

Tips for Being an Effective Committee Member

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

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
New committee member	You have had little or no experience as a member of a University committee, and have been invited to join a committee as a new member.	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.	Sam as a new committee member should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend any induction session offered. Normally the Executive Officer or Secretariat support will contact Sam to arrange a convenient time before her first meeting. If this does not happen, Sam should contact them to enquire about an induction session. • Familiarise herself with resources provided by the University Secretariat for committee members on the University website, including references on the University terminology. • Proactively search out a committee mentor or “buddy” to assist her to familiarise herself with the workings of committees and help her gain confidence in meetings. • Prepare for meetings and forward apologies if unable to attend. • Use the agenda and notate points for discussion prior to the meetings. • Listen to the speakers and learn from other people. • Ask questions if unclear or unsure and consider all the options and share views. • Always vote according to her own views or the views of those she is representing. If Sam is on a committee as a representative of a team or group, she has an obligation to present to the committee any recommendations to it from that team or group.

Topic	This Topic Covers	Scenario Example (If this...)	Possible Action (Then that...)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak up when having something to say and be responsive to constructive feedback. • Focus on the best interests of the University and committee goals rather than on personal interests. • Abide by the committee's decisions, whether she agrees with them or not. • Pay attention to the University activities that affect or are affected by the committee's work. • Support the efforts of the committee Chair and carry out individual assignments allocated by the Chair.
<p>Voice overlooked during meetings</p> <p>(https://www.mindtools.com/media/Images/Infographics/5-Ways-to-Get-Your-Voice-Heard-in-Meetings.pdf)</p>	<p>You contribute a point during the meeting which is ignored, talked over and at a later point brought up by someone else which receives avid attention.</p>	<p>Phillip raises a point in the discussions which is promptly overlooked, ignored or talked over, and yet the same point receives considerable attention when raised by a more senior and long-time committee member.</p>	<p>Phillip should (if talked over):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politely request from the Chair that he be allowed to finish his point. • Consider whether he has been speaking loudly enough – if not talk louder. • Consider whether he has been going on too long, been repetitive or unclear, in which case he should end his statement quickly. • When the item is re-introduced, clearly and succinctly speak up to restate his points for the discussion.
<p>How to get your voice heard in meetings</p> <p>Extract from link: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/how-to-get-your-voice-heard-in-meetings.htm</p>	<p>You may have succeeded in sharing your thoughts, but have been ignored or "<i>shot down</i>" by bigger voices in the room.</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>Megan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have confidence in her own value and what she brings to the committee. • Research the subject under discussion in the agenda before attending the meeting and plan what she wants to say to contribute. • Ask questions to clarify points and show she is engaged and interested. • Express her views firmly, keeping it short and to the point • Speak up for others who are also not getting a chance to speak. Say something like "Andrew, what were you going to say?"

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be one of the first to speak and give her ideas the best advantage, without being aggressive. • If she agrees with another member's viewpoint, then acknowledge them and add to their comments.
<p>Managing your behaviour in meetings</p> <p>https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/dealing-conflict-what-do-when</p>	<p>Sometimes you might feel that your behaviour is threatening to destabilise the harmonious workings of a committee, even though this is not your intention.</p>	<p>Feeby is acting in a manner which is disrupting the meetings and she receives feedback from someone else on the committee that her behaviour is unhelpful. Her behaviour is affecting the drive of committee members and attendance has declined.</p>	<p>Feeby should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be responsive to constructive feedback on her current meeting behaviour and strive to improve positive relations with other committee members. • Adhere to the University Code of Conduct especially in terms of meeting etiquette and speaking out of turn or monopolising meetings. • Review her ongoing membership of the committee (if not an Ex Officio)—can she be an asset to the committee. • Define a clear purpose for her attendance and contributions to the meetings and strive to match her skills, knowledge and interests with the needs and requirements of the committee. • Be open to discuss reasons for her behaviour at a personal meeting with the Chair, “buddy” or other committee members if she so wishes. • Strive to improve her behaviour and review the code of conduct should she wish to continue on the committee. • Seek information from internal and external personal development resources on how to act and behave on committees and at meetings. • Understand her role and work harmoniously and purposefully as a team member focussing on the best interest of the committee and his peers. • Be courageous and request removal from the committee membership if she feels she cannot add value or her situation does not permit her to continue (if not an Ex Officio).

