RECORDKEEPING GUIDELINES FOR UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

VERSION 1.1
ACCESS AND PRIVACY OFFICE
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT......................................................................................................................2

INTRODUCTION.............................................................................................................................................3

TYPES OF COMMITTEES.............................................................................................................................3

WHAT ARE COMMITTEE RECORDS? ...........................................................................................................4

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMITTEE RECORDS? ..............4

COMMITTEE RECORDS FORMATS .............................................................................................................5

ACCESS AND PRIVACY ..............................................................................................................................5

MANAGING ACCESS AND PRIVACY .........................................................................................................5

TAKING MINUTES – RECOMMENDED PRACTICES..................................................................................7

MANAGING RECORDS ...............................................................................................................................8

ORGANIZING MEETING RECORDS ...........................................................................................................8

RETENTION OF COMMITTEE RECORDS ....................................................................................................9

TRANSFERRING RECORDS TO THE ARCHIVES ....................................................................................10

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Chris Halonen, University Records Manager, Records Management Office, University of Waterloo, who has given permission to adapt the University of Waterloo Guideline for use at the University of Manitoba.
RECORDKEEPING GUIDELINES FOR UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES

INTRODUCTION

Committees, large and small, formal and informal, are integral to the functioning of the University. These guidelines are intended to assist committee chairs and secretaries in managing the records of University committees. Following these guidelines will help ensure that committee decisions and actions are easily retrievable when needed and will facilitate the University’s compliance with The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA), and University policies and procedures. They will clarify record keeping responsibilities, and ensure that full and accurate records are created, maintained, and accessed appropriately.

TYPES OF COMMITTEES

Governance: At the highest governance level of the University are the Board of Governors and Senate as well as their committees and councils.

Faculty, School, College, and Department Councils and their committees exist as the next level of governance.

Mandatory committees are also present on campus. These are committees mandated by legislation or external agencies. They include the Health & Safety Committees and Research Ethics Boards.

Adjudicative committees: These are committees which decide or make recommendations regarding: faculty or senior administrative appointments; tenure and promotion; the awarding of scholarships, prizes, and honours; appeals, and the allocation of certain types of research funding. These committees exist at several levels of the organization.

Administrative committees: There are also numerous University level and departmental committees, ad hoc committees and taskforces, which support the operations of the University. Other University initiatives operate with the assistance of advisory boards and councils.
WHAT ARE COMMITTEE RECORDS?

Committee records are the documents providing the official records and evidence of the committee’s deliberations and decisions. Committee records include:

- the committee’s mandate or terms of reference;
- meeting records such as agendas, minutes, and supporting documents;
- reports produced by the committee;
- working records such as current membership lists and members’ contact information, room reservations, catering orders, etc.
- official memorandum, and other official communications

Depending on the nature of the committee the supporting documents for meetings may include reports (either internal or externally generated), proposals, presentations, and case files for awards, grants, job applications, promotions, etc.

Informally constituted groups such as ad hoc taskforces, working groups, and staff meetings may not require formal minutes. The work of these groups may be documented by notes on action items, final reports, or documents such as official memorandums that record decisions and actions.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMITTEE RECORDS?

The committee secretary or recorder is responsible for maintaining the full and official records of the committee. If there is no secretary or recorder, the Chair of the Committee is responsible for maintaining the official record, or should delegate this responsibility to another member. The delegation should be included within a motion of the committee to formally document the responsibility. The full responsibility of managing the retention of the Committee records includes ensuring the accurate creation of meeting minutes and retaining a complete and official copy of all committee records, as well as transferring the historical record regularly to the Archives. Further detail on this can be found in the section regarding Managing Records.

Other Committee members should maintain their copies of records as long as required to serve in their role, and then ensure that all copies are securely destroyed when no longer required. If the committee has dealt with confidential issues, or issues involving personal information, such as decisions around the granting of awards and honours, discipline issues, or any issue that involves individual personal health issues, all copies of material containing personal information should be destroyed at the conclusion of the meeting.
COMMITTEE RECORDS FORMATS

While many committees still meet face to face, technology is providing new and increasingly popular methods for people to meet remotely using, conference calls, videoconferencing, and web meetings. Be aware that when the proceedings of meetings are recorded (whether by audio, video, or in writing), these records may be included in an Access to Information Request.

If your committee relies on the creation of these types of records as an interim step in the creation of official and approved minutes, it may be useful to determine and document within the committee procedures how these records are created, used and securely destroyed.

