



**UNIVERSITY OF  
SASKATCHEWAN**

## **University Council**

# **Guidelines for Committee Chairs**

**Office of the University Secretary  
University of Saskatchewan**

*As reviewed by the Coordinating Committee of Council in September, 2007  
Minor revisions 2008, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018*

## Guidelines for Council Committee Chairs

The composition and responsibilities of Council Committees are provided in the Council Bylaws, Section IV. The Standing Committees of Council serve Council by considering issues in depth and presenting their deliberations for consideration by Council as a whole. Council Committee Chairs are vital to this process, by providing leadership and direction and ensuring committee meetings are conducted following practices of good governance. The following are intended as brief, practical guidelines to apprise the Chairpersons of Council and its Committees of their responsibilities and the support available to them.

**General Duties of Chairperson:** Committee chairpersons are leaders of their committees and of Council, and have a special responsibility to promote orderly involvement in discussion by the members of their own committees and of Council and the university community as a whole. Their duties can be grouped under six headings:

- (1) to organize the work of the committee by setting meetings as needed, identifying possible agenda items, and ensuring that the committee receives necessary information in a timely fashion;
- (2) to run committee meetings effectively and in a way that ensures the work of the committee gets done well, preferably with the full participation of all members – the chair should display equanimity, interpersonal sensitivity, diplomacy, and diligence;
- (3) to present the committee's reports and recommendations to Council, inviting and leading discussion in such a way as to bring Council members' attention to the key issues, information, and decisions;
- (4) to advise the Chair of Council about matters affecting Council, including the construction of Council's agenda and matters affecting the work of other committees;
- (5) to represent Council, its interests, and its policies to the university and the academic community; and
- (6) to participate in an *ex officio* capacity as a member of or participant in other bodies or activities in which the Chair of a Council Committee is named. Such bodies include the Coordinating Committee, the Governance Committee and Standing Subcommittees (see below).

**Term of Appointment:** Committee Chairs are nominated by Nominations Committee and approved by Council. The appointment is for one year, with Chairs being eligible for reappointment up to an additional two years.

**Committee Vice-Chairs:** Each Committee Chair should select a Vice-Chair, with the approval of the committee, to assist in planning and to assume the role of Chair either due to the Chair's absence or a conflict of interest of the Chair. If preferred, co-Vice-Chairs may be appointed.

**Absence of the Chair:** If the Committee Chair is unable to serve for any reason, the duties of the Chair will be carried out by the committee Vice-Chair. If the Vice-Chair is required to act as Chair for more than six months, the Nominations Committee will be asked to submit the name of a nominee to Council to serve as committee Chair.

## Meetings

**Quorum:** Quorum is a **majority** of the voting members, with the exception of the Nominations Committee, where quorum is two-thirds of the voting members. The President and the Chair of Council are ex-officio, non-voting members of all committees but are not counted for purposes of quorum.

**Motions:** Motions can be made only if quorum has been attained. If quorum has not been attained, the meeting may proceed with the committee's agreement on a discussion basis only, with the agenda received, but not approved.

**Rules of Order:** Most committee meetings are run in a relatively informal way, but if you feel a need for a reference work, Council uses Kerr and King's *Procedures for Meetings and Organizations*, Third Edition, Chapter 17 of which concerns Procedures for Committees.

**Record of Meetings:** Committees are expected to keep formal agendas; notes or minutes; and a record of quorum. These documents are archived and form an important record of Council's deliberations. The chairperson should review the draft minutes, wherever possible, prior to their being circulated to committee members for approval.

**Committee Support:** Council Committees are supported by the University Secretariat with the exception of the Scholarships and Awards Committee, which is supported by Student Finance and Awards, the Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee supported by the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning Office, and the International Activities Committee, which is supported by the International Office. Chairs can expect the Committee Secretary to develop agendas, take minutes, draft reports and any correspondence, and assist in the planning, coordination, and communication with Council and Council committees.

