

## **Style Guide for Committee Documentation**

### **Purpose**

This guidance is designed to ensure that agendas, papers and minutes, prepared for meetings of committees and working parties, and other formal bodies of the University, follow a standard format, as described in more detail below.

### **Agendas**

The agenda for a meeting should fulfil three functions:

1. to confirm the time and place of the meeting
2. to inform members in advance of the topics to be dealt with
3. to act as a structural framework for the meeting by presenting the items in a logical sequence or by category of topic

### **Papers**

Papers, which normally accompany an agenda, should present the main topics for discussion at the meeting in sufficient detail to enable members attending to understand the issues and be ready to discuss them. While the content may vary greatly, most papers designed to elicit a decision (as distinct from papers issued for information only) should include the following, in the sequence shown:

1. the object of the paper
2. the question that is at issue together with a summary of the background. (Extensive background material should preferably be put in one or more appendices)
3. the alternative options
4. the resource implications
5. an invitation to make a decision

### **Minutes**

Minutes should provide a selective but accurate, clear, concise and logical record of a meeting for reference purposes. They should record the origin of each item, major points made in the course of discussion, the decision taken (including the voting on that decision if appropriate), the follow-up action required and an indication of by whom such action is to be taken.

### **Format**

Agendas (A) should be produced on blue paper, headed with the name of the Committee or Body and the date, time and location of the meeting. The name(s) of the person(s) convening the meeting should be given at the bottom of the agenda together with a note of to whom queries or apologies should be referred

Papers (P) should be produced on white paper, headed by the name of the Committee or Body, the subject title and date of the meeting. The name and title of the author should be given at the bottom together with the date of production

Minutes (M) should similarly give the name of the Committee or Body and the date, time and location of the meeting together with a list of all in attendance and those sending apologies. They should be produced on pink paper.

All documents should include page numbers, where they are more than 1 page in length, and should also include a footer stating 'This document is the property of the Royal Agricultural University'.

### **Document references**

Agendas, papers and minutes must carry the appropriate reference in the top right hand corner; for example

*TLAC/A(2006-2007)1 = The agenda for the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the TLAC in the 2006-2007 academic year*

*AQSC/P(2006-2007)5.6 = The paper relating to agenda item 6 for the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of AQSC in the 2006-2007 academic year*

*AB/M(2006-2007)3 = The minutes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of Academic Board in the 2006-2007 academic year*

### **Numbering**

Agendas, papers and minutes should be numbered consecutively starting with 1 for the first meeting of each academic year. This number is to be found immediately after the year dates, as shown above.

Items in agendas and minutes should be numbered in sequence, starting at '1', which should normally relate to the confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting.

Papers should be numbered to indicate both the meeting and agenda item under which they will be considered. This number will form the last figure or figures of the reference as shown in the AQSC example above.

### **Circulation**

Agendas and papers should be issued, whenever possible, at least five working days in advance of the meeting. Minutes should not normally be issued more than ten working days following the meeting to which they refer.

Action points from each meeting are to be circulated to the relevant member of staff within two weeks of the relevant meeting, by the committee secretary or their nominee.