GUIDANCE ON SERVICING UCL FORMAL COMMITTEES
1. Introduction

Committees are a major feature of university life and play a significant role in the governance of higher education institutions (HEIs).

All HEIs have a hierarchy of formal committees – from the HEI’s governing body (the Council) and senior academic authority (the Academic Board or Senate), through other institutional-level committees, to committees operating at subject-specific levels of the institution (such as Faculties and Departments) and typically including learning and teaching committees, Boards of Examiners, etc. The various committees within an HEI are likely to operate with differing degrees of formality, but all need to be serviced and managed effectively.

A full list of UCL’s currently established formal committees is available on UCL’s formal committees web pages. These pages include details of the constitution and membership, terms of reference, reporting lines to other committees and dates of meetings for all of these committees. Electronic copies of non-confidential Minutes of meetings of these committees are also available on these web pages, subject to access restrictions (see section 3.4 below).

Although much of the guidance contained in this document is intended primarily as a resource and reference tool for staff servicing UCL’s formal committees, those staff servicing other non-formal UCL committees, steering groups, working groups and faculty and departmental committees will also find the content useful and are encouraged to adopt the general principles outlined herein, where appropriate, for the purpose of servicing their own committees and presenting their own committee documents.

The guidance contained herein should be read in conjunction with the UCL Committees Code of Practice, which includes further details of the essential definitions, principles and procedures governing UCL committee operations, and the Standing Orders for UCL formal committees, which prescribe essential arrangements governing the conduct of business for UCL formal committees.

Academic Services, which is based within UCL Student and Registry Services, is responsible for overseeing UCL committee operations and for promoting the effective communication of information relating to UCL’s formal committee system, including: maintaining and disseminating the UCL Committees Code of Practice and Standing Orders for UCL formal committees; maintaining details of UCL’s formal committees and overseeing the online storage of Minutes of these committees; and defining policy and good practice guidelines on the preparation and dissemination of committee documents. Any questions on any of the information contained in this guidance, or on any aspects of committee servicing, should be directed to Academic Services (contact: Nick McGhee, tel. 58217).
2. UCL committees

2.1 UCL formal committees

UCL’s formal committees include:

- committees that are prescribed by UCL’s Charter and Statutes, eg UCL Council, Academic Board;
- committees that are established by UCL Council (UCL’s governing body – see below) and authorised to take decisions according to prescribed terms of reference and/or delegated powers;
- committees that are statutorily required by national legislation, eg Health and Safety Committee.

UCL’s formal committees differ in size, shape and function. Some play key roles in policy and strategic decision-making within the university (eg Academic Committee; Estates Management Committee; Finance Committee; Human Resources Policy Committee), some deal primarily with student affairs and administration (eg Student Experience Committee; Student Recruitment, Admissions and Funding Committee), while others operate mainly in accordance with external statutory requirements (eg Audit Committee; Health and Safety Committee).

UCL Council is the governing body of UCL, with overall responsibility for managing the university’s property and finances as well as overseeing its mission statement, strategic direction and its long-term academic and business plans.

Academic Board is the senior academic body of UCL and the senior forum for UCL’s academic community. It is also a key forum for dissemination of information by the Provost and other senior UCL officers and committees. Academic Board is provided for in the UCL Charter and Statutes rather than formally established by Council as a formal UCL committee.

Academic Committee is responsible on behalf of Academic Board for considering and advising UCL Council on all academic matters and questions affecting the educational policy and processes of UCL.

The establishment and disestablishment of UCL formal committees requires the formal approval of UCL Council. All proposals for the establishment or disestablishment of a UCL formal committee should be submitted for the formal approval of UCL Council by way of the Academic Services officers in the first instance (contact: Nick McGhee).

2.2 Non-formal UCL committees, steering groups and working groups

Operating below the level of UCL’s formal committees, there are non-formal committees and other informal bodies such as steering groups and working groups.

Non-formal UCL committees are committees that operate at an institutional level outside the formal UCL committee system. That is to say, they are committees that are not formally established by UCL Council, although some may still perform an important function within the institution and have reporting lines to UCL formal committees.

A working group is a body set up by a UCL committee in order to examine a particular issue, either within a predetermined period or for the indefinite future as set out in the committee’s terms of reference. A working group may be charged with submitting a report to the committee by which it was convened, or may be empowered to take independent action within its prescribed remit.
2.3 School, Faculty and Departmental committees

At School, Faculty and Departmental level, there are committees that play an important function in decision-making, and many of these have reporting lines to UCL formal committees. These include Faculty Teaching Committees (which submit Minutes of their meetings to Education Committee), Departmental Teaching Committees (which submit Minutes of their meetings to Faculty Teaching Committees), programme teaching committees, and Faculty Library Committees (which submit their Minutes of meetings to Library Committee).

2.4 Constitution and terms of reference

All committees should have a ‘constitution’ and ‘terms of reference’.

The ‘constitution’ of a committee defines its membership according to different categories of membership, or ‘constituencies’ (see section 2.5 below).

The ‘terms of reference’ of a committee define its purpose, scope of business and remit.

In order to ensure their continuing fitness for purpose, committees should receive and be given an opportunity to review their constitution/membership and terms of reference annually at their first meeting of the academic session.