**Representation and other memberships on subcommittees and advisory committees:** Representation from Council committees is often requested on advisory committees, and Council committees may also form their own standing subcommittees or *ad hoc* committees. Council committees should receive regular reports from their members who serve on *ad hoc*, standing, or advisory committees. Committees may also designate non-members to sit on such subcommittees and should arrange for annual reports in such cases.

**Conflict of Interest:** In Council bylaws, Conflict of Interest is defined as follows:

A conflict of interest exists for a member of Council or a member of a Council committee when, with respect to a matter being considered by Council or the committee:

- (a) the decision being made is such that the member could not reasonably be expected to exercise independent judgment because of the effect the decision would or would be likely to have on the member or a person closely related or closely associated with the member; or
- (b) as a result of occupying a position or holding an office in an organization, the person is legally obligated to subordinate the interests of the University to the interests of the organization when dealing with the matter.

Committee Chairs and members are expected to exercise independent judgment with their principal concern being the welfare of the University community.

Members are expected to disclose and identify a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest and to abstain from voting on related committee proceedings, and when appropriate, withdrawing from all committee deliberations with respect to the matter. The Chair is entitled to raise the question of whether a member has a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest.

When the Chair has a conflict of interest in relation to a particular item, she or he should request the Vice-Chair chair the part of the meeting where that item is being considered.

## Reports to Council

**Notices of Motion for University Council:** Council members are to be given at least 10 days' notice of substantive motions; a recommendation contained in a committee report is deemed a notice of motion if included with the Council meeting agenda. Changes to Council Bylaws require 30 days' notice of motion.

**Reports to Council:** In order to conduct the business of Council, committees regularly submit requests for decision or reports for information for Council's benefit. Reports are submitted on a standard template provided by the University Secretary. Council committees are required to report to Council at least once each academic year. This generally takes the form of an Annual Report of the committee's activities.

**Council Deadlines:** Council reports are required by the University Secretary 13 days prior to the Council meeting.

**University Policy proposals:** Council committees often develop and/or are consulted on University policy. The University's Policy Oversight Committee, which is an administrative committee with Council representation, is responsible for reviewing proposals for new or amended policies, recommending that policy development proceed, identifying an appropriate sponsor, advising about consultation, and identifying an appropriate approval path. Questions regarding policy development may be directed to the University Secretary as Chair of the Policy Oversight Committee.

## Other responsibilities

**Coordinating Committee:** The Coordinating Committee, chaired by the Chair of Council, is responsible for coordinating the work of Council Committees. Meetings provide the opportunity to consider whether items should be brought to Council for approval or for information and to determine the path of consultation amongst Council committees. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Council and Council Committee Chairs comprise the membership of the Coordinating Committee. Chairpersons should bring to the Coordinating Committee meetings a list of all items and reports they propose to submit to the next Council meeting; such reports should also, of course, have the prior approval of the committee bringing them forward.

**Council Chairs Breakfast Meetings:** The Coordinating Committee meets informally on a monthly basis with the President and other members of senior administration to discuss Council business, university governance, and other matters of interest or concern to Council.

**Governance Committee:** The chairs of Planning and Priorities, and Academic Programs sit as ex-officio members of the Governance Committee.

## Housekeeping matters

**Committee Budget:** Each committee is provided with a modest budget to cover meeting costs, such as copying and catering expenses. Requests for additional budget to support committee activity may be made to the University Secretary.

**Council Website:** The Council website is housed at [www.usask.ca/secretariat/governing-bodies/council/index.php](http://www.usask.ca/secretariat/governing-bodies/council/index.php). Council's bylaws and policies can be found there, and each committee has a dedicated page.

**Chair Stipend:** To recognize the contributions of Council Chairs, each Committee Chair and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council may apply for a one- or two-unit special research stipend per one-year term, to be applied against costs associated with research personnel, travel, or equipment.