

UNIVERSITY SECRETARIAT

Effective Minute-Taking

Minutes of meetings are part of Carleton's duty to document and serve an important purpose for the institution's historical record. It is important that they are accurate, accessible and consistent.

BEST PRACTICES

- Write the minutes the week the meeting occurred or as soon as possible
- Use plain language
- Follow the agenda and use chronological order of information
- Do not use acronyms, but if required, spell out in full first
- Use a consistent design and layout
- Minutes should not be verbatim or a transcript
- Use passive voice (it was moved, seconded and carried that...)
- Minutes should stand on their own without need to refer to the circulated materials
- Have a consistent file name and procedure for review/approval

WHAT TO INCLUDE

- Meeting date, time (start and adjournment), and location
- Name of committee or other group holding the meeting, the Chair and Secretary
- List of those present, including Chair and Secretary, members, guests in attendance, and any recorded regrets/absences.
- Quorum
- Approval of minutes and a record of formal motions and outcomes
- Associated materials and documents that were circulated
- Deferred items
- Requests for information

WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

- Avoid directly quoting individuals or providing transcripts
- Don't include unsubstantiated or subjective information or opinions
- Leave out expressive adjectives, embellishments, buzzwords and jargon

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT (FIPPA)

Because minutes are official records of the university, they are also subject to access to information requests under FIPPA regulations. Ensure your minutes meet our duty to document as well as to protect personal information.

- Draft your minutes assuming they could be made public.
- Protect the privacy of individuals involved in meetings or issues.
- Include only factual and concise statements about each issue discussed, omitting unnecessary details.

RETENTION AND DISPOSITION

Minutes and accompanying documentation are official records of the university and must be retained for specific periods using best practices for records management:

- Certain minutes are also be considered of permanent or historical value and must be transferred to Corporate Archives once no longer needed by your unit.
- All personal notes, drafts and recordings should be shredded/destroyed as soon as the final minutes are approved.
- If you or your office only receive the minutes for reference and you do not have primary responsibility for the committee, your copies are transitory and can be destroyed when you no longer need them.
- Retention and disposition rules for different types of committees are listed in the [Carleton University Retention Schedule](#) OR contact Corporate Records and Archives directly to establish a retention period.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

On Minute Taking and Governance
University Secretariat
secretariat@carleton.ca

On FIPPA Obligations
University Privacy Office
university_privacy_office@carleton.ca

On Retention and Disposition of Minutes
Corporate Records and Archives
corporate.archives@carleton.ca