



Sample Guidelines for Council Standing Orders

All School Council decision making takes place within the framework of the Schools of the Future Reference Guide.

The following constitutes a suggested outline for the preparation of School Council Standing Orders. The outline is not prescriptive as the final document should reflect the actual needs of the individual school/college council.

General Purpose of the Council

The Council is the governing body of the school. It determines appropriate educational policies within Department of Education and Training (DE&T) guidelines to promote the achievement of school charter goals and priorities. In addition Council controls the school's monies and resources.

Composition of Council

The Constituting Order of <school / college name> states the composition of the Council as (example)

- 6 elected **parent members**
- 4 elected **DE&T employee members** (other than the Principal)
- the **Principal**
- Up to three **community members** elected by council from the school/college community (excluding DE&T employees) having special expertise and an interest in the school/college

Elected members of the < school / college name> Council have two (2) year terms of office with half retiring annually on 31st March of each year.

Elections are conducted according to the *Education Regulations, 1988* and the school's Constituting Order.

Community members are appointed by the school council and have two year terms which also terminate on 31st March.

Office Bearers

- **President** The President is elected by all members of <school / college name> Council and may not be a DE&T employee.

Council shall also elect from its members the following Office Bearers:

- **Vice President** Although there is no restriction on a DE&T member being appointed, the position is normally allocated to a non DE&T-employed member of Council to allow for the Vice President to chair meetings in the absence of the President.
- **Treasurer** There is no legal requirement for Council to have a Treasurer but most do. It is recommended that the position be held by a non-DE&T parent or community member.
- **Minute Secretary**
May be appointed where the role is not carried out by the Principal as Executive Officer

Principals Role on Council

The Principal is not an Office Bearer but is a full member of Council.

The Principal acts as **Executive Officer** and is responsible for the implementation of council policies and for informing council on educational, statutory, regulatory and Government policy issues.

Role Descriptions

The President shall:

- act as chairperson of all council meetings
- decide recommendations for each item of council correspondence in collaboration with the Executive Officer
- conduct the business of council under council's standing orders
- act as a signatory to the council financial accounts
- be an ex-officio member of all council committees
- act as a spokesperson for council

The Vice President shall:

- in the absence of the President, act as Chairperson at council meetings and otherwise represent the President as required

The Treasurer shall:

- chair all Resources & Management sub committee meetings
- ensure that the school finances are in accordance with DE&T guidelines
- ensure that relevant internal control procedures are maintained
- work with the principal and the Resources and Management sub committee to develop budget recommendations to submit to council for approval
- present financial reports and Resources & Management sub committee recommendations to council

The Principal shall:

- provide all council members with minutes of the previous meeting, agenda, reports of committees and financial reports by the Friday prior to the council meeting.
- notify council of any apologies received
- ensure that minutes of the meeting are recorded
- table all council correspondence
- write all correspondence authorised by council
- be the **Executive Officer** of the council
- be an ex-officio member of all council committees

Signatories for accounts under the control of council

The Principal and one of either the President, the Treasurer or one other council member nominated by the council shall be authorised to sign cheques.

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Council Sub-Committees

Council will determine which committees it requires and will review their role descriptions annually. The committee structure for <year> will be
(for example)

- **Resources & Management**
- **Education & Policy Development**
- **Facilities & Environment**

Membership of sub-committees shall be decided at the first regular meeting of council after the annual council elections, when councillors will nominate their preferences for committee membership.

Some negotiation may be necessary to achieve general balance of size and representation.

Each committee shall elect a convenor. Membership of sub committees shall be extended to include interested school community members with special expertise or interest in the area of the sub committee.

The full membership of the sub committees will be as listed and approved by the council.

All sub committees are formed to advise council and have no decision making powers.

Sub committee meetings are to be held at a time to be decided by its members but usually within 14 days of the next council meeting.

Each sub committee is to provide a written report on its activities including recommendations for each council meeting.

Council may approve of working parties to assist the work of sub committees as required.

Council Meetings

Council will meet at least twice each term with at least 8 meetings being held in any calendar year.

The council must hold at least one public meeting each year to report on its activities and to present a statement setting out the school's/college's income and expenditure for the previous calendar year.

The times, dates and locations of the meetings are to be decided by the council and reviewed annually preferably after each election.

Quorum for a council meeting is not less than one half of the total membership provided that there is a majority of members present who are not DE&T employee members.

