

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

GUIDANCE FOR DRAFTING PAPERS FOR UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE BOARD AND UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES 2022-23

This short guidance note is designed to assist University colleagues in drafting appropriate, timely and effective paperwork for consideration by the University Executive Board (UEB), and University Committees including Senate and Council.

UEB, Senate and Council have responsibility for all major strategic decision-making, as well as monitoring the management and performance of the University. All committees have a large amount of business to consider annually.

- UEB meets every other Thursday during term time ([meeting dates](#); [UEB paper deadlines](#))
- Senate meets three times a year for formal business (https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/executivesuite/University_of_Exeter_Committee_Dates_and_Deadlines_2022-23.pdf)
- Council meets seven times a year, including an Away Day (https://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/executivesuite/University_of_Exeter_Committee_Dates_and_Deadlines_2022-23.pdf)

Papers: General Principles

UEB and the University Committees receive a substantial volume of paperwork at each meeting and so it is important that paperwork is presented as effectively and succinctly as possible.

- Reports must be **no more than four pages long**.
- If your paper is unavoidably longer than four pages (e.g. some business cases or statutory returns), in addition, you can provide either:
 - ❖ a coversheet providing an executive summary of the key information and any decisions required, or
 - ❖ a coversheet, as above, plus a summary paper of up to four pages.
- Using the Executive Summary on the coversheet, please state the reason why your paper is the length that it is.
- When papers are going to be presented to Council, they should address the needs of the non-specialist Independent members by avoiding jargon, with acronyms only used if they are genuinely in common currency (e.g. OfS) or if they are spelt out in full when they first occur in the text. Importantly, the coversheet for Council will need to be tailored to the needs of Council members and will need to reflect what Council is being asked to do (i.e. note/approve the paper). This is likely to be different in emphasis to what UEB is asked to do with the same paper. UEB members will be very familiar with the detail of University activity and have responsibility for operations; Council members, who do not have responsibility for day-to-day operations, are looking at the strategic overview and implications.

Coversheet

- For every paper, you will need to complete a coversheet (template below) that is **no more than two pages long**.
- The coversheet is extremely important and will be the first thing that your audience will read and so it is important to be clear and to include the correct information. The coversheet needs to make clear what the purpose of the paper is and what the key recommendations are.
- Most importantly, please provide an executive summary of your paper. An effective executive summary is essential to successful board-level papers. It gives an overview of a report's purpose, methods, findings, and conclusions/recommendations. They are an absolutely essential tool for

busy board members who may not have time to read the whole report.

- There is a lot of free guidance available on how to write an effective executive summary. For example:

RMIT Learning Lab: <https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/beginning>

- All sections of the coversheet must be completed, and in particular please ensure that Equality and Diversity issues have been fully considered. If you are unsure what to include in this section, please contact the relevant Secretariat or the EDI team for guidance.

Appendices

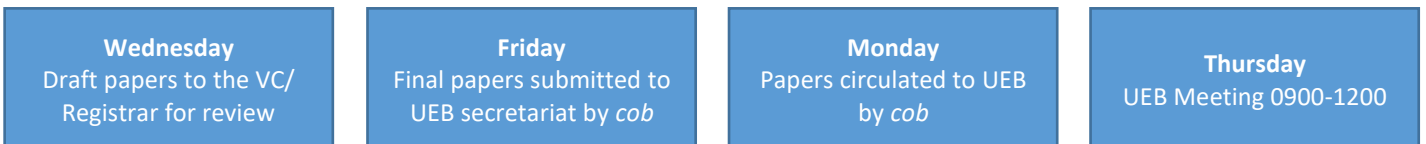
- Appendices can be included as background information, but the information contained in them should not be essential to the discussion/decision-making process. Too much detail can mean that key points/issues are lost.

Reserving time on the agenda

- Please send notice of agenda items to the relevant team as early as possible and certainly by the deadline for each of the Committees (see above).
- For UEB unless unavoidably urgent, notice should be given a minimum of two weeks in advance of the meeting in order to allow sufficient time for the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar to review and agree the final agenda.
- Please contact the Secretariat for Senate and Council papers. Please note that the Council agenda will be closed six weeks prior to the meeting date.

Prior Approval and Submission of UEB Papers

- **It is the role of the UEB sponsor to ensure that papers are presented appropriately and in the required format. UEB sponsors must approve all papers in advance of submission that go in their name.**
- The Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar may ask to review papers in advance of the submission deadline. The UEB secretariat team will inform you if this is the case, so please ensure that your paper is ready to share by the close of business on the Wednesday of the week before the UEB meeting that your paper is due to be presented to. Illustrative timetable:



Prior Approval and Submission of Senate and Council Papers

All Council papers must be approved by the Registrar and Secretary before the paper deadline which is two weeks before the meeting. If your paper has not been reviewed and approved by UEB, the Committee Secretariat will arrange for this but must receive the paper **one week before the paper deadline** (i.e. three weeks before the meeting). In the case of Council, the Chair receives all papers for review the day after the paper deadline, therefore there can be no late papers or deadline extensions. The Chair will remove any item from the meeting agenda if he has not received the paper on time.

