# Guidelines for drafting Council papers

## Summary

Council members have a huge amount of paperwork to read in a short time, so it helps them to receive the papers in a consistent format. For this reason, all papers for the Council must follow the Council template, which includes:

* a one-page coversheet (see the example and guidelines on page 3); and
* a main section (max three pages), unless the matter is so straightforward that the coversheet will suffice (see the guidelines below and the example on page 4).

If necessary, longer reports or further background information can be provided in an annex or via hyperlinks (see the example on page 5). Please keep the amount of supplementary material to the minimum that the Council needs in order to undertake the actions asked of them.

## Guidelines for drafting the main section

The main section should not normally exceed two pages, although complex matters may require three pages. As a minimum, the main section should include three sub-sections: context, action requested of the Council and next steps. For more complex matters, additional sub-sections may be required to provide further information on the substantive points. The example on page 4 includes notes (in grey italics) on the expected content of each section.

Avoid using technical language in the paper: plain English is best. Please expand all acronyms the first time that they are used as Council members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and may not be familiar with them. Please reference any annexes from the main section.

## Formatting guidelines

For consistency, please use the styles which are built into this template, including the font, font size, numbering and spacing. The main styles which are used in the Council papers are listed below:

## Contacting the Secretariat, paper deadlines and paper review process

Please contact Angela via [council@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:council@admin.cam.ac.uk) as far in advance as possible, to discuss bringing a paper to the Council and so that it can be added to the Council’s work plan.

Dates of Council meetings and the corresponding paper deadlines are online at [How to... submit papers to the University Council (cam.ac.uk)](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/council/Pages/how-to-submit-papers-to-council.aspx). We cannot accept late papers but are happy to comment on early drafts of the papers or to receive papers well in advance of the deadline.

Once we have reviewed your draft we will send you our comments. These may include suggestions for amendments and/or clarifications based on our previous experience of the types of queries that arise at Council meetings and members’ comments on earlier papers.

There may be several iterations before we send the paper to the Vice-Chancellor for sign-off.

## Note on papers that need to be considered by the General Board and the Council

Certain matters (particularly HR issues relating to academic staff, reports of bodies which report jointly to the General Board and Council, and matters which fall within the remit of the General Board but which require the approval of the Council), will need to come to both the General Board and the Council. Please copy both Secretariats into emails relating to such items ([generalboard@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:generalboard@admin.cam.ac.uk) and [council@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:council@admin.cam.ac.uk)).

The General Board and Council templates are aligned. You only need to complete one template and within the Secretariats we will tweak the paper for circulation to the other body.

**University of Cambridge**

**THE COUNCIL**

# *Title of the paper, for example:* Expected format for the one-page coversheet

**Summary**: *Please provide a brief summary of the key objectives of the paper, including references to earlier discussions/decisions if applicable (no more than 75-100 words).*

**Action requested of the Council**: the Council is asked to **note/discuss/endorse/approve** the proposal/update/recommendations. *Please select the action which is required of the Council. If there are several actions please list them separately, for example:*

The Council is asked:

1. to **endorse** the proposals; and
2. to **approve** the associated Notice for publication in the *Reporter*.

Main links to the [**University Risk Register**](https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/assurance-audit-regulatory-compliance/risk-management):*Please note significant links between the paper and the risks on the University's Risk Register, for example:* This item relates to risks 1 ‘Failure to be financially sustainable as a leading global institution’ and 9 ‘Failure to ensure our people feel valued’.

**Previous decisions/decisions taken by sub-committees:** *Please complete the table to show any related decisions/discussions at sub-committee meetings or earlier Council meetings, with the most recent meeting listed at the top. Previous Council agendas, minutes and papers can be accessed via the* [*Council website*](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/council/Pages/default.aspx) *(Raven login required).*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Committee | Reason why the matter was considered | Decision | Date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | Paper and minute refs *(hyperlinks)* |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
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**Next steps:** *Please provide details of the next steps, assuming a positive decision of the Council.*

**Originating office/body**: *Please indicate which office drafted the paper and/or on behalf of which body. For example:* Research Office on behalf of the Research Policy Committee.

**Annex(es) (hyperlinked annexes contain supplementary material just provided for reference):** *Please list any annexes which are provided with the paper, including annexes that are provided as hyperlinks). Please keep the amount of supplementary material to the minimum that the Council needs in order to undertake the actions asked of them.*

Annex A:

Annex B:

# *Title of the paper, for example:* Expected format for the main section

## Context *(rename as appropriate, the suggested length for this sub-section is half a page)*

1. *Please state why the matter is brought to the Council and summarise any necessary background information. For complex matters, or where there is a lengthy history, please ensure that you provide sufficient information to help newer Council members to understand the context*.
2. *For straightforward matters it may also be possible to provide the following information in this sub-section*:
   1. *an outline of the key issues with clear and well-evidenced recommendations*;
   2. *short references to* [*Statutes & Ordinances*](https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/) *(if relevant)*;
   3. *any particular areas of concern that previous committees may have had and how these have been addressed*;
   4. *any additional costs which would be incurred as a result of the proposal and how these costs would be met*;
   5. *a timeline for the decision-making process and any risks if the timeline is not met*.

## Action requested of the Council

1. *Please summarise the action(s) requested of the Council. NB. the same info (or a condensed version of it) is required on the coversheet.*

## *For more complex matters include additional sub-sections on the substantive points, for example:* Key points for note by the Council

1. *For more complex matters (i.e. where it is not possible to cover points 1-2 in half a page), please use additional sub-sections to provide further information on the substantive points*.

## Next steps

1. *Please summarise the next steps, assuming a positive decision of the Council. NB. the same info (or a condensed version of it) is required on the coversheet*.

# *Title of the annex, for example:* Annex X: Example of an Annex