2.5 Categories of committee membership

There are various categories of committee membership, or ‘constituencies’:

- ‘Ex officio’ indicates a person who is a member by virtue of his or her post. Membership is automatically changed when the post-holder changes. Ex officio members are not appointed for a finite period.

- ‘Appointed’ indicates a person whose membership has been determined either by a senior committee, such as UCL Council or Academic Board, or by the committee itself.

- ‘Nominated’ indicates a person whose membership has been put forward or formally approved by another person or body (eg a Dean of Faculty or one of UCL’s recognised trade unions).

- ‘Elected’ indicates a person whose membership is the result of an election.

- ‘Co-opted’ indicates a person appointed as an additional member in a personal capacity, often on a short-term basis, and usually because there is a need for that person’s specific expertise. Any formal committee of UCL may co-opt members without reference to any other UCL committee or body. If a committee finds itself co-opting someone long-term, it should consider changing its constitution.

- ‘Observer’ indicates a person (eg a representative of an organisation which works closely with UCL) who while not a full member of the committee, receives papers and is entitled to attend meetings.

- ‘In attendance’ is not a committee membership category but a term used in committee Minutes to introduce a list of persons who are present at the meeting in addition to the members of the committee. Such persons include the Secretary and may also include UCL officers who although not members of the committee, regularly attend its meetings to answer technical questions, etc, from committee members. Persons ‘in attendance’ may also include UCL officers or others who do not attend regularly but have been invited to a particular meeting of the committee to speak to a particular Agenda item, or to hear a particular discussion.
2.6 Reporting lines

Every UCL committee should have a reporting line, either to a more senior committee or to another committee or body that has delegated part of its responsibilities to the committee concerned. This reporting line is usually effected through submission of the Minutes of the committee’s meetings to the senior committee or other committee or body, but in some cases it may involve the submission of an annual or other periodic report on activities within the purview of the committee. The committee’s reporting line(s) should be specified in its terms of reference.

With the exception of UCL Council, which is UCL’s governing body, the Academic Board and all of UCL’s formal committees report to a senior or other committee by submission of the Minutes of their meetings and/or an annual or other periodic report.

2.7 annual self-review

Academic Board, Academic Committee, Audit Committee, Finance Committee, Honorary Degrees and Fellowships Committee, Human Resources Policy Committee, Nominations Committee and the Remuneration and HR Strategy Committee are charged with carrying out an annual ‘self-review’ process and reporting to Council in the autumn that has been done, highlighting any matters of concern. There is a standard set of questions to be addressed. New secretaries of these committees should liaise with Academic Services (Nick McGhee).
3. Committee documents

3.1 General

The principal documents pertaining to the function and business of committees are Agendas, Papers (sometimes with accompanying Appendices) and Minutes.

The Agenda is the first document for any committee meeting and serves as the committee’s schedule, listing the items of business and the order in which they are to be considered. Also included on the Agenda is an indication of any Papers that are to be received by the committee. See section 6.1 for more detail on the format of Agendas.

Papers are written reports, notes or other documents that accompany the Agenda and relate to one or more of the items of business listed on it, which the committee is to receive for discussion/decision, formal approval or information. A Paper may include a number of Appendices, usually containing specific detail that is not found in the Paper itself. For example, a proposal for revision of a policy may have the reasons and justification for the proposed changes in the body of the Paper itself, with the wording of the revised policy provided in an Appendix. See section 6.2 for more detail on the format of Papers.

The Minutes are the written formal record of each meeting of the committee. Their purpose is to record clearly and concisely:

- The list of members and other persons present at the meeting;
- The sequence of items of business considered by the committee at the meeting, along with, in relation to these items:
  - any Papers (or any other items of information, such as oral reports) received;
  - the key points or matters noted by the committee;
  - the committee’s formal decisions (which may include recommendations to another committee) along with any other action(s) agreed;
- Any other items of information that the committee received and noted for the record (eg the date(s) of the committee’s next meeting(s)).

See Section 6.3 for more detail on the format of Minutes.

Minutes are categorised as follows:

Draft – as initially written by the Committee Secretary after the meeting has taken place and before approval by the Chair;

Unconfirmed – draft Minutes that have been agreed by the Chair for circulation to members;

Confirmed – Minutes that have been formally approved by the committee at its next scheduled meeting, incorporating any amendments that have been agreed.

3.2 Principles

As a general principle, all committee documents should be considered quasi-legal documents that are publicly accessible. In fact, this should be presumed to be the default position on the grounds that UCL’s business should be conducted in an open and transparent manner.

Accordingly, it is important that the documents produced for a committee are:

- Consistent in layout and style;
- Written in good, clear English;
- Are as concise as is consistent with carrying forward the committee’s business;
Identify clearly (i) those issues that require approval or a decision and (ii) decisions and follow-up actions that are agreed by the committee.

### 3.3 Categories of committee business

Although the guidance set out in this section applies principally to secretaries and officers of UCL’s formal committees, all UCL committee secretaries (including secretaries of non-formal committees, steering groups and working groups) are encouraged to apply the guidance contained in this section to the categorisation and presentation of committee business.

The UCL committee system distinguishes the following three categories of committee business:

- Unrestricted (or ‘open’) business;
- Confidential business;
- Confidential (Reserved) business.