Not all Senate and Council papers will require approval by UEB. However, if you would like your paper to be considered by UEB prior to Senate or Council, please consult the UEB dates and deadline where the final UEB meeting date to consider Council and Senate papers is shown. Generally, it will be papers that have strategic or major resourcing implications, or for audit or regulatory reasons, that will need to be shared in advance with UEB. If you are unsure whether your paper requires UEB consideration, please contact the UEB Secretariat team.

Style and Submission Guidance

UEB, Senate and Council are 'paperless meetings' and these groups only receive papers electronically via a specialist board papers software package. Please bear in mind that papers will only be viewed on screen so please avoid the use of complex or large spreadsheets and pivot tables where possible.

- Arial 11pt or Calibri 11pt or 12pt should be used for all papers.
- Pagination - please add page numbers to the bottom right hand of the document. Numbering paragraphs can also be helpful.
- A PPT template is available on request if you are presenting slides.
- Please submit documents in **one PDF document**, containing the coversheet and main paper (please send accompanying appendices in a separate PDF file).
- If you need to use Excel spreadsheets, please convert them to PDF before submission and ensure that all data is captured.
- Papers should be emailed to:
 - For UEB papers, please submit to UEB-secretariat@exeter.ac.uk.
 - For Senate papers, please submit to senate@exeter.ac.uk.
 - For Council papers, please submit to secretariat@exeter.ac.uk.

Coversheet and paper templates below

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE BOARD/COUNCIL/SENATE [insert date of the meeting]

COVERSHEET

Document title:	
Author/s:	
Sponsor on UEB/Council/Senate:	
Document History:	First/second/final version (please include details of other groups/committees that have reviewed the paper before UEB)
Paper Classification:	Open/Confidential/Commercial in Confidence/ Legally Privileged (delete as appropriate) <i>Open: open to all internal audiences and can be published (if Council paper in accordance with the OfS Regulatory Framework Ongoing Conditions of Registration)</i> <i>Confidential Or Commercial in Confidence: – not to be shared unless stipulated. Please state why this paper is exempt from publication.</i> <i>Legally Privileged: must not be shared unless with the written permission of the paper author and sponsor.</i> Please also remember that if papers include information that is considered Personal under GDPR, that this should be highlighted clearly that this should not be shared.
Type of Paper:	For information – not for discussion For discussion – issue for discussion not for decision For approval – recommendations for decision/approval (delete as required)

Executive Summary

[Please summarise the key points in the paper and encapsulate the findings of the paper.]
An effective executive summary is essential to successful board-level papers. It gives an overview of a report’s purpose, methods, findings, and conclusions/recommendations. They are an absolutely essential tool for busy board members who may not have time to read the whole report.
There is a lot of free guidance available on how to write an effective executive summary. For example: RMIT Learning Lab: <https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/beginning>

Financial Implications:

[Briefly summarise the financial implications for the University, Colleges and Services. Please indicate if there are none, and the reasons for this.]

Risk Assessment:

[Briefly summarise key risks. Please indicate if there are none, and the reasons for this.]

Equality & Diversity:

[Briefly summarise E&D implications and indicate whether an EIA has been undertaken or needs to be undertaken. Please do not leave this blank but on the rare occasion that this section is not applicable to your paper, please highlight nil returns in advance to the UEB Secretariat (or the Secretariat for Council papers) or liaise with the EDI team.]

People Impacts

[Briefly summarise any staffing implications, including potential changes to staffing levels and profiles; impacts on ways of working; training requirements; and how the proposal is aligned with the HR strategy]

Environmental/Sustainability Impacts:

[Briefly summarise the Environmental/Sustainability Impacts.]

UEB is asked to:

[summarise actions required by UEB at the meeting]

Template for Papers

Below is a sample outline template for all reports and the Coversheet to be used for most papers is provided above.

Most papers¹ should contain the following elements:

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE BOARD/SENATE/COUNCIL, [insert date of the meeting]

Document Title

[Please note that there is no need to repeat the Executive Summary in the coversheet]

1. Context

A short paragraph contextualising the paper in order to make UEB/Senate/Council aware of the sexternal/internal context, or perhaps as an aide memoire when issues are returning to UEB/Senate/Council for further discussion.

2. Main Proposals

This section should include

- Details of the issue/proposal
- Financial and other resource implications
- Analysis of any legal consequences and the risks of a course of action (and mitigation activities)
- Equality and diversity – in particular whether an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried or needs to be (separate guidance available)
- Health and safety issues

3. Recommendation/s to UEB/Senate/Council

Please clearly state what you would like UEB/Senate/Council to decide upon or put into action. Bullet point lists are the best way to achieve this.

4. Next Steps

Outline what will happen after the UEB/Senate/Council meeting if the paper is approved and the expected timeline.

5. Communications

Papers may need to include a section outlining the communications issues relating to any proposal/decision, and a full communications plan for UEB/Senate/Council to discuss and approve if appropriate. This should include

- Brief communications timeline
- Which individuals and groups have been consulted on the proposals so far
- What plans are in place to consult with or involve colleagues going forward
- Highlight any action individual UEB members are expected to take to implement or cascade any decisions.

¹ It is noted that some reports (for example research grant or admissions data) may follow a different (separately agreed) format to the template set out here.