

PLANNING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION COMMITTEE
STANDING ORDERS¹
as at May 2023

Preamble

Council has adopted the following common set of principles within which its committees operate.

- **Subsidiarity** Handling of committee business through Council's main committees reflects the principle of subsidiarity, that decisions should be delegated to the lowest level appropriate to that decision.
- **Clarity** There should be clarity regarding the membership of the committee and the role of those in attendance, the flow of business to and from the committee, its terms of reference, delegations (both in matters delegated to the committee and by the committee), the reports coming to the committee and the reporting arrangements of the committee itself (e.g. to Council, to other bodies, to Congregation and the wider community of the collegiate University). Matters such as these are set out in the Standing Orders of a main committee of Council.
- **Flow of business** Where allowed by legislation and timeliness, most items should come to Council through one of its five main committees. Items normally should go to only one of those committees. If an item has to go to more than one, it should do so sequentially, so that a single report comes up to Council. The reason for an item coming through more than one main committee should be clearly documented for Council.
- **Timeliness** Handling also reflects the importance of timeliness. Ensuring timely decision-making may require Chair's Action; in such cases Chair's decisions are reported at the next available meeting.
- **Inclusivity** Consideration should be given to ensuring diverse membership of the committee and to conducting business in a way that encourages the full participation and engagement of all members to achieve effective decision-making.
- **Reporting** Items coming to Council should first and foremost enable Council members to exercise their duties as trustees. They therefore normally address key strategic opportunities and/or significant risks. These may be new risks not necessarily yet reflected in the current risk register.

Reports to Council should be brief and focussed. Detailed consideration, wherever possible, should already have taken place at the level of the reporting committee. Information recording this detailed consideration, in the form of minutes and supporting papers, is accessible to Council members via the SharePoint site.

1. Membership

1.1. Eligibility for membership and procedure for vacancies

Eligibility for membership of all committees is set out in general regulations. See regulations 1.2 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002: <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

1.2 Period of membership²

Appointed, elected, and co-opted members of committees of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC), other than the student member, shall, in the absence of provision in these regulations, or in the General Regulations of Council for Committees, to the contrary, serve for three years.

Such a member may serve no more than two full terms of office, and on completion of those two terms may not become an appointed, elected, or co-opted member of PRAC until a full term of office on that committee has passed. GPC may dispense the member from this requirement.

¹ The requirement for Council's main committees to have Standing Orders is set out in Regulation 2.8 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

² Regulation 2.2 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

The student member shall serve for one year.

Further provisions concerning members whose appointment to the committee is tied to other matters, e.g. membership of Council, and casual vacancies (where a vacancy occurs mid-way through a period of office), are provided in the regulations governing period of membership.

1.3 Composition of PRAC

PRAC's composition, including its powers of co-option, are set out at regulations 5.1 – 5.3 of Council Regulations 15 of 2002:

<https://governance.web.ox.ac.uk/legislation/part-5-planning-and-resource-allocation-committee>

1.4 Inclusivity and diversity

PRAC has agreed to give due consideration to the diversity of its membership when using its power of co-option. The committee will review its membership annually against the targets set by Council for diversity of representation on University committees.

1.5 Eligibility to vote

Appointed, elected, and co-opted members of PRAC, other than the student member, shall be entitled to vote, where, at the chair's discretion, a vote is called.

2. Terms of reference

PRAC's terms of reference are set out at regulations 5.4 – 5.5 of Council Regulation 15 of 2002:

<https://governance.web.ox.ac.uk/legislation/part-5-planning-and-resource-allocation-committee>

3. Arrangements for meetings

3.1 Timing

Meetings of PRAC shall normally be held at 10:00 am on the Tuesday of the 1st, 5th and 10th Weeks of each Full Term. The Chair may postpone or cancel meetings at their discretion. The Chair may call an extraordinary meeting at any time.

3.2 Declaration of personal interests

Members of PRAC will be asked to declare any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda at the beginning of the item in question. All interests so disclosed will be recorded in the minutes. If the Chair deems it appropriate, the member shall absent himself or herself from all or part of the committee's discussion of the matter. Wording reflecting these provisions will be included at the beginning of every PRAC agenda.

3.3 Order of Business

The order of business will normally be as follows, for both unreserved and reserved sections of the agenda:

1. Matters requiring active consideration (business that is 'above the line'):
 - 1.1 minutes of the previous meeting (to be taken as read unless any objection is raised);
 - 1.2 matters arising from the minutes;
 - 1.3 other items requiring discussion and/or decision to be normally organised under the headings of the committee's main responsibilities as set out under its terms of reference;
2. Matters not requiring active consideration (business that is 'below the line'):
 - 2.1 matters arising from the minutes;
 - 2.2 other items requiring approval or noting.

