

# OBC Guidance for Staff Participation in Meetings – Meeting Etiquette

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## 1. Introduction

Oxford Business College [the College] believes that the success of its business meetings is highly related to the positive contributions of its members. To that end, this guidance has been developed to allow for meaningful interaction between staff members, so the power of cognitive diversity can help shape powerful collaboration in pursuit of the organisational and strategic objectives.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of the College's Meeting Etiquette Policy is to promote a professional and respectful approach to the running of College Committees and Meetings. The policy outlines the college's approach to promoting organisational behaviours expected of staff members, committee members and their chairs. It provides guiding principles that are to be adopted to ensure that meetings are conducted in an effective and efficient manner. The policy encourages open communication, active listening, and the expression of diverse opinions and perspectives. It emphasises the importance of punctuality, preparedness, and constructive feedback. It also sets expectations for appropriate behaviour, including respectful language, courteous conduct, and the avoidance of disruptive behaviour. By adopting this policy, the college aims to create a positive and productive environment for all staff members, committee members and their chairs, ensuring that meetings are conducted in a manner that is conducive to achieving the College's strategic goals and objectives.

## 3. Scope

This policy is to be adopted by all staff members and should be the approach used by the College when conducting any formal business meeting of, or meeting of the Corporate Academic Governance framework.

## 4. Aims & Objective

The aim of this policy is to provide clarity to staff members regarding the expected behaviours that the College values, providing the chair reference as to the way in which the college expects its meetings to be run.

## 5. Oxford Business College Meeting Etiquette

As defined, etiquette refers to good manners required by an individual to find a place in society. It is appropriate for an individual to behave appropriately in a group or in public to earn and retain respect and appreciation.

Meeting Etiquette refers to codes of behaviour an individual ought to follow while attending meetings and discussions.

Meetings are a major component of the College functioning. Members sit together on a common platform to exchange views and opinions and reach solutions that progress the College in pursuit of its strategic objectives. Behaviour of Staff at a meeting is important to the success of a meeting. Effective meetings can be achieved if all individuals are committed to simple ground rules of behaviours before and during meetings.

### 5.1. The College recognises the following “Meeting Etiquette Rules”:

- Appropriate etiquette meeting behaviour reflects respect for self, others and the College.
- Preparation for meeting: review agenda and all applicable documents, be ready to express your options and views.
- Check the Action Plan that is attached to the minutes of the previous meeting well in advance of the meeting, and make sure that you complete all the action points that are assigned to you before their respective deadlines.
- Submit written reports that have been requested by the time they are requested using the template(s) provided.
- Never be late for a meeting unless prior notice (apology) is given.
- Do not deviate/digress from key points on the agenda.
- Practice phone etiquette during the meeting.
- Staff should practice active listening and not have meetings within meetings.
- Staff should respect each other’s contribution and not interrupt when someone is speaking.
- Staff should take turns talking.
- Staff should act in a way that is fair and unbiased.
- Staff should make sure that their comments do not amount to personal attack on another individual and should avoid using heated, emotional and value loaded language and behaviour.

- Staff should avoid acting or speaking in a way that may be perceived as bullying, abusive, discriminatory, or derogatory.
- Individual and personal disputes should not be allowed to affect conduct within the meeting but should be resolved elsewhere.
- Any staff member who does not comply with the Meeting Etiquette Rules may be asked to leave the meeting by the Chair.
- Any staff member excluded from an individual meeting because of behaviour may be subject to the College disciplinary procedures outlined in the Staff Handbook.

5.2. For Online Meetings the following additional behaviours should be observed:

- Ensure your profile picture and username are both appropriate.
- Test your camera and microphone settings in advance of the meeting.
- Ensure an appropriate screen background.
- Have your camera on unless otherwise requested by the chair.
- Mute your microphone whilst not speaking.
- If sharing your screen, close all other irrelevant programs and tabs on your computer.
- Use the video conferencing platforms functions to bring awareness to your intent to ask a question, for example the raise hand function or chat function.

## 6. The Approach to Chairing Meetings

The purpose of having someone to chair a meeting is to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly and efficiently. They should:

- Ensure all agenda items are discussed.
- Ensure everyone's views are heard.
- Ensure clear decisions are reached.
- Ensure meetings keep to time and stay on topic.
- Maintain meeting etiquette.

There is a responsibility on the chair to ensure effective preparation for the meeting has taken place. This should include:

- Booking the meeting in attendees' calendars in advance of the planned meeting date.

- Ensuring the room is suitable for the meeting type being held.
- Ensuring that agendas have been circulated at in advance of the meeting, for committee meeting this should be at least one week in advance of the meeting where possible.
- Ensuring requested reports are templated and give assurance against the terms of reference.
- Ensuring adequate time is planned for members to submit reports.
- Ensuring adequate time for reports to be read in advance of the meeting, for committee meeting this should be at least one week in advance of the meeting where possible.

The role of the chair at the start of the meeting should ensure everyone feels welcome and is able to contribute. To help this:

- Everyone has the agenda and any additional information in advance.
- Introduce yourself and others at the start of the meeting. If it is a small meeting, ask everyone to introduce themselves
- Reiterate the purpose of the meeting and what outcomes you need – don't assume everyone knows.

To effectively run the meeting, the chair should discharge four key responsibilities:

- Keep to the agenda and keep to timings unless something is raised that seems to require immediate attention.
- Involve everybody.
- Reach decisions.
- Dealing with difficult people.

To keep to the agenda and the planned timings the following guidance should be followed:

- Have a clear agenda with timings.
- Introduce each agenda item.
- Never assume people know what you are talking about.
- Clarify key issues and why you are discussing them.
- Keep an eye on the time – move items if necessary.
- If people try to raise other agenda items out of place, acknowledge their contribution but reinforce that it will be discussed later in the meeting, or at another appropriate time outside of the current meeting.
- Stop side conversations as soon they start; politely and firmly.

- Explain why the decision is being made, for example “I am going to give that discussion another 5 minutes and then draw to a close.

To involve everybody, the chair needs to make sure that those who are prone to over talking are restrained and who are quieter in meetings have their point drawn out. Ideally an atmosphere where there can be genuine debate and discussion is sought. The following guidance should be followed:

- Acknowledge those looking to contribute to an item.
- Ask open questions to draw out further contributions.
- Stop people interrupting others, acknowledge their contribution but ask them to wait till after the current speaker has finished.
- Make sure people giving controversial or unpopular views aren't intimidated and feel confident to express their thoughts.

As chair clear decisions are required to be reached, to achieve this the chair should consider the following:

- Bring people back to the decision that needs to be made regularly throughout the discussion.
- Try and pull together points of agreement and agree a way forward.
- Summarise converse points of view concisely and present the options to the group.
- Before moving to the next agenda item confirm what has been agreed and any actions or owners and timescales.
- Don't assume silence means agreement.

Running an effective meeting can often involve balancing converse ideas around a topic, to maintain 'Meeting Etiquette' the following guidelines should be followed:

- Remind people of the meeting etiquette rules.
- Be firm but fair and consistent.
- If discussion becomes heated, summarise key points on both sides then move focus away from the individuals by asking for other people's thoughts.
- If someone keeps repeating the same point, assure them their point has been heard and turn the discussion back to the group.
- If someone is continually critical, ask them their ideas about how they would approach the situation.

- Ask the groups' opinion – “Do people want to spend more time on this discussion or move on to the next topic?”