Working Party Report

Working Smarter Through Committees

The Next Steps

Document History

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<td>3.</td>
<td>Annette Black</td>
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<td>Incorporation of working party feedback</td>
<td>Robyn Owens</td>
<td>20 July 2005</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Annette Black Robyn Owens</td>
<td>27 July 2005</td>
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<td>Margaret Seares &amp; Peter Curtis</td>
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<td>Annette Black</td>
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<td>Incorporation of working party and University Secretary's feedback</td>
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<td>Annette Black</td>
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Sign off:

Professor Robyn Owens
Chair,
Working Smarter Through Committees Working Party

Date:
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PURPOSE

To identify current issues relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of committees and to recommend improvements for working smarter through committees.

WORKING PARTY

The "Working Smarter Through Committees" working party members:

Dean, Graduate Research Studies [Chair],
Director, Research Services,
Lecturer, History,
Business Manager, Finance & Resources,
Project Co-ordinator, Finance & Resources,
Robyn Owens
Campbell Thomson
Andrea Gaynor
Victoria Wilmot
Annette Black

OVERVIEW

Introduction

The Leadership Retreat held in February 2005 highlighted the workload pressures University leaders were experiencing and in particular the levels of commitment required in committee work. In response to these growing demands the Deputy Vice Chancellor together with the Registrar commissioned a working party to further consider the review of committees undertaken in 2002 and to investigate ways of streamlining and improving the committee process without compromising the collegial aspects of the process. To that end a working party “Working Smarter Through Committees” was formed with the brief to address these issues.

Process

The working party considered the review of committees undertaken in 2002 and acknowledged whilst the fundamental principles of efficient and collegial committee work were captured in the report, there had not been uniform take up of these principles by the university community. To that end the working party undertook to review committee practice in the public sector since 2002 and to reconfirm with minor modifications the principles of the previous committee. Further the working party considered the workloads and commitments of committees; the conduct of committees and their members; and the clarity and purpose of committees and committee membership.

In consideration of these elements the working party has updated and reorganised the original principles into three distinct documents: a set of eight key principles, a set of rules for the operation of committees and a code of conduct for committee members, with a view to presenting the information in a simplified and easy to follow format.

The process of review followed by the working party included

- An initial meeting with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) and the Registrar to clarify the brief of the committee.
- Several meetings with the University Secretary and Deputy University Secretary to create the standard decision making and standard communication maps for central committees.
- Consideration of committees external to the University for comparison of processes and collection of successful strategies for improved operation of committees.
- A literature review including the reviews of the current Principles for Operation of Committees; Effective Meetings, a Guide to Good Practice; and the Survey of Staff regarding committees, working parties and staff meetings at faculty level or below 2003/2004.

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1 Review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Committees in the University of Western Australia, Working Party Report, September 2002.
A meeting with the Chair of the Academic Board and Academic Council to discuss key decision making pathways of those committees.

The collation of data from the following key committees relating to the decision pathways of those committees: Research; Teaching and Learning; Admissions and Legislative, and Planning and Budget.

The collection of information from Faculties regarding their various committees.

A meeting with the Dean of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (FNAS) together with the FNAS Faculty Manager to verify the working party's findings and recommendations, and ascertain any other issues that may need to be included.

A final meeting prior to completion with the DVC and Registrar to provide an interim report and ensure that all requisite issues were being addressed.

As a result of the investigation, the working party compiled a list of recommendations and some supporting materials to help improve the working of committees at the University.

**STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

This work was conducted with reference to the University's strategic plan, in particular addressing the University's goal:

>To organise and manage its affairs to achieve the most efficient and effective use of its resources in the pursuit of its mission and goals, in the belief that excellence in teaching and research must be supported by excellence in organisation and management.

**BETTER PRACTICE ALIGNMENT**

This work was conducted with reference to external practices including State and Commonwealth government public sector governance and better practice standards. The key aspects\(^2\) of better practice and quality public sector governance in relation to the operation of committees were identified as:

- **Accountability**
  Members of committees are responsible for the actions and decisions of the committee both as individuals and as a committee group and should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and internal and external conformance requirements.

- **Transparency and openness**
  Committee meetings are conducted in a manner that ensures confidence in the decision making process and actions of the committee, including open, thorough and meaningful discussion, consideration of stakeholders and planning, reviewing and evaluating performance.

- **Integrity**
  Committee business and decision making is conducted with honesty and objectivity ensuring high standards in management of the organisation's affairs, compliance with relevant legislation, values and code of conduct, and personal standards and professionalism.

- **Stewardship**
  Committees undertake business in a manner that maintains trust and exercises powers to enable the efficient and effective management of resources to ensure that the capacity to serve stakeholders is maintained or improved over time.