3.4 Quorum³

No business shall be transacted at any meeting of a committee reporting directly to Council or one of its main committees unless a quorum is present.

³ Regulations 2.6-2.7 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

For PRAC and each of its subcommittees and working groups, a quorum is one third of those members eligible to vote upon the business of the committee in question (rounded to the nearest integer) with the following exceptions:

- a) **BPSC:** one third of members eligible to vote, provided that this must include at least one head of division
- b) **PMSC:** one third of members plus one
- c) **SSC:** one third of members eligible to vote, provided that this must include at least one member from the divisional registrars or one person nominated by a divisional board
- d) **Joint bodies:** one third of members eligible to vote, provided that this must include at least one university and one college member

A member who is participating in a meeting by telephone, video-conference or any other means of communication which permits all members simultaneously to hear one another, shall be considered present and therefore shall count towards the quorum.

If a quorum is not present within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting, or during a meeting a quorum ceases to be present, the business or remaining business of that meeting shall be deferred to another meeting, whether already scheduled or to be scheduled, or shall be dealt with by the Chair acting under delegated authority in accordance with these standing orders (see paragraph 9.3 below).

3.5 Chair's casting vote⁴

The person taking the chair at any committee meeting shall have a second or casting vote in the event of equality of voting.

3.6 Deputy Chair

At the start of each academic year, or at other times as necessary, the committee shall appoint one of its members as deputy chair, to deputise as chair in the event of the chair's absence, or for an item in which the chair has a conflict of interest.

4. Attendance at meetings

4.1 Voting members

Only individuals appointed, elected or co-opted to the committee or listed in 4.2 and 4.3 below may attend meetings on a regular basis. On occasions when the appointee is unable to attend the appointee will still receive the papers and be able to raise any comments or questions through the Secretariat or with the Chair.

4.2 Officers in attendance

Where they are not members of PRAC, the following officers may attend any meeting of PRAC for the full agenda: the Pro-Vice-Chancellors with portfolio, the Registrar, Head of Gardens, Libraries and Museums, the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Estates, the Director of Planning, the Academic Registrar, Director of the Department for Continuing Education, the Head of Financial Planning and Analysis, the Divisional Registrars, and the secretaries of the committee. These officers may speak if invited, but are not entitled to vote.

Whilst the Academic Registrar and Director of Estates have a standing invitation to attend any meeting of PRAC they are only expected to do so when items on the meeting agenda are particularly related to their areas of responsibility.⁵

4.3 Student member

The student member is entitled to attend the unreserved business of a meeting of PRAC, but not the reserved business and is not entitled to vote⁶.

⁴ Regulation 1.3 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

⁵ Agreed as part of the PRAC Self-Review 2019/20

⁶ Regulation 2.3 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

4.4 Those invited for particular items

Other individuals may be invited to attend for particular items and participate in the discussion.

5. Confidentiality of PRAC's proceedings

5.1 Categories of business

Unreserved business is the business of PRAC for which the student member may be in attendance. It may either be designated as 'open', 'restricted', or 'confidential'.

'Open' business is not of a sensitive nature. All 'open' business may be discussed within the wider University and may be published on the intranet.

'Restricted' business may be discussed within the wider University but because of certain sensitivities will not be made known to the wider University through publication on the intranet⁷. 'Restricted' papers are labelled as such.

'Confidential' business is of a sensitive nature, but not to the extent that, in the opinion of the Chair, the student member cannot be present for its discussion. Confidential papers are labelled as such.

Reserved business is the business of PRAC for which the student member may not be present. It is always 'confidential' and the papers are marked accordingly. The expectation is that this category of business will be used as sparingly as possible. As a principle, items of business are reserved where a breach of confidentiality would have potentially serious consequences. The following matters will be ordinarily categorised as 'reserved' business, and therefore as 'confidential':

- a. issues of particular strategic sensitivity;
- b. issues of particular commercial sensitivity; and
- c. matters pertaining to specific individuals, such as honorary degrees and decisions on appointments, promotions, and other matters concerning the personal position of members of the staff of the University; and the admission of individuals and their academic assessment and personal affairs.

The list above is not exhaustive and there may be occasion on which matters falling outside those categories listed above need to be treated as 'confidential'. If this occurs, the expectation would be to provide the explanation to PRAC.

The student member shall receive the full agenda (edited as necessary in the opinion of the Chair or Secretary) but not the papers or minutes relating to reserved business.

5.2 Treatment of the different types of business

'Open' and 'restricted' business may be discussed within the wider University. 'Open' business may be made known to the wider University through publication on the intranet; 'restricted' business will not.