Best practice would be to retain any transitory audio files until the written minutes of the session that was recorded have been approved. Any interim notes or recording that are made to support the creation of the official records may be disposed of as Transitory Records.

ACCESS AND PRIVACY

Depending on the nature of the committee, committee records may be public or subject to a security classification such as restricted or protected (see the Data Security Classification for more information on security classifications). All committee records are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), which means that all or part of a committee’s records may be accessible in the event of an Access to Information Request.

MANAGING ACCESS AND PRIVACY

Create committee records with the expectation that they could be made accessible under provincial privacy legislation, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FIPPA, and The Personal Health Information Act, or PHIA. Meeting minutes should be concise and objective with the decision clearly recorded. Avoid unsubstantiated or subjective comments. Avoid attributing comments to a specific person unless the attribution is required. (See below for recommended practices for taking minutes.)

Confidential and restricted records should be subject to reasonable security measures to keep them from inappropriate disclosure. Should committee records include personal information or personal health information, access should be provided only on a need to know basis, and only the minimum amount of information should be provided to the minimum amount of people.

Paper records should be stored in locked cabinets, and the cabinets should be located in a secure and private space, like a file room or an office. Electronic records should be protected either by restricting access to the folders on the shared drive, or by establishing appropriate roles and permission levels within a secure software application. If portable media are used to store records, such as thumb drives or portable hard drives, these media must be encrypted. Confidential and
restricted records should be disposed of using secure disposal practices. You can refer to the University's Data Security Classification for more details regarding handling sensitive information.

The following are recommended practices for the secure disposal of records that contain sensitive confidential or personal information:

1. Collect and shred paper copies distributed to committee members at the end of a meeting or once a decision is made.

2. Ensure that electronic copies of information are deleted after the meeting.

3. If sensitive confidential or personal information is shared electronically, it must be transported on encrypted and password protected devices.

4. Educate new committee members regarding expectations for keeping/disposing of copies at the beginning of their term.

5. If the proceedings of a meeting are recorded, the recording should not be seen as a substitute for a written summary or the official minutes. Informal notes or temporary electronic audio and video files should be destroyed in a secure fashion once the minutes have been circulated and approved by the committee. See the University’s Guideline on the Creation and Handling of Transitory Records for more information.

6. If informal notes or other files have not been destroyed, and if it is determined that they are related to or considered responsive to an active Access to Information Request or related to legal proceedings, they must be put on hold and no destruction of records should occur. Copies or originals should be provided to the required University business unit, as per the relevant University policy in order to allow the University to respond to the proceedings. Any related records should not be destroyed until the records creators are notified that the hold on destruction has been lifted. Please see the Records Holds Procedure for further detail.
TAking minutes – recommended practices

The minutes are the official record of the discussions and decisions of a constituted committee or other group. The record is made for the use of the members and, where appropriate, for those not in attendance.

It is best to write minutes as soon after the meeting as possible. The minutes should include:

1. name of the committee or group holding the meeting;
2. date of the meeting;
3. names of those present, including the chair, secretary, and guests as well as any absences/regrets and resources;
4. approval of the minutes, noting any changes, and any business arising;
5. record of any formal motions, decisions or action items, and related discussions; and
6. clear identification of any documents presented and/or discussed.

When recording discussions, it is best practice to focus on ideas, arguments, and facts. Ideally, the minutes should allow a reader to understand the rationale for the committee’s decisions and its rejection of alternatives. Record the points made, not the people who made them (examples: “Discussion included perceptions by students that...,” or, “In the discussion, the following points were raised...,” or “Members favoured the proposal for the following reasons...”).

There are two exceptions where individuals should be named.

1. Contributions may be attributed to a specific person if that person expressly requests it, and the meeting agrees that it should be part of the minutes.

2. When recording presentations, reports, or other scheduled items, it is acceptable to record the names of individuals acting in their professional capacity (e.g., John Smythee, Director of Campus Beautification, presented a report on “Re-designing Flower Beds for Maximum Colour Impact”).
MANAGING RECORDS

Managing records includes retaining the official copy of the records of the committee (including minutes, agendas, supporting documents and official correspondence and memorandum), filing and storing them securely while they are active, and then arranging for transfer to the appropriate University Archives when they are no longer actively referenced.

