

# **Conduct of Members of Academic Board and its Committees - Guidelines**

## **Section 1 - Guidelines for Conduct of Members of Academic Board and its Committees**

### **Role of Committee Members**

- (1) The primary role of committee members is to help committees make the best possible decisions in the interests of the University as a whole by bringing their different individual expertise and experience to bear on relevant issues.
- (2) Committee members must express their own individual views to the committee, and vote according to these views, regardless of whether they have been elected by a particular body, appointed to the committee, co-opted by the committee, or attained membership by virtue of holding a particular position in the University (i.e. in an ex officio capacity).
- (3) Committee members may bring to the committee's attention other relevant views they are aware of, such as views that have been expressed by members of their electorate or another group within the University, so that the committee is aware of the full range of relevant views to make the best decisions, but must avoid taking advantage of their position to argue the case of a specific group to the committee.
- (4) Committee members holding an ex officio role are obliged to present to the committee any recommendation from the group they represent but must still vote (and may wish to speak) as an individual for what they see as the best decision for the University as a whole, which may or may not accord with the formal view of the group they represent.

### **Commencing in the Role**

- (5) Committee members will be notified of the date of commencement of their role by Governance Services.
- (6) Immediately upon, or just prior to, commencing in their role, committee members are expected to attend an induction session that will be arranged by Governance Services.
- (7) Before commencing in the role, committee members should familiarise themselves with the Terms of Reference for the committee, the relationship of the committee with other academic governance committees of the University, and these Guidelines.
- (8) Committee members should contact Governance Services for assistance if anything is unclear, or if there is anything further they wish to know before commencing in their role.

### **Preparing for Meetings**

- (9) Committee members will receive a copy of the meeting agenda at least four days in advance of the meeting (as specified in the [Standing Orders - the Academic Board and its Committees](#)), which will advise in detail of the business that will be discussed at the meeting, and may include attachments.
- (10) Committee members must set aside enough time before the meeting to thoroughly familiarise themselves with

agenda details; the amount of time required will typically vary for different committees and may also vary between different meetings.

(11) Committee members must read and fully understand all agenda items so they are prepared to make informed contributions at the meeting and will not waste the time of other committee members by asking questions or offering opinions from a position of ignorance.

(12) Committee members should form an opinion on agenda items before the meeting, particularly where the meeting is expected to consider a draft resolution, so they are prepared to contribute to reaching a consensus decision or, if necessary, to vote.

(13) Committee members should endeavour to obtain any additional information they need or resolve questions they have before the meeting if possible, by contacting the author of the relevant agenda item, the Chair of the committee, or Governance Services.

## **Participating in Meetings**

(14) Committee members are expected to attend all committee meetings for their entire duration unless they have other essential commitments, in which case they should inform the meeting Secretary prior to the meeting so an apology or leave of absence can be noted.

(15) Committee members are expected to actively participate in meetings, i.e. contribute their experience, expertise and informed opinions to discussions, so that decisions can be made based on a full range of relevant views.

(16) Committee members should discuss with the Chair before the meeting if they feel they will have difficulty in expressing an opinion or voting on a matter, for example due to concerns about feeling vulnerable or intimidated in the meeting.

(17) Committee members must declare any conflict of interests or indicate if a perceived conflict of interest could exist, either at the start of the meeting when requested by the Chair, or during any relevant discussion if they suddenly become aware of a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest.

(18) Committee members should only speak if they have something new to contribute to the discussion, i.e. they should not feel obliged to speak if the point they wished to make has already been made by another member.

(19) Committee members should ensure they speak at the meeting if they disagree with the direction in which a discussion is going, or if an appearance of consensus is developing when they hold a dissenting view.

(20) If called on to vote, committee members should only abstain if they:

- a. have a conflict of interest;
- b. are not satisfied that they have been provided with necessary information to make an informed judgement, despite their best efforts to obtain this information; or
- c. have formed the opinion that it is not appropriate for the meeting to be making a resolution on an issue at that time.

## **Acknowledgement**

(21) These Guidelines are based on, and in parts reproduced directly from, the document "The effective committee member" produced by the University of Western Australia.

## Status and Details

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