checked.
- The Committee Secretary has overall responsibility for the quality of the papers circulated so they should be thoroughly checked particularly if they have been collated by another person. The Committee Secretary will specify the order of agenda items depending on importance and agree the final papers with the Chair prior to circulation. Committee papers must not be circulated without approval from the Secretary.

- The minute secretary should write up minutes as soon as possible after the meeting – the same day if possible when the discussion is fresh in mind
- Get all of the information on paper and then start to reduce it by removing unnecessary notes and by grouping points that although made separately should be positioned together in the minutes
- Remove duplication. Once a point has been made it doesn't need to be made again – even if it was in the meeting (irrespective of who made the points – see notes about not identifying individuals in the minutes)
- Once a final version has been drafted, save and leave the minutes for the rest of the day. The following day, return to them and read them through. Any glaring mistakes should be more obvious when looked at afresh. See note about accuracy above.
- The Committee Secretary should have a draft copy of the minutes within one week of the meeting. Within 2 weeks the draft minutes should be finalised after being reviewed by the Chair.
- It is generally expected that minutes will be no longer than 4 pages – if they are more than this then it is probably that they contain too much detail (on the basis of a 2 ½ - 3 hour meeting)
- Look at the templates for how minutes should be laid out
- Minutes are as important as other priorities within your office as they record agreed actions to be taken forward. They should not be considered as something that can be left and returned to when you have more time.