ORGANIZING MEETING RECORDS

PAPER RECORDS
Best practice is to arrange meeting records in chronological order, so that all records for one meeting are filed together. That would include the agenda, minutes, attachments, and other documents which are to be discussed at the meeting. It may be appropriate to keep case files, such as job applications or applications for an award separately from the meeting minutes.

A useful practice is to maintain a separate agenda file with a copy of the agenda for each meeting. This file can serve as a quick index to the committee’s business, which will make it easier to retrieve particular meeting records when necessary.

Paper records may be stored in binders separated by dividers for each meeting date or in hanging files organized by date.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS
Separate folders should be kept for each committee and for each type of document within that committee. It is important to be consistent in using and naming folders and files. The following is a suggested folder/file plan (Committee record keepers may devise their own).

Folder: Committee name – it can be the full name or an agreed upon abbreviation or acronym. For ease of retrieval, the same abbreviation or acronym should be used for all records.

Subfolders: could be created for Meeting Minutes including a copy of the agenda and supporting documents for each meeting; Agendas; Reports (for reports prepared by the committee); Attachments (for items, often submitted by committee members or guests, to append to the agenda); and “Other,” for correspondence, notes, etc. related to the committee. If necessary, additional folders may be created for information specific to a particular committee.

Sub – subfolders: each subfolder should be further subdivided by year – this could be a calendar year (e.g. 2010) or a fiscal year or academic year (e.g. 2009-10 for meetings from May 2009 to April 2010), whichever best suits the work of the particular committee.

Files for agendas, minutes, and reports should be named consistently with the same elements in the same order and using agreed upon abbreviations. The elements may be separated by a
hyphen. The file name should include the meeting date (yyyy-mm-dd), the type of file (agenda, minutes, or report), and an agreed abbreviation or acronym for the committee name.

Files for attachments, other documents, and committee specific folders – may be named at the discretion of the committee secretary/chair. For example, files to be attached to the agenda may be left as named by the sender or changed so that they sort in a way that makes retrieval easy for the secretary/chair. Use the standard format (yyyy-mm-dd) when adding a date to a file name, and add the agreed committee abbreviation or acronym to any files created for a particular committee.

Committee records should be stored in a common location such as a shared network drive rather than on personal computer space. Information Services and Technology can help ensure that only relevant employees have access to the folder. This practice will facilitate access to the records if the record keeper is unavailable. However, for committees that deal with sensitive personal information, care must be taken so that new committee members do not have inappropriate access to previous committee files (see Access and Privacy above).

If a committee has members from across business units, providing access to the records will be more complicated, and you may wish to contact the University Records Manager for advice relevant to your specific situation.

RETENTION OF COMMITTEE RECORDS

Most committee records, particularly minutes, agendas, supporting documents and official correspondence, have long-term value to the University and will be retained permanently as part of its archives. Committees with permanent records include the Board of Governors and its committees, Senate and its committees and councils, faculty and school councils and their committees, college and departmental councils and their committees, University-level committees, advisory boards and councils, and academic department committees.

Records of committees that are mandated by government or perform adjudicative functions, such as committees that recommend or decide on hiring or the awarding of scholarships, grants, etc., may have shorter retention periods. Please speak with the University Records Manager for clarification on these records.

Most working records related to committees (e.g., copies of catering orders and room bookings, regrets sent by email and other email related to setting up meetings rather than to the substantive business of the committee, and draft notes from meetings) are of short term value and should be destroyed or deleted once they are no longer needed for current work. Please see the Guideline on the Creation and Handling of Transitory Records as well as the Common Records Authority Schedule (GOV-030) for further details.
SHOULD OFFICIAL COMMITTEE RECORDS BE PAPER OR ELECTRONIC?

Either format is acceptable, however if formal signatures are required on minutes you may be required to use paper. For official signatures, please also ensure a good pen with quality ink is used to prevent fading.

If your committee records are being maintained solely in electronic form, please contact the University Records Manager to determine which records have archival value and for advice on maintaining those records until a long-term solution is available.

Electronic imaging: paper committee records may be imaged (scanned) for the convenience of users (e.g. for ease of search and retrieval or to post a copy on the website). The paper originals should be transferred to the archives.

TRANSFERRING RECORDS TO THE ARCHIVES

The majority of committees’ official records are considered archival. For all faculty, school, college and departmental committees, records should be managed according to the Common Records Authority Schedule. Requisition forms should be completed and sent to the Access and Privacy Office. If you have any questions, you may contact the University Records Manager.