#### 3.3.1 Unrestricted or ‘open’ business

As a general rule and in accordance with the principles set out in section 3.1 above, as much committee business as possible should be open and unrestricted, and confidential business should be kept to a minimum.

However, there may be certain items of business presented in committee documents which should be restricted to members of the committee only or to a subset of members of the committee, eg non-student members, on the grounds of confidentiality.

#### 3.3.2 Confidential and Confidential (Reserved) business

Items of confidential business should be listed as such on the Agenda. In certain circumstances, it may be desirable for confidential items to be listed in a separate, confidential agenda sheet. Whichever format is used, confidential items should be minuted in a separate confidential section to follow the open Minutes.

**Confidential Business** should generally be regarded as any items of business pertaining to sensitive information held by UCL or concerning its interests, where one of the exemptions provided under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) might be deemed to apply. This would normally include information relating to:

- The personal safety of UCL staff and students;
- The security of UCL’s property;
- The commercial interests of UCL and its partners;
- Confidential relationships, both personal and commercial.

For further information, see 3.4.1 below and [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/foi](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/foi)

**Confidential (Reserved) Business** is confidential business from which any student members of the committee are also excluded when these items are considered by the committee. This may include items of business which refer to individual members of staff by name (in the context of appointments, promotions, etc), in addition to items of business which refer to individual students by name (in the context of admissions, academic assessment, etc).

There is a small number of UCL formal committees whose business may be regarded in its entirety as confidential. In such cases, the Agenda papers and the subsequent Minutes in their entirety should be marked as Confidential.
Secretaries should note that the categorisation of a committee document as confidential is not always a guarantee that it will be exempt from disclosure in the event that a request for disclosure is challenged.

Concerns about whether or not an item of business should be regarded as confidential should be discussed with the Academic Services officers (contact: Nick McGhee, tel. 58217) and/or the UCL Freedom of Information Officer (contact foi@ucl.ac.uk).

3.4 Access and restrictions on access to committee documents

Committee secretaries should ensure that all committee documents are made accessible as appropriate (see section 3.5 below).

3.4.1 The Freedom of Information Act (2000)

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) gives the public general rights of access to recorded information held by HEIs and other public authorities. This includes committee documents.

The presumption of the Freedom of Information Act legislation is in favour of disclosure, which HEIs and other public authorities can achieve by two routes, both of which are statutory duties:

- responding to direct requests for information, and
- maintaining a Publication Scheme, which specifies what information is readily available and how this information can be obtained.

The Freedom of Information Act (2000) provides 23 exemptions from the right of access to, or disclosure of, certain information. Some of these are designated ‘absolute’, meaning that the duty to provide the information does not apply. Absolute exemptions will necessarily apply to any of the following types of information:

- Information accessible by other means (eg public web pages or in an HEI’s Publication Scheme);
- Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters;
- Court records, and information held in relation to court proceedings;
- Information provided in confidence;
- Information prohibited from disclosure by any other piece of legislation or enactment, eg Data Protection Act

However, most of the exemptions are known as ‘qualified’ exemptions, which means that a public interest test is required to be applied to decide whether the public interest in withholding the information will outweigh the public interest in disclosing it. Absolute exemptions will apply to any of the following types of information:

- Information intended for future publication
- Investigations & proceedings conducted by public authorities
- Information relating to Audit Functions
- Information relating to Health And Safety
- Personal information relating to a third party access request
- Information relating to Commercial Interests

UCL has an obligation to respond to a valid request for information within 20 working days of receipt of the request. Responses to Freedom of Information requests are made by the UCL Freedom of Information Officer.

Secretaries or officers of any UCL committee or working group who receive requests for the disclosure of any committee documents that are not already publicly available either via UCL’s...
Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act will be considered by the UCL Freedom of Information Officer on a case-by-case basis. Even when an exemption is applicable, its duration will usually diminish over time, so that what is exempt today may not be so at a future date. A designation of any committee documents or items of committee business as confidential should therefore be considered as an indicator of confidentiality or sensitivity that was applicable at the time that the document was written.

In all cases, if requests are received for any committee documents that are not already publicly available, the UCL Freedom of Information Officer will consult the committee secretary or officers concerned and offer more specific advice on the implications of disclosure and the possible application of exemptions. This will include requests received for any committee documents (including Papers), regardless of whether or not they are marked or deemed confidential.

3.4.2 Availability of UCL committee documents

In observance of the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act, all confirmed unrestricted (or 'open') Minutes of UCL’s formal committees are made publicly available on the committee web pages.

Prior to this, the unconfirmed versions of these Minutes are made available on the committee web pages – however, access to these is restricted to members of the UCL community only (ie all those with a UCL user-id and password) until the Academic Services officers receive notification that the Minutes have been confirmed by the committee concerned at its next scheduled meeting.

Confirmed unrestricted (or ‘open’) Minutes of UCL formal committees for meetings held prior to 2010-11 are also available on the committee web pages – however, as for all unconfirmed unrestricted (or ‘open’) Minutes, access to these is restricted to members of the UCL community only, reflecting the access arrangements that were in effect at the time that these documents were produced.