- **Leadership**
  Committees should set a framework for the organisation, demonstrating an organisation-wide commitment to leadership and ethics, and commitment to good governance standards.

- **Efficiency**
  Committees need to ensure the appropriate balance and skills of members, so that the right information gets to the right areas to support efficient and effective decision making and the best utilisation of resources to further the aims and objectives of the organisation.

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\(^2\) Based around the Australian National Audit Office "Public Sector Governance, Volume 1" July 2003, Principles of Public Sector Governance page 8.
Whilst committee structures provide a suitable framework, it is the members of the committees who determine whether good governance and better practice standards are actually achieved and that the committee is adding value.

**PRINCIPLES FOR THE OPERATION OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

The current principles for the operation of committees were reviewed in line with the University's value set and better practice standards. The working party confirmed these principles and has reconfigured these with minor modifications into a revised set of principles for the operation of committees was extracted (Attachment A).

The principles for the operation of committees provide the following key requirements:

**General Principles**
1. Collegiality
2. Working Smart
3. Good Conduct
4. Review

**Functional Principles**
1. Policy Decisions
2. Management Decisions
3. Communication
4. Membership

These principles are further supported by the Rules for the Operation of Committees (Attachment B), a standard template for committee meeting agendas (Attachment C) and the University Committee Members’ Code of Conduct (Attachment D).

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES**

A number of issues were identified as potentially having a negative impact on the working smarter principle. To address these issues the Working Party has made the following recommendations. The adoption of the recommendations will further enhance the operation of committees at The University of Western Australia, thereby building on the current strong committee system as well as providing an increased return on the large investment of time by staff and external members.

**Recommendations – Committee Roles**

To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of University committees it is essential that the University community is aware of the purpose and role of the committee, and appropriate business is directed to the committee in a proper and timely manner.

**Recommendation 1:**

**Constitution**

| **Issue:** | The purpose or role of a committee may be unclear, resulting in members spending a significant amount of time on issues outside the scope of the committee's business. Staff may be potentially unclear as to what items of business should be sent to a particular committee resulting in unnecessary delays in decision making. Further, the membership may not be effectively aligned to committee business. |
| **Recommendation:** | All committees should have a constitution which clearly states the committee's business including defining its role and purpose, the business it deals with, process of operation and the required skills and qualifications of members as appropriate. Committee constitutions should be made available to all University staff through the University intranet. Further, all committees should review existing constitutions for clarity of purpose and role. |
| **Responsibility:** | University Secretariat in conjunction with the Executive Officers |
| **Timeline:** | 31 December 2006 |
| **Impact:** | Increase effectiveness of committee business through improved clarity and awareness of committee purpose, in line with the Working Smart principle for the operation of committees. |
### Recommendation 2: Central Committee Decision Making Map

**Issue:** The University committee structure is a complex one. It appears many staff may be uncertain as to the relationship between committees and the hierarchy for committee decision making. This uncertainty may result in delays if information is not forwarded to the correct committee in time for the next meeting of that committee. The Working Party has endeavoured to demonstrate the complexity of the committee decision making process in a decision making map (Attachment E).

**Recommendation:** The relationship between central committees is clearly mapped to enhance understanding and knowledge of the committee structure and decision making process. The map should be readily available to all staff through the University intranet.

**Responsibility:** University Secretariat

**Timeline:** 31 December 2005

**Impact:** Increase the timeliness of committee decision making by clarifying the decision making process, in line with the *Working Smart* principle for the operation of committees.

### Recommendation 3: Central Committee Communication Map

**Issue:** Committees provide a suitable forum for focused discussion and debate about local, national and international issues which affect the University and its business. It is essential that committees have access to appropriate and timely information relevant to the committee’s business. (Attachment F)

**Recommendation:** The communication pathway between central committees is clearly mapped to enhance understanding and knowledge of committee communication requirements. The map should be readily available to all staff through the University intranet.

**Responsibility:** University Secretariat

**Timeline:** 31 December 2005

**Impact:** Increase the relevance and timeliness of committee communication by clarifying the communication pathways, in line with the *Working Smart* and *Communication* principles for the operation of committees.

### Recommendation 4: Individual Committee Decision Making Map

**Issue:** The complexity of the University committee structure arising from the number of committees and the various connections between them can make it difficult to interpret a single committee decision making map for the entire University. It is important staff and Executive Officers involved with a particular committee are fully aware of the committee's responsibility for decision making.

**Recommendation:** All committees construct a Decision Making Map indicating where the committee’s business comes from and where recommendations and/or decisions go.

