BSBADM502
Manage meetings
Release 1

Learner guide

aspire
learning resources

BSBADM502
Manage meetings

Release 1

Learner guide

Aspire Version 1.1

aspire learning resources

Aspire is committed to developing quality resources that meet the needs of our customers. However, occasionally Aspire finds, or is notified of, errors. Please refer to our website at www.aspirelr.com.au to see if there are any updates that may be relevant to you.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this book is accurate; however, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for any loss, damage or injury arising from such information.

Except where an information source is acknowledged, the names and details of individuals and organisations used in examples are fictitious and have been devised for learning purposes only. Any similarity to actual people or organisations is unintentional.

All websites referred to in this unit were accessed and deemed appropriate at time of publication.

Aspire Training & Consulting apologises unreservedly for any copyright infringement that may have occurred and invites copyright owners to contact Aspire so any violation may be rectified.

BSBADM502 Manage meetings Release 1

Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

First published April 2017

Cover design: Rewind Creative
Printer: Doculink Australia Pty Ltd, 1d/28 Rogers Street, Port Melbourne VIC 3207

e-ISBN 978-1-76059-303-2 (PDF version)
ISBN 978-1-76059-302-5

Contact details

Participant
Name:
Start date:
Phone number:
Email:
Work location
Name:
Address:
Postal address:
Workplace supervisor name:
Phone number:
Fax:
Email:
Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
Name:
Address:
Postal address (if different):
Phone number:
Fax:
RTO contact name:
Mobile:
Email:

Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *BSBADM502 Manage meetings*, Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete. The features of this learner guide are detailed in the following table.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples and case studies	Examples of completed documents that may be used in a workplace are included in this learner guide. You can use these examples as models to help you complete practice tasks and learning checkpoints. Case studies highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	Where QR codes appear, learners can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help
Summary	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	There is a learning checkpoint at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

The following table outlines specific foundation skills noted for your learning in this learner guide.

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	• Identifies and interprets information from complex texts including legislation, organisational policies and procedures • Compares final output with original notes to check for accuracy
Writing	• Addresses the context, purpose and audience when generating a range of texts • Prepares complex texts from notes using appropriate structure, and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation • Records notes of meeting proceedings according to organisational requirements • Edits and corrects own work to ensure accuracy
Oral communication	• Participates in verbal exchanges using appropriate style, tone and vocabulary for audience, context and purpose • Listens for specific information during meetings • Asks questions and listens to responses to clarify understanding
Numeracy	• Recognises and interprets numerical information related to timeframes and budgets
Navigate the work of work	• Recognises and responds to both explicit and implicit organisational procedures and protocols and legislative/ regulatory requirements
Interact with others	• Selects the appropriate form, channel and mode of communication for a specific purpose relevant to own role • Cooperates with others as part of familiar activities, playing an active role in facilitating group interaction
Get the work done	• Applies formal processes when planning complex tasks, producing plans with logically sequenced steps, reflecting an awareness of time constraints • Recognises and takes responsibility for addressing predictable problems in familiar work contexts

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Prepare for meetings	1A Develop an agenda	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B Ensure an appropriate style and structure for the meeting	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C Identify meeting participants and notify them of the meeting	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D Confirm meeting arrangements	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1E Dispatch meeting papers within designated time lines	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
Topic 2 Conduct meetings	2A Chair meetings according to requirements and agreed conventions	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B Ensure meetings are focused, time-efficient and achieve outcomes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C Facilitate participation, discussion, problem-solving and issue resolution	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2D Brief the minute-taker	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

continued ...

... continued

Topic	Key outcome		Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 3 Follow up meetings	3A	Check the accuracy and format of meeting notes	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3B	Distribute and store minutes and other follow-up documentation	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	3C	Report meeting outcomes within designated time lines	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1
Prepare for meetings

There are many reasons for having a meeting; however, the reason for any meeting should be clear to all the participants and communicated well ahead of time so they may effectively prepare. Participants may need to prepare by reviewing or preparing documentation, reports, answers to questions, research and development, electronic presentations and so on.

A productive meeting requires planning to ensure an appropriate outcome. This involves the preparation of an agenda, making and confirming arrangements and disseminating relevant meeting documentation to all participants.

Organisational policy and procedure documents that may provide guidance on managing meetings may include a meeting procedures document, information management policy, supplier policies and a style guide. An organisational meeting template may need to be followed.

In this topic you will learn how to:

1A Develop an agenda

1B Ensure an appropriate style and structure for the meeting

1C Identify meeting participants and notify them of the meeting

1D Confirm meeting arrangements

1E Dispatch meeting papers within designated time lines

1A Develop an agenda

An agenda is a framework that supports the meeting and allows matters to be discussed in an orderly fashion. It allows for clarity, continuity and an effective outcome of the meeting. It should list all relevant matters for the particular meeting and set out an order of proceedings.

Before the agenda is created, research should be conducted in conjunction with management, potential members of the meeting and any relevant parties, to ensure that a meeting is warranted and, if so, that relevant topics are put on the agenda. This research also helps when deciding who will attend the meeting.

Establish a purpose for the meeting

Before you begin preparations for a meeting you need to confirm why you are having it. Every meeting must have a clearly defined purpose. A meeting goal can simply be to gain information, to give information or to hold a discussion to work out the best way to go about a specific task. Meeting purposes may be formalised or required by company protocols; for example, an annual general meeting of shareholders is dictated by the company's prospectus and company rules. There may also be government rules and regulations that must be adhered to.

Reasons why meetings are held

You must be very clear why you are having a meeting. Examples of common reasons for conducting a meeting are provided below.

Goals and decisions

To set goals and reach a decision

The setting of goals can relate to a company, to teams or individuals. These types of meetings will allow employees an opportunity to take part in the decision-making processes along with management.

Example

The sales manager calls a meeting with the sales team to set a monthly target for them to achieve during a new promotion. This lets everyone know the target and gives them an opportunity to decide an achievable goal.

Business review

To receive reports from participants and discuss business

Managers and staff meet on a regular basis to review matters regarding the financial position of the company, staff, management and the performance of its divisions.

Example

Regular staff meetings maintain order and monitor progress. Regular management meetings ensure budgets are followed, projects are on time and issues are dealt with promptly.

Project planning

To plan and develop a project

This requires regular meetings between group members to consider the particular focus and potential implementation of the ultimate goal.

Example

When selling a new product the sales manager, designer, writers, head of department, secretary, client, media buyer etc. meet regularly to plan an effective launch of the new product.

Project monitoring

To monitor a project

Once goals have been set, regular review meetings keep tabs on time, cost, performance etc. and allow the goal to remain in focus. Any issues can be dealt with promptly, before they get out of hand and cause delay.

Example

The sales manager calls a meeting with her sales team to ensure the goals previously agreed to are on target. The manager may give feedback and support if required.

Gain support

To gain support for an idea, initiative or decision

It is always a good idea to have a meeting to brainstorm ideas, gain new perspectives and check the views of key personnel. Ideas, initiatives or decisions can be reviewed at minimal cost to the business.

Example

A new client has been taken on board and the chief designer calls his team together to brainstorm promotions for the new brand. Possible concepts are discussed openly to gain new insights, opinions and ideas.

Resolve conflict

To discover, analyse or solve a problem or conflict

Conflict needs to be solved as quickly as possible, and a meeting with individuals helps to contain any issues.

Example

If the company needs to resolve an issue, such as a need to change shift hours, an open forum with key personnel enables meeting participants to discuss possible issues that may arise, and to develop risk management strategies.

Forum for discussion

A forum for discussion

This kind of meeting is valuable for both internal and external participants as a clarification tool for a range of business items. This is where the views of individuals can be aired, listened to and a plan of action can be discussed or put into place.

Example

An annual general meeting where shareholders can have their say on the performance of the company is a forum for discussion.

Share information

To share information

Some meetings provide information to participants without requirement for discussion.

Example

A staff meeting is held to inform staff of new phone procedures and advise there will be some disruption to their work stations when new air conditioning is installed next week.

Gain understanding

To gain understanding

A meeting requires information from its participants for the benefit of all concerned, but mainly as a gathering of details for the Chair.

Example

A team meets to update the supervisor on their projects. The supervisor can then pass that information up the line.

Set the date

Decide on an appropriate date and time for the meeting. Clarify that the time and date are acceptable and agreed upon by the appropriate person who may be the director, project manager, chairperson, etc.

Prepare the agenda

It is usual practice for any written agenda to be prepared by the person who has been designated as Secretary for the meeting. The chairperson will have the final say on the agenda items. The secretary is a person who has been chosen to assist the chair in gathering information for the meeting, organising meeting arrangements, recording the proceedings of meetings, then preparing the minutes and issuing them to the participants afterwards.

The way agendas are presented depends on the organisation's policies; some are detailed and include the item in broad terms, the issues to be discussed, who will speak about the item and the time allowed; while others are more basic and simply list the item to be discussed.

It is essential that agenda items are clearly numbered so participants can see the order of the meeting and meeting minutes can be written to match the agenda items.

Agenda components

The main areas an agenda includes vary depending on the focus and style of meeting. The following is a list of commonly used headings and their meanings or procedures.

Agenda components

1

Statement or purpose of meeting

The statement or purpose of the meeting is usually found at the top of the agenda to indicate why the meeting is being held; for example, 'Annual shareholders meeting', 'Rotary fundraising meeting'.

2

Date, time and location of meeting

The date, time and location of the meeting are positioned near the top of the agenda with as much clarification as needed; for example, Saturday 25 June 2015, 10.00 am–4.00pm, Boardroom 1, Level 2, Pacific Financing, 345 Argyle Street, Sydney.

3

Quorum

A quorum is the number of people required to attend a meeting so voting can be conducted and decisions made. The chair needs to know how many people are attending and whether decisions are able to be made.

4

Welcome and apologies

The meeting is declared open by the chair and those non-attending participants (who have notified the secretary or chair that they cannot be there) are read out by the secretary. The chair then asks meeting attendees if there are any further apologies known.

5

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting (if there was one) are accepted and any amendments are noted before a motion is carried. These are official documents reflecting what occurred during a meeting. They may be required for official records; for example, as in a shareholder meeting of a public company.

6

Matters of business arising from the previous minutes

This means any decisions that were made during the previous meeting that require action are reviewed; for example, a decision may have been made to set a sales target by the next meeting so the meeting needs to know whether this has been achieved.

7

Correspondence

Correspondence is any communication relating to the meeting both inward and outward. Each letter or email is read out and if a decision or action needs to be taken a motion will be moved and seconded by members in the group. The motion would be discussed (if required) and then voted upon by the members in the group. This particular procedure may be deferred to general business when there is more time allowed and greater discussion permitted.

8

Reports

Reports are presented in written form from particular members of the meeting. The Treasurer's report will usually be the first considered as it may have bearing on other reports and business from a financial point of view. It is good practice to have the reports, the minutes of the previous meeting and the notice of meeting sent out to participants, at hand.

9

Major agenda items

Major agenda items are the purpose for which the meeting was called. These may include the general item; for example 'Sales', but may also include directions such as, 'Review sales targets', 'Discuss monthly sales figures' or 'Decide on advertisement for new sales consultant'.

10

General business

Each department or section may have to report progress or issues that have come up. These may include items left over from the previous meeting, adjourned business or motions on notice. (A motion on notice is an issue for which attendees have had time to consider and make a decision about, or are prepared to raise their objections or state their opinions during the discussion. The motion is said to be foreshadowed. This is usually only used for important matters.)

11

Other business

Once the important matters have been dealt with the Chair asks for any further business. This is when any participant may add a discussion point to the agenda and where any issues from correspondence or reports will be resolved.

