



STUDENT
EXPERIENCE
NETWORK



MEETING GUIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Meetings are an important part of running your club. They offer your members an opportunity to be heard and are designed to encourage constructive debate, leading to informed decisions.

Meetings are intended to turn good ideas into better ideas.

People on committees often learn how to run meetings based on how people did things previously, not the best way to do things

The purpose of this meeting guide is to help your committee understand:

- The different types of meetings your club may have
- Common terminology at meetings
- The agenda
- The minutes
- Standing orders

Use this meeting guide with the following meeting resources:

- Meeting videos
- Agenda and minute keeping templates
- Motions diagram
- A committee's guide to informed decision making
- The role of the secretary: The committee meeting cycle and the general meeting cycle



2. TYPES OF MEETINGS

Regardless of the type of meeting, there are a number of meeting procedures that you should follow.

These include:

- Sticking to a set agenda
- Dealing with non-routine correspondence
- Motions, resolutions and voting
- Reports, including the treasurer's report
- General business

Committee Meeting

Committee meetings are held every month or so and involve committee members and any other club members who have been invited to attend.

These should be the most regular formal meetings that your club holds and the committee should use these meetings to set the club's plans for the year (or for the longer term), review how things are going and make decisions on behalf of the club's membership.

It is important to note that elected or appointed committee members are entitled to vote at committee meetings.

General or Special General Meetings

General or special general meetings should be held as required, to deal with significant issues for your club, such as amending your constitution, changing your club's name or dissolving the club.

Many clubs fall into the trap of holding regular (e.g. monthly) general meetings, instead of committee meetings.

This can result in club business not being dealt with effectively, due to a large number of members being involved in lengthy, unproductive discussions.

General meetings can be held infrequently, maybe only once a year, to address any major issues that arise. The committee was elected to lead the club, so it is appropriate for operational decisions to be made at committee meetings.

Annual General Meetings

Annual general meetings (AGMs) are held once each year, usually within a few months after the end of your financial year. The timing of your AGM will be set out in your constitution.

The AGM is a formal, and somewhat ceremonial meeting, where you are likely to address the following items:

- Reports from outgoing committee members
- Adopting the financial statement for the financial year just finished
- Electing the incoming committee

You can also use the AGM as a chance to formally thank volunteers, supporters, sponsors and members.

Subcommittee Meetings

Subcommittee meetings may be held as required, depending on each subcommittee's operations and responsibilities. Your committee can choose to delegate decision-making authority to subcommittees for specific areas of operation, such as events or fundraising. Any authority delegated to subcommittees should be recorded in committee meeting minutes, including the expiry date for any delegations.

However, the committee is always accountable for the club's actions and must therefore know what each subcommittee is doing.

Subcommittee meetings can typically be much less formal than committee or general meetings. However, it is still important to have an agenda, keep your discussions on topic and record minutes.

3. MEETING BASICS

Agenda

After a few meetings, most committees become comfortable with a standard form of agenda. You may wish to use or adapt the TAG agenda templates, which highlight the important components of a meeting.

Because the agenda outlines what the committee intends to decide at the meeting, it forms the basis of the minutes.

It is a good idea to release your agenda well in advance of the meeting, to give all attendees time to prepare.

The Chairperson

The role of chairperson usually falls to the president. The president runs the meeting, ensures that the agenda is followed and keeps discussion on topic. Check your constitution to confirm who should hold the role of chairperson.

Minutes

The value of taking good minutes during a meeting cannot be understated. The minutes of your meetings represent your club's only record of the business conducted during the meeting.

Your minutes are very likely to be called upon in the future. For example, when seeking funding, it is important to show that you have planned for upcoming events and projects, so evidence of discussion during your meetings may be very valuable.

The minutes should follow the order of the agenda, stating the main issues, points of view discussed, and decisions made. The full text of motions and resolutions should be accurately recorded in the minutes.

The minutes need to provide an accurate record of attendance and apologies received. They should include financial details and the treasurer's report, other reports received and details of any correspondence addressed during the meeting.