**Responsibility:** Executive Officers

**Timeline:** 30 April 2006

**Impact:** The establishment of clear decision making pathways assists in understanding responsibilities, in line with the *Working Smart* principle for the operation of committees.
**Recommendation 5: Individual Committee Communication Map**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of communication, it is important to recognise the role University committees have in capturing and distributing information relevant to their business. Similarly it is important to ensure the committee's role is not diluted by overusing committees as a communication mechanism.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong></td>
<td>Each committee construct a Communication Map indicating where its information comes from, and which committees or groups need to be informed of its decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility:</strong></td>
<td>Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline:</strong></td>
<td>30 April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong></td>
<td>The establishment of clear communication pathways assists in appropriate distribution of information and efficient informed decision making, in line with the <em>Working Smart</em> and <em>Communication</em> principles for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation 6: Faculty Committee Structures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>The University operates in a devolved governance model and as such each Faculty operates a different committee structure. With an increasingly complex environment and growing concerns regarding workloads, it is important that time is taken to review structures and seek best practice. Further, the different requirements of the Faculties need to interface seamlessly with the University committee structure. An increase in transparency and consistency of structures also assists staff in understanding the University decision making processes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong></td>
<td>Faculties review the various Faculty committee structures and establish better practice standards for Faculty committee structures. Each Faculty considers the better practice principles with the view of simplifying and standardising the best structure for the Faculty's business and interface with the rest of the University. This would include greater standardisation in core areas (such as Teaching and Learning, Research and Planning and Budget).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility:</strong></td>
<td>Senior Managers Group and Deans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline:</strong></td>
<td>30 September 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong></td>
<td>The establishment of better practice standards and the streamlining of faculty committee structures, recognising diversity and increasing efficiency and transparency, in line with the <em>Collegiality</em> and <em>Working Smart</em> principles for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation 7: Delegated Decision Making**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>The principle of committee-based decision making is at times in conflict with timely and cost efficient business practice. It is important that the decision making process recognises the importance and potential impact of the issue and aligns the responsibility for decisions at the appropriate level in the University. For example, the current use of committees for the approval of a new prize may in some instances take a substantial period of time from conception to the awarding of the first recipient.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendation:</strong></td>
<td>Specific decision making areas are identified for potential delegation to either subordinate level committees or to University staff. The list should identify the staff responsible and timelines for further action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility:</strong></td>
<td>University Secretariat in conjunction with the Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline:</strong></td>
<td>30 April 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact:</strong></td>
<td>The realignment of the levels for certain decision making will expedite decision making and reduce workloads, in line with the <em>Working Smart</em> principle for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations – Committee Operation

To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of committee operations, committee meetings should be conducted in accordance with better practice standards and University requirements.

Recommendation 8: Principles for the Operation of Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Principles for the operation of committees, adopted in late 2002, are already in place. However, a more succinct version of these Principles has been prepared by the Working Party in order to facilitate their retention by University staff. The revised version simplifies the principles and separates out the high level principles from the general rules of operation and members' code of conduct (Attachment A, B, C and D).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>University Secretariat (Academic Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Increases University staff knowledge of the requirements for operation of committees and members' conduct, in line with the principles for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendation 9: Distribution of the Principles and Rules of Operation to members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Anecdotally it appears that the current good practice guide for the operation of committees has had limited penetration to date. To be effective, it is imperative that all University committee members are aware of the revised principles, rules and code of conduct and actively conduct business in accordance with these standards. To achieve this, a greater level of distribution and awareness is required.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td>The University's principles and rules for the operation of committees are distributed (as part of the agenda) to all committee members and the Chair explicitly address these at the first meeting of each year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Executive Officers and Chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>Commencing 1 January 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>A high level of awareness and subsequent take-up through the reiteration of the principles and rules for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendation 10: Distribution of the Principles and Rules of Operation to staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>The University's investment in the establishment of better practice principles and practices is less efficient if the work is not widely distributed and accepted throughout the University. It is imperative to the success of the recommendations that a high degree of awareness and penetration into current committee practices is achieved.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td>The redesigned principles and rules for the operation of committees and the code of conduct for committee members are communicated to all relevant staff and actions are taken by senior managers to attain acknowledgement and ensure ongoing awareness of these requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Senior University Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 March 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>A high level of awareness and subsequent take-up through the reiteration of the principles and rules for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Recommendation 11: Agenda Format

**Issue:** The University invests a significant amount of time in committee business. Preparation by members is important to enable the committee to conduct business in an efficient, effective and timely manner. Where agendas are long, complex and not presented in a suitably standard or timely manner, members may not have sufficient access to items to prepare themselves.