12

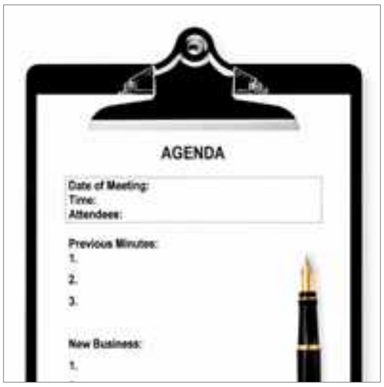
Next meeting

The Chair will announce the next meeting time and date if known, or action to be taken for advising of it; for example, 'An email will be sent in the next week advising you of the follow-up meeting'.

Agenda items

When preparing an agenda, make sure all relevant items your organisation requires are included. For example, you may be required to:

- include a list of all the correspondence received rather than simply have the heading 'Correspondence'
- include any breaks for refreshments in a day-long meeting
- include the name of the person who is to present each item
- insert a time limit to each agenda item
- cross-reference items that have supporting papers.



Prepare an annotated agenda paper

When arranging meetings for a board, executive or shareholders, you may need to prepare an annotated agenda paper to assist the chair. This may consist of answers to questions that may arise, background information about a guest speaker they have to introduce or the history of a project.

Use action words where required

If you are creating an agenda item that requires a fuller explanation, begin with an action word (verb) that clearly explains what you want participants to do when discussing the agenda item. Here are some examples of action words and some contexts to which they may apply.

Decide 'Decide the next convention venue' or 'Decide on a president'
Discuss 'Discuss areas where overtime is required' or 'Discuss new carpet installation disruption'
Review 'Review the accounts' or 'Review recommendations from the previous meeting'
Select 'Select possible guest speakers for the upcoming convention' or 'Select training candidates'

Prepare the agenda and check for accuracy

If you are delegating the preparation of the agenda to a team member, make sure they use the organisation's agenda template that outlines the format to be followed. If the team member is new, you should give them a sample agenda to familiarise them with the layout.

Once the agenda has been drafted, you need to check that all items are covered and all details are correct. Some organisations accept comments, additions or deletions from staff after they have read the first draft.

Practice task 1

Read the case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

Case study

Your manager has discovered that three members of staff lack adequate computer skills for their positions and have not been inducted properly. The new staff members are:

- Julie – 16 years old – has just left school and works in the HR department
- Peter – 55 years old – works in the mailroom
- Halva – 35 years old – works in the mailroom.

Your manager asks you to organise a meeting with Jenna Simpson, the Human Resources Manager, and Michael Burgess, the Mailroom Supervisor, to discuss a review of the company's induction procedures and potential training opportunities for the new staff.

1. What is the purpose of the meeting?

2. What steps will you take to plan the in-house meeting?

3. What components will you include in your agenda?

1B Ensure an appropriate style and structure for the meeting

A well run meeting addresses the needs of the participants, as well as effectively conducting the items detailed on the agenda. For this reason, you need to pay particular attention in the planning stages to how it will be structured and presented. This will depend on the purpose of the meeting; for example, whether it is an annual general meeting with legal obligations or an informal team meeting designed to share progress and motivate members.

The style of a meeting will also depend on the participants; for example, whether they are team members, the whole staff, a project team, shareholders, board members or members of the public.

Identify the meeting's style and structure

You need to be able to identify a meeting's style, structure, size and duration. This will be based on the purpose of the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting dictates whether it is highly structured and moderated with rigorous guidelines and protocols, or is friendly and informal.

Type of meeting to be held

Each of the following types of meetings should be presented and run in a manner appropriate to its purpose.

Annual general meeting

An annual general meeting or board meeting is highly structured, moderated and formal, usually following comprehensive guidelines and protocols (set out in a company charter, prospectus or organisational regulations). A prepared agenda is sent out ahead of time identifying areas of discussion, time, location, etc. An annual general meeting is an official requirement of public companies so the minutes will be kept as a company record and need to accurately reflect the proceedings of the meeting.

Staff meeting

A staff meeting may be formal or informal depending on the nature of the meeting; for example, a committee meeting that needs to submit a report may choose to take minutes and have a formal agenda, and keep people on track; whereas a Monday morning briefing on projects at hand may have a brief agenda but be more relaxed with informal discussion.

Remote conferencing

A web conference, videoconference, or teleconference meeting may have either a formal or informal style, depending on the topic. It may be held as part of a board meeting where participation can be controlled or limited for confidentiality purposes; it may be held to keep colleagues updated with colleagues in other departments; it may be a way to include those who cannot attend the particular time or date of the meeting. It is essential to have meetings of this nature recorded as minutes so an accurate record can be kept for future reference.

Short notice meeting

An impromptu or emergency meeting is usually between people who already have an understanding of an issue and need clarification, a quick decision, an update or to engage in discussion; for example, a brief update on a particular job. Impromptu meetings should not be used for large groups as their lack of formal structure can lead to confusion among participants.

Face-to-face meeting

A face-to-face meeting between two or more people may be relatively informal and self-directed. For this style of meeting there may be no formal written agenda as those attending the meeting would be aware of its purpose and any areas for discussion. One or more participants may make notes on the discussions, and note down any decisions made. An overview of the meeting may or may not be circulated after to confirm any decisions or actions required. Any issues that are raised will be decided upon by the participants or passed on to management for further direction.

Remote conferencing

Remote conferencing is becoming more commonly used in organisations through the advent of technological advances in phone, video and internet systems. This form of meeting attendance provides many advantages such as cost savings in terms of reducing travel time or enabling wider audience participation.

All formats of remote conferencing require specific meeting protocols to ensure the meeting achieves its objectives in the allocated time.

Telephone conferencing

Telephone conferencing is widely adopted in the business community as it is now integrated into most phone systems and requires little technical knowledge to implement.

Webconferencing

Webconferencing is following a similar pathway as telephone conferencing and has the potential to include an extremely broad audience in meetings. From an implementation perspective, the required hardware is either built into notebook computers or mobile devices or can be easily added to desktop computers, but there are many technological hurdles that webconference participants commonly experience. Appropriate training and continued development of hands-on experience in using webconference systems are important factors that contribute to its successful adoption.

Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing requires the installation of specialised equipment, but is commonly used in large organisations. This technology is improving rapidly, making it possible to video conference across organisational systems with linkage into computer systems such as electronic whiteboards.

Other factors

Apart from the type of meeting, there are a number of other factors that affect the style and structure of a meeting.

Select the images below to learn more about these factors.

Who needs to attend?

The participants will dictate the manner in which the meeting is presented. For example, consider whether it is appropriate to invite key stakeholders, board members, all staff, departmental staff, personnel from branch offices or representatives from other organisations.

The size of the meeting

Consider how many people will best suit the purpose of the meeting and help you reach your objectives. For example:

- Do all stakeholders need to be present?
- Will you be taking a vote and need a quorum?

The duration of the meeting

The type of meeting will determine how it is structured. For example, will you need refreshment breaks; will lunch be served or just morning tea; is a guest speaker timetabled; will you allocate specific times limits for speakers?

Make sure the length of the meeting is appropriate to the type of meeting; for example, a staff meeting may be regularly scheduled to last one hour, whereas you may schedule half a day to finalise a project or an entire day for a board meeting.

The venue

The meeting's purpose will often determine where it will be held, which in turn will determine how it is structured and presented. For example, a shareholders' AGM may be at the company's headquarters or in a public venue such as a town hall. The location should be appropriate to the meeting, such as a specific meeting room, a boardroom, or an off-site conference room. Make sure the venue will accommodate the expected number of people attending.

The budget

Check that your budget is appropriate to the type of meeting so you can hire an appropriate venue if necessary, supply refreshments or provide free car parking, etc.

Resources needed

Check that all the resources needed for a particular meeting have been prepared. These will vary according to the meeting type, but may include data projectors, paper, pens, information sheets and other materials.

Example: Team management meetings

At Jones and Company weekly team meetings:

- keep management up to date with what's happening in the office and client negotiations
- allow management to identify and resolve any detrimental issues or conflict situations
- provide feedback to and from upper management.

The weekly meetings always have a prepared agenda but sometimes take on a semi-formal nature and are conducted in an informal style to allow a free flow of information. Occasionally a more formal tone is required when decisions are conveyed. Minutes of the meeting are taken and made available on the file server.

v1421

Practice task 2

Review these meeting types then answer the questions that follow:

- annual general meeting
- staff meeting
- teleconference
- project meeting
- team management meeting
- face-to-face meeting with two people
- impromptu meeting.

1. Which types of meetings are formal or informal in style? Why?

2. Identify the meetings that require minutes to be recorded. Why would minutes be necessary?

continued …

... continued

3. Suggest appropriate venues for the project meeting and team management meetings, and any possible resources that may be required.

4. Give examples of two styles of meetings from your own experience and write a brief summary on the style and structure, including who needs to attend, the size of the meeting, the duration of the meeting, the venue, the budget and resources needed. If possible, include an actual agenda.

5. Identify two reasons for the use of webconferencing during a meeting.

1C Identify meeting participants and notify them of the meeting

It is important that the right people attend each meeting. It is the chair's responsibility to ensure those people invited to attend are notified and provided with a notice of meeting and an agenda.

You may need to decide who should be included in the meeting and how to invite participants to the meeting, including the preparation of a notice of meeting.

Who to invite

Members of the group should be selected because of their knowledge and the contributions they may make to the discussion. For most meetings it will be the chair who will decide the participants to ensure they can help to facilitate the purpose of the meeting.

When making decisions about who to invite, consider the following issues.

Directly connected

People who already work together and are therefore affected by the purpose of the meeting should all attend; that way everyone receives the same information or opportunities.

Indirectly connected

A person who is not directly connected with a project or the topic being discussed may be asked along to provide a fresh point of view.

Decision maker

Anyone who is potentially involved in carrying out the decision to be made at that meeting should be included.

Group dynamics

Take note of the personalities of the participants if you are familiar with them. Think about the effect of group dynamics; some people will not contribute and others will dominate the discussions; some people can be distracting or get the group off-track with their own agendas; others will simply cause conflict wherever they go or be bored and not benefit the group or themselves.

Questions to ask

When deciding who should attend a meeting and whether or not they should be included, it may be helpful to ask the following questions.

Who should attend?

- Who must be there?
- Who are the decision-makers?
- Who will the meeting affect?
- Do they need to be there?
- Are there organisational requirements that must be adhered to?
- How many people need to be there?
- Do you require diversity of viewpoints?

Who should possibly be included?

- What is their role?
- How can they help?
- Are they for or against the issue?
- Are they interested?
- Do they have time to attend?
- Do they have information on the purpose of the meeting?
- Will they be involved in any process of the decision – research, carrying it out or formulating procedures, etc.?
- Can they contribute effectively to the meeting?

Example: Select participants for a meeting

This table may help you when selecting participants for meetings with maximum effectiveness. Adjust the headings according to your needs and the needs of the meeting and add the names of your participants to the table.

Participant qualities required	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Unknown
Knowledge of topic/expertise					
Commitment					
Time					
Viewpoint					
Speaks their mind					
Open minded					
Authority to make decisions					

Notify participants

All participants should receive a notice of meeting well before the meeting. For meetings that have special requirements for attendance, such as shareholder meetings and annual general meetings, all those who are entitled to receive the notice of meeting must, by law, receive it, whether or not they will attend.

For more-informal business meetings (those not requiring a quorum) the basic information for notification should include the date, time, location and the purpose of the meeting, and give enough time for those attending to prepare.

The notice should clearly identify key details relevant to the meeting. There are legal requirements for accurate key information to be included in a formal notice of meeting.

Legal requirements for a formal notice of meeting include:

- the name of the organisation holding the meeting
- the details that it is a notice of meeting
- the type of meeting being held
- the date, time and location of the meeting; if the participant is only required to attend part of the meeting, the scheduled time for them to attend
- any business that will be conducted, including full text of any motions on notice, to give attendees enough information to make an informed decision.