Following meetings, the secretary writes up and circulates the minutes. It is best if this is done as soon as possible after a meeting as this provides information and details of the meeting to those who were absent, as well as a reminder of the decisions made at the meeting.

You may wish to use or adapt the TAG minute keeping templates, which provide further guidance to keeping effective minutes, as well as sample wording of motions during the meeting.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of people required for a meeting to be able to proceed. This is to ensure that any decisions made at a meeting are well considered by enough people to represent the interests of the club's members.

The quorum for your club's committee meetings and general meetings should be addressed in your constitution. It is important to ensure that the quorum for each meeting is a careful balance between enough people for accountability but not so many to become unmanageable.

Location

The location for your meeting can have an effect on the tone and productivity of your meeting. Holding meetings in a café or bar can cause distractions that not only extend the duration but detracts from the importance of your meeting.

Consider these elements when choosing a location for your meeting:

- Appropriate size for the amount of attendees
- Enough seating available
- Convenient location
- Quiet and private

Coordinate with your student services department on the available spaces you can access for a meeting.

Motions

Any significant items of business should be placed on the agenda as motions. Motions should be worded as decisions, not topics.

Anyone who wants the meeting to decide something needs to put that desired decision on the agenda as a motion. The best way to think about how to write a motion is to simply ask yourself, "What do I want the meeting to 'decide?'"

When the agenda includes a clear decision, it is much easier for everyone to stay on-topic during the meeting.

And if everyone has read the agenda and prepared before the meeting, a quick decision can be made, and the club can confidently begin planning to implement that decision.

Motions should:

- Commence with the word 'that'
- Be specific
- Not be in the first person
- Not contain more than one sentence

When the appropriate time in the meeting arrives, the person who asked to put the motion on the agenda moves the motion. Moving the motion is the official way to introduce the motion to the meeting. The mover of the motion then speaks to the motion by explaining their reasons for wanting that decision made.

After the motion is moved, it is seconded by someone else. The purpose of seconding a motion is to confirm that there is enough support to warrant the meeting debating the motion. If there is no seconder for a motion, that is an indication that it is only one person's idea, so the motion lapses. This can prevent a waste of time in lengthy discussions during the meeting.

Once a motion has been moved and seconded, it is opened for further debate. Amendments to the motion may be debated until the meeting is satisfied with the wording of the motion and it can then be put to a vote.



4. QUICK TIPS FOR MEETINGS

Here are 5 quick tips to help your club run quick but productive meetings.



Meetings are for decisions, not discussions

- Meetings are where the formal decisions of your club are made, so that they can be put into action
- At your meetings, always start with, and focus on, the decision that needs to be made
- Each 'decision' should be listed on the agenda as a motion. When agreed, the motion becomes a resolution



Meetings can turn good ideas into great actions

- The debate on motions during a meeting should be constructive, designed to turn the good ideas into great actions



An agenda is not optional!

- Your agenda is like your map for the meeting. It should tell you where and when to start, where the meeting is going, and how to know when the meeting comes to an end
- The agenda should be brief, but specific. It will probably include standing agenda items, things that you discuss at every meeting, as well as more significant matters, which should be listed as 'motions'



The chairperson needs confidence

- The chairperson needs to keep the meeting on track, nip distracting side conversations in the bud, and progress through the agenda
- Be assertive where necessary. Use the power of the meeting and a well-planned agenda to help make decisions and prepare action plans as quickly as possible
 - Be prepared
 - Be on time
 - Start on time
 - Stick to the agenda
 - Finish on time



General business is general

- General business is no excuse for not being prepared for a meeting
- If you've got an idea that you would like the committee to 'decide' at the next meeting, it's up to you to put that idea on the agenda as a motion
- General business should only include:
 - Items that don't need a formal decision, but which should be noted in the minutes
 - Approval for minor purchases.
- If anything significant comes up during general business, list it as a motion on the agenda for the next meeting, so that everyone can take time to be prepared before making the decision

Great meetings lead to great decisions, which lead to great actions, which lead to great outcomes for great clubs.