Business that is designated 'confidential' may be discussed only with:

- a. other members of PRAC;
- b. members of, and senior officers in attendance at, the committee(s) that have previously considered the issue;
- c. senior officers in attendance at PRAC;
- d. senior officers in receipt of PRAC papers; and
- e. where the business is unreserved, the student member of PRAC.

In exceptional circumstances, a PRAC member may desire to discuss confidential issues with a person outside the groups in a-e above. In such a case, approval must be sought, with reasons, and obtained from the Chair or Secretary in advance of the discussion taking place.

A PRAC member may seek further information on an item from the officer specifically named in the paper as being the source of such information. The same designation of confidentiality will attach to the information provided as to the item on the agenda.

⁷ This may cover items such as the setting of student fees and funding, in the process of which there has been widespread consultation, but the premature publication of which might infringe competition law.

At its meeting, PRAC may alter either the designation of a paper, or its position within the agenda. For example, it may decide that a previously confidential paper should be designated as 'open'. If a change in designation is thought desirable following PRAC meeting in which the item was considered, the Chair has authority to approve such a change.

5.3 Discussion at meetings of PRAC

Irrespective of the categorisation of business, in all cases views expressed by others present at meetings of PRAC (either members of PRAC or those in attendance) during the course of the PRAC meeting may not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone outside the meeting unless that person is either another member of PRAC an officer ordinarily in attendance, or, with the exception of discussions of 'reserved confidential' business, the student member.

6. Papers

6.1 Drafting

Papers should be no more than six pages in length:

- Two pages maximum for the standard template requirements
- Four pages maximum for the main report

Main reports should include all the pertinent information required for a decision to be made. Additional information (which provides further details or context but is not crucial to decision-making) should be provided in annexes, which may be published separately to the main pack. Annexes longer than 10 pages will ordinarily be published on SharePoint outside of the main pack; exceptions will be agreed by the Chair and Secretary in discussion with the report author.⁸

6.2 Circulation

Electronic copies of the agenda and papers will be published on PRAC's SharePoint site for members of the committee, officers in attendance, and others authorised to see the papers, normally 4-5 working days before the meeting.

Members of Council will have access to PRAC's SharePoint site.

Others for whom it is necessary for the discharge of their duties shall also have access to the PRAC SharePoint site, subject to endorsement by the secretary to PRAC, in consultation with Heads of Section where necessary.

The Keeper of the Archives shall have access to the PRAC's SharePoint site to download the agenda and papers for permanent electronic preservation. A hard copy of the committee's papers shall also be sent to the Registry file.

6.3 Holding and disposal of papers

All information concerning PRAC, including its papers whether in electronic form or hard copy, must be held in accordance with the University's Information Security Policy⁹.

Members of the committee and others in receipt of committee papers, including minutes, must ensure that hard and electronic copies of such papers in their personal possession are disposed of, when no longer needed by them; the secretary of the committee shall make appropriate arrangements for the confidential disposal of any such papers which are returned to him or her.

7. Self-review¹⁰

PRAC, as a main committee of Council, shall carry out a self-review of its operations and effectiveness at least every five years and shall report its findings to Council with recommendations for change where appropriate. The last such review was carried out in 2019/20.

8. Risk register

The committee will review its risk register each term to ensure that the appropriate risks are identified

⁸ Agreed as part of the PRAC Self-Review 2019/20

⁹ <https://www.infosec.ox.ac.uk/>

¹⁰ The provisions governing self-reviews are at [regulation 2.5 of Council Regulations 14 of 2002](#).

and that suitable and effective mitigations are proposed.

9. Delegations

9.1 Powers delegated by Council to PRAC

In addition to those set out in Part 5 of Council Regulations 15 of 2002, Council has delegated the following powers to PRAC:

- authority to authorise expenditure commitments within the limits set out in the [Financial Regulations](#).
In exercising this power, PRAC shall take account of risk factors such as novelty, complexity, size of project, environmental impact and political sensitivity, which may affect the treatment and level of scrutiny. For any capital project anticipated to entail substantial risk, approval may be escalated to Council at an early stage. In particular, in the case of any capital project for which the total cost is expected to be over £10m, PRAC should seek Council approval for initial expenditure above £1m.
- approve the final business case and notice to proceed for capital projects at the Gateway 3 stage of the Gateway Review Process.

9.2 Other powers relating to the Committee set out in regulations

Suspension of regulations¹¹

Council, or, in a case falling within the delegated authority of any of the main standing committees of Council, ... that committee, may..., by a resolution carried by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting, suspend the operation of any regulation, other than a regulation made by the Rules Committee under Statute XI, to cover some specific case.