Accuracy is important

For meetings that have legal requirements, it is also required that the information is accurate and not misleading; for example, if a meeting is called for Thursday 14 September this would be misleading if the 14th was actually on a Tuesday. Some people may turn up on the Tuesday; if they turned up on the Thursday they would have missed the meeting and thus been excluded from any decisions.

If legal requirements of the meeting are not followed, decisions made at these meetings are regarded as null and void. Any decisions would need to be ratified by or voted on and confirmed at a subsequent meeting where a correct notice of meeting has been given and a quorum is present.

If a formal notification of meeting has been published and is found to be incorrect, a correction can be sent out or published if there is time prior to the meeting. Otherwise the meeting must be cancelled and another convened.

Notification methods

A decision must be made as to how you will contact the participants. Sometimes organisational or legal requirements may prescribe this; for example, a shareholder meeting via personal letter and via public notices in a major newspaper.

Whichever method you choose, ensure it is appropriate to the meeting and to the participants and that everyone who needs to know is contacted.

Here are some examples of the many ways to notify people of meetings:

- Email, letter, memo or invitation
- Phone or SMS
- Fax
- Word of mouth
- Bulletin or poster on a noticeboard
- Newspaper or advertisement

Additional meeting inclusions

There are many inclusions that can help prepare a participant for an effective meeting, such as those listed here:

- Map and any travel details, parking or methods of transport
- Time line, or a brief outline of the agenda
- Meals and other activities available
- RSVP for numbers (specifically for venue and catering purposes)
- Request for additional items for the agenda

Example: Provide notice of board meetings

The following is an organisation's procedures for the regulations governing a notice of meeting for a board meeting.

1.5.2 Notice of meetings
Notice of meeting to be sent out at least seven days prior to the meeting date.
Approved written forms of communication with participants include letter, fax or email. Telephone and verbal forms of communication may not be used, and a written record must be kept of each participant invited to each board meeting. The president, or in his/her absence, one of the two vice-presidents may make an exception to the rule and notify the meeting, at the start of the meeting prior to apologies being taken, as to why authorised procedures were not followed. The minute-taker will document the exception and reasons within the official minutes.

Practice task 3

Read the case study, and complete the task that follows.

Case study

An annual general meeting for the shareholders of Visual Communications needs to be called for Friday 31 July 2015. It will be held in Visual's main boardroom at 742 Corporate Road, Binder Qld 4245 and will run all day. Daily business hours are from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm with the building itself opening from 6.00 am to 6.00 pm. All shareholders need to be notified, as well as Mandy Hopkins, the guest speaker. There are two motions on notice, 'That Gerald Ford be confirmed as President of Visual Communications' and 'That new head office premises be found for Visual Communications'.

Create a notice of meeting to comply with the legal requirements.

1D Confirm meeting arrangements

Strategic planning and preparation need to be undertaken to ensure a successful meeting. Once you have decided on the purpose of the meeting, the participants and the time frame you then need to identify, arrange and confirm the rest of the meeting requirements. You may have additional help to aid you such as the chair, secretary, nominated individuals, a committee specifically convened for the purpose, or a venue manager.

You will need to take a number of factors into account when deciding on meeting arrangements. These could include the available budget, participant roles, venue, catering, technology and other meeting resources or needs such as documentation, transport and accommodation. Not all of these will apply to all meetings. Keep in mind the type of meeting and its purpose. Your organisation may have policies governing suppliers, transport, hospitality and venues that need to be followed.

Establish the budget

Before anything is started or decided it is essential to determine the budget. This will affect what you can and cannot achieve for the meeting. It is always a good idea to have an extra amount set aside for unexpected contingencies.

Confirm that the budget will cover requirements; for example, the hire of a venue; refreshments; resources that need to be hired or purchased; travel arrangements for board members such as airfares, parking and/or accommodation; gifts, prizes or thank you acknowledgments for guest speakers. Make sure you keep track of costs as you make arrangements for the meeting.

Confirm meeting roles

Identify and confirm who will be chair and minute-taker. Ensure they are familiar with the role and understand their responsibilities. Make sure all those who are presenting understand what they have to do and any time limits imposed on them. Identify whether there will be special guest speakers.

You may need to decide how the meeting will be recorded; for example, how detailed the minutes need to be; whether you will use an organisational template; how the previous minutes will be accepted; or whether the minutes need to be signed by the chair at the conclusion of the meeting.

Finalise the venue

When planning and booking for meetings, the location of the venue is a crucial decision. Surroundings affect the way that people think and act and should be comfortable for all concerned, free of any distractions and help to generate a flow of communications between participants.

Ensure that you or someone you delegate views the venue prior to the meeting and any issues are identified and corrected. Meetings proceed smoothly if you prepare beforehand for all the resources that are required.

Venue considerations

Regardless of whether you are booking an external venue or using an on-site meeting room, consider the following aspects when arranging a venue.

Venue considerations

1. **Budget**
   Confirm the cost if you are hiring a venue. Find out the payment terms.
2. **Purpose**
   Confirm that the venue is appropriate for the purpose of the meeting. For example, check that the venue will hold the number of people you are expecting. A room that is too small will make the participants feel squashed and uncomfortable; too large and it may appear intimidating and intrusive. A good rule of thumb is to ensure there is enough room to move around easily and allow each participant personal space. Also allow for an extra participant and some extra chairs.
3. **Availability**
   Ensure the venue is available for the times you need it. Confirm the booking procedures, such as recording the meeting in a booking form; or paying a deposit.
4. **Time frame**
   The duration of the meeting, the number of participants and the meeting's purpose will dictate how long you require the venue. Make sure you clearly indicate the proposed duration when you book the room.
5. **Functions manager**
   If you are dealing with an external venue, contact the manager who will assist you before and during the meeting.
6. **Ease of access**
   Ensure that the venue is easy to get to. Check there are transport options nearby. Check that the room is easily accessible to all participants; for example, that there is wheelchair access or a lift for older participants.

7

Atmosphere

Confirm the atmosphere you hope to establish, such as formal, casual, open or friendly. The venue should be clean and comfortable, well-ventilated and with an unobstructed view of the main speaker, participants and any technological aids used. It should preferably be temperature controlled with appropriate acoustics and lighting for the meeting.

8

Layout and seating

Check that the layout of the room is conducive to communication and fits with the purpose of the meeting. A long and narrow room, for example, is likely to inhibit discussion and windows can be distracting.

Consider seating arrangements. Are there specific places the chair should sit? Are place cards necessary? Consider the purpose of the meeting and arrange seats accordingly; for example, in a circle, u-shaped or classroom style.

9

Amenities

Confirm whether the technology you require, such as electronic whiteboards or an internet connection is supplied by the venue or whether you need to hire it. If your meeting needs refreshments, check whether catering is provided at the venue or whether you must provide it yourself. Check there are sufficient chairs, tables, stage and a lectern, etc. A meeting longer than an hour or so may require comfortable chairs and room to move around.

10

Security

Ensure that all participants will be safe and secure.

11

Backup plan

Establish a contingency plan such as having a backup venue, technology or speaker just in case it is needed.

Organise catering

Confirm catering arrangements if required. This may include costs, type of food, amount of food, whether it is a set menu or a buffet, morning or afternoon tea, and when it will be served. If you are delegating this task to a team member clearly explain to them how many people need to be catered for; any special food requirements such as vegetarian, diabetic, allergy to nuts or shellfish; and the time it needs to be served. Let them know whether there is a preferred caterer. Make contingency plans in case more people turn up.

Identify specific needs

Confirm if participants who are presenting need anything, such as particular equipment to play a DVD or a data projector to present overheads.

Confirm that the venue has the facilities and amenities you need such as breakout rooms for discussions, toilets, areas for people to smoke, a separate food area and parking. You must also check that the venue is easily accessible to all participants; for example, access for people with special needs; an interpreter to assist those for whom English is a second language; or material in large-print format.

Confirm technology requirements of the meeting

Consider the following aspects you will need to check and confirm.

Confirm the following technology requirements:

- The type of technology needed; for example, microphones, speakers, data projectors, telephone link up, electronic whiteboards, flipcharts, recording equipment or computers
- Whether your organisation can supply the equipment or whether you need to hire it
- The cost to hire
- Availability
- How long you need the equipment
- If there will be an expert to operate the equipment provided, and if this costs extra
- An alternative if the technology should fail

Identify accommodation and transport needs

For a long meeting, or one that will continue over a few days, it may be necessary to have accommodation available for participants. Provide your participants with at least three alternatives for accommodation, taking both cost and location in mind. In some situations, such as a board meeting, the organisation may pay for the accommodation. Directions for appropriate accommodation should be included with details of the meeting. If the venue is within, or affiliated with a hotel, participants may receive a discount for staying there; this can be confirmed by the organisers and supplied with the meeting details.

If you are organising transport for the participants you will need to know how many participants require transport, when they will be arriving and where, and any costs involved.

Alternatively, directions to the venue and modes of transport are required for all participants. Ensure directions are clear enough for those not familiar with the area to be able to locate the venue easily. Alert participants to a range of options that will allow them to get to the venue, and if possible give them time frames and costs for that particular mode of transport. Here are some examples of transport issues.

Modes of transport

Walking

If participants are from the same office or building, let them know:

- which room the meeting will be held in
- how to get there.

If participants are coming from outside the building, alert them to:

- the full address of the building
- any landmarks nearby to help identify it.

Example: White House Convention Centre, 237 Mowbray Road, Chatswood NSW, opposite Mowbray War Memorial. The meeting will be held in the Stanhope Room located on the second floor.

Car/taxi

Provide a map reference and give verbal or written instructions. Ensure that the contact person knows the venue and directions to it, can give further advice about parking and any possible costs.

Example: Major routes into the city are via Pacific Highway, if coming from the north take the Hornsby Exit, follow the signs to Chatswood. Turn left at Mowbray Road and immediately right at the entrance to the White House Convention Centre. Follow the parking signs to the left; parking costs $5 per hour.

Bus/tram

Give bus/tram routes, their departure and arrival times from major areas.

Example: Bus route 56 leaves from Chatswood station on the hour. There are five scheduled stops until you reach the White House Convention Centre. This will take approximately 30 minutes.

Train

Mention the station closest to venue, and advise of additional transport that may be required to get to the venue (taxi/bus). Send the timetable, or weblink for more information.

Example: Chatswood station is the closest station to the White House Convention Centre. There are bus and taxi stands nearby.

Air

Notify the person of the closest airport and available transport options to and from it. If a hire car is required, then directions will need to be given.

Pick-up

If you are providing transport for your participants you will need to ensure everyone is aware of when you are leaving and from where. This requires confirmation and coordination, but ensures those essential people arrive on time; for example, special guests, speakers, interstate or international participants.

Confirm meeting details

Confirm that all meeting details are correct. Check that the agenda has been finalised with any suggested additions included and the date and time for the meeting have been agreed to and confirmed. Remember to take into account global time changes if participants are in another country or time zone.

Prepare documentation

Check that all documentation is prepared and ready to send to participants. This may include previous minutes, the agenda, meeting papers, reports, a map of the venue, etc. Make sure you or the person you delegate this task to understand what participants need to read and consider before the meeting, and the time frame for dispatch. You may need to develop a checklist to ensure this final aspect of meeting preparation is handled efficiently and on time.

Example: How a manager arranges a meeting time

Here is a series of emails that demonstrate how a manager arranges a meeting time.

Email one

Dear Jenny,

Just writing to arrange a meeting to discuss the schedule for the new project. Unfortunately next week looks quite busy, but I do have time on Tuesday 25 March. I'd prefer an early morning meeting, perhaps we could arrange a working breakfast at The Tiger Lily Café next door so we can discuss the new project time lines. You will need to bring the plans and your ideas with you.

Please get back to me by 6 pm today as I will be out of the office for the rest of the week.