Confirmed and unconfirmed Minutes of UCL formal committees that are marked as ‘Confidential to the Committee’ or which relate to any Confidential or Confidential (Reserved) Business are not made available on UCL’s formal committees web pages for any sessions, on the presumption that they contain information that disqualifies them from disclosure under one or more of the exemptions provided by the Freedom of Information Act (see section 3.3.2 above).

With the exception of Academic Board, other committee Agendas and Papers are not currently made available on the committee web pages.

3.5 Distribution

In addition to distributing or making available committee documents to members of the committee, secretaries should also consider if there are any other UCL officers who should routinely receive or be given access to the committee’s documents for information.

Committee secretaries should ensure that any committee documents referring to confidential or reserved areas of business are distributed or made available only to those persons who are entitled to see them (see guidance at section 3.3.2 above).
3.5.1 Distribution of papers

Electronic distribution is now the preferred mode of transmission for committee documents, given the increasing use of laptops and tablets at meetings. Secretaries may however also need to take account of the fact that some committee members – most usually externals – may prefer to continue to receive committee documents in hard copy.

Electronic dissemination is often by way of a ‘Sharepoint’ which can be configured so that only those persons with the appropriate authorisation (including non-members of the committee who routinely receive committee documents for information) can gain access. Alternatively, papers may be circulated by email. Where committee documents are sent by email, they should be combined into a single bookmarked PDF file rather than attached as separate files.

Committee secretaries should also ensure when transmitting documents electronically that they make clear to committee members whether or not hard copies of the documents are to follow.

If electronic transmission is used, secretaries of formal committees should ensure that they continue to produce hard copies of Agendas, Papers and Minutes (including signed Minutes) for submission to the Records Office and for signature by the Chair in confirming the Minutes at the committee’s next scheduled meeting (see section 5.8.5 below).

Where committee documents are distributed in hard copy, the following principles should usually apply:

- Agendas, Papers and Minutes should be double-sided;
- Each Paper and Appendix should begin on a new sheet.

Committee secretaries may wish to use different coloured paper for hard-copy distributions, eg yellow paper to distinguish the Agenda sheet from the accompanying Papers, but the practice of using green paper as a matter of course for printed Minutes has been discontinued.

Colour printing
Care should be taken to ensure that papers are printed in colour where this is necessary (eg with graphs). In the case of brochures, annual reviews etc it may be preferable to ask the author to submit a sufficient number of hard copies.

3.6 Retention and Disposal

Committee secretaries should maintain their own up-to-date electronic records of committee documents for each meeting of the committee and ensure that these can be made available upon request as appropriate.

Any spare hard copies of committee documents should be disposed of appropriately. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that any hard copies of confidential committee documents are either shredded or put into the confidential waste.
4. Responsibilities of the Chair and committee members

4.1 Responsibilities of the Chair

The Chair has overall responsibility for the committee’s business. In particular, the Chair should:

- Fully understand the committee’s remit and know the limits of its business and powers;
- Be proactive in taking forward the committee’s business;
- Manage the committee’s business to ensure that it is conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible, both during and between meetings. For example, the Chair should ensure that the size of the committee is as small as is consistent with getting its work done and that its paperwork and the length of its meetings are both kept to the essential minimum;
- Keep the usefulness and fitness for purpose of the committee under review in consultation as necessary with other committee officers.

4.2 Responsibilities of committee members

Members of the committee should:

- Understand the committee’s remit and know the limits of its business and powers;
- Be willing and able to attend the committee’s meetings. Members have a responsibility to attend. If for any reason members are unable to attend a meeting of the committee, they should ensure that they notify their apologies to the committee Secretary in advance of the meeting. Committee membership is considered to be a non-transferable status. In light of this, it is not normal practice for committee members to nominate a delegate to represent them at a committee meeting in the event that they are not able to attend. The constitution of a committee may provide for eg a Dean or other senior UCL officer to nominate a colleague as their representative on the committee. It should be noted, however, that a ‘nominee’ in this context is a continuing member of the committee in place of the senior officer concerned.
- Ensure that they prepare themselves properly for meetings by reading the committee papers in advance, giving them due thought and consulting others where appropriate;
- Ensure that they observe any markings of confidentiality that are applied to committee documents and do not disclose beyond the committee any confidential business or other information that is considered by the committee;
- Ensure that they act, and are perceived to act, impartially in the best interests of UCL and are not influenced by any personal business or social relationship. If members have any pecuniary, personal or family interest in any matter being discussed by the committee, they should declare this conflict of interest normally at the start of the meeting and take no part in the committee’s discussion or decision-making on that subject.
5. Role of the Committee Secretary

5.1 General

The Committee Secretary is not normally a member of the committee but nevertheless has a key role to play in its operation. This includes the following responsibilities:

- detailed management of the committee’s business – e.g. scheduling the dates and locations for the committee’s meetings in consultation with the Chair and other members; the preparation and distribution of Agendas for meetings; monitoring the progress and scheduling of the committee’s business and ensuring that its meetings run smoothly;
- being thoroughly familiar with the committee’s terms of reference, with a view to giving the Chair, members and any other officers concerned with the committee’s business appropriate advice when needed;
- briefing the committee’s Chair before meetings to ensure that any difficulties in transacting business are anticipated and appropriate strategies for handling them identified. For some senior committees with a wide range of business, this may best be undertaken by means of a written briefing note prepared by the Secretary in advance of the meeting; for other committees, a briefing meeting alone may be sufficient – each committee may set its own practice in this regard;
- attending the meeting and taking notes as a basis for producing the formal record, i.e. the Minutes, of the meeting;
- drafting the Minutes of the meeting and sending these for approval to the Chair of the committee via any other committee officer(s) as appropriate;
- distribution of the Minutes as appropriate and notification of follow-up action arising from the Minutes;
- ensuring that any reporting relationships between the committee and other committees are observed, e.g. by sending copies of Minutes to, and receiving them from, other committees as appropriate;
- maintaining up-to-date electronic or hard-copy records of the Minutes of meetings and all Papers and other committee documents, i.e. via the committee sharepoint site or shared drive, or Minute Book.

5.2 Scheduling dates of meetings

The dates of meetings of formal committees should usually be planned well in advance. It is good practice to arrange all of the committee’s meetings for an entire year ahead, ideally with a view to confirming these at the committee’s final meeting of the preceding academic year. In scheduling dates of meetings, the Committee Secretary should take account of the dates of meetings of any committee(s) to which the committee is expected to report (either through submission of its Minutes or of an annual or other periodic report). Senior Committees such as Council, Audit Committee, Finance Committee, Academic Board and Academic Committee set their meeting dates in co-ordination with each other.

As soon as dates of meetings have been confirmed, the Committee Secretary should arrange for rooms to be booked. Centrally bookable rooms are reserved through the Room and Conference Bookings Office. It is advisable to ensure that the room is booked 30 minutes in advance of the start of the meeting, so that the Secretary has time to reconfigure the room, if necessary, following any earlier meetings. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of a meeting overrunning, and the room should be booked accordingly. Refreshments are booked, on the main Gower Street site, through the Refectory. It is usual to provide refreshments when external members are attending a meeting.

5.3 Agreeing a schedule of committee business

It is good practice for the Committee Secretary to meet with the Chair and any other relevant committee officers as appropriate prior to the start of each committee session in order to
discuss and agree a schedule of committee business for the forthcoming session. This schedule should include i) recurrent items of business, along with any ‘one-off’ items that the committee has specified should be considered or reviewed at a particular time of the year and ii) an indication of the deadlines for receipt of papers and reports in relation to these items.

Once the schedule of business has been agreed, the Committee Secretary should ensure that it is circulated to members of the committee as well as to any other non-members of the committee who are responsible for contributing items for meetings, so that they are given sufficient notice of any deadlines for receipt of papers or reports.

5.4 Briefing new members of the committee

The Committee Secretary should arrange to provide appropriate briefing for new members on the work of the committee, before new members attend their first meeting.

A number of UCL formal committees include student representatives among their ex officio and/or nominated memberships. In such instances, it is good practice for the Secretary and (where possible) the Chair of the committee to offer private briefings to new student members before the committee’s first meeting of the session.

In addition, provided that committee secretaries are notified of the names of incoming elected UCLU student sabbatical officers in advance of the following session, they may provide the students concerned with the date of the last meeting of the committee in the current session and offer them the opportunity to sit in as an observers (effectively ‘shadowing’ the current UCLU student sabbatical officer representative).

5.5 Preparing the Agenda

A draft Agenda should be prepared and sent to the Chair for approval at least ten working days prior to a meeting.

The Chair may request a briefing meeting with the Committee Secretary to discuss an outline Agenda (prior to preparation of the full draft Agenda).

It is good practice for the Committee Secretary either to prepare briefing notes for the Chair to use as an aide-memoire in conducting the meeting or to arrange a briefing meeting with the Chair to run through the items on the Agenda.

A committee can only operate effectively if its documents are produced in time for members to read them and give them proper consideration prior to the meeting. The finalised Agenda, as approved by the Chair, along with any accompanying Papers, should be prepared for copying (where applicable) and distribution so that they reach members at least five working days prior to the meeting.

The Committee Secretary should ensure that colleagues who are responsible for contributing items for an Agenda are given sufficient notice of any deadlines for receipt of papers. It is standard practice to set a deadline of two weeks before the meeting date for receipt of papers from their authors. This is to allow sufficient time to address any questions arising from the content or format of the paper before circulation one week in advance of the meeting.

Despite the Committee Secretary’s best efforts in this regard, there will occasionally be papers that are not received in time for circulation by the set deadline. Where necessary in order to ensure that the bulk of the committee papers for the meeting are sent out on time, any late papers should be clearly marked “To follow” on the Agenda and circulated as soon as possible with an explanatory covering note or notice cross-referencing them to the relevant Agenda item. However, no papers should normally be circulated less than two working days (48
hours) before a meeting. In the event that a paper is received by the Committee Secretary less than two working days before the meeting, the paper must be accompanied by an explanation from the submitting officer of any exceptional grounds for allowing the paper to be forwarded to the Committee. The Committee Secretary will then ask the committee Chair to decide the matter.