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Non-attendance at meetings	You do not attend most meetings and do not contribute when you do attend.	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>Owen is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the committee Terms of Reference particularly with regard to meeting attendance. • Attend a committee induction or proactively source the Secretariat resources for committee members on the University webpage to reinforce his purpose in attending the meetings. • Be responsive to constructive feedback on his current meeting attendance behaviour. • Be open to discuss reasons for his behaviour with the Chair and formulate a strategy to improve attendance. • Review his capacity to continue on the committee (if not an <i>Ex Officio</i>), especially in terms of his ability to maintain attendance commitments and contribute.
Committee member performance development needs	The Chair and committee member prepare for a performance development discussion.	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>At the meeting the Chair and Ann should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss any identified gaps and Ann could seek further discussions with colleagues in similar committee roles to improve her skills in the identified areas. • Examine the possibility of further training and education for Ann, which should be brought to the attention of Ann's Line Manager as part of Ann's professional development activities.
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.	<p>Sonia should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a watertight refusal in place and say something like "I'm working on a very important project and worried I won't have the capacity to undertake this work". • Arm herself with evidence to decline the request and make a case for splitting the work more evenly with the men on the committee. • Propose rotating the task she has been asked to do with other members of the committee.

Appendix 1: Attributes of Good Committee Members

Adapted from: <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/workforce-capability-framework-implementation>

Community Sector Workforce Capability Framework Tool Kit, word document page 20-21

Quality Attribute	Descriptor
Creative and innovative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds ways to work better and smarter • Generates options and ideas • Is open to change and alternatives • The ability to think creatively and laterally
Passionate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is enthusiastic • Has a willingness to learn • Effective interpersonal and communication skills • Deep interest in the mission of the organisation and committee
Dependable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has faith in own abilities • Is optimistic • Remains calm and focused when faced with difficulty • Follows through with commitments
Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews arguments and opinions before making judgement • Presents clear and logical arguments • Ability to think strategically, critically and analytically • Takes a systematic approach when building toward improvements
Flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to changing circumstances in the workplace • Prioritises work and addresses what is most important • Takes advantage of new and emerging opportunities
Resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovers from setbacks • Overcomes obstacles and impediments • Learns from experience and identifies areas for self-development
Team Orientated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possess positive collaborative attitude • Is attentive and outcome focused • Recognises the rights of others • Makes equitable decisions • Encourages others to attain goals and achieve
Culturally aware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects difference in all its forms • Adapts language to aid communication • Values diversity as a strength and positively utilises diversity
Honest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is credible and truthful • Is reliable and trustworthy • Acknowledges and learns from mistakes • Independence of thought
Ethical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has integrity and principles • Exhibits expected standards of behaviour and/or Code of Conduct • Has positive reputation in the organisation • Ethical and moral behaviour

Quality Attribute	Descriptor
Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is committed to the organisation's objectives • Ability to operate as part of a team • Understanding of stakeholders and their needs • Works with others to achieve common goals • Engenders a spirit of teamwork • Is able to address tough issues and work through conflicts

The document was adapted from information obtained from the following links:

- Workforce-Capability-Framework-tool-kit.doc (Attached), 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
- <https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/workforce-capability-framework-implementation>
- (<https://www.mindtools.com/media/Images/Infographics/5-Ways-to-Get-Your-Voice-Heard-in-Meetings.pdf>)
- <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/download/dealing-conflict-what-do-when>
- <https://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/committees/principles/meetings/set-up/member>
- https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/opinion/sunday/sheryl-sandberg-and-adam-grant-on-women-doing-office-housework.html?_r=0
- <https://officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/womens-policy/womens-leadership/women-on-boards-and-committees>

Further Readings:

Get your Voice Heard at Meetings

<https://www.inc.com/andy-molinsky/7-tips-to-get-your-voice-heard-at-meetings.html>

The Top Five Strategies for Effective Committees:

<https://www.tripbuildermedia.com/2017/05/committees-top-five-principles-committee-effectiveness/>

Female participation on committees and how women are often selected to do the non-promotable work or even volunteer

https://hbr.org/podcast/2018/09/lets-do-less-dead-end-work?utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter_daily&utm_campaign=dailyalert_not_activesubs&referral=00563&deliveryName=DM14467

So you want to be a committee member

https://www.orsr.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/7101/So_you_want_to_be_committee_member.pdf