Thanks, Bob

Email two

Hi Bob,

I'm afraid I can't make Tuesday next week, as I'm on a training course Monday–Wednesday. Do you have time on Friday this week or perhaps Thursday or Friday next week? I would prefer a time later in the day as I see clients most mornings.

Let me know which day is more convenient for you.

Many thanks, Jenny

Email three

Hi Jenny,

The new project's schedule is fairly urgent. I will need it completed by Friday of next week. I would prefer to have it settled by Wednesday at the very latest. I can arrange to be in my office at 4.30–5.00 pm on Friday afternoon. We can meet there. Please advise if this time suits ASAP today. Don't forget the plans.

Thanks, Bob

Email four

Hi Bob,

Yes that's fine.

I am out with Mary seeing clients most of that day, but will ensure I return in time for the meeting at 4.30–5.00 pm on Friday in your office. I will bring the plans.

See you then, Jenny

Practice task 4

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

You are the organiser for a team planning meeting to be held over two days from Monday 5 December to Tuesday 7 December 2016. There will be 15 staff attending the meeting from a number of locations. The meeting will be held at a hotel in Burwood, near the company's head office. The same venue is used every year for the planning meeting. Accommodation and all food are provided from Monday lunch through to Tuesday lunch.

A notice of meeting and agenda will be provided and confirmed prior to the meeting. Planning documents will also be sent to meeting participants.

Attendees

- Attendees are staying at the hotel where the planning meeting is being held.
- Four staff are arriving at Melbourne airport at 8.30 am on Monday morning. They will catch a taxi from the airport to the hotel using taxi vouchers you have issued them.
- Five staff, including the manager, are meeting in Geelong and travelling to the hotel in the company car.
- Staff who work in Melbourne will make their own way to the hotel.

Catering

Morning and afternoon tea and lunch on Monday and Tuesday will be provided at the hotel. The staff will be going out together for dinner to a local Indian restaurant within walking distance, which you will book.

Venue

The hotel has a meeting room large enough to accommodate the 15 staff. Hotel staff will bring in and clear away morning/afternoon teas and lunches.

Resources

The manager will need a data projector. She will bring her own laptop.

Staff will bring their own iPads or notebook computers.

Create a time line and checklist for any arrangements needed for the meeting.

You may like to use this table and add lines as required.

Task	Time line	Completed

continued ...

... continued

Task	Time line	Completed

1E Dispatch meeting papers within designated time lines

There are a number of meeting papers that may be required before, during and after the meeting. It is usually the role of the designated secretary to organise and distribute meeting papers, in conjunction with the chair. This is especially true during the meeting, where the secretary is responsible for accurately recording the proceedings and any decisions made within a meeting.

Meeting papers

It is important that all documentation a participant requires prior to the meeting is sent to them within a time frame that gives them sufficient time to read the documentation and prepare themselves for the meeting.

Check that you know the type of papers that need to be sent and who to send them to. Here are some questions that you should ask yourself concerning this.

Ask yourself these questions
What materials are needed to suit the meeting purpose? How will the materials be dispatched and who will do this?
Are there any legal requirements, company regulations, statutory requirements or guidelines that must be followed? If so, what are they?
How can the materials be presented for maximum comprehension and effective use?
Is the information required to prepare the meeting papers available?
What procedures and equipment do you require to create the meeting materials?
Have the meeting papers been checked to ensure they are correct?

Papers required prior to the meeting

It is essential that the chair and the minute-taker prepare the participants for the meeting properly. To do this they are required to supply them with a number of documents. The type and amount of detail required in the documentation will depend on the type and purpose of the meeting. For example, an annual board meeting may require a notice of meeting, an agenda (or draft agenda), previous minutes, financial reports, project reports or motion on notice; whereas a staff meeting may only require an agenda (including notice of meeting) and previous minutes.

Additional information that may be useful includes:

- details of any required information the participant should bring with them; for example, paper, pen, laptop, reports, invoices
- a list of other participants if relevant
- expectations of the participant and what they can do to prepare for the meeting; for example, give a report, make a presentation, listen and discuss, read an article to be discussed at meeting, watch a video etc.
- whether a reply in the form of an RSVP is required.

Example: Types of documentation sent to participants

Determine which of these documents need to be sent to participants:

- Notice of meeting, time, date and venue of meeting is essential
- Agenda, so participants know what the meeting will cover; in some instances, the agenda may be given to participants as they arrive at the meeting
- Previous minutes are needed to ensure their accuracy was vetted by previous participants and any business arising from previous minutes is on hand
- Chair's report, including provision of information; such as direction of proceedings or additional information regarding a motion on notice
- Any particular correspondence that has relevance to any motion or discussion
- Financial reports, if required
- Itemised meeting papers, when a number of items are to be discussed in a particular order
- Research reports, so all participants are kept up to date on any particular motion, discussion or decision

Time lines

Adhere to the organisation's policy and procedures for sending out the notice of meeting and other documentation. The time frame will depend on the type of meeting; for example, board members may need to be informed at least two weeks before the meeting, if not earlier; staff should be given the agenda a week before the regular staff meeting; participants may only have an hour or so notification of an emergency meeting.

Best practice is to allocate an appropriate amount of time you will need to prepare for the meeting and ensure that the documentation is prepared, checked, collated and dispatched in time for the participants to read them. Consider contingency plans if, for example, the photocopier breaks down.

The documentation's safe arrival is another important aspect – options include delivery by post, by hand, express delivery or email.

Meeting time frames

Be aware of any legal, contractual or organisational requirements that surround the particular meeting. There may be legal requirements in regard to timing that must be adhered to; for example, notification of a shareholders notice of meeting may need to be sent as a personal letter 14 days prior to the meeting and via public notices in a major newspaper published 30 days prior to the meeting. This is because this rule has been decided upon by a majority of shareholders and written into the organisation's constitution. This then becomes a matter of law when dealing with formal proceedings (where a quorum is required for decisions).

Contractual obligations are essential when dealing with government, government programs or tendering processes that require submission of regular reporting and progress updates.

The time frames for meeting requirements may also be set through a variety of other mechanisms as shown below.

Formal time frames set by the organisation
This time frame may be dictated within an organisation's procedural and policy documentation. For example, there may be dates set at the beginning of the year for the annual general meeting, bi-monthly board meetings and weekly staff meetings etc. This means that the person responsible for compiling the papers should have a calendar of meetings, the papers that will need to be prepared for each one and when they need to be dispatched. Time needs to be allowed to prepare reports and other itemised meeting papers.

Informal time frames
For more informal meetings, at least 48 hours is a good rule of thumb to give notice that a meeting has been called. In order for a meeting to be most effective and for participants to reorganise their own work schedules and prepare, it is advisable to notify them as far in advance as possible.

Project time lines
A project time line will include the date for progress meetings, so you need to be sure that all documentation such as the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting, progress reports etc. are prepared and dispatched in time for participants to be prepared for the meeting.

Statutory requirements
There are a number of government statutory requirements relating to time, that govern a shareholder annual general meeting. For example the annual general meeting must be held within three months of the end of the share scheme's financial year. Regulations detail when nominations for the board, motions for the agenda, and the notice of meeting must be sent.

Time frames decided by participants
In some circumstances, especially in an informal meeting, the participants themselves will decide on a time frame for the meeting. Be sure the details are entered into your diary or calendar of events so you prepare the relevant agenda and any other meeting papers required.

Practice task 5

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

Good morning Sue,

As you know the next body corporate meeting for Westaway Court is to be held Friday 26 June at 2 pm in our offices.

Please ensure all papers are sent out between 15 May and 5 June to coincide with the required time lines. My suggestion is to send them out on 18 May to ensure adequate time for replies. This will coincide with the window set for nomination forms to be delivered and received.

Can you ensure that a notice of meeting is sent to each owner of the 24 units? This can be found in the body corporate roll. Please note that Lot 15 was sold two weeks ago and you may have to contact the real estate agent, or Luke the Property Manager for the new owners' details.

As this will also be an annual general meeting we need to supply all voting papers, including ballot papers, an envelope marked 'ballot papers', along with the notices for the annual general meeting. In the letter containing the notice of meeting, ensure that it is noted that all ballots must be received prior to the beginning of the meeting. We cannot accept any nominations after the start of the meeting. This must be made abundantly clear.

Additionally, proxy forms must also be sent for those owners who wish to send their proxy by mail, or a person in their stead.

Please also supply owners with the previous minutes, and make special reference to the two motions on notice.

Please also alert Luke Simpson, the Property Manager, to be in attendance.

Collect the documents and send me a sample by 8 May so I can be assured all documentation is in place.

Many thanks,

Jeremy Benson

Manager, Body Corporate Services

List the range of documentation that needs to be sent for the body corporate meeting and when they need to be sent by.

Summary

1. An agenda is a framework supporting the meeting that allows matters to be discussed in an orderly way. Agendas note the time, date and location of the meeting as well as the items for discussion.
2. Attendees will be selected because of their knowledge and the contributions they may make to any discussion.
3. An important aspect of meeting preparation is clarifying the style and structure of the meeting. From this, you will be able to make decisions regarding the venue, the size, the duration, and the formality required of the meeting.
4. Once a budget has been established for a meeting, all arrangements such as venue hire, resources needed, catering etc. need to be organised and confirmed.
5. A notice of meeting identifies all key details and should be sent to participants in accordance with any legal, company or customary rules and regulations.
6. Meeting papers must be sent to participants well in advance so they can prepare for the meeting. Be familiar with the type of papers needed; for example, notice of meeting, agenda, financial reports, research reports or itemised meeting papers, etc.

Learning checkpoint 1
Prepare for meetings

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in preparing for meetings.

Part A

1. Reflect on the meetings that you have been involved in during your business or personal life. Record four examples of meetings. Identify the type of meeting held, the reason for meeting and any outcomes. An example is provided in the following table.

Meeting type	Reason for meeting	Meeting outcomes
Team meeting	Hold regular team meetings to monitor progress, provide information and give feedback.	Progress was tracked. Difficulties were identified. Feedback was given to team members.

2. Explain the role of the agenda and list the main components of an agenda. Outline some of the consequences of poor planning.

3. Describe the role of a manager in planning meetings and the skills and knowledge they need to successfully manage a meeting.

4. Submit a detailed plan for a meeting of at least 10 participants and explain how you will confirm arrangements, make contingency plans and get papers out on time, etc. You may like to use the following template to outline the processes you will follow.

Reason for meeting		
Time		
Location		
Participants		
Special arrangements		
Agenda outline	Quorum	
	Previous minutes	
	Incoming/outgoing correspondence	
	Reports	
	Discussion topics	
	General business	
Participant roles and presentations	Chair	
	Secretary	

Part B

Read the case study, then complete the task that follows.

Case study

For each monthly staff meeting Office Manager Carly Houghton prepares the agenda; ensures each staff member is aware of their role and checks whether they need any resource support; ensures all staff receive any papers they need to read before the meeting; and arranges a guest speaker.

Here is the agenda for the next meeting.

Staff Meeting

Wednesday 14 September 2016

10.30 am until 12.00 noon

Conference room

Objective: Weekly update

1. Welcome: attendance and apologies
2. Review and approve minutes from 10 August
3. Business arising from the previous minutes
4. Correspondence
5. Operations update: Mary Simmons, Operations Manager
6. Marketing update: Bob Wrangle, Marketing Manager
7. Finance report: Felicity Manning, Accounting Manager
8. IT upgrade status report: Alan Peeters, Technology Manager
9. Sales report: Mary Simmons reporting on behalf of Craig Tines, Sales Manager
10. Employee update: Julie So, Human Resources Manager
11. Guest speaker Mr Howard Trevaskis will speak on manual handling in an office environment
12. General business
13. Other business
14. Next meeting: Wednesday 12 October 2016

Prepare a checklist for the preparation of this meeting including a time line. (This checklist can be used for all meetings in the future.) Against each item, describe what Carly needs to do to ensure everyone is prepared and the meeting runs smoothly.