9.3 Powers delegated by PRAC to its chair, or to the officers

(a) Chair of PRAC shall:

- (i) have power to: give approval to any matter that falls within PRAC's terms of reference, provided that the Chair is satisfied that the case for urgency is such that approval cannot await the next meeting of the committee, and subject to report of the decision at the next meeting. When the likely need for an urgent decision between meetings is foreseen, a report should be brought to the committee outlining the current position and asking for prospective approval of Chair's action on the committee's behalf. In case of doubt or difficulty, the Chair may, at their discretion, seek approval from other members of the committee by correspondence.
- (ii) Provided a case for urgency is made as under (i) above, in respect of capital items, the Chair has authority to approve on behalf of PRAC:
 - the release of capital expenditure up to £5m;
 - the purchase and sale of property up to £5m;
 - submission of an offer for both the purchase and sale of property up to £10m, provided that the actual purchase and sale shall be the subject of approval as required under the Financial Regulations and provided that a robust business case has been prepared in line with CSG guidelines.

(b) Director of Estates shall:

- (i) Have power to approve individual projects within the annual Carbon Management Fund budget up to a value of £1m, on the understanding that: (a) the individual project cases meet the criteria set out in the Carbon Management Plan; and (b) the use of the delegated authority will be reported on a termly basis to Sustainability Steering Group, Capital Steering Group and BESC.
- (ii) approve allocations of space up to (and including) 300 sqm NUA, subject to the provision of a summary termly report to BESC.

¹¹ Section 20 of Statute VI.

- (iii) authorise the leasing and licencing of space within the functional estate up to a limit of 300 sqm NUA, subject to termly report to PRAC.
- (c) **Secretary of PRAC** shall:
- (i) Have power to approve technical changes to the *Examination Regulations: Regulations on Financial Matters* for submission to the University Gazette, on the understanding that such changes have no policy implications. Technical changes are defined as: changes to names and titles, updates to lists of awards, corrections and typos.
- (d) **Head of Environmental Sustainability** shall:
- (j) Have authority to approve the release of up to £100k per annum from the Sustainability Small Projects Fund (part of the Oxford Sustainability Fund) for departmental Environmental Sustainability projects.

9.4 Powers delegated by PRAC to other bodies

- (a) **BESC** shall have power to:
- authorise the allocation of a site or a building the area of which is below the threshold for approval by Congregation.
 - approve the final business case and notice to proceed for capital projects at the Gateway 3 stage of the Gateway Review Process.
- (b) **ESSC** shall have the power to:
- to take decisions in respect of spending from the Oxford Sustainability Fund.
- (c) **JFSSAG** shall have power to:
- Approve changes to fee levels outside the annual fee-setting cycle that raise no issues or doubt or difficulty.
 - Approve changes to additional course costs text.
 - Approve the introduction of new deposits and changes to deposit levels.
- (d) **PMSC** shall have power to:
- authorise the sale or purchase of property (unrelated to capital projects), subject to a delegated authority level of up to £2m.

10. Reporting

10.1 Reports to Council¹²

PRAC shall report to Council as required to fulfil its remit. In so doing, it shall also refer to Council any matter that in the opinion of the committee requires the attention of Council.

PRAC shall make an annual report to Council, of no more than 2-3 pages, which draws out themes and issues across the year, identifying the key strategic opportunities and significant risks.

In addition to substantive items that are referred to Council, the committee shall make available its minutes and supporting papers to Council on the business it has considered. Individual items may be marked 'confidential', 'restricted', or 'reserved confidential'.

10.2 Annual reports to PRAC

PRAC shall receive reports on an annual basis on:

- (a) Student number planning – from JSNPSC
- (b) Acquisition, management and disposal of non-functional estate – from PMSC
- (c) Data Assurance – from Data Assurance Group
- (d) John Fell Research Fund – from John Fell Committee

¹² Regulation 2.4(2) of Council Regulations 14 of 2002 "They shall make reports and recommendations to Council as they consider appropriate, subject to such policies and guidelines as Council lays down by regulation or otherwise."
<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/council-regulations-14-of-2002>.

- (e) Environmental Sustainability Strategy – from ESSC
- (f) Service Planning – from SSC

10.3 Terms of reference of sub-committees and panels of PRAC

Terms of reference of the following sub-committees and panels of PRAC may be found at:

<https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/subcommittees-of-prac>

- Budget Planning Subcommittee
- Buildings and Estates Subcommittee
- Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee
- Property Management Subcommittee
- Services Subcommittee
- John Fell OUP Research Fund Subcommittee
- Data Assurance Group
- Endowment Challenge Fund Management Group
- Joint Fees and Student Support Advisory Group
- Joint Resource Allocation Advisory Board
- Joint Student Number Planning Subcommittee