

Office of the Governing Council

Overview

When the Governing Council was established in 1972, the Office of the Governing Council was created as the successor to the offices of the Board of Governors and the Senate. The primary functions of the Office are to:

- act as the corporate office of the University;
- provide support services for the Governing Council, its Boards and Committees;
- maintain historical records of University ceremonies and provide support to such ceremonies, particularly convocation;
- support the judicial processes of the University; and
- serve as an impartial resource for the members of the Governing Council and members of the University community who are involved in the governance process.

The Office also acts as a liaison between the members of the Governing Council and the administration, University constituent groups and the outside community. Members of the Office provide support and advice in a way that serves the needs of the University community while preserving the principles of neutrality and objectivity.

Corporate Office

The Office is responsible for the use of the academic and corporate seals of the University, and maintains a record of each application of the seals. It also executes contracts on behalf of the University.

Board and Committee Support

The specific functions and responsibilities of the Secretary of the Governing Council and the Board and Committee secretaries relate to the preparation for meetings, advice on their conduct, and the preparation of the official record.

Meeting Schedule

The Office of the Governing Council is responsible for scheduling meetings and, working with the administrative assessors, preparing an annual calendar of business for the Governing Council and each Board and Committee.

Agenda Planning

The agenda for the Governing Council is set by the Executive Committee. The agenda for each Board and Committee meeting is determined at a preliminary agenda planning meeting attended by the Board/Committee chair, vice-chair, administrative assessors and secretary. In the case of the Academic Board, this planning function is the task of the Agenda Committee.

Agenda Planning (cont'd)

The agenda planning group usually meets two weeks before the Board/Committee meeting. In addition to establishing the agenda, the agenda planning group reviews draft documentation:

- (i) to ensure that it is complete and that the proposal is ready to proceed,
- (ii) to identify any issues that should be addressed in advance of the meeting, and
- (iii) to identify those individuals who should be invited to the meeting to answer questions that members might have on the item.

Prior to the agenda planning meeting, the Board /Committee secretary prepares a first draft of the agenda and co-ordinates and distributes the supporting documentation provided by the administrative assessors. At the agenda planning meeting, the secretary advises the chair and administrative assessor(s) on the level of approval appropriate for each item, Board/Committee procedures, relevant policies, and other governance issues, as appropriate.

In order to provide background information for discussion, the Board/Committee secretary, when necessary, undertakes historical or other research projects on policy issues and prepares a précis of relevant documents or decisions.

Meeting Preparation and Documentation

After the agenda planning meeting, documentation is finalized by the administrative assessors and assembled for distribution. A target date for distribution of meeting documentation is set for seven days prior to a regular meeting. Non-confidential meeting material is posted on the Governing Council website, for electronic access via web links (URL) in the agenda, and is sent to members who request a paper copy of the agenda package. Confidential material is distributed through the campus mail system for members with University addresses, and by regular Canada Post delivery to other members.

Members are informed by email or fax when material has been posted to the web and distributed. Material that becomes available after the distribution of the agenda package is distributed electronically prior to the meeting, and copies are available at the meeting.

Some confidential material, for example, documentation for senior appointments, is distributed to members at the meeting, and time is provided for members to review the material before it is presented and discussed.

Meeting Support

During Governing Council, Board and Committee meetings, the secretary is responsible for providing advice concerning parliamentary procedures. The secretary takes careful notes at meetings and then prepares and circulates the minutes / report of the meeting with details of decisions and discussion.

Meeting Follow-up

On some matters, the Governing Council has delegated authority to its Boards or Committees, and it is important that members of Council be able to know not only the decisions taken but also the matters considered in making those decisions. In other cases, the Boards make recommendations to the Governing Council. In those cases, it is important that members of Council know what matters have been dealt with so that there need not be duplication of the discussion at the higher level.

Decisions taken by the Council, its Boards and Committees are transmitted to the appropriate administrative officers for action. Where matters arising during deliberations require follow-up, they are noted by the secretary for transmittal to the appropriate officer and for future consideration by the Governing Council or the appropriate Board or Committee.