Topic 2
Conduct meetings

Regardless of the purpose for which the meeting has been called, the conduct of the proceedings must be controlled to ensure that the purpose is achieved within the scope of the meeting agenda. Keeping a meeting in line with the agenda requires a range of management skills to maintain the focus of the meeting, keep the meeting to time and deal with group interaction. A well-facilitated meeting where all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally will result in clear resolutions that carry the support of the participants.

Recording the conduct and all decisions made is essential. An accurate record of a meeting includes attendance, all decisions and resolutions passed, and follow-up action.

In this topic you will learn how to:

2A Chair meetings according to requirements and agreed conventions

2B Ensure meetings are focused, time-efficient and achieve outcomes

2C Facilitate participation, discussion, problem-solving and issue resolution

2D Brief the minute-taker

2A Chair meetings according to requirements and agreed conventions

Meetings would quickly degenerate into disarray if there was no agreement on procedures for how they were conducted and if there was no-one in charge to arbitrate issues that arose. Over the years conventions for formal meeting procedures have evolved and been adopted in various forms by most organisations. These conventions are intended to allow all members of the meeting to have an equal and fair input into resolutions, and for any decisions made to be the consensus of the whole meeting and not the opinion of one person or faction. In some instances, procedures are controlled by legal and ethical considerations as well as organisational policies and procedures.

Role of the chair

The most important person at any meeting is the chairperson (or chair). The chair is responsible for the maintenance of order during the meeting, the conduct of business, procedural correctness and the general tone of the meeting itself.

As chair of a meeting it is your role to conduct the meeting according to the organisation's meeting protocols and relevant meeting conventions. To do this efficiently and effectively you must review the range of conventions covered under organisational policy and legislation prior to taking on the role of chair. You need to feel confident about conducting a meeting, especially if others know the protocols better than yourself.

It is essential that you maintain control of a meeting, otherwise the goals it sets out to achieve may not be achieved. Control can be maintained throughout the meeting through the agenda and using your communication and interpersonal skills to encourage participation, keep track of the time, ensure discussion is clear and appropriate, summarise proceedings when necessary, arrange voting when needed and identify any follow-up action. You need to conduct yourself professionally at all times and be confident, tactful, patient and impartial.

Meeting procedures

Procedures and protocols of meetings will be outlined in a company's organisational rules that govern the conduct of an organisation. These should include the rules and requirements for conducting meetings including the roles of office bearers and how they are elected. They are generally referred to as standing orders. It is useful, especially if you are new to chairing meetings, to have a copy of your organisation's standing orders with you at the meeting so you can refer to them if necessary. It is better to be accurate than risk making a mistake.

The organisation may have a separate meetings procedures document, with details on formatting, structure, distribution and storage of meeting documents. There are a number of common meeting procedures and conventions that most organisations follow but some will depend on the type of meeting.

Quorum requirements

The quorum is the number of members of an organisation that, according to standing orders, must be present for any business transacted to be considered valid. Often a quorum is a simple majority of those members who are entitled to vote at meetings. Some resolutions, such as changes to the organisation's constitution or standing orders, may require a different quorum; for example, to change the constitution an organisation may require a two-thirds majority of all members eligible to vote. The chair may need to identify whether there is a quorum before the meeting gets underway.

Order of business

All meetings should follow a prepared agenda. The chair will welcome participants and then proceed with the first item. Some standard agenda items to start the meeting are provided below.

Noting attendees and apologies

Names of people attending the meeting and those who have sent apologies must be recorded. This should be the first item on the agenda after the welcome. In some instances, it may be a legal requirement for participants to sign a register of attendance.

Accepting the minutes of the previous meeting

Generally the previous minutes can be accepted simply by asking participants whether the minutes are a true and accurate record. In some meetings the minutes require a mover and a seconder to be accepted; the names of the mover and seconder must be recorded. Only those who attended the meeting can move or second acceptance. The chair may need to sign and date the minutes. If errors are noted they are recorded in the minutes of the current meeting.

Speak in order

It is the chair's role to invite those responsible for presenting an item to speak when it is their turn. During the meeting, any questions and discussion must be addressed through the chair. For example, if someone wishes to speak other than the person presenting the item, they should indicate to the chair that they wish to say something and the chair will ask them to speak when appropriate. This is referred to as being 'recognised' by the chair. If the meeting involves a lot of discussion, you need to follow conventions such as people raising their hands to indicate they wish to speak; if there are a lot of people wanting to speak, you need to acknowledge that they have been recognised and note the order in which it is their turn to speak.

Motions and amendments

Formal meetings require issues to be decided through the official presentation of a motion, which may move through various stages before it is accepted or defeated. A motion is essentially a suggestion for action. The chair needs to understand the standard convention for dealing with a motion.

Motions have two forms as described here.

Substantive motion

A substantive motion is a motion ordering that something be done, authorising some action or expressing the meeting's opinion on a topic.

Example: 'That the minutes of the previous meeting be endorsed' or 'That the organisation supports the new environmental guidelines'.

Procedural motion

A procedural motion is a motion dealing with the conduct of the meeting.

Example: 'That the meeting move on to the next agenda item'.

Motion procedure

When a motion is proposed it should be worded clearly and simply so there is no misunderstanding and should always begin with the words 'That …'. Once a motion is proposed and seconded, it proceeds as follows.

Procedures once a motion is proposed and seconded
The chair opens the motion to discussion (debate) calling alternately for people to speak for and against the motion.
Attendees may only speak once to the motion, including the mover and seconder, and are subject to a time limit overseen by the chair. This allows an opportunity for all members to speak and prevents more-vocal attendees from monopolising the debate.
After an appropriate time for discussion, the chair calls the debate to a close.
The chair restates the motion and asks participants to vote first for, then against, the motion. If the required majority vote in favour of the motion the chair declares the motion carried. The resolution becomes an official decision of the meeting.
If the vote is tied, subject to standing orders, the chair may pass a deciding vote. Some organisations consider a motion defeated if there is not a majority in favour; in this case a tied vote would result in the motion being defeated.

Motion amendments

If the original motion is changed by someone suggesting better words to clarify the meaning, then this amended motion must be proposed, seconded, discussed and voted on.

If the amended motion is accepted, then the procedure begins again with further discussion and voting until it is either accepted or defeated.

In some cases, the chair may decide the motion needs further investigation and will postpone the voting until the next meeting to give people time to undertake research.

Voting procedures

In many meetings decisions are reached by all participants taking a vote; in others, only certain people are allowed to vote. Make sure you understand your organisation's standing orders that outline voting rights. The chair plays a key role in ensuring a meeting is conducted efficiently and in a professional manner.

If a person is unable to attend a meeting, they can delegate someone else to vote for them if this is in line with their constitution. The appointed person is known as a proxy. Find out whether your organisation has provision for proxy voting and what it entails; for example, the proxy appointment must be given in writing at least 48 hours before the meeting.

There are a number of voting methods that are shown below.

A show of hands whereby people raise a hand to indicate whether they are in favour of or against a decision or proposal.

Each person indicates their preference by saying either 'yes' or 'aye', or 'no' or 'nay'.

Each person claps loudly to indicate their voting preference.

A ballot or poll in which each person confidentially records their vote on paper or electronically.

Each person physically moves to the left or right of the room in what is referred to as a division.

Understand conventions

There are a number of other commonly used meeting conventions that must be followed that may not be applicable for all meetings. These are listed below.

To carry a motion

There may be a requirement for a particular number of members to vote in a particular way. For example, for a motion to pass, more than half the members may be required to vote for it before it can be passed; if this number is not reached, then the motion is defeated.

In the event of a tied vote for or against a proposition, the chair will be asked to cast a vote to break the tie.

In some situations there may be a requirement that all members vote and agree on a motion. The motion is invalid if consensus is not reached.

Conflict of interest

There may be times when a person who is in a decision-making position benefits from a particular vote. That person has a duty to declare the situation to others or to abstain from the decision-making process.

Informal discussion

During less-formal procedures, and in the absence of standing orders, a motion does not require a mover or seconder. For a simple situation an informal discussion may be undertaken by participants. The chair may sum up the discussion and paraphrase the decision that is in agreement with the participants' wishes; the chair may put this to a vote if appropriate. The decision or resulting action to be taken will be recorded in the minutes.

Point of order

If a participant believes there has been an alleged irregularity in the proceedings, they must officially bring it to the attention of the chair by calling a 'point of order'.

Restricting discussion

The chair must only allow items on the agenda to be discussed. Participants may be instructed to only speak through the chair (the chair has to first acknowledge the speaker before the person can speak). If a participant strays from the motion item under discussion, speaking privileges may be withdrawn, or the person expelled from the meeting if they cause a disruption.

Presenting a paper

Any papers, reports or correspondence that a participant wishes to discuss should be distributed prior to the meeting so everyone has an opportunity to read the material and contribute to an informed discussion. The participant is then invited to present the information according to the item on the agenda. This is referred to as a paper 'on notice' for discussion.

If a participant brings a paper to the meeting, it is formally 'noted' or 'tabled' in the minutes but may not be addressed at the time.

Time limit on speakers

In some meetings, speakers may only be allowed to speak for a particular time. This may occur even in informal meetings if there are a number of items on the agenda, but is more often policed at formal meetings such as an annual general meeting. Infractions of time are important as the chair will instruct the meeting to disregard any comments by that particular speaker made after the time allotted has expired, and those comments may not be taken into account when voting.

Legal and ethical requirements

Be aware of any legal or ethical considerations that must be taken into account when running a meeting; for example, demonstrate equal opportunity and anti-discrimination by avoiding favouritism, harassment and conflict of interest. Handle cultural issues sensitively and appropriately by understanding cultural differences and other people's traditions and sensibilities; for example, in some countries shaking the head from side to side means 'yes'.

Remember that all meetings must be conducted honestly, openly and with full disclosure. However, you also need to take into account confidentiality provisions and not knowingly discuss issues that are deemed confidential.

Legal requirements

Legal requirements may include the following.

Anti-discrimination law

Adhere to anti-discrimination legislation. This requires that the meeting be conducted in a manner that treats all individuals fairly and without discrimination. State, territory and federal legislation relating to anti-discrimination stipulates that discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability and sexual orientation is illegal.

Federal privacy laws

Maintain the privacy of individual information in line with federal privacy laws. Members attending a meeting must give express permission to the chair if personal information is to be raised during, or used after, the meeting. It is commonplace for meeting attendees to discuss private matters or sensitive company-specific matters in closed meetings. This information, while not strictly administered under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), should be considered confidential and treated carefully by members attending the meeting. Minutes and other records are often kept confidential for this reason. Breaching this trust could have an adverse effect on the organisation and therefore become a legal matter.

continued ...

... continued

Copyright legislation
Intellectual property used for, within or as a result of a meeting should be protected by basic copyright legislation. Be aware that ideas, proposals and even memos can be considered to have legal ownership. In corporate settings, the ownership is usually passed on to the organisation under contractual arrangements with employees.

Health and safety requirements
The meeting must be held in a safe and healthy environment. Where the meeting is held affects the level of risk. For example, meeting in an outdoor environment will have more inherent risks than an office-based meeting. Ensure all aspects of the environment including physical, emotional and social risks are considered. Meeting with parties representing vastly different points of view may increase the emotional or social risks – this should be managed effectively to ensure the safety of all members. Large meetings may also require public liability insurance to protect the company in the event of injury or incident involving the attendees.

Ethical requirements

The meeting should abide by the principles of ethical behaviour. Ethical behaviour will depend on the where, when and with whom the meeting is conducted. Consider cultural differences, ceremonies, traditions and other elements within a meeting environment that may require ethical consideration.