5.6 Material to take to the meeting

The Committee Secretary should take the following items with them to the meeting:

- **Spare copies of all committee documents.**
- **Minutes of the previous meeting, for the Chair’s signature.** Once the committee has approved and confirmed them at the meeting, the Chair should be asked to sign the Minutes and include the date of signature, at the foot of the final page.
- **List of apologies for absence.** To be read out by the Chair or the Committee Secretary at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Attendance sheet.** In the case of large committees, or in instances where the Committee Secretary may be unable to identify certain members, a list of the names of committee members may be useful to register the attendance of members and others in attendance.
- **Reference material.** The terms of reference and constitution of the committee should be on hand, along with any standing orders (ie regulations governing the proceedings of that particular committee). The Committee Secretary should also have to hand a diary/calendar, details of dates of future meetings of the committee and of future meetings of senior committees to which the committee might report.

5.7 Conduct of meetings

- **Room arrangements.** The Committee Secretary should aim to arrive in good time before the start of the meeting to ensure that tables and chairs are properly laid out, debris from any previous meetings or functions is cleared away if necessary, etc. It is advisable to book the room from 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time if possible.
- **Preparation for start of meeting.** The committee secretary should ideally sit next to the Chair during the meeting so as to be in a position to provide advice or clarification when required.
- **Briefing of Chair immediately before start of meeting.** New members and/or any non-members attending to make oral reports, etc, should be pointed out to the Chair as necessary.
- **Quorum.** The quorum for meetings of UCL’s formal committees (ie the minimum number of committee members who must be present in order for a meeting to proceed) should normally be not less than half of the total membership of the committee. However, the UCL Regulations for Management define a different quorum for Council and Academic Board.
- **Signing of previous meeting’s Minutes.** When the committee has approved and confirmed the Minutes of the previous meeting, these should be passed to the Chair for signature. Alternatively, the Chair may prefer to sign the Minutes after the meeting.
- **Notetaking.** The Committee Secretary should not try to take down everything that is said but should keep listening all the time and continually assess what needs to be noted and record all decisions that are made along with actions that are agreed. If necessary, s/he should ask members to clarify important points that are made during the course of discussion. It is not usual practice to take recordings of a meeting; if this needs to be done, members’ permission must be sought in advance.

5.8 Action following the meeting

- **Leaving the room.** The Committee Secretary should be the last to leave the room, after collecting any committee papers that may have been left behind.
• Confirmed signed Minutes of the previous meeting. For all UCL formal committees, these, along with all Papers, should be sent to the Records Office (contact: Robert Winckworth) within three working days of the conclusion of the meeting. Any amendments agreed by the committee in approving and confirming the Minutes should be included. If any amendments agreed are too extensive to be incorporated by way of handwritten annotations, the Committee Secretary may wish to incorporate the amendments in a reproduced set of Minutes that should be sent to the Chair for signing and dating retrospectively.

5.9 Preparing the Minutes

Minutes should be drafted as a matter of priority as soon as possible after the meeting and sent to the Chair for approval. As a general principle, committee secretaries should aim to issue Minutes of meetings no more than 10 working days after the date of the meeting.

Once the Chair has approved the draft, the unconfirmed Minutes should then be issued to members of the committee and to any other UCL officers as appropriate.

5.10 Requirements of secretaries of UCL formal committees

The following requirements apply to secretaries of UCL’s formal committees.

5.10.1 Proposed amendments to the committee’s name, constitution or terms of reference

Any proposed amendments to the name, constitution or terms of reference of UCL formal committees should be notified to the Academic Services officers (contact: Nick McGhee).

5.10.2 Changes in membership; dates of meetings

Any changes in membership which do not require the amendment of a UCL formal committee’s constitution should be notified to the Academic Services officers (contact: Nick McGhee, so that the membership details on UCL’s formal committees web pages can be kept up to date. Details of dates of meetings and any changes to these should also be notified to the Academic Services officers.

Nominations Committee is responsible for recommending to Council the appointment of external members and advice should be sought from the Nominations Committee Secretary at least six months in advance of the end of term of an incumbent external member. Nominations Committee is also responsible for the reappointment of existing external members for an additional term.

5.10.3 Cases for the continued service of long-serving members

In order to encourage a balance between continuity of committee membership (with the steady growth in knowledge of a committee’s business which this implies) and the opportunity for regular fresh input, all UCL committees are required to submit a case for any of their non-student members, other than ex officio members, to serve for more than six consecutive years (except where length of service is prescribed by Statute or Regulation for Management). Accordingly, secretaries of UCL formal committees are asked annually to submit to the Academic Services officers (contact: Nick McGhee) brief statements in support of the continued service beyond the normal maximum period of any members who have reached or exceeded six years’ service.

UCL is committed to creating equality of opportunity and promoting diversity. In line with this and in order to ensure that committee structures and processes take account of and are informed by a wide representation of views and perspectives, officers of UCL committees are encouraged to (i) take all reasonable steps to replace long-serving members or to fill impending casual vacancies with staff from under-represented groups, and (ii) confirm annually to the
Academic Services officers that this consideration has been taken into account in reviewing the long-serving membership of committees. Progress in promoting diversity in the make-up of UCL committees is reviewed annually by the Academic Services officers in consultation with the Head of Equalities and Diversity, and an annual report is submitted to the Equalities and Diversity Committee.