**Recommendation:** All committees adopt a standard agreed agenda format which includes the following items (Attachment C for suggested template):
- Apologies
- Confirmation of Previous Minutes
- Declarations of Potential or Perceived Conflicts of Interest
- Part I - Items for Communication to be dealt with En Bloc
- Part II - Items for Decision to be dealt with En Bloc
- Part III - Items for Discussion and Decision, and
- An Items/Business in Progress list addressing previous action item status.

All agenda items for Discussion and Decision should have a clearly stated purpose.

**Responsibility:** Executive Officers

**Timeline:** 31 December 2005

**Impact:** Increase the effectiveness of the agenda through uniformity of structure and process and encourage better use of committee time, in line with the Working Smart and Communication principles for the operation of committees.

### Recommendation 12: Review and Evaluation

**Issue:** The requirements and contribution from committees can change over time as the environment in which the University operates changes. It is important that committees are recognised for their current role rather than an historical one. In some cases committees that were required in the past may be abolished. Similarly committees may become too busy, and the establishment of a sub-committee or transfer of responsibilities to another committee may be more efficient. A review process is imperative to ensure optimal committee function.

**Recommendation:** All committees are regularly reviewed to evaluate the performance of the committee and its members.

**Responsibility:** Executive Officers

**Timeline:** 30 April 2006

**Impact:** Ensures the review and evaluation of committees as part of a cycle of feedback and continuous improvement, in line with the Review principle for the operation of committees.
Recommendations – Committee Membership

To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of committees it is important that members have the appropriate skills and expertise to add value, and that the membership has suitable diversity without unnecessary duplication of effort or representation. These principles were highlighted in the 2002 Review. The following recommendations reaffirm these principles and are designed to ensure compliance.

**Recommendation 13: Induction Package and Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Committee members may not be fully aware of the role and function of the committee or possess the appropriate level of knowledge on key University issues and processes. This may potentially result in inappropriate or delayed decision making, or protracted discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td><strong>All University committees develop or review their members' induction package and process, in line with the Rules for the Operation of Committees and Code of Conduct.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Increase effectiveness of committee members' contribution to committee business, in line with the <em>Working Smart</em> principle for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommendation 14: New Member Induction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>New committee members may not be fully aware of the role and function of the committee or possess the appropriate level of knowledge on key University issues and processes. This may potentially result in inappropriate or delayed decision making, or protracted discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td><strong>All new committee members are provided with an induction into the business of the committee as detailed in the Rules for the Operation of Committees and Code of Conduct.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Chair and/or Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Increase effectiveness of new committee members' contributions to committee business, in line with the <em>Working Smart</em> principle for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
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**Recommendation 15: Members' Code of Conduct**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>The value of contribution by committee members or their colleagues may be potentially reduced through committee members' irregular attendance, late arrival, early departure, attendance without preparation and without review of agendas and supporting documentation or inappropriate behaviour towards other members. This may also result in inappropriate or delayed decision making or protracted discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td><strong>Adopt Code of Conduct for University committee members as presented in Attachment D, with any appropriate additions as required.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Committees through the Chair and Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>1 January 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Increase effectiveness and appropriateness of committee member actions, in line with the <em>Good Conduct</em> principle for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendation 16: Training of Chairs and Executive Officers

**Issue:** The efficiency and effectiveness of committees can be largely affected by the skills, expertise and organisation of the Chair and/or the Executive Officer. Inexperience or lack of expertise may lead to delayed and/or misunderstood agenda items and protracted discussion and decision making. For example, a lack of awareness of the committee reporting lines and key dates for related committees may result in items not being clearly communicated to the required Executive Officers.

**Recommendation:** Development of additional training courses for Chairs and Executive Officers including refresher courses and advanced courses for more experienced Chairs and Executive Officers. Attendance at training courses should be mandatory for University staff involved with major committees.

**Responsibility:** University Secretariat and Organisational and Staff Development Services

**Timeline:** OSDS 2006 – 1st semester training programme

**Impact:** Increase the effectiveness of committee Chairs and Executive Officers, in line with the *Working Smart* principle for the operation of committees.

Recommendation 17: Attendance and Conduct of Members

**Issue:** Regular attendance of members is a standard committee governance measure. Whilst not yet mandatory, from 2004 DEST recommends the reporting of Senate Members' attendance in the Annual Report in line with company governance reporting requirements. Failure of members to regularly attend meetings and conduct themselves in accordance with the Code of Conduct may impact the contribution of all members. Furthermore, committees may be unable to undertake business due to difficulties in satisfying quorum requirements resulting in the inefficient use of members' time or undue delay in decision making.

