



Best Practices for Meeting Minutes

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OASIS Technical Advisory Board

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Abstract:

This document recommends these best practices for preparing and recording your meeting minutes.

Status:

This document was approved by the TAB on 26 July 2017.

Interested parties can send questions or comments on this document to the TAB by sending email to tab-askthetab@lists.oasis-open.org.

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1 Goals of Minutes

The minutes of TC meetings are a key part of the group's historical record. They are useful for members who miss a meeting or as a reminder of decisions made and pending business in preparation for an upcoming meeting. They memorialize attendance and quorum, document key decisions and milestones, and, in many cases, are needed when requesting support actions from OASIS staff.

To help meet OASIS's principle of maximizing visibility into TC work, the TAB recommends these best practices for preparing and recording your minutes.

2 Requirements of OASIS process

The OASIS requirements for meeting minutes are deliberately minimal in order to provide committees with the maximum amount of flexibility in how they are handled. The OASIS TC Process and the Committee Operations Process documents only require that:

- Minutes be posted to the committee's primary mailing list; and
- Minutes record individual attendance at the meeting.

Regarding the second requirement, TC Administration has interpreted the requirement to mean that the names of attendees must be listed in the minutes and the minutes must indicate whether or not quorum (51% of Voting Members) was achieved. Although it seems convenient to link to the attendance page of a calendar entry for the attendees, that record is not authoritative. It can be changed after the fact or even deleted. You can use that page to copy and paste the names into your minutes. However, the names must be in the document itself.

While the requirements are minimal, the TAB recommends the following practices as most likely to result in concise, accurate minutes that will be as useful in the future as they are today.

3 Recommendations for Meeting Minutes

Here are our recommendations on how to take and publish TC minutes.

Use the word “Minutes” in the subject line

Use the word “Minutes” and the meeting date in the subject line of the email. For example, “Draft minutes for <tc-name> 2017-07-24.”

This seems obvious but from time to time people forget to do it. For someone trying to find a record of your prior meetings, it is very frustrating to search the archive for the word “minutes” and finding nothing.

Similarly, if you write the minutes in a