

Standards for Meeting Minutes for Committees on Ministry

The writing of minutes of meetings is a critical task for Committees on Ministry with long term implications. The objective of meeting minutes is to keep an official collective record to memorialize the decisions and activity of the COM. Minutes are an official record that may be used to inform your Association, Conference and National Ministries records. Below are some standards that may assist those charged with this duty:

Accuracy

It is the responsibility of the minute-taker/scribe to ensure that the record is clear and accurate. It is therefore expected that if the meeting gets ahead of the scribe, they will notify the chair, and the meeting will pause to ensure that the record accurately reflects decisions and discussions.

Content

Some things to keep in mind with regards to contents of minutes:

- Minutes should include date, purpose of meeting (regular or special meeting), who was present, and location of meeting or if it is virtual.
- The adoption of the minutes of the prior meeting (with or without amendments) should be recorded.
- Enough information about a decision or discussion should be recorded so that someone reading the minutes at some future time can know what happened. Factual, not feeling, information should be recorded.
- When the COM is taking an action regarding a specific person, the COM does need to specify the person's name in the minutes
- If a report is being given that does not require a decision, the name of the person making the report and the name of the person about whom the report is being made, and a short summary is sufficient.
- It is not necessary nor advisable to record verbatim everything that occurs. It is important to remember that the minutes reflect the collective decisions and actions of the COM not the individual words of COM members.
- Attention to both transparency and appropriate confidentiality is especially important for Committees on Ministry. If there is discussion on a motion or proposed action, it is valuable to include a summary. What that will look like depends on what is being discussed. "The concerns raised by COM members

included . . ." or "Points raised by COM members included . . ." may be ways of framing key points of the discussion. It is not necessary to name individual committee members who raise points or concerns.

Decision-making

Whatever the decision-making method used, the fact of a motion/proposed action in its original form must be recorded, as well as any second that is required. If the motion/proposed action fails for lack of a second, that should be noted. As a motion/proposed action proceeds, amendments or changes from the original should be given to the scribe in writing if at all possible, as those present may wish to hear the motion/proposed action with the amendment or proposed changes before the COM votes or moves to a consensus process so that there is clarity about the proposed action. The final vote should be recorded with the action as voted and the actual count (numbers of ayes, nays and abstentions) or consensus achieve, or the fact of pass or fail to pass if votes are not counted. On occasion the COM may decline to act on a given matter. It may be important to record that simple fact in the minutes without additional information simply to ensure that the decision to decline to act is noted.

Confirmation of Content

It can be highly valuable for the scribe to send the relevant portion of the draft of the minutes to the individual making a given report to ensure accuracy. The entire draft should be shared with the COM Chair/Co-Chairs and the staff person who supports the COM before being sent to the members, once again to ensure accuracy. Nevertheless, care must be taken that the record of the scribe be genuinely the record of the meeting; requests for changes in the draft must be weighed as to their appropriateness. Minutes should only reflect what occurred in the context of that meeting, not what transpires afterward (which should be reported at the next meeting and recorded in those minutes).

Timing

Minutes form the basis for not only a historical record but also for the development of future agendas and for follow-up actions at the conclusion of a meeting. Therefore, it is important that minutes be available as soon as possible after the meeting, at the very least for the Chair/Co-chairs and staff, but preferably for all members.

Confidentiality and Use of Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are for internal use to record the actions of a COM and are not to be distributed publicly or to anyone beyond current COM members and Conference/Association staff to preserve the confidential deliberations of the COM. Every effort should be made to preserve the confidentiality of COM minutes whether they are electronic or paper. However, the decisions made by COMs are public and minutes may be used as a reference to provide accurate reports for Association and/or Conference reports. When a decision is made regarding an MID or minister, the minutes of that decision should be placed in their file.

Using Artificial Intelligence for Note Taking

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology for taking notes during a meeting should be a decision made by the COM and should be aligned with the COM's AI policy, if available. If AI note taking capacity is accessed, the COM scribe should edit any AI generated notes before they are distributed or used to prepare minutes. Another important consideration is whether the AI note-taker is part of a closed or open system and the importance of reading the "terms of use" for considerations of confidentiality. For more information about artificial intelligence and COMs, you are invited to explore the Artificial Intelligence and Committees on Ministry in the [COM Resource Library](#) under "Resources for Healthy COMs."