**Recommendation:** Chairs should monitor members' performance in line with the Code of Conduct. This may result in the dismissal of committee members who do not regularly attend meetings or who fail to comply with the Code of Conduct. Chairs have the authority with the support of the committee to co-opt new members at any time.

**Responsibility:** Chairs

**Timeline:** 31 December 2005

**Impact:** Increase effectiveness and efficiency of committees and improve the conduct of members, in line with the *Working Smart* and *Good Conduct* principles for the operation of committees.

Recommendation 18: Committee Membership Number

**Issue:** Operating in a collegial environment, committees endeavour to include representation from all interest groups. This can result in the membership of committees being unnecessarily large. Further there may be a tendency to include more members to represent constituents fully. It is a misconception that increased membership provides for better representation. Rather it is essential members representing constituents make every attempt to canvass and represent the views of the group.

**Recommendation:** A review of current membership of committees is undertaken with a view to reducing the number of members when this can be achieved without impacting the effectiveness of committee business or the collegiality that is a hallmark of the University committee system.

**Responsibility:** Chairs (assisted by Executive Officers)

**Timeline:** 31 December 2006 to be conducted in line with Recommendation 1

**Impact:** Decrease the time University staff spend within committee meetings, in line with the Collegiality and *Working Smart* principles for the operation of committees.
Recommendation 19: Multiple Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Staff may be members of multiple University Committees. Where appropriate delegation should be considered when the business of these committees differs. Decision making processes and committees' structure should be evaluated where an individual staff member sits on numerous committees linked within the same hierarchical committee stream, (i.e. discusses the same business or makes recommendations relating to the same actions). The nomination of delegates to sit on committees provides opportunities for staff and shares workload. However it is important to be mindful of the need to communicate committee outcomes back to the delegator.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td>Committee membership is reviewed in light of the hierarchy within the committee structure. Where a staff member sits on numerous committees across a broad portfolio consideration should be given to the delegation of membership. Where a staff member sits on numerous committees of the same hierarchical stream, consideration should be given to the efficiency of the decision making structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>University Secretariat in conjunction with Executive Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 December 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Reduce time individual staff spend on the same matters within committee meetings, in line with the Working Smart and Collegiality principles for the operation of committees, whilst providing further development opportunities to high quality staff.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Recommendation 20: Membership Nomination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Membership of University Committees is an important role in the management of the University. The effectiveness of committees is directly reliant on the skills and commitment of its members. Currently there is an inconsistent and in some cases inadequate application of skills and commitment across the University's committees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation:</td>
<td>Nominators should consider a candidate's skill set and ability to contribute in accordance with the committee's constitution and Code of Conduct. Similarly nominees should give consideration to their ability to meet the expectations of the committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Chairs and Nominees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td>31 October 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact:</td>
<td>Ensure the appropriate alignment of committee members with committee business and increase the effectiveness of the committee, in line with the Working Smart principle for the operation of committees.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES

The following documents where reviewed by the working party and provide additional relevant information:

University

- "Review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Committees in the University of Western Australia" Working Party Report, September 2002
  http://discussiondocuments.intranet.uwa.edu.au/internal/review_of_the_efficiency_and_effectiveness_of_committees_in_the_uwa

- "Principles for the Operation of Committees", University Secretariat, March 2005

- "Effective Meetings – A guide to good practice", University Secretariat, 2005
  http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/commconst/effective_meetings

- "Welcome To Committees" Staff Induction, Organisation Staff Development Services
  http://committees.uwa.edu.au/home

- "Survey of staff regarding committees, working parties and staff meetings at faculty level or below, 2003/2004", Institutional Research Unit, Report No. 04/40, September 2004

- "Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct"
  http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/publications/code_of_ethics

- Senate Code, University Secretariat
  http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/senate/code

- University Record Keeping Plan
  http://www.archives.uwa.edu.au/rkp

Commonwealth and State Government

- Australian National Audit Office – Better Practice Guides; "Public Sector Governance"
  http://www.anao.gov.au/Website.nsf/6c72c3851a8f8a94ca256bed00179e7d957e55a89b1050724a256d73001df10/OpenDocument

- Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Public Sector Management – "Getting on Board: A Guide to Recruitment and Induction of Members of Western Australian Government Boards and Committees"

- Auditor General, Western Australia, "Public Sector Boards – Boards governing statutory authorities in Western Australia", Report No.9, November 1998

- Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Public Sector Management – "Corporate Governance Guidelines for Western Australian Public Sector Board Members", 1999

- Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics

  http://www.wa.gov.au/psssc/html/08pub0.htm
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Principles for the Operation of Committees
Attachment B: Rules for the Operation of Committees
Attachment C: Agenda Template
Attachment D: University Committee Members' Code of Conduct
Attachment E: University Central Committees Decision Making Map
Attachment F: University Central Committees Communication Map
Attachment G: Faculty Committee Maps
ATTACHMENT A

Principles for Operation of Committees
Principles for the Operation of Committees

While the committee structures provide a suitable framework, it is the members of the committees who determine whether good governance and better practice standards are actually achieved and ensure that the committee is adding value.