5.10.4 Submission of committee documents for storage on UCL’s formal committees web pages

Secretaries of UCL formal committees should submit electronically (preferably as a PDF) to the Academic Services officers (contact – Nick McGhee) the unconfirmed Minutes of meetings as soon as these have been approved by the Chair (i.e. prior to the next meeting of the committee). Upon receiving unconfirmed committee Minutes from committee secretaries, Academic Services officers will arrange for these to be stored on UCL’s formal committees web pages according to the access restrictions that are highlighted in section 3.4 above.

All unconfirmed committee Minutes stored on UCL’s formal committees web pages in accordance with the above arrangements will be flagged as ‘Unconfirmed’ and made available only to members of the UCL community (i.e. persons with a valid UCL user-id and password) until the Academic Services officers receive notification that they have been formally approved and confirmed by the committee at its next meeting.

Committee secretaries should ensure that they notify the Academic Services officers (contact - Nick McGhee) when the unconfirmed Minutes have been confirmed and signed by the committee at its next meeting, and in instances where any amendments have been agreed, supply an electronic version to Academic Services incorporating these amendments.

5.10.5 Submission of committee documents to the Records Office

Although UCL’s formal committees web pages serve as a repository for electronic versions of Minutes of UCL’s formal committees, secretaries of these committees are still required to send hard copies of all confirmed, signed Minutes and related Papers to the UCL Records Office, for storage in perpetuity.

Secretaries of UCL formal committees should submit to the UCL Records Office (contact: Robert Winckworth) a hard copy of the confirmed signed Minutes of each meeting within three working days of their confirmation and signing at the next meeting of the committee.

All confirmed signed committee Minutes submitted to the Records Office should be full sets, including any sections marked as ‘Confidential business’ or ‘Confidential (Reserved) business’ and all Papers referred to in the Minutes.

The confirmed signed Minutes submitted to the Records Office should incorporate any amendments agreed by the committee in the process of approving and confirming the Minutes. Where any amendments agreed by the committee are relatively minor, e.g. typographical errors or deletion/addition of words, it may be possible to incorporate these on the signed Minutes as handwritten corrections. However, in cases where any amendments agreed by the committee are more substantial, it may be necessary to reproduce the Minutes to incorporate the amendments, with a view to resubmitting these to the Chair for signing.
6. Presentation of committee documents

6.1 Presentation of the Agenda

A (partly fictional) illustrative example of a committee Agenda is at APPENDIX 1.

A template for secretaries of UCL formal committees to use as a basis for drafting Agendas according to the house style illustrated on the following pages is available to download at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/committees/Agenda_Template.doc

- The order of business on the Agenda should normally be categorised as follows:
  - Preliminary Business
    This comprises the routine business to be dealt with initially before the main business of the meeting and should include:
    1) Any matters relating to the constitution, membership or terms of reference of the committee (NB. the committee should usually receive and note its constitution, membership and terms of reference at its first meeting of each session);
    2) Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting – the Chair should be asked to sign and date a hard copy of the previous meeting’s Minutes to confirm them as a true record;
    3) Matters Arising from the previous meeting’s Minutes. This may consist of: (i) an oral report from the Chair or Secretary; (ii) a cross-reference to items later in the agenda; or (iii) a written update paper.
  - Matters for Discussion
    These are the main items of business of the meeting and should include substantive major issues which the committee is expected to discuss. These may or may not involve formal decisions or recommendations to other committees.
  - Other Matters for Approval or Information
    These should include other items of business that the committee is expected to approve ‘on the nod’ and which are not expected to require substantive discussion, along with items of information that the committee is expected to note and which do not require decision. Included in this section of the Agenda should be the reporting any items of action taken by the Chair on the committee’s behalf since the committee’s previous meeting.

- Numbering of items always starts with 1, 2, 3, etc, and then returns to 1, 2, 3, etc, for subsequent Agendas. [NB this is not the case with Minutes, where a sequential run of numbers should follow through the whole academic year.]

- The Agenda should indicate whether the committee is being asked to take a formal decision (see items 6-8 in the example). Further detail should be provided in the header box of the Paper itself.

- All Papers should be given a unique reference number in the footer of the paper. The full format for the paper attached to item 4 in the example agenda would be: JBSC 1-03 (15-16); this indicates that the Paper is the third paper on the Agenda of the first Jeremy Bentham Scholarships Committee meeting in 2015-16. This ‘full’ form should be used in the Minutes, but for the purposes of the Agenda paper, 1-03 is sufficient.
Depending on the nature of the committee, the Secretary might also give consideration to using a single run of page numbers throughout the set of papers, with page number references included on the agenda. While this is helpful for members, it can be impractical where late changes to the papers are common.

6.2 Presentation of Papers

A template for secretaries of UCL formal committees to use – and to send to other UCL officers as appropriate – as a basis for drafting Papers according to the house style illustrated on the following pages is available to download at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/committees/Appendix_paper_template.doc

General

☐ As a general principle, Papers are expected to be self-sufficient documents – that is to say, they should include all of the substantive relevant background information that the committee requires to consider the matter to which the paper refers.

☐ Papers received by a committee should be brief, clear and to the point. In the case of longer papers, an executive summary should be considered.