Treat everyone equally, be aware of people's beliefs and sensitivities and be able to provide evidence for any statements you may make.

Codes of practice

Existing codes of practice may form the foundation of the meeting procedures. A code of practice usually refers to an organisation-wide set of behaviours that all employees are expected to follow. These behaviours are broad enough to incorporate existing anti-discrimination and WHS legislation as well as the acceptable treatment of others in the workplace. Ensure your meeting abides by these practices.

v1423

Legislation relating to companies and associations

Corporations law and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) stipulate the requirement for companies to hold regular meetings as a measure of good governance. Companies limited by guarantee are required to hold annual general meetings as well as regular board meetings under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth), Part 2G. While there is no legislative requirement for the directors of proprietary limited companies to meet, it is seen as good practice and is often inferred as a requirement of good financial housekeeping.

Associations are legislated for in each state. The laws cover the requirement for regular meetings and for a constitution to include the meeting procedure. Ensure you familiarise yourself with your relevant Act if you intend to run meetings under the auspices of an association (such as sporting clubs and special interest clubs).

The relevant Acts for each state and territory are listed below.

State/Territory	Act
Australian Capital Territory	*Associations Incorporation Act 1991*
New South Wales	*Associations Incorporation Act 2009*
Northern Territory	*Associations Act 2005*
Queensland	*Associations Incorporation Act 1981*
South Australia	*Associations Incorporation Act 1985*
Tasmania	*Associations Incorporation Act 1964*
Victoria	*Associations Incorporation Act 1981*
Western Australia	*Associations Incorporation Act 1987*

Requirements for public meetings

Public companies are governed by the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) and ASIC, when conducting public shareholder meetings. These requirements include the format of the meeting and the notice that must be given to shareholders. Much of the procedural detail is laid out in the company's constitution, which will vary with the size of the organisation.

Care should be given to notify the relevant union officials and other stakeholders within the industrial relations community of the company. These members may be invited to participate – again, depending on the context of the meeting.

Example: Requirements for a board meeting

The following is an interview conducted with Terry Hill, Chair and Managing Director of a Queensland-based organisation.

How do you ensure you cover all the legal conventions when conducting a board meeting at your organisation?

Firstly, we use the services of our company secretary to keep the meeting on track and ensure we cover all the issues circulated in the board papers for that month. The secretary also assists me to direct votes on company matters to ensure the ballots are conducted in accordance with our constitution.

My primary responsibility is to facilitate healthy discussion of each of the salient points of the meeting. As a team, the company secretary and I work to finalise all the agenda items in the given time and in the best interests of the company.

All directors have completed a CDC (company directors course) and are aware of their rights and obligations as directors. We know that the decisions we make must comply with the requirements of good governance and not place the company into any compromised circumstances.

Practice task 6

1. A member presents the following motion to the meeting:

   'I want us to buy a new photocopier so we can photocopy quicker and do more advanced things like scanning.'

   a) How should the motion be worded so that the meeting can vote upon it?

   b) Is there any further discussion required?

   c) What other steps may be taken to ensure an appropriate and effective decision is made?

2. A meeting lacks a quorum, yet decisions need to be made. What options are open to the chair?

2B Ensure meetings are focused, time-efficient and achieve outcomes

The chair of a meeting is a crucial role as it is this person's responsibility to facilitate and impartially guide participants to ensure all the business on the agenda is considered, the meeting fulfils its purpose and is completed within the planned time frame.

The chair should ensure that all members of the meeting understand each agenda item, that each item is addressed comprehensively, and that appropriate time is given for discussion. Pacing a meeting is a skill that is learnt with practice.

Keep meetings focused and on time

To keep a meeting on time and focused follow these suggestions.

Steps to keep meetings focused and on time

1. **Start the meeting on time**
   Do not wait for latecomers to arrive. Some groups even schedule 10 minutes of time to socialise before the start of the meeting, to make sure everyone is there.

2. **Ensure there is a quorum**
   If a quorum is required for business to be legally transacted then it is the chair's responsibility to ensure there are enough members present. If a quorum is not present, any business transacted is null and void.

3. **Establish the length of the meeting**
   Establish at the outset how long the meeting will take.

4. **Review the purpose and aims of the meeting**
   Briefly review the agenda to give an overview at the start of the meeting of the aims and purposes of the meeting. This helps participants focus their attention and understand what will be required of them. The chair should make clear the outcomes to be achieved, and what decisions or actions they hope to make.

5

Follow the agenda

Keep the discussion focused by following the agenda.

6

Establish commitment

Establish a sense of commitment so members keep participating.

7

Manage discussion

Encourage participation but control the discussion by enforcing the time allocated to speakers. Bring the meeting back on track if a discussion strays off the topic. Deal with difficulties firmly and politely and move on to the next item.

8

Facilitate making decisions

Help the meeting come to decisions by summarising the information; clarification at this point can prevent problems later. Gain consensus by taking a vote or otherwise acknowledging the decision and move on to the next item.

9

Create an action plan

Agree on an action plan that outlines the specifics that must be achieved, including the names of the people who are required to follow up and the date the action should be finalised.

Example: Meeting evaluation survey

It is useful to ask someone to observe you conducting a meeting and give you feedback on your performance. Here is a sample evaluation survey you can give meeting participants or your observer.

Rate the meeting by circling a response below, and making comments in the area provided.

Aspect	Rating				
1. Pace of meeting	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
2. Participation	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
3. Meeting had a clear purpose	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior

continued ...

... continued

Aspect	Rating				
4. Meeting met all legal requirements	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
5. Discussions were focused and helpful when making decisions	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
6. Chair kept discussion and participants under control	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Superior
7. Meeting strengths					
8. Areas for improvement					
9. Any other comments					

Practice task 7

Outline why each of the following factors are important in keeping meetings focused and on time.

1. Start the meeting on time.

2. Ensure there is a quorum.

3. Establish the length of the meeting.

continued ...

4. Review the purpose and aims of the meeting.

5. Follow the agenda.

6. Establish commitment.

7. Manage discussion.

8. Facilitate making decisions.

9. Create an action plan.

2C Facilitate participation, discussion, problem-solving and issue resolution

A well-facilitated, active meeting that sets the stage for follow-up will ensure participation and achieve its outcomes. If people feel their input is valued then they will be enthusiastic about being a part of the meeting.

It is the role of the chair to set a positive, productive tone for interaction among the meeting participants, then keep them on track, deflect signs of disruption and handle difficulties smoothly and appropriately.

You may find there are some participants for whom English is a second language; who have different cultural expectations about speaking in an open forum; or have special needs. You will need to use strategies and techniques to ensure everyone is aware of the meeting conventions, understands the information provided and can participate fully. In some circumstances you may need to have an interpreter or provide material in large-print format. Always speak clearly, slowly and explain any technical language and jargon that is used.

Encourage participation and discussion

Facilitate participation by preparing a comprehensive agenda and informing participants well ahead of the meeting so they have time to prepare. In this way participants will come prepared with ideas and suggestions. This effectively saves time and ensures everyone is focused on what the meeting is trying to achieve.

Here are some strategies for including all participants in a meeting.

Introduce each agenda item clearly and explain what you hope the meeting will achieve. Allow sufficient time for debate.

Refer to participants by their name so they feel they are acknowledged and part of the meeting.

Understand group dynamics and interaction. Try to involve those people who you know are shy about speaking. Watch for people dominating discussions.

Encourage involvement by inviting participants to offer an opinion, but don’t force the issue if they are obviously reluctant.

Don’t hurry a response from someone just to move the meeting along. Use your judgment.

Help to summarise or clarify an issue if someone has difficulty explaining their opinion.

Respect all points of view. Be impartial and don’t show signs of being biased or prejudiced about a response.

Resolve problems

During the course of a meeting, difficulties may arise and it is your job to be prepared for them and know the techniques to use to defuse tempers and resolve issues calmly and professionally. In some instances the difficulty may be the behaviour of a meeting participant, while other difficulties may arise from an agenda item that cannot be resolved.

Here are some suggestions for resolving difficulties.

Identify issue	**Identify the issue by defining the problem** Identify the issue by defining the problem as you see it and confirming it with the meeting.
Discuss situation	**Decide to resolve or discuss the situation** Make a decision to either resolve the situation promptly or discuss the situation and leave a decision for later. Don't rush to make a decision. You may need time to reconsider the facts in a calmer atmosphere, especially if the meeting is getting heated.
Open discussion	**Open discussion and utilise appropriate techniques** Open the situation for discussion, making sure everyone has the opportunity to have input. Use techniques such as brainstorming to generate other options; listing advantages/disadvantages; or presenting criteria to make a judgment.
Consider ideas	**Vote on ideas or list them for further consideration** Consider the range of ideas presented and either put them to a vote or list them for further consideration.
Be impartial	**Consider all issues impartially** Even if you think it is inappropriate or unconsidered, the issue is important to a participant. Learn how to listen to a complaint or different point of view and recognise those that are out of order or timewasters. Remain professional and respect the participant but move on firmly to the next item.
Resolve conflict	**Resolve any conflicts** If two or more participants begin to argue over a particular point, the chair may need to step in to calm them. The chair should allow each person to express their own point of view before asking other participants in the group to comment. It is unproductive to have two people argue without a compromise being reached. It takes up valuable time and can easily divide a group, resulting in no decision being made. The chair may have to step in and lead the discussion to enable a compromise and resultant decision.

Make decisions

There are several decision-making strategies you can use.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming promotes creativity and teamwork. This technique can create a range of alternatives that may not have been thought of before.

Majority rule technique

The majority rule technique is easily understood, quick and simple to use. Simply put a decision to the meeting and ask for their opinion either by a show of hands or calling for 'yes' or 'no' and accepting the decision that generates the most support.

Consensus

Asking for consensus is similar to majority rule, except that it involves a short debate, before a decision is made. Participants will feel that their opinion is valued and heard. Facilitation of group communication and conflict management skills are the key to this strategy, as some individuals will dominate the discussion. Full participation increases acceptance of decisions and may support a more sustained effort toward achieving goals.

Example: Qualities of an effective chair

An effective meeting facilitator/chair must:

- have good communication skills to participate in sustained, complex, interpersonal exchanges
- speak clearly and unambiguously; this is particularly important in culturally diverse workplaces
- listen to and encourage feedback from participants
- understand group dynamics to enable all participants to be involved
- be alert to where cultural or linguistic factors may be limiting the participation of attendees
- respect everyone's opinions and use a respectful and formal mode of speech with a meeting that includes a culturally diverse group who do not know each other very well
- watch for nonverbal behaviour that may indicate that a participant has a problem; ask for feedback from a cross-cultural group, as this helps prevent misunderstandings
- have the ability to synthesise and summarise information effectively
- handle conflict situations quickly and effectively
- have time management skills to ensure agenda items are covered
- continually learn to develop and improve their facilitation skills.

Practice task 8

Attend a formal meeting at your workplace so you may observe an experienced chair. Use your observations to answer the following questions.

1. How well do you think the chair conducted the meeting? Write an overview of the meeting and highlight any areas you felt may be improved. Why?

2. Describe how the chair encouraged participation and resolved any difficulties.

continued ...

... continued

3. Were there any decisions made during the meeting? Outline the methods used by the chair to direct proceedings and arrive at a consensus.

4. After the meeting, interview the chair and ask them for tips on conducting meetings effectively.

2D Brief the minute-taker

Before the meeting takes place, a person, known as the secretary or minute-taker, should be appointed. Their responsibilities are focused on recording the content of the meeting to create a permanent record. This is in contrast to the chair of the meeting who is more concerned with the actual process of the meeting.

The recording of the minutes is essential for all meetings but is especially important when there are statutory, legal or organisational regulations to be met that require documentary evidence of a meeting.

