

Induction information for student members of committees

Most university and academic partner committees have a student representative member. This paper provides a summary of induction information for student members of committees.

What is a student representative?

Student members are nominated for their expertise as current students, and perhaps for their knowledge and experience of student issues through other representative roles. Whilst participating on the committee they do so as individuals, although they may also have expertise and links to the students' association that might provide useful context for the committee. In most cases, the role of a student member will be to research and consult widely, and present evidence and perspectives that represent a wide view of students, and not those of an individual or particular group of students. In certain cases, such as subject networks or faculty committee, it will be the views of students in that subject area of the University that will be of greatest interest to the committee.

Details of the **[Insert name of committee]**

Name of committee	
Frequency of meetings	
Membership (overview, individual names may be found on minutes)	
Purpose / overview of committee (please attach a remit where available and add explanation of relevance to student experience, if helpful)	
Placement and role of this committee within the university / college administrative structure	
Video Conference Booking Details	Book VC links with Servicedesk: servicedesk@uhi.ac.uk Book local VC rooms with [insert name] , or your local Reception staff.
Chair of committee, and contact details *	
Clerk of committee (main contact if no officer), and contact details *	
Officer of committee (main point of contact) and contact details *	

* Not all of these positions are always appointed for every committee. If the person filling the role of Chair, or Clerk varies, details of the main contact for the committee are provided instead.

Membership of committees

Student representative members of committees are full members who are encouraged to take part in the discussions and decisions of the committee. Not everyone present at the meeting will be a member. Some people are invited to be 'in attendance' for their specialist knowledge, and may attend all or some meetings of the committee. Checking previous minutes will provide a list of those in attendance, and full members of the committee.

The Chair of the meeting leads the committee. There may be a vice-chair who leads in the absence of the Chair. The Clerk takes minutes of the meeting. The Officer organises the committee, makes practical arrangements, sends out minutes, and is who apologies and agenda items should be sent to. If there is no designated Officer, the Clerk will fulfil these roles.

Where it is not possible for you as nominated student member to attend the meeting, it may be possible for another representative to take your place, subject to permission being granted by the designated Officer or Chair of the

committee. You may also wish to submit a paper if you are unable to attend in person. Where a student association officer, sits on a committee ex officio, that is by virtue of holding that office, a substitute is not usually allowed.

Benefits of committee membership

Sitting on a University committee as a student member brings considerable benefits. In addition to the opportunity to get involved in the decision making process, you have the opportunity to make the student voice heard within decision making structures. Personally, you will find that you develop valuable skills and experience, as well as being useful experience for future careers.

Notification of meetings

Members of the committee are notified by email of forthcoming meeting dates, and will also be supplied with minutes, agenda, and committee papers by email. Student committee members should remember to check their University email account for details (please note you may also have other email addresses linked to your studies, please check with the officer that they have the correct address for you). When joining a committee for the first time it is worth sending an email to the Officer to check that you have been added to the email membership list, and to check when the next meeting is, in case papers have already been sent. If you are unable to attend, please let the Officer know so that you may be included in 'apologies'.

Remit

Every committee has a remit (provided in the above table) which details what the committee is authorised to discuss and action. It will also set out how the committee fits within the overall committee structure of the University.

Agenda; agenda items

Prior to the meeting of a committee an agenda together with minutes of the previous meeting, will be issued. The agenda sets out items for discussion at the meeting. In order for papers to be sent out on time, there are deadlines for the submission of agenda items. Please check with your committee officer for details of these in case you want to ask for an item to be put on the agenda. Unless otherwise stated it is usual for papers to be sent out one week in advance, with submissions received at least two weeks in advance.

Student members of committees are activity encouraged to submit papers, as their role is not merely to react to the business of the committee but help shape and steer it.

The agenda will state the date, time and location of the meeting. It will also include Video Conference (VC) booking details. If required, please book a room at your campus and email Servicedesk (servicedesk@uhi.ac.uk) with these details. It is also sometimes possible to connect with Jabber or Cisco Spark PC software, but please be aware that bandwidth is limited, and a VC Suite should be used where possible.

Some committees use a 'starred system' for agenda items. All items unstarred will be approved/noted in terms of the recommendation set out in the relevant papers without discussion. Members are invited at the outset of the meeting to request starring any unstarred item which the member wishes to be discussed. Agenda items may also be marked according to RACI methodology (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed). A committee is Responsible for approving its own minutes so the term used on the agenda is R, if the body was receiving minutes from another group for information only then the letter used would normally be I for Informed. If however, a paper was presented for discussion and inviting a response or comment then we would list C for consulted. Lastly, A stands for accountable and is used when the committee would be held to account for their decision. For example, the Finance Committee may be held accountable for a decision that they have made on a contract or Academic Council would be accountable to Court for decisions made on quality standards etc.

Meetings

Meetings will usually begin with a 'welcome and apologies'. At this point apologies from anyone unable to attend will be read out.

The next section will be 'minutes of meetings'. Minutes of the last meeting will be reviewed and the committee will be asked to approve them as accurate. Any errors or omissions may be raised at this point. Minutes of any sub committees, or extra meetings, may also be reviewed and approved at this point. Actions and matters arising are then read. This is where items agreed to be carried out are reviewed. Those responsible for actions are asked if they are complete, and have an opportunity to tell the meeting if there have been any changes in circumstances that have prevented actions from being completed.

The meeting will then move on to the main agenda and new items and reports will be given consideration by the committee. These are numbered and if there is a paper attached its number will be noted on the furthest right column of the agenda. Papers are provided with the agenda, in the order of their discussion. Items are usually discussed in the order they appear on the agenda. However, the Chair may amend the order, for example, to allow the attendance of an external speaker. If the committee feels it is unable to make a decision on an item, it may be requested that it is referred to another committee, a working group, or returned for further discussion.

Occasionally an item will be marked as 'verbal' which means the person presenting it will give a short verbal update and there is no accompanying paper.

The committee will be asked to 'action' each item in one of the following ways:

- Note – the committee is being asked to acknowledge the information provided. This means there is generally no need to discuss the item.
- Approve – this is a request to the committee to discuss and reach a decision about the item.
- Ratify – the committee is being asked to approve a decision made elsewhere.
- Endorse – a paper that is for approval by a more senior committee.
- Discuss – the committee is asked to discuss and form an opinion on a paper.

The Chair's role is to lead the committee. Comments you make should be addressed to the Chair, even when responding to another committee member.

Conclusion of the meeting

The second last item is 'AOCB' which means 'any other competent business'. This is an opportunity to raise an item which is urgent, within the remit of the committee, and has arose too recently for inclusion in the agenda. It is good practice to ask the Chair as soon as possible prior to the meeting if the item you wish to discuss would be appropriate to be included under AOCB.

Help and assistance

If you have any questions or need assistance with your committee membership, please contact the committee Officer or Clerk. Details are provided on page 1. If you have any general questions about student membership of committees, please contact the student engagement staff at studentengagement@uhi.ac.uk.