☐ Wherever possible, detailed supporting information should be placed in one or more appendices to the Paper, rather than in the main text.

Summary box

☐ The top of the first page should include an introductory (boxed) section which includes the following information:

  o A brief summary of the content of the paper – for example, to provide an update report on developments within a certain area of activity since the committee’s previous meeting, etc.

  o A statement of the action that the committee is being asked to take – in many cases this will read simply ‘to note’ (as, for example, in the case of an update report for the committee’s information). Where the committee is being asked to approve the report or a recommendation or proposal contained therein, this will usually be in the format ‘That the Committee approve….’

  o The name of the author(s) (in the case of a Paper ‘to note’) and/or the proponent(s) (in the case of a Paper making a recommendation or proposal). Although it may often be the case that the Author and Proponent are the same officer, this may not always be the case. In instances where a Paper has been written by an officer (or officers) but the proposal contained therein has been put forward in the name of another senior officer (or officers), then authorship of the Paper should be credited separately.

Content

☐ In the process of drafting Papers that outline proposals or recommendations, authors will also wish to bear in mind the following points:

  o Are there any other UCL officers who need to be consulted in the process of drafting the proposal or recommendation?
  o Will the proposal or recommendation outlined in the paper give rise to any changes to any UCL policy documents (eg policy statements in the UCL Academic Manual)
or regulations (eg UCL Academic Regulations) that will need to be referred to other UCL officers for action?

- Are there any financial, IT, space or other resource issues or implications that need to be taken into account?
- Does the decision of the committee that is being asked to consider the proposal need to be referred to another committee or body for formal approval?

(NB. The points above are not exhaustive. Chairs and secretaries of committees will wish to liaise to agree their own list of relevant questions/issues that authors should be asked to bear in mind when drafting Papers for consideration by the committee, and issue guidance on this accordingly.)

☐ **It may be helpful to categorise the information contained in the Paper** under the following sub-headings (or other sub-headings as appropriate):

- **Background** – setting out any background information which helps to give context to the Paper. This might include the text of a previous Minute if the Paper relates to an item that has been considered previously by the committee.
- **Issues** (or **Developments**) – summarising any key issues relating to the proposal (or developments if the Paper is providing an update report on an area of activity since the previous meeting). Other sub-headings may be used as appropriate.
- **Proposal(s)** – setting out any proposals that the committee is being asked to discuss and/or approve.

**Numbering of Papers**

☐ Once the Paper is received from the author, **the information in the header and footer, ie the Paper number, should be added by the Committee Secretary.**

### 6.3 Presentation of the Minutes

A fictional example of Minutes is at APPENDIX 2. A blank template is at [https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/committees/Minutes_Template.doc](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/committees/Minutes_Template.doc).

- **Numbering of Minutes** runs consecutively throughout the session rather than returning to 1, 2, 3, etc, for each set of Minutes. For example, if in a first meeting of a session the minute numbering ran from 1-12, the Minutes of the next meeting in the same session would begin with 13.

- The Minutes should record the **list of members present** at the meeting in alphabetical order of surname, with the Chair listed first. If a person attended in place of a member, his or her name should be listed with the name of the member for whom they are deputising shown in brackets. Non-members who attended the meeting or part of the meeting should be shown separately under the heading ‘In attendance:’ and, in cases where they attended for only part of the meeting, the Minute numbers of the items of business for which they were in attendance. The Committee Secretary’s name should normally be included in the details of those in attendance (unless s/he is a member of the committee). The details of those in attendance should be followed by the names of members from whom apologies were received.

- The **order of Minutes** will usually follow the actual chronology of business discussed at the meeting, except in the case of confidential Minutes, which should be included in a separate section at the end.

- **All information recorded in the Minutes should be written in the past tense** – eg ‘It was noted that…’; ‘The dates of the next meetings of the Committee were scheduled as follows...’
Minuting discussion. It is recommended that Minutes should at least give a flavour or summary of the discussion leading to a decision or resolution – however, the need for brevity should be the key consideration. Any discussion should be minuted as concisely as possible and should not attempt to be a transcript of every comment made. Also, secretaries should bear in mind when minuting discussion that the committee Minutes will have an audience beyond the immediate membership of the committee and may be requested by external agencies and bodies under the Freedom of Information Act (2000) (see section 3.4.1 above). Only in exceptional circumstances should statements in the Minutes be attributed to named individual committee members. In most cases, the impersonal ‘It was noted’, ‘It was agreed’, etc, should be used. An example of exceptional circumstances would be when a member asked for his or her disagreement with a committee’s decision to be recorded.

Minuting decisions and follow-up actions. Minutes should clearly record any decisions or follow-up actions agreed by the committee along with an indication of the names of the persons responsible for effecting the decision or follow-up action. Formal resolutions should be recorded in bold text preceded by ‘RESOLVED –’, or, where applicable, ‘RESOLVED – on the recommendation of xxxxx –’.

Summary of required action arising from the Minutes. Required action arising from decisions and follow-up actions recorded in the Minutes should be distilled and summarised on a covering Action Sheet, together with an indication of the persons responsible for each action and the due date for the action to be taken – as indicated in the example at APPENDIX 3. A template Action Sheet is at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/srs/governance-and-committees/committees/Covering_action_sheet.doc.