

Tips for Being an Effective Chair and Handling Challenging Meetings.

These scenarios are provided to support the induction material provided for new and continuing committee Chairs. The intention is to ensure that Chairs of committees have appropriate ways to deal with how they conduct meetings and support the University's Code of Conduct and Values (Integrity, Respect, Courage, Excellence and Impact), Vision and Mission.

The role of the Chair is different to that of the committee members as they are first and foremost a facilitator. The chair is required to ensure all members participate and are heard, to encourage rich discussions, and tease out different viewpoints, keeping dialogue focused and on track. The Chair sets the tone of what is acceptable and expected from members to ensure effective meeting outcomes.

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
<p>Induction of a new committee member</p> <p>https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/help-how-induct-new-members</p> <p>An effective induction programme provides core information and advice to enable a new member to understand the organisation and their role, and ensures that new members feel welcome, valued and part of the team.</p>	<p>A staff or student who has little or no experience as a member of a University committee, and has been invited to join a committee as a new member.</p>	<p>Sam is a staff member recently asked to join a Faculty committee due to her expertise within one of the Schools in the Faculty. Sam is excited to have been selected for the committee and is also nervous as a new committee member.</p>	<p>You as the Chair of the Committee can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a preliminary introduction email to Sam to welcome her to the committee prior to her first meeting and outline the functions of the committee and expectations of members. • Ensure that Sam feels welcomed to the meeting and encourage all members to briefly introduce themselves, their roles and responsibilities and position (if applicable) in the group. • If possible, invite Sam for a one to one induction meeting to discuss committee structure, Terms of Reference and any matters currently being worked on by the committee. Discuss the specific skills and expertise that Sam possesses and how these can best be used in the committee.

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider an experienced committee member to assist Sam as a “buddy” and provides mentoring and direction for a period of time.
<p>Ensuring Members feel their voice is heard</p> <p>Extract from link: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLMD1121.html</p>	<p>A committee member may have succeeded in sharing their thoughts, but has been ignored or "shot down" by bigger voices in the room.</p> <p>Although deeply demoralizing for the speaker, your team and organization are also losing out on knowledge and experience of the speaker, and will be poorer for it.</p>	<p>Megan is not getting the chance to speak, or not feeling that she is being heard when she does speak, and feels deeply demoralized – especially as it happens time and again.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call meeting to order and invite Megan to finish her statement and points. Lead by example and encourage Megan to voice her ideas by saying something like, “Megan, I believe that you have a point you wish to add to this discussion, please go ahead” Summarize what Megan has said, confirming with her that it was a fair summary of her points. Possibly ask Megan to undertake a task to be brought back at the next meeting for discussion and lodge an item on the agenda for the next meeting if further discussion (and unpacking) of her viewpoint would be beneficial. If other members are dominating the conversation, specifically ask others like Megan for their ideas. Close down unhelpful or harmful conversations, and have the ability to ask committee members to stop, regroup and refocus if required.

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
<p>Managing challenging behaviours</p> <p>https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/dealing-conflict-what-do-when</p>	<p>Sometimes the behaviours of certain individuals can threaten to destabilise the harmonious workings of a committee.</p>	<p>Feeby is acting in a manner which is disrupting the meetings with her behaviour. This is affecting the morale of committee members and causing member attendance to decline.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the meeting, close down unhelpful or harmful conversations by Feeby and ask her to stop, regroup and refocus if required. • Make an appointment to speak to Feeby outside of the meeting to reiterate clear expectations on her meeting responsibility. • Discuss with Feeby the reason for her behaviour in meetings and confirm actions to be taken to address this. • Reflect on the expected standards of behaviour and/or Code of Conduct which all committee members have agreed to follow, especially to act with integrity and respect in meetings at all times, and provide Feeby with the link to the University Code. • Develop strategies to assist Feeby that may be helpful for her performance as a committee member.
<p>Non-attendance at meetings</p> <p>Extract from Steps Forward</p> <p>https://edhub.ama-assn.org/</p>	<p>Committee member who doesn't attend most meetings and doesn't contribute when he does attend.</p>	<p>Owen has been on the committee for a few years and was initially attending meetings on a regular basis. Since a change in committee membership has occurred, Owen does not attend as regularly and often misses the meetings with no explanations.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Owen hasn't shared his thoughts at meetings he attends, you as the Chair can draw him out by saying, "We haven't heard from you Owen, and we'd like to hear your thought on this discussion point." • Meet with Owen outside of the committee meeting or contact via email to discuss the reasons for non-attendance (could be a short-term personal issue or work challenges).