An organization chart of the Governing Council, including the names of the Chair, Senior Assessor and Secretary of each Board and Committee, is available at:

<http://uoft.me/2014orgchart>

Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances (ADFG)

The ADFG Office provides support to the following judicial or quasi-judicial processes:

- non-academic discipline
- the University Tribunal
- the Discipline Appeals Board
- the Academic Appeals Committee
- the Grievance Review Panel
- the Tenure Appeals Committee
- the Clinical Faculty Grievance Review Panel
- the Clinical Faculty Academic Clinical Tribunal
- the Advancement Review Panel

The ADFG staff occupy a neutral position in matters coming before these bodies and in that capacity provides advice and guidance to participants in such matters.

In addition, the ADFG Office organises training sessions and educational programmes, and assists in the maintenance and function of the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, the *Code of Student Conduct*, and the *Policy and Procedures on Sexual Harassment*.

More information on the ADFG Office is available from its website:

<http://www.adfg.utoronto.ca/>

Liaison

The Office of the Governing Council facilitates communication between the members of the Governing Council and the administration, and members of the University and outside communities.

The Office receives inquiries concerning all aspects of the University from academic divisions and departments, individual members of the University community, alumni and the media. Depending on the nature of the inquiry and the person seeking information or advice, the enquiry is answered or is referred to the appropriate University officer, the Department of Strategic Communications, the appropriate chair, or another resource person. For example, general queries about approved policies are usually answered by the Office, whereas questions concerning specific interpretation or implementation of policies are referred to the University officer responsible for the specific policy area.

Members of the Governing Council seeking information about current policies or wishing to initiate consideration of a particular matter would be advised by the Office of the status of the issue or about the proper procedures to initiate consideration of the matter.

Information Resources

From time to time, the media contacts the Office of the Governing Council to obtain information concerning items of business that are under consideration by the Governing Council or to request interviews with persons involved in the governance process. The Office will provide procedural or historical information or will refer the inquirer to the appropriate officer, to the Department of Strategic Communications, or to the Chair of the Governing Council or the appropriate Board or Committee Chair.

Policies and reports that have been considered by the Governing Council and its Boards and Committees are on file in the Office and are available for public perusal. Meeting minutes, reports, agendas and non-confidential agenda items, as well as approved policies, can also be viewed on the Governing Council website at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/home.htm>.

Associated Offices

Office of Convocation

The Office of Convocation is part of the Office of the Governing Council. The *University of Toronto Act, 1971* empowers the Governing Council to 'provide for the granting of and grant degrees, including honorary degrees, diplomas and certificates'.

The Academic Board is responsible for convocation policy, and authority for decisions on procedures rests with a committee of the Chancellor, the President, the Chair of the Academic Board and the Secretary of the Governing Council. The Secretary of the Governing Council is responsible for the application of convocation policies and procedures.

Office of Convocation (cont'd)

The Office of Convocation is responsible for:

- preparing the degrees and certificates based on information provided by the academic divisions;
- preparing the convocation schedule in consultation with the Offices of the Governing Council, Chancellor and President;
- liaising with the many offices involved in the convocation ceremonies;
- preparing the convocation programs for all ceremonies;
- arranging for the distribution of tickets;
- arranging the student and academic processions;
- distributing degree and diploma parchments;
- providing, in response to requests, replacement parchments; and
- managing many other details related to convocation.

The Offices of the Chancellor and President are responsible for aspects of Convocation having to do with honorary degrees.

Further information on the Office of Convocation is available on its website:
<http://www.convocation.utoronto.ca/>.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office is responsible for access and privacy at the University of Toronto, including:

- Responsibility for end-to-end coordination of freedom of information requests, comprising documentation; timely processing; support of and liaison with affected units to ensure complete searches and full consideration of relevant decision factors; issues management and decision quality in the University context; and liaison with the *Information and Privacy Commissioner/Ontario* (the IPC) for appeals from University access decisions.
- Coordination of responses to privacy issues, including contact with the IPC.
- Informing, advising and training staff members on access and privacy issues to support effective delivery of access and privacy and to support affected University functions and units, including work with Staff Development personnel to ensure integration and coverage of learning opportunities.
- Developing access and privacy policies for approval by governance; preparing practices and procedures for University access and privacy implementation.
- Assisting faculty, staff and public seeking University-held general information.

Further information about the Office is available on its website:
<http://www.fippa.utoronto.ca/>.