5. SAMPLE STANDING ORDERS

Standing orders set out the rules that govern how business is conducted during meetings. They can also be called 'rules of order' or 'rules of debate'. They address the way that attendees are to behave at meetings, how motions are dealt with and the powers of the chairperson. These standing orders provide a sample that your club may choose to adopt or adjust as necessary.

Formal standing orders are not always required. If you use a good agenda and if everyone prepares well prior to meetings, your meetings may be productive enough without needing to add a layer of formality that standing orders set out. However, it is a good idea to have written standing orders that have been adopted, so that the chairperson can invoke them at any time, such as if a contentious matter is to be resolved or if it becomes necessary to use formal meeting rules to address any misbehaviour by meeting attendees.

1. All club meetings, including general meetings, committee meetings and subcommittee meetings, shall be conducted in an orderly manner.
2. All meetings shall begin with an Acknowledgement of Country.
3. The chairperson shall have the authority to invoke these standing orders as they deem necessary, to maintain order and ensure that the meeting is productive, subject to the operational requirements of the club and the seriousness or confidentiality of any matters to be resolved at a meeting.
4. Subject to a quorum being present, the chairperson shall open the meeting at the time set out on the notice of the meeting.
5. If quorum is lost at any time during a meeting (i.e. if an attendee or attendees leave the meeting and the number of attendees remaining is less than that required for quorum), the meeting shall be closed or adjourned as determined by the chairperson.
6. Meetings shall continue until all business on the agenda has been completed or until the time agreed for the closure or adjournment of the meeting.
7. Any unfinished business from an adjourned meeting shall be included on the agenda for the next meeting and shall be completed before any new business is considered at that meeting.
8. Any attendee desiring to speak at a meeting shall raise their hand and address the meeting when called upon by the chairperson.
9. To maintain order and ensure that the meeting runs on time, the chairperson shall have the authority to interrupt any attendee speaking or to rule that an attendee has exhausted their time to speak on any matter.
10. A motion must be seconded before anyone other than the mover of the motion can speak to it. If a motion is not seconded, it lapses for want of a seconder and shall not be recorded in the minutes.
11. The chairperson shall, as far as practical, call on speakers for and against a matter or motion alternatively, subject to the right of the seconder of a motion to speak immediately after the mover.
12. If everyone at the meeting agrees, the wording of a motion may be changed by the mover of the motion.
13. If a formal amendment to a motion is proposed, the amendment is to be moved, seconded, debated and voted on as a separate matter from the original motion, before debate on the actual motion can continue.
14. When the chairperson determines that sufficient time for debate on a matter or motion has elapsed, or if two consecutive speakers have both argued either for or against the matter or motion and no attendee wishes to argue the opposite view, the mover of the motion shall have the opportunity for a final reply before the chairperson shall call for a vote on the motion.

- 15.** The chairperson shall have the authority to allow any attendee to speak only once on any matter or motion, with the exception of the right of reply for the mover of a motion.
- 16.** Any attendee may raise a 'point of order' to officially draw attention to an alleged irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting. A point of order shall take precedence over all other business and shall be open to discussion. A point of order must be raised at the time the alleged irregularity occurred.
- 17.** If voting on any matter or motion is equal, the chairperson shall declare the question resolved so as to maintain the status quo.
- 18.** A meeting may at any time during the debate on a matter or motion relax the usual limits on debate, allowing more time for discussion and an open exchange of views without the urgency of a final vote.
- 19.** Any or all of these standing orders may be suspended by a simple majority vote of attendees (i.e. more than half).
- 20.** Once a matter or motion has been resolved, there is to be no further discussion or debate regarding that matter or motion, with the exception of a new motion to rescind any resolution previously adopted.
- 21.** Any decision made at a meeting that was properly called and held shall not be void because there was a departure from these standing orders which was not detected until after the decision had been made.
- 22.** Any matters not dealt with in these standing orders shall be governed by the customary procedure at meetings.

These standing orders have been adapted from *Guide for Meetings and Organisations*, by N.E. Renton, (Australia 2005). Should your club wish to adopt more formal standing orders, refer to Chapter 10 and Appendix 4 of *Guide for Meetings and Organisations: Volume 2*.