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Owen and actively listen to the concerns he raises, identifying the root causes of his non-attendance. • Enforce the committee Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct for members, highlighting where it specifies required attendance levels and actions to be taken if breached. Restate the code to Owen as a reminder. • Discover if Owen was inducted when he first joined the committee, and provide if necessary with written description of roles and responsibilities.
Managing challenging behaviours	<p>Members who are volatile, speak out of turn or monopolise meetings.</p> <p>Extract from: https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/preventing-damaging-conflict</p>	<p>Tom is a very enthusiastic committee member who is eager to express his opinions at committee meetings on all agenda items and has a hard time controlling his passion and behaviour.</p> <p>The committee members see Tom as impulsive and are not engaged when Tom monopolises the meetings.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Tom and all committee members understand their roles and relevant boundaries. • Maintain control of the meeting and in doing so set time limits for Tom and other members to speak to the agenda items. • Encourage full participation and freedom of expression, however discourage any member who monopolises the meeting. • Be tactful and sensitive to the feelings of Tom and all members, making them all feel valued. • Steer Tom to work harmoniously and purposefully as a team member, focusing on the best interests of the committee. • Discourage Tom and all members from personal attacks or point scoring. • Establish an agreed approach for each agenda item, making clear when individual

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
			members make an uninterrupted presentation and when items are open for discussion.
<p>Dealing with conflict: What To Do When...</p> <p>https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/dealing-conflict-what-do-when</p>	<p>Most committees have some sort of challenge with individual members.</p> <p>All committee members have a valuable role to play. The diversity of membership, with differing backgrounds, skill-sets, experience and personalities can be a source of strength for the organisation if effectively managed.</p>	<p>Ben has served on a University committee as the Deputy Chair for a long time and on occasions in the role of Acting Chair. He holds strong views on his value and mission on the committee and wants to keep a firm grip on the outcomes at each meeting, in some cases to the detriment of the University and the committee of which he is a member.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and respect Ben's past achievements and strategies and thank him for his involvement, however point out the need for whole committee collaboration especially when the committee needs to agree on new directions and move forward. • Conduct a skills analysis for Ben and other committee members to make everyone aware of the range of skills and experience available within the group and encourage more even involvement from all members. • Clarify the authority for delegated tasks, decision-making and reporting to identify which decisions need to be authorised by the whole committee. • Clarify the decision-making processes for committee matters as a whole with emphasis on the use of consensus and voting.
<p>Committee member performance development needs</p>	<p>A committee member seeks out the Chair for feedback to help prepare for a performance development discussion.</p>	<p>Ann has been a member of the committee for only a few months and feels overwhelmed and uncertain of her performance on the committee.</p>	<p>You as Chair can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to a brief discussion with Ann outside of the committee meeting. • Actively listen to what Ann has to say about her thoughts on her performance and possible development needs. • Prepare examples of knowledge, skills and contributions in the areas that Ann has highlighted as areas for improvement.

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest opportunities for professional development that may assist Ann to gain the best outcome from her membership. • Point Ann towards internal and external sources that may be helpful for her performance development strategies.
Asked to undertake tedious tasks as a committee member	A new committee member is more likely to be delegated tedious tasks that no one else wants to do.	Sonia is a new committee member and feels that she is continually being asked to undertake the menial tasks in support of the committee's activities.	You as Chair can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all committee members are given the opportunity to use their knowledge and skills towards completing tasks in support of committee activities. • Rotate the tasks amongst committee members to improve their skills development and capabilities for addressing unaccustomed activities.

Appendix 1: Characteristics of a Good Chair

(<https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/characteristics-of-a-good-chairperson>)

Qualities, skills and knowledge

A good chairperson will:

- speak clearly and succinctly;
- be sensitive to the feelings of members and show interest in member's viewpoints;
- be a good listener, exhibit active listening and have an ability to respect confidences
- be impartial, objective and tactful;
- start and finish on time and able to delegate;
- be approachable and good at team building;
- have an understanding of the University sector and sound knowledge of the University's work;
- be a good strategist and a strong networker;
- consider succession planning;
- plan for skills development of themselves and the committee;
- have experience of management committee involvement;
- ensure decisions are taken and recorded.

Do's and Don'ts

A good chairperson will:	A good chairperson will not:
Make all members feel valued	Be the person who talks most at the meetings
Strive for consensus, using his/her casting vote sparingly	Make all the decisions
Listen to others, active listening	Allow one or two people to dominate meetings
Encourage new faces onto committee	Cut people out of discussions
Plan for the future	Allow meetings to become unproductive
Make new members feel welcome	Make people feel foolish or useless
Allow others to take responsibility	Force people to contribute to discussions
Keep calm	Lose his/her temper

This document is adapted from information obtained from the following links:

- Workforce-Capability-Framework-tool-kit.doc, Authorised and published 2011, republished by the © State of Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services December 2017; licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence (Attached)
- <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/workforce-capability-framework-implementation>
- http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/resources/covid-19/how-effectively-is-your-board-chaired?utm_source=AdobeCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MembershipUpdate&utm_content=DM3271500&TC=DM3271500.
- <https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/education/courses-for-the-director/webinars/9615---spotlight-on---the-effective-chair-11301>
- https://complaints.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/Code_of_Conduct.pdf
- <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/resource/characteristics-of-a-good-chairperson>
- <https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/RunningMeetings.htm>
- <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/dealing-conflict-what-do-when>