# Guidelines for drafting General Board papers

## Summary

General Board 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 General Board must follow the General Board 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 General Board 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 General Board 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 General Board members 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 General Board papers are listed below:

# Heading 1

## Heading 2

### Heading 3

#### Heading 4

1. Paragraph
   1. Sub-paragraph

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

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

Dates of General Board meetings and the corresponding paper deadlines are online at [How to submit papers to the General Board (cam.ac.uk)](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/general-board/Pages/How-to-submit-papers-to-the-General-Board.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 General Board meetings and members’ comments on earlier papers.

There may be several iterations before the paper is considered to be ready for publication.

## 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 GENERAL BOARD OF THE FACULTIES**

# *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 General Board**: the General Board 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 General Board 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 have adequate investment capacity to remain world leading’ 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 General Board or Council meetings, with the most recent meeting listed at the top. Previous General Board agendas, minutes and papers can be accessed via the* [*General Board website*](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/general-board/Pages/default.aspx) *(Raven login required).*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Committee | Reason why the matter was considered | Decision | Date *(dd.mm.yyyy)* | Paper and minute refs *(hyperlinks)* |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Next steps:** *Please provide details of the next steps, assuming a positive decision of the General Board.*

**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 General Board 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 General Board, including where the Board’s authority to make a decision on the matter arises from, 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 General Board 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. *where the General Board’s authority to make a decision on the matter arises from;*
   3. *short references to* [*Statutes & Ordinances*](https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so/) *(if relevant)*;
   4. *any particular areas of concern that previous committees may have had and how these have been addressed*;
   5. *any additional costs which would be incurred as a result of the proposal and how these costs would be met*;
   6. *a timeline for the decision-making process and any risks if the timeline is not met*.

## Action requested of the General Board

1. *Please summarise the action(s) requested of the General Board. 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 General Board

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 General Board. 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