An **extraordinary meeting** of council may be held at any time decided by council, provided all members are given prior notice of the time, date, place and purpose of the meeting.

An extraordinary meeting may also be called upon written request by three (3) members being given to the President, Vice President or Executive Officer of the council, who must then convene a meeting by sending a notice to all councillors advising the time, date, place and purpose of the meeting.

Pecuniary Interest

If a member of the council, or an immediate family member, has any pecuniary interest in a subject or matter under discussion at a council meeting, that member:

- must declare it
- must not be present during discussion unless invited by council
- must not be present when a vote is taken on the matter
- but may be included in the quorum for the meeting.

Council Decision Making

A decision of the majority of members eligible to vote and present at any meeting of council is the decision of the council.

For council to make a decision a majority of people present must be non-DE&T employees.

An **Executive** consisting of the President, Vice President, Treasurer and the Principal may act on behalf of the council on any urgent matter or at any time when it is not possible to call a full meeting of the council.

Any decision by the Executive must then be discussed at the next council meeting.

Meeting Procedures

Normal meeting procedures will be followed as defined by council and may vary from strict rules of debate to a less formal procedure appropriate to committee meetings.

All decisions of council shall require formal voting. All members of council including the Principal have one vote. If votes are tied, the presiding member has a second or casting vote. Voting will normally be by show of hands, but council may resolve to hold a secret ballot on a particular item of business.

Meetings are to commence at <for example> 7.30 pm. and conclude by 9.30pm unless council votes for a 10 minute extension. Under exceptional circumstances councillors may vote for a second extension.

Visitors are welcome as observers, however if matters to be discussed are of a confidential nature, council may declare the meeting as "closed". When a meeting is closed, observers will be asked to leave.

Observers cannot vote but can speak if invited by the council.

Agenda

The Agenda for council meetings is to include the following :

- A general outline of the order of the meeting
- A statement of correspondence sent and received
- Copies of any correspondence to be debated by council
- A written report from each committee including recommendations to council
- Financial statements for month since the previous council meeting

Agendas are to be sent to councillors by the Friday before each council meeting.

A call for additional items of general business will be made immediately following discussion of business arising from the minutes.

Responsibility of Council Members

Each member of council is expected to:

- regularly attend the meetings of council
- read reports etc before each meeting
- be a member of at least one council sub committee
- maintain confidentiality as required
- have a commitment to make decisions in the best interests of all students at the school
- maintain an awareness of education issues
- participate in at least one professional development activity per year pertinent to the operation of School Councils

Council Sub Committees - General Guidelines

All council sub committees shall:

- recognise that, within the School/College, the council is the ultimate decision making body in the formation of policy
- have a clear role statement approved by council
- in their area of responsibility, recommend courses of action to the council
- prepare submissions for programs to be considered when budgets are prepared

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The Convenor of a Council Committee shall:

- call all meetings and provide all sub committee members with an agenda prior to the meeting
- in the event of his/her absence, nominate another member of the sub-committee to act as chairperson of the meeting
- provide the council Executive Officer with a written report of the minutes and recommendations within three working days after each sub committee meeting (a common format for reporting to council is recommended)
- ensure that the guidelines above are followed

Special Guidelines for Council Sub Committees

The Executive Committee shall:

- make decisions on behalf of the council when time doesn't allow for a meeting of the whole council to consider the matter
- if it deems a matter of sufficient importance, call an extraordinary meeting of the Council to decide the issue
- report any decisions taken to the next meeting of council to allow for further discussion/ratification

Education and Policy Development Sub Committee shall:

- consult with the school community and make recommendations to council on aspects of the school's educational policy.
(It is the province of the Principal and teaching staff to implement these policies).
- make recommendations to Council on the approval of camps and excursions taking due regard of DE&T safety guidelines.
- monitor progress towards the school Charter goals and priorities
- develop and review policy as required

Resources and Management Sub Committee shall:

- consider budget submissions in the light of council policies and charter goals and priorities and make budget recommendations to council for approval.
- monitor council income and expenditure including:
 - Local fund raising
 - Voluntary contributions
 - Trusts and Co-operatives
- make recommendations to council for short and long term financial planning in line with Charter goals and priorities.

Facilities and Environment Sub Committee shall:

- develop and implement a maintenance priority plan for the school
- identify the future buildings and grounds requirements for the school
- ensure that grounds and buildings are safe and well maintained
- monitor the school cleaning contract
- co-ordinate working bees
- monitor and make recommendations to council on improving the student learning environment