



Recordkeeping for University Committees and Working Groups

A RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICE GUIDELINE

Introduction

Committees, regardless of their size or formality are both common and essential to the decision-making of the university. The records constitute a valuable source documenting the history of the University. These guidelines are intended to assist committee Chairs and administrative staff supporting the Chair in the creation, management and [disposition](#) of the documents produced by university committees and working groups.

Recordkeeping Check List

- ✓ Chair of the committee is responsible for recordkeeping and is responsible for delegating this responsibility as required
- ✓ Committee records follow the position of the committee Chair - no abandoned committee records
- ✓ Committee chair should control access to records as governed by the sensitivity of the records content
- ✓ Always include an agenda
- ✓ Prepare minutes as soon as possible after the meeting
- ✓ Review access rights to Confluence, WorkSpace, or other content systems when membership changes
- ✓ Committee members hold copies that do not need to be retained and should be destroyed when their involvement in the committee ends, this includes email
- ✓ The minutes should be an accurate representation of the decision-making of the committee

Responsibility for Committee Records

The chair of the committee has responsibility for the creation and management of the records produced by the committee. In practice, much of this responsibility is delegated to administrative support personnel. Every committee should have a designated person responsible for committee records creation and management. The designated person is typically responsible for:

- Distribution of agendas, minutes, and meeting packages containing supporting documents
- Recording the minutes of meetings
- Managing the master set of minutes
- Arranging for transfer and/or disposition of committee records in accordance with the university's policies and procedures



Change in Chair Position

If the Chair of a committee changes, all official records of the committee should also be transferred to the new Chair. If the extent of the inherited records is burdensome and depending on the records content, **please contact the University Archives for potential transfer of a portion of the record series**. Transfer of records should include any committee records that may be stored off-site.

Copies held by Committee Members

Committee members may hold their own committee records-set for reference. Ideally, the Chair should provide a link to a central location where the records could be viewed read-only thus eliminating the need for committee members to accumulate their own copies. Nevertheless, records held by committee members are copies and retained for convenience only. These duplicates should be destroyed when no longer required or when the member's committee involvement has ended. The Committee member should also do a search in their email for any email associated with the committee such as agendas, meeting minutes and/or packages sent to them and destroy those when their membership has ended or when they are no longer required for reference.

Security

Depending on the nature of the committee, the Chair should know how, or if, access to committee records is controlled. On a shared drive or content system, this is typically facilitated through the use of a [security group](#). The Chair and/or designate should also review the security profile on the folder when membership changes.

Recommended Practices

Agendas

An agenda is the outline of the activities planned for the meeting. It is often available in advance of the meeting as part of a package that contains supporting documentation to be discussed at the meeting. An agenda is an important addition to an effective meeting. The agenda should include:

- The name of the committee or group holding the meeting
- The members invited to the meeting
- The date time and location of the meeting
- A list of the items that will be addressed at the meeting



Minutes

The style of minutes should match the needs of the committee. The style of the minutes should be decided at the first meeting. There are three styles of minutes:

1. **Verbatim**
Used for any type of meeting where a verbatim word-for-word account is required. The context is often legal and not typically required for university business.
2. **Decision/Action Only**
Used for a formal meeting that require formal approval without any recorded discussion.
3. **Anecdotal**
Anecdotal minute taking record both the decision/action as well as a summary of the discussion is recorded if deemed important. Anecdotal minute taking is the most common at the university.

Meeting minutes document summary discussion and decision. They are the official record of a committee but are not used solely by the committee members. They may also be used by future members, non-members and, if appropriate in the future, by members of the researching public. They are a key record of the university's documentary history and should be created with this in mind. Be sure the minutes are an accurate representation of the decision-making of the committee. Regardless of adopted style, minutes should be created on a template that includes letterhead. The minutes should also include:

- Name of the committee
- Date
- Location
- Attendance list
- Regrets
- Guests
- Actions and decisions of the committee

Preparing the minutes

The minutes should be prepared as soon as is possible after the meeting. At the very least, the notes taken should be reviewed immediately following the meeting to ensure that they are sufficiently detailed for the preparation of the minutes if they are to be prepared at a later date.

Once the minutes are approved (typically at the next meeting) they should be **saved as a PDF** and named according to a consistent [naming convention](#). All approved documentation should be filed together. In addition, once approved, all [transitory](#) materials relating to the preparation of the minutes should be destroyed (notes used to prepare the minutes for example). Regardless of the formality of the minutes there should not be any personal or subjective information recorded.

Disposition of committee records

Retain 5 years and contact the University Archives.

Some records documenting the activities of committees at the University are archival and, depending on the committee, should be stored with the University Archives when they are not required for the functioning of the committee (typically after 5 years in the office). Please see the Records Management Office's [Guidelines on Archival Records](#) for more information. Contact the Records Management Office to produce a retention and disposition schedule tailored for your committee.



Glossary

<i>Term</i>	<i>Definition</i>
disposition	The destruction or transfer to archives of records completed on a schedule
naming convention	A generally agreed upon way to name documents or files; please see the Record Management Office's E-Records Naming Convention Guidelines for more information.
security group	A specific group of people given access to records
transitory	Temporary records that are kept for convenience, such as an email agreeing to a meeting which is only relevant until after the meeting is completed or notes made during a meeting that are transcribed into formal meeting minutes afterwards

References

Harvard University Archives. (n.d.). *Recordkeeping Guidelines for University Committees*. Harvard University Records Management Services. Retrieved May 29, 2018, from https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/ManagingCommitteeRecords_2017.pdf [no longer available]

University of Waterloo. (2019, January 11). *Recordkeeping Guidelines for University Committees*. University of Waterloo Records Management. Retrieved March 31, 2021, from <https://uwaterloo.ca/records-management/help-advice/recordkeeping-guidelines-university-committees>



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