

Best Practices – Committee Work

These recommendations summarize suggested best practices for committee work in order to support time and outcome-efficient committee work.

The committee should know what its charge/tasks are, what the potential workload is, whether their role is advisory or decision making, and how their work product will be used. The committee should know its (by)laws including how members and chair are elected (by whom?)/appointed (by whom?) and the term of service. The committee should know whether formal notes/minutes are required and whether it needs to reach unanimous decisions or if a simple majority is sufficient. Depending on the committee it may be appropriate to state voting results or the level of support by members in recommendations/draft documents. If any of these points are not known, the chair should request clarifications from the respective administrator. The chair of the committee should ensure that all committee members know and understand the roles and the operating procedures of the committee. For newly established committees, this should be discussed at the first meeting. For standing committees, the new members should be informed by the chair (or be informed where the information can be found).

The committee should set ground rules of operation. For newly established committees, this should be done prior to commencing with the work; for standing committees this should be done once a year. Typically, the following rules are used (but should be modified as appropriate):

- Be collegial in tone and content
- Be constructive and goal-oriented
- Share air time
- The committee represents the faculty body. The committee may decide to request outside opinions/information. However, this is a decision by the committee and not left to individual committee members.
- Be prepared to share the workload with the committee chair
- Regular attendance

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Benchmarking: Gathering information about how other institutions handle a specific situation can provide important insights. It can also delay or derail decision making. The committee should establish what kind of data set should be collected, from which institutions, and how the data will be used.