The main thing to remember is that the minutes, when published, are a true and accurate reflection of the meeting. Some people write the minutes by hand, then transcribe them onto a computer; while others type directly into the computer then re-read and amend them before sending the finalised minutes out.

Minute-taking skills

v1424

Some meetings will be long and complex, so it is essential that the minute-taker doesn't rely on memory after the meeting to recreate what occurred. For this reason, it is valuable to have a person who does not actively participate in the meeting but whose job is dedicated to taking notes of the proceedings. Your organisation should have a minute template that helps make this a straightforward task.

Make sure all minute-takers understand that as an official record of a meeting, the minutes can be used as a legal document. They must therefore ensure that all names are spelled correctly, motions are unambiguous, and decisions are recorded accurately.

Checklist for minute-taking

Not everyone is suited to minute-taking and many companies and organisations retain the same person in the job to provide consistency and continuity within the minutes. However, all these skills can be learnt. A successful manager helps team members widen their skills, so it is a good idea to train team members to be effective minute-takers by encouraging the acquisition of appropriate skills.

Skills of an effective minute-taker include:

- Active listening
- Critical thinking in order to decide what needs to be recorded
- Accurate and concise writing using easy-to-understand language
- Objectivity
- The ability to maintain confidentiality
- Good grammar, punctuation and spelling
- The ability to understand prescribed editing marks

Preparation for minute-taking

As the meeting manager, the chair is responsible for allocating the task of minute-taker and checking they are performing the task as required. Below are a number of tasks that should be checked.

Minute-taking tasks
Understand that the primary function of minutes is to provide an accurate representation of the meeting itself; in particular to record key decisions made, votes taken and who is responsible for any follow-up action.
Understand that the role of the minute-taker is to: • record the meeting as accurately as possible • submit a draft copy to the chair for checking; the chair may decide not to include extraneous information • send a final copy to participants and those who could not attend within a designated time.
Understand the type of meeting being conducted; for example, a regular staff meeting, an extraordinary meeting or a board meeting.
Understand the agenda and that the minutes must follow the agenda and cover all aspects including: • the date, time, location • objectives and welcome • attendees, apologies, and if there are proxies • approval of previous minutes • matters arising • correspondence • agenda items • other business • close and details of next meeting (if appropriate). Also, that they are familiar with any documentation that had been sent out with the agenda.
Have an agreed protocol with the chair; before the meeting the chair and the minute-taker should agree on the style of how the minutes will be taken; for example, a brief overview of decisions made; detailed notes for motions only; or a verbatim record of the entire meeting. The chair may instruct the minute-taker not to record some information as they may prefer a discussion to be 'off the record'.

Meeting administration requirements including:

- having prepared all the paperwork needed for the meeting
- being aware of governing documents and procedures
- understanding the organisation's style and preferred format for presenting the minutes; for example, using full sentences, recording who participated in a discussion, and italicising follow-up actions
- being familiar with the issues that may arise in the meeting so they are aware of specific terminology, acronyms, key names and likely discussion areas.

Meeting administration protocols including:

- knowing how to deal with confidential information
- knowing how to record a guest speaker or someone who only attends for a short period of time
- checking any equipment needed by participants is ready and working; this includes the laptop the minute-taker may be using to record the minutes
- knowing the time lines for the meeting and for speakers.

Record the meeting

There are a range of tasks the minute-taker must carry out during the meeting. Check that they understand the following duties.

Duties of the minute-taker during a meeting
Ensure that people sign-in at the meeting; this is particularly important when a quorum needs to be established.
Ensure everyone has a copy of the agenda and the previous minutes, if appropriate.
Receive and report apologies.
Alert the chair to procedural issues; for example, if there is not a quorum; if they are confused by a decision.
Ensure minutes are signed by the chair (once agreed) and are filed away.

Responsibilities for different types of meetings

The following information describes the difference in the style of minutes that may be produced for different types of meetings.

Informal minutes

Small groups sometimes prefer to operate more informally. However, minutes are still a vital component of the meetings. Minutes will report what occurred at the meeting for future reference, summarise the actions taken, the action planned, the people responsible and any deadlines. Minutes may include some background information, keeping in mind they are written solely for the benefit of people already familiar with the group and its activities.

Action minutes

Action minutes are best suited for one-on-one meetings that operate in a purely conversational manner. They can be written in point form. Minutes will identify the person or persons responsible for future actions and set time limits.

During many informal meetings the minute-taker, or secretary, is encouraged to participate in discussions. In such situations, action minutes are usually easiest to use.

Formal minutes

During formal meetings, decisions are reached through motions. Motions are proposals placed before the members for debate and voting. These must be recorded verbatim.

When you are organising the minutes of a formal meeting, they follow the same format as the agenda.

Tips for recording minutes

If you spend time training the minute-taker you will be rewarded with effective notes taken efficiently and accurately. Here are some suggestions for guiding a staff member who may be new to this task. These tips apply where the minute-taker is writing or using a laptop.

Refer to agenda

Have a copy of the agenda with you and follow the same format for recording the minutes. Number the pages to avoid confusion later.

Tips for producing minutes

During the meeting, write in sentences and as fully as possible as it is better to have too much information than not enough (you can always summarise later or the chair can delete superfluous information). Learn various shorthand tricks to help you with speed; for example, 'mtg' for meeting.

Don't be afraid to interrupt if you did not catch a name or statement correctly.

Write up the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting while the information is still able to be easily recalled.

Use standard phrases or conventions

Use standard phrases or conventions that clearly convey what happened such as:

- 'The meeting agreed to ...'
- 'Lively discussion followed where it was agreed that ...'
- 'The following questions were raised ...'
- 'There was disagreement from this point and participants put forward the following suggestions: ...'

Attach additional documents

Additional documents should be attached in an appendix or an indication given of their location.

Further tips

- Be objective – your role is to be an impartial observer. Try to capture the tone and feel of the meeting as well as the facts. Don't include your own opinion.
- Focus on action items, not the discussion.
- Avoid using people's names except when recording motions or seconds. For example, 'The discussion centred on ...' rather than 'Mr Keith said ... then Mr Christer said ...'.

Example: Organise a meeting

The monthly sales meeting for a national chemical wholesale company is regularly chaired by the National Sales Manager, Louise Brevan, and includes state sales managers (flown in for the meeting) and a regular product briefing from two or three product specialists. The meeting convenes on the first Monday of each month. It is important to maintain this timing, as the finance department knows they must prepare the sales profit reports for the chair by that day.

The meeting is required to evaluate the previous month's sales and to forecast the coming month's inventory requirements.

Ms Brevan is aware that the team needs to get back to their respective offices quickly, so she schedules the meeting for 9.00 am and makes sure all the attendees are out by 2.00 pm to catch flights and return home at a reasonable hour. For this reason, she is a stickler for timing and the schedule. She ensures all participants have their say in accordance with the meeting requirements and that any follow-up or action points are distributed clearly at the end of the meeting.

Problems are tabled early to permit effective discussion and outcomes to be reached quickly. Ms Brevan sets strict boundaries with her team to avoid discussions becoming 'gossip sessions' as she calls them, where the main points are lost and general negative conversation ensues.

As the results of the meeting usually require several action points, it is important that the minutes are accurate and disseminated quickly. Ms Brevan assigns this task to her assistant who sits in on the meeting, organises catering, and distributes the agenda and action items for each meeting.

The results of the sales meeting help the organisation maintain a focus on continuous improvement and a sustainable competitive advantage within a very competitive industry.

Practice task 9

Read the case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

Case study

During a meeting, Jason, who is taking the minutes, finds it hard to follow the discussion; struggles with the jargon and isn't sure which agenda item is being discussed, as people seem to jump from one topic to another.

He notices that people don't explain anything to him, but look in his direction to make sure he is taking notes.

Jason writes down as much as he can. The meeting lasts three hours, by which time he has 24 pages of notes. It takes him a further five hours to transcribe the notes into six pages of minutes, which he sends to his manager the next day.

Four days later Jason receives his notes back with many amendments and insertions. Although embarrassed, he makes the corrections and returns them to the manager. The minutes are returned two days later with some other minor corrections, which he makes and again returns for approval. They are finally accepted with a note asking that the minutes be circulated to those at the meeting and the committee chair. Jason does this, relieved that the minutes are finally completed.

continued ...

... continued

1. What could be done to improve Jason's minute-taking skills?

2. What processes or procedures could be employed to improve the meeting?

Summary

1. Formal meeting procedure has evolved and been adopted in various forms by most organisations. These conventions allow all members of the meeting to have an equal and fair input into resolutions, and for decisions made to be the will of all the participants.
2. It is crucial that the chair understands and applies meeting conventions and protocols.
3. The chair of a meeting holds an essential role. They are responsible for leading and guiding participants in an impartial manner so they may fulfil agenda requirements and achieve the meeting's objectives.
4. Effective meeting facilitation starts with a review of the goals, or anticipated outcomes, and the agenda. All participants need to be involved. The chair uses group communication and conflict management skills to increase acceptance of decisions made and support a sustained effort toward achieving goals.

Learning checkpoint 2
Conduct meetings

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in conducting meetings.

Part A

1. Explain the process of making a decision in a formal meeting.

2. Research the types of legal and ethical requirements that apply to meetings. Explain how they may regulate an organisation's meeting conventions.

3. Discuss how a meeting could lose focus and run out of time. Describe methods for keeping a meeting on track.

4. Describe the techniques you may use to ensure that your meetings are inclusive.

5. Prepare a checklist you could give to a new minute-taker to help them gain the necessary skills to effectively record meetings. Use this list to train a group of people in minute-taking.

Part B

Read the case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

Case study

A car dealership in the outskirts of Melbourne holds regular management meetings on the morning of the last Friday of each month. These involve the two Senior Sales Associates (Joe and Evan), the Sales Manager (Helen), the Administration Manager (Julie), Finance Manager (Paul) and Service Department Manager (Ahmed). The meeting is chaired by the Dealer Principal.

The June meeting is going to be tense. The agenda is circulated to the staff prior to the meeting. Three items in particular are expected to cause a lot of discussion:

- Notification of the resignation of two sales staff (Jeff and Melanie)
- Third month of below-target sales performance … ideas!
- Delays in new stock arriving – now expected in August.

The meeting

The meeting starts at 7.30 am and is due to run for one hour. Before the meeting is officially underway, a heated discussion erupts between Joe and Paul regarding the sales figures. Joe appears to blame Paul for the lack of sales, saying his finance rules are too strict and he'd knocked back perfectly good customers. Paul reports directly to the Dealer Principal; Joe reports to the Sales Manager (who is not present and has not informed the chair she would not be attending).

Ahmed has prepared a proposal for increasing the service department's contribution to the company's bottom line – but has not told the chair that he wants to table it at the meeting.

1. Discuss what roles and attitudes people may bring to the meeting. How might this affect the running of the meeting?

2. How can the chair ensure that each of the participants contributes effectively to this meeting?

3. What steps can the chair take to ensure issues are resolved?

4. In your opinion, do minutes need to be taken? Why/Why not?

5. Identify any issues you believe may arise in relation to statutory and corporate regulations.

Topic 3
Follow up meetings

After a meeting has been conducted, the minute-taker's job is to ensure the notes they have taken are typed up following the organisation's required format, and are submitted for approval. They must then be distributed to all meeting participants within an accepted time frame.

It may be your role to train team members as minute-takers and ensure they complete the follow-up tasks correctly. Alternatively, you may arrange a mentor to guide them.

