

GUIDANCE FOR DRAFTING PAPERS: UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE BOARD 2021-22

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

UEB, Senate and Council have responsibility for all major strategic decision-making, as well as monitoring operational performance and management information. UEB meets fortnightly and has a large schedule of business annually. Senate meets three times a year for formal business, and Council meets seven times a year. All three groups consider a large volume of paperwork at each meeting and therefore, there is a need to ensure that paperwork is presented as effectively and succinctly as possible.

General Principles

- Reports must be **no more than four pages long**.
- For every paper, you will need to complete a coversheet (template below) that is **no more than two pages long**. The coversheet provides an executive summary of the paper and should make clear what the purpose of the paper is and the recommendation for UEB/Senate/Council to consider. All sections of the coversheet must be completed.
- 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.
- If your paper is unavoidably longer than four pages (e.g. business cases or statutory returns), in addition, you can provide either:
 - a) a coversheet providing an executive summary of the key information and any decisions required, or
 - b) 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.

- Please send notice of agenda items to the UEB secretariat team as early as possible, and unless unavoidably urgent, this should be a minimum of two weeks in advance of the meeting.
- **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:
- The submission timetable is available on the website at the following address:

http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/executivesuite/vceg/Agreed_UEB_Paper_Dealines_2021-22_for_web_use.pdf

Wednesday Draft papers to the Registrar for review	Friday Final papers submitted to UEB secretariat by <i>cob</i>	Monday Papers circulated to UEB by <i>cob</i>	Thursday UEB Meeting 0900-1200
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For papers for onwards submission to Council or its sub-committees only

- The OfS Regulatory Framework Ongoing Conditions of Registration require providers to publish non-confidential minutes and reports from its governing body meetings and sub committees on the university's website. The requirements specify that only "genuinely confidential" material is exempt from disclosure. "Genuinely confidential" is not defined but has been interpreted as any information that would fall within the scope of the exemptions set out in the FOI Act. Details of the 23 exemptions that may be applied are available here: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/foi/summary/>
- When papers are going to be presented to Council, they should address the needs of 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.

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, pivot tables or landscape formats 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).
- Please do not send through Excel spreadsheets but convert to PDF before submission.
- UEB papers should be emailed to Dr Victoria Alcock, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (v.j.alcock@exeter.ac.uk) and Jean Lloyd, Executive Suite Manager (j.a.lloyd@exeter.ac.uk) by **4pm on the Friday before the UEB meeting** at which the paper is going to be considered. Papers will be circulated by close of the business day on the Monday before the UEB meeting. Late papers will not be accepted but will be rolled over to the following week.
- For Senate papers, please submit to senate@exeter.ac.uk.
- For Council papers, please submit to secretariat@exeter.ac.uk.

Cover sheet and paper templates below

COVER SHEET

Document title:	
Author/s:	
Sponsor on UEB:	
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

<p>[Please summarise the key points in the paper and encapsulate the findings of the paper.]</p> <p>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</p>

Financial Implications:

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

Risk Assessment:

<p>[Briefly summarise key risks. Please indicate if there are none, and the reasons for this.]</p>
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Equality & Diversity:

<p>[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 highlight nil returns.]</p>
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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 external/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.