General:

1. **Collegiality**: The Committee system is transparent and consultative, and all staff have the opportunity to provide meaningful input into decisions that significantly affect them.

2. **Working Smart**: Committee time is used in ways which make the most efficient and effective use of staff time to deliberate on significant issues and policies.

3. **Good Conduct**: Committee members abide by a Code of Conduct that requires them to be appropriately informed and prepared before the meeting so that they can contribute to the decisions of the committee.

4. **Review**: All committees are regularly reviewed in relation to both the performance of committee business and committee members.

Functional:

1. **Policy Decisions**: Committees are, wherever possible, engaged in establishing policies and rules within which individual staff can manage and administer University business.

2. **Management Decisions**: Committees are involved in management and administrative decisions as close to the activity as is compatible with legislative requirements.

3. **Communication**: Committees are used to provide a contextual framework within which University policies are developed and decisions are made.

4. **Membership**: Committee membership ensures the broad University community, in all its diversity, is represented. However, individual committees are not constituted to represent every possible interest group and the number of members should be kept as low as practicable.
ATTACHMENT B

Rules for the Operation of Committees
Rules for the Operation of Committees

Establishment and Review of Committees:

1. Committees are to have a constitution that clearly describes the purpose and operation of the committee including membership, Chair, function, decision-making and communication lines, quorum and conduct of meetings.

2. Mechanisms for reporting the business of each committee should be made clear at the time of establishment of the committee.

3. Committees should establish a review regime addressing the frequency and nature of the review process and the allocation of responsibility for conducting and acting on the review.

Conduct of Meetings:

4. Meetings should only commence with the appropriate quorum. If the meeting is inquorate the meeting can be cancelled and business dealt with by circulation or discussion can take place in committee mode with recommendations ratified at the next meeting or by circular.

5. Meetings should be held in accordance with constitution. However, the committee should not meet simply because a meeting has been scheduled rather only when there is important business to transact. If business is limited, consideration should be given to circulating items with the Chair's recommendation rather than to deferring items to a later meeting.

6. Items brought to the committee for a decision for noting or for communication should be relevant to the business or role of the committee. Consideration should be given to holding a joint meeting of two committees when there is an item of interest for more than one committee. When it is clear that the committee has insufficient knowledge to add value to a decision, then other means of processing the decision should be found within existing policy and legislative provisions.

7. Where decisions are to be referred to other University committees then meeting dates should be scheduled to facilitate the efficient flow of business to these committees.

8. There should be an opportunity at the start of each meeting for members to declare any potential or perceived conflict of interest in respect of any item and where appropriate to absent themselves from discussion and/or the room while the item is being considered.

9. Documentation for committees should be written precisely, accurately, clearly and succinctly. The level of formality and detail should match the purpose and readership of the document.
10. Agendas of meetings should:
   ▪ Contain or have attached any background material necessary to enable members to make informed decisions. If items have been discussed previously a chronology of key elements of the discussion should be attached.
   ▪ Be divided into three parts (Attachment C):
     Part 1. Items for Communication to be dealt with En Bloc - only items for communication that require no decision or discussion, but are relevant to the business of the committee or its future decision-making, or require dissemination by members to staff within their areas;
     Part 2. Items for Decision to be dealt with En Bloc - only items for decision with clear recommendations by the Chair that are likely to require no further discussion;
     Part 3. Items for Discussion and Decision.
   ▪ Include an Item/Business in Progress List providing an update of actions since the last meeting, where appropriate
   ▪ At the discretion of the Chair allow items of ‘Other Business’ provided there is advance notice to the Chair and the item is not a major policy item.
   ▪ Be distributed to members at least three working days before the meeting and items perceived by the Chair to be key issues should be highlighted. Deadlines for placing formal items on the agenda should be enforced by the Chair and the Executive Officer. Rather than delay the distribution of an agenda because one item is not ready, the use of supplementary agendas should be considered.
   ▪ Be posted on the Web, with attachments where possible and available to all staff on the University’s intranet, unless issues of confidentiality preclude this.