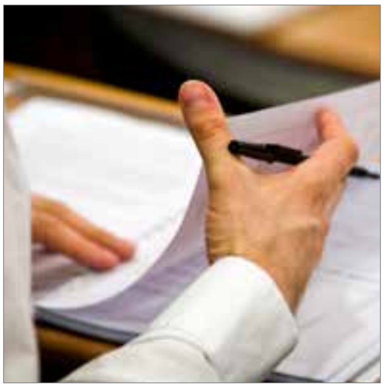
In this topic you will learn how to:

3A Check the accuracy and format of meeting notes

3B Distribute and store minutes and other follow-up documentation

3C Report meeting outcomes within designated time lines

3A Check the accuracy and format of meeting notes



Minutes and meeting notes need to be reviewed and, if necessary, transcribed as soon as possible after the meeting. Obviously if the minutes have been recorded on a laptop this is unnecessary to some degree, although they must still be reviewed for accuracy and grammatical correctness.

Make sure your minute-taker is aware of the procedures for attending to the minutes while their memory of events is still clear in their mind, and submits them as soon as possible after the meeting. Occasionally, they may need to obtain further information from you for clarity or may need to check the spelling of a name before the draft is completed.

They also need to know when the minutes are required to be distributed so they can factor in the time it will take to transcribe them, make any amendments, re-check them before distribution and include any other material that needs to be sent with them.

Submit a draft copy

It is essential that once the minutes have been drafted into a readable format, a draft copy is submitted to the chair for approval. Ensure the minute-taker knows what to check for when preparing the draft copy.

Examples of checks for preparing draft meeting minutes:

- The minutes follow the organisation's meeting minutes template.
- The date, venue and purpose of the meeting are listed correctly.
- All names are spelled correctly.
- Correct grammar and punctuation is used.
- The minutes are concise.
- Legal regulations are adhered to in respect to confidential information.
- Motions are worded correctly.
- All details are correct.
- Follow-up action items clearly record who is responsible and by when they need to be completed.

Make amendments

You or the chair will advise the minute-taker of any amendments that are necessary. Use conventional editing marks. Amendments may be in regard to:

- accuracy of the minutes, including discussion, decisions, voting, seconders or actions to be taken, etc.
- customary, legal and regulatory requirements
- format and style
- spelling and grammar.

Any amendments should be made by the minute-taker prior to circulating the minutes.

Unit release 1 (Aspire Version 1.1)

Practice task 10

1. What are some tips you would give your minute-taker to aid in ensuring accuracy of minutes?

2. Create a checklist for a minute-taker to ensure the accuracy and correct format of meeting notes.

3B Distribute and store minutes and other follow-up documentation

Once the minutes are finalised it is your responsibility to ensure they are distributed to the relevant people in accordance with organisational time lines. Make sure the person you have delegated this responsibility to knows the following aspects:

- The time line for distribution.
- Who to send the minutes to; for example, the chair; participants; those who could not attend the meeting; those required to receive the minutes in accordance with statutory, legal, organisational and customary requirements such as shareholders; and any interested parties provided confidentiality and privacy guides are not breached.
- Whether any follow-up documentation needs to be attached to the minutes such as a report, discussion paper or a copy of a letter.
- The method of distribution; this may depend on the urgency and the type of meeting; for example, whether the minutes should be sent by express post, a courier, registered post or regular mail or whether they can be emailed.
- If emailing, that they understand confidentiality requirements and know that the receiver has compatible software.

Make sure appropriate resources are available; such as envelopes, labels and other packaging where appropriate.

Adhere to time lines

It is essential to distribute minutes within accepted time frames so people can follow up items and put decisions into action. Some time lines demand attention because they will have consequences if the time lines are not followed by the next meeting. There may be legal, contractual or organisational obligations for receiving minutes within a set time; for example, a public company shareholder meeting has time lines for dispatch of minutes laid down in their company or organisational regulations or constitutions.

Store and archive meeting minutes

As a manager you need to delegate to a team member the responsibility of keeping a copy of all meeting documentation. It may or may not be the minute-taker. Documentation should include copies of the agenda, minutes and any supporting documents such as reports or correspondence.

Make sure meeting minutes are stored securely and appropriately.

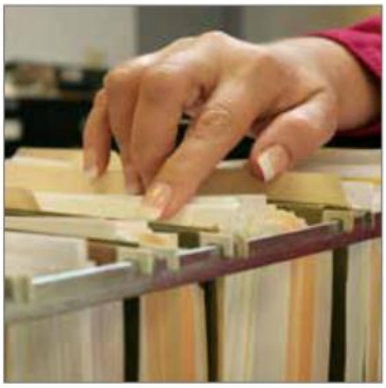
v1425

Storage methods

Storage methods may vary between organisations; some keep a paper-based filing system while others maintain information in electronic folders in a secure disk drive; some may use a combination. If using an electronic system, most organisations have a back-up system that stores the files on server back-up, portable storage media or cloud-based server.

Your organisation may have an information management policy and/or information management procedures documents that should be followed.

Access



Those authorised to deal with meeting documentation need to know where it is filed. Is the location easily accessible? Is there enough space for both previous and future documentation, plus all additional documentation that may be needed? If not, is there an option for extending, especially if in hard copy?

Regardless of the storage method, documentation should be easily accessible to those who need it. However, security and confidentiality are crucial. In some circumstances meeting documentation will only be available to authorised people; make sure those responsible understand any password protections that have been applied or whether documentation is held in a locked filing cabinet. Relevant people should know who has access, who does not have access and what the procedure is for access. Make sure you have trained your team members in the organisation's procedures.

Filing procedures

Whether the storage method is paper based or electronic, it should adhere to correct filing procedures.

Name the files, folders and sub-folders according to organisational procedure. They must be easily identifiable in relation to content. Clearly explain the reasoning behind each pathway so those who are naming and handling files understand the logic behind the filing system. For example:

- an electronic filing system may store staff meeting minutes in the following pathway: StaffMeetings\15 May\Sales Report
- details such as the author, section and computer operator may be included in a footer or header
- a paper-based system may have a section called 'Staff meetings', and separate folders for each year made up of files for agendas and minutes.

Make sure there is an indexing system to ensure easy retrieval if someone needs to check votes, discussion, notes or papers on particular issues from past meetings.

Example: The importance of procedures

The procedures for taking, distributing and storing minutes should be clearly described in an organisation's policies and procedures manual so the process is understood by anyone who may need to take over the responsibility of administering meetings

Monika, who always handled taking, distributing and storing the minutes is about to go on 12 months maternity leave. She has been responsible for the minutes for years. When she started her job there were only some very brief notes on what to do. While she has handled her duties exceptionally well and added and refined her tasks over time, the procedures she follows were never written down. The organisation's procedures and Monika's position description only record a brief outline of her duties. Because there is no comprehensive written procedures no-one else actually knows what she does. Her manager realises that it is essential to have a written record of the secretary's responsibilities.

v1426

Practice task 11

Prepare a list of a person's responsibilities in regard to distributing and storing minutes.

3C Report meeting outcomes within designated time lines

After a meeting has been finalised, it may be your responsibility to report the outcomes of the meeting to a relevant body such as a project committee, your senior management group, or your team.

Examples of meeting outcomes that may need to be reported are shown below.

> A management meeting may have made a resolution that you need to disseminate to team members.

> You may need to distribute the annual general meeting report to shareholders.

> You may need to let staff know of the decision made concerning the purchase of a new dishwasher for the kitchen.

How and what to report

How and what you report will depend on who you are reporting to and the type of information they need; for example, you may only need to prepare a summary report listing recommendations made and actions to be taken. This may be forwarded to the appropriate people or you may need to make a face-to-face presentation to them.

In some instances, the decisions of a meeting may need a committee to be formed, additional research undertaken, action or discussion outside of the original meeting, documentation sent, or people to be contacted. Depending on the circumstances, you may need to prepare a comprehensive list of actions required and let the relevant people know what their responsibilities are and when they need to complete the task. Make sure you include a time line with appropriate checks along the way. You will need to report back at a subsequent meeting about the progress of the action taken.

Whatever the outcomes or decisions made at a meeting, they must be conveyed to the relevant people as soon as possible. You may find it useful to highlight each outcome from the minutes and identify the necessary follow up.

Example: How action items are reported to a customer service group

The customer service manager at a regional call centre organises a meeting for his customer service centre staff to discuss several concerns raised by customers over the last three months. The meeting is very useful as he is able to gather input from all the staff, discuss alternative perspectives and develop a range of action items that all call centre staff should implement as a matter of urgency.

The meeting outcomes are reported on the minutes and distributed in paper form to those who attended. The manager is aware of the importance of this communication and doesn't want it to get lost in the usual paperwork that accumulates in the office. He decides to post the action items on the intranet so all relevant staff can access the outcomes immediately.

Example: Check the accuracy of meeting documents

The finance committee of a large public company meets monthly to ensure the financial commitments and records of the organisation are compliant with regulatory requirements and meet the organisation's strategic objectives. The previous month's reports are tabled in order for the committee members to analyse the financial trends and the effects of previous decisions on the monthly performance. They are distributed to the committee members two days prior via secure email that requires an acceptance notification. This lets the chief financial officer (CFO) know each member has received the information in a timely manner.

At the meeting, each member votes to accept the accuracy of the previous records and the minutes of the previous meeting. The CFO asks that all members have read, understood and agree that the records are an accurate reflection of the financial matters discussed.

The need to ensure accuracy, timeliness and effective distribution of financial meeting notes for large organisations is self-evident. However, it is no less important in small organisations where cashflows can determine the ongoing viability of the company.

Practice task 12

Refer to a meeting report you have used in your workplace or in another situation. This can include minutes, action items, full reports or any other format used. Reflect on whether the report was distributed to the right people within an appropriate or designated time. Briefly describe the outcome and any recommendations you would make for future reports.

continued ...

... continued

Summary

1. It is the manager's responsibility to check transcribed meeting notes to ensure they reflect a true and accurate record of the meeting.
2. It is essential that draft minutes are presented in a format according to organisational requirements, are reviewed and submitted to the chair for approval.
3. Minutes must be checked for accurate details and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4. Minutes and any attached documentation must be sent to participants and those who apologised in a timely manner.
5. It is the responsibility of the manager to train team members in saving, filing and storing minutes according to organisational procedures.
6. Minutes of meetings must be in an easily accessible storage file for those authorised to access them.
7. Outcomes of a meeting must be reported to the relevant people as soon as possible so any follow-up actions can be promptly undertaken.

Learning checkpoint 3
Follow up meetings

This learning checkpoint allows you to review your skills and knowledge in following up meetings.

Part A

1. Describe the process you use to check the accuracy of meeting notes. How do you ensure the content meets organisational standards?

2. Explain the procedure you use to distribute action items and other important meeting notes after a meeting to those who require them. Use an example that clearly identifies the people involved and their responsibilities following the meeting.

3. How are minutes stored in your workplace or one you are familiar with? Make at least one recommendation that would improve the current method of storage. For example, you may suggest ways of improving access to the information or methods of storage within your management systems.

4. Describe a time when you were required to send out meeting information within a given time frame. Ensure you cover:
   a) why the time frame was important

b) the method you used to disseminate the report

c) any recommendations you would make to improve future processes.

Part B

Read the case study, then complete the tasks that follow.

Case study

Julia Jackson manages a team of seven staff at a regional freight distribution company. She instigates regular quality control meetings to gain input from each employee that can be used to improve the customer experience.

At today's meeting Julia has an agenda item that refers to the outcomes from the previous meeting. Before everyone gathers she needs to make sure the notes are accurate but she can't recall last month's meeting with any confidence. Additionally, the minutes are handwritten and difficult to read.

There were also two action items from the last meeting:

- Change the logo on the invoices sent to customers (marked as urgent).
- Implement a 'three-ring-to-answer' policy (marked as non-urgent).

Neither of these has been completed in time for the next meeting.

1. Recommend a method that Julia could instigate that would improve her ability to check the accuracy and format of meeting notes.

2. Describe a procedure that Julia could use to distribute and store minutes and other follow-up documentation from the meeting.

3. How would you report meeting outcomes to relevant staff in a timely manner? Describe the procedure with reference to the case study.