



Faculty Board Meetings- Reserved Business and Minuting A Pro Forma Text

As requested at the Faculty Forum on the 17th January, below is a *pro forma* text which could be used as a basis of a letter or paper to be submitted to a faculty board. Please feel free to use/ignore as much of it as you like! Some bits may not apply to your faculty and you might also like to add extra information. Indeed, if you have a very good relationship, you might even try just speaking to them.

Dear Chairman/Secretary,

Would it be possible for the Faculty Board to review its minuting policy at the next Faculty Board meeting in order to make the process more open and transparent for the students? In particular, I was wondering if it would be possible to publish all the confirmed minutes of the faculty board online and review the way “Reserved Business” is minuted.

A number of faculties (such as Biology, Mathematics and Physics and Chemistry) already publish the minutes of their meetings online and the practice has long been followed by a number of University bodies (such as the General Board, the Council and the Board of Scrutiny). It does not require much time or effort to implement but is of great help to the students of the faculty. As the terms of office of student Faculty Board members are annual and most undergraduates are only in Cambridge for three years, students invariably have a lesser memory of previous meetings and decisions than members of staff. Therefore, the need to consult previous minutes is far greater. Equally, because there are only three students representing the entire student body, compared to fifteen staff members, students are less likely to come into contact with those present at Faculty Board meetings and are therefore less likely to find out, anecdotally, what current issues in the Faculty are. By putting the minutes online, current students will be better able to find out what is happening and their representatives will be able, far more easily, to consult previous minutes.

Additionally, would it be possible for the faculty to implement the provision of publishing the minutes of Reserved Business, as given in Statute K,20:

No person in statu pupillari shall receive papers relating to any item of reserved business, except that members of any body constituted by

Statute, or of any body appointed by such a statutory body, who are in statu pupillari may, if the statutory body so decides, receive minutes of the decisions taken on reserved business.

The policy of Reserving Business causes quite a strong divide between the staff of the faculty and the students. By allowing students to see what decisions are made during Reserved Business, a greater sense of openness will be created. Separate minutes could be circulated to those *in statu pupillari*, written in generic and anonymised terms. This would allow students to see the types of decisions made without violating the confidentiality of this part of the meeting. At the moment, the secrecy with which the Faculty conducts half its business is seen as a reminder of the “old days” of the University’s governance, when decisions were made without any consultation with the student body. This is especially true as the chairman is allowed to make any matter Reserved at his discretion without any possibility of student scrutiny or consultation. In these days of Tuition and Top-Up Fees, the University should strive to be as transparent in its decision making as possible and therefore, this simple act of allowing students to see what decisions are made during the second part of Faculty Board meetings will be of great help.

Yours faithfully,

A. Student