The following standard information should be included in the terms of reference of University standing committees of Senate and Council, using the headings as indicated below:

**Role**

This section should provide a basic summary, in a few sentences, of the Committee’s main role and purpose.

**Responsibilities**

This section should describe in more detail, in a numbered list, the specific activities that the Committee is responsible for. It should indicate clearly what the nature of the Committee’s responsibility is in relation to each activity; eg

1. To enhance the performance of...
2. To consider and approve...
3. To develop and implement...
4. To receive reports...
5. To monitor and evaluate...
6. To recommend for approval...

All University committees must include the following standard clause in their list of responsibilities:

To consider, record and address the potential equal opportunity impacts of decisions made by the Committee (in accordance with the ‘due regard’ provisions of the Equality Act 2010).

**Reports to**

This section should specify the University body, ie Senate or Council, to which the Committee is responsible, and to which it submits its minutes/reports.

**Constitution and membership**

This section should provide two types of related information:

1. the different membership categories that make up the Committee’s constitution, ie positions that are ex-officio, appointed, elected, nominated, co-opted etc.
2. the names of the current member(s) in each category.

Where applicable, it is helpful to show in brackets after each member’s name the year in which their current term of office on the committee is due to end.
Duration of appointment

This section should specify the standard period for which members in the various categories are appointed to serve on the committee. Three general principles should be borne in mind:

i. ex-officio members are appointed by virtue of the position that they hold, so usually their term of office will not have a fixed end date.

ii. for appointed/elected/nominated members it is good practice to set a limit on the maximum period of time that they can serve on the committee. In governance terms this helps to ensure that the committee maintains an independent and objective approach to its work, and an inflow of fresh ideas and experience.

The standard approach is to say that such members shall normally be appointed for an initial period of three years, with a possibility that this may be renewed for a further period of no more than three years, to give a maximum tenure of six years. Such members must then retire from the committee for at least one year before being eligible for re-appointment.

Some University committees have specified that members in this category will not normally be allowed to serve for more than the initial period of three years. Where circumstances allow, this should generally be regarded as best practice.

iii. special considerations apply in the case of co-opted members. Such appointments are made outside of the committee’s formal, established constitution in order to provide relatively short term specialist advice, skills or experience for a particular project or programme of work. For this reason the standard approach is to say that co-opted members shall normally be appointed for an initial period of one year, with a possibility that this may be renewed annually, on up to two occasions, to give a maximum tenure of three years.

In attendance

This section should specify any other individuals, including the Secretary, who are not members of the Committee but who are expected to be regularly in attendance at its meetings. It is important to remember that although attendees may have useful opinions on or insights into the business of the Committee, they are not entitled to play a part (eg if something is put to a vote) in any formal decisions taken by the Committee.

Secretariat

This section should indicate which office in the University is responsible for providing administrative and secretarial support for the work of the Committee.

Frequency of meetings

This section should indicate the minimum number of meetings of the Committee that will normally be held in each academic year (or term). It should not be so restrictive as to place the Committee under an obligation to meet even when the flow of business is unlikely to warrant a meeting.
Quorum

This section should specify the quorum required for meetings of the committee. As a minimum, the quorum should be calculated as being one-third of the total membership of the committee (ie excluding the secretary and ‘attendees’), rounded up to the nearest whole number. On this basis, for example, the quorum for a committee of 9 members would be 3, and the quorum for committees of 10 or 11 members would be 4.

A committee may set a higher or more specific quoracy rule if it decides that this is required to suit its own circumstances, but obviously not to a level which presents a risk that meetings will fail regularly to be quorate.

Governance Office
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