11. Minutes of meetings should:
   ▪ Contain a summary or précis of events, in dot form wherever possible, rather than a detailed account of every contribution. In general names of individuals should not be recorded in the discussion.
   ▪ Contain all resolutions and agreements, whether reached formally through motions or through general consensus, and a clear statement of the action to be taken in relation to each item including the person responsible for the action and a timeline for completion, where appropriate.
   ▪ Be distributed to committee members within 10 working days of the close of the meeting.
   ▪ Be posted on the Web and available to all staff on the University’s intranet, unless issues of confidentiality preclude this.

Role of Members:

12. Members are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the University's Code of Conduct and the University Committee Members' Code of Conduct.

13. Members are required to participate actively in committee business and provide appropriate contributions to decision making for the betterment of the University as a whole.

14. University members should only nominate for committees for which they feel they are well placed and appropriately informed to contribute to the business of that committee.

15. Members who represent constituents on a committee should make every attempt to canvass the views and opinion of that group to bring back to the discussion of the committee and report committee decisions back to their constituents.
Role of Chair and Executive Officer:

16. Chairs and Executive Officers are responsible for ensuring these rules for the operation of committees are followed including the appropriate recording of decisions and actions.

17. Chairs should conduct meetings with the degree of formality appropriate to the committee. Generally, greater formality is needed with major committees, committees with a larger membership and where it is required by constitutional and statutory provisions.

18. Chairs should ensure meetings are conducted fluently so members understand the matters at hand and have the opportunity to discuss them, and the voting processes and resolutions are clear. Chairs should try to ensure the active participation by all members of the committee.

19. Chairs and the Executive Officers have a responsibility to ensure the business of the committee is either referred for a decision to the relevant committee or is communicated effectively to relevant areas of the University.

20. Committees should make provision for delegating responsibilities to the Chair and Executive Officer as far as possible, ensuring accountability for these delegations.

21. Chairs and Executive Officers should meet to discuss the draft agenda so both understand the purpose and possible outcomes of the meeting.

22. Executive Officers should familiarise themselves with the working of the University committee system as a whole, and as much as possible work with Executive Officers of other committees to ensure smooth transition of business through the committee system.

23. Executive Officers should work with the Chair to provide all new members with induction briefing material and appropriately induct new members into the committee. Where possible, this should occur well before the member's first attendance at a meeting of the committee. It is recommended that briefing material provided to new members includes:
   - The constitution of the committee including information on the position of the committee in the University committee structure (namely maps with pathways for decisions and communication).
   - The Principles and Rules of the Operation of Committees.
   - The Code of Conduct of committee members.
   - Committee meeting dates.
   - Major items of business of the committee in the previous year.
   - Commonly used acronyms and abbreviations which might be used in the conduct of the committee's business.

Any enquiries relating to the rules for the operation of committees may be directed to the University Secretariat.
ATTACHMENT C

Agenda Template
Agenda Template

The University of Western Australia

MEMBERS OF THE [XXXXXXXXX] COMMITTEE

[List Chair]
[List Ex-Officio Members]
[List Elected Members]
[List Invitees]
[List Observers]

[XXXXXXXXX] COMMITTEE MEETING – [Date of Meeting]

The next meeting of the [xxxxxxxxxx] Committee will be held in [room and location] on [date of meeting] at [time of meeting].

[Name and title of Executive Officer]

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

2. MINUTES

   Confirmation

   Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting of the [xxxxxxxxxx] Committee held on [date of the previous meeting].

3. DECLARATIONS OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

4. ITEMS/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS FOR NOTING SINCE PREVIOUS MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

PART 1 – ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION TO BE DEALT WITH EN BLOC

PART 2 – ITEMS FOR DECISION TO BE DEALT WITH EN BLOC

PART 3 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION
ATTACHMENT D

University Committee Members' Code of Conduct
University Committee Members’ Code of Conduct

Membership of a University Committee is an important role and brings with it key responsibilities and obligations. The specific membership requirements for University Committees have been prepared to promote good practice and give committee members a summary of their obligations and provide guidance on ethical conduct.


1. **Personal Conduct:** All members of University committees are required to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the University’s Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. A copy is available at: http://www.hr.uwa.edu.au/publications/code_of_ethics

   Members of committees are also required to:
   - Understand the committee’s role and purpose within the University.
   - Stay informed about relevant matters affecting the committee’s business.
   - Attend all committee meetings or where attendance is not possible, submit an apology.
   - Participate actively and work cooperatively with other committee members and University staff.
   - Prepare for all committee meetings by reading and considering the agenda items, papers circulated and other relevant documents.
   - Not improperly influence other committee members.
   - Make new points succinctly without reiterating at length points already made.

2. **Accountability:** All members have a responsibility to ensure efficient and effective operations of the committee, avoid extravagant and wasteful use of resources and ensure actions are consistent with the role and purpose of the committee.

   Members of committees are also required to:
   - Participate constructively in committee activities in a lawful, ethical and justifiable manner.
   - Ensure decisions are consistent with any statutory and legal requirements.
   - Ensure resources, funds and staff are used effectively and economically for committee business.

3. **Record Keeping and Use of Information:** All documentation produced by the committee forms part of the University records and should be maintained in accordance with University’s Record Keeping Plan (http://www.archives.uwa.edu.au/rkp).

   In conjunction with specific responsibilities of the Executive Officer, members of committees are also required to:
   - Ensure adequate procedures are followed for documenting decisions and actions of the committee.
   - Maintain confidentiality of committee business where necessary, ensuring confidential records are subject to appropriate storage and access procedures.
   - Respect confidential discussions and not misuse any information obtained through membership of the committee.
   - Openly declare any matters of private interest and record any issues with the potential for conflict or perceived conflict to ensure they are transparent and capable of review.
   - Where appropriate, disqualify themselves from committee discussions and decisions where a conflict of interest occurs.
   - Be aware of the FOI Act 1992 and that access may be sought to all records under this legislation

Where members are unsure of their obligations or responsibilities under the University Committee Members’ Code of Conduct, the member should contact the Chair or Executive Officer of the Committee for assistance.
ATTACHMENT E

University Central Committees Decision Making Map
ATTACHMENT F

University Central Committees Communication Map
ATTACHMENT G

Faculty Committee Maps
Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Visual Arts

COMMITTEES OF THE FACULTY

- Council of Disciplines
- Board of Examiners
- Admissions Committee
- Teaching & Learning Committee
- Building & Equipment Committee
- Information Technology Committee
- PostGraduate and Research Committee
- Faculty Advisory Board
- Faculty Appeals Committee
  - Academic Assessment
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

- **FACULTY BOARD**
  - Teaching and Learning Committee
  - Admissions Committee
  - Research Committee
  - Board of Examiners
  - Budget Committee
  - Board of Studies in Social Work & Social Policy
  - Board of Studies in Music
  - Faculty Appeals Committee - Academic Assessment

- **OTHER COMMITTEES**
  - Jean Rogerson Committee
  - Governing Board of the Doctor of Arts
  - Undergraduate Commencement Scholarships Committee
  - Ancillary Fees & Charges Reference Group
  - Appeals Committee
  - Arts Building Steering Committee
  - Fees & Charges Committee
  - IT Advisory Committee
  - FAHSS Safety & Health Committee
Faculty of Education

COMMITEES OF THE FACULTY

- Board of Examiners
- Faculty Appeals Committee
- Faculty Advisory Board

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

- MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
  - PostGraduate Programs Committee
  - International Programs Committee
  - Initial Professional Education
  - Continuing Professional Education
Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics

FACULTY BOARD

- Postgraduate Board of Examiners
- Undergraduate Board of Examiners
- Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Committee
- Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee
- Research Committee
- International Committee
- Programme Committee for the Bachelor of Computer and Mathematical Sciences

OTHER COMMITTEES

- Management Advisory Committee
- Dean's Appeal Committee
- Faculty Appeals Committee
- Faculty Industry Advisory Board
- School Industry Advisory Panels
Faculty of Life & Physical Sciences

- BOARD OF STUDIES IN SCIENCE
  - OVERSEES ON BEHALF OF THE FACULTY OF LIFE AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES AND THE FACULTY OF NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES MATTERS CONCERNING THE TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE
- BOARDS OF EXAMINERS
- FACULTY APPEALS COMMITTEE

- EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
  - TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE
  - RESEARCH COMMITTEE
  - HIGHER DEGREES COMMITTEE
  - MARKETING AND INTERNATIONALISATION COMMITTEE
Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry

- Faculty Advisory Board
- Dean's Advisory Committee
- Research Committee
- Higher Degrees Committee
- Adjunct Appointments Committee
- Medical Curriculum Committee
- Dental Curriculum Committee
- Faculty Selection Committee
- Executive Committee of the Rural Clinical School
- Board of Examiners
- Faculty Appeals Committee
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

- Faculty Board
- Faculty Committees
  - Faculty Resources Committee
  - Associate Deans Committee
  - Board of Studies in Science
  - Board of Examiners
  - Research and Higher Degree Committee
  - Faculty Advisory Board
  - Faculty Appeals Committee
  - Faculty Selection Committee
  - Prospective Students Committee
  - Student Staff Consultative Committee

Oversees on behalf of the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences matters concerning the teaching and assessment of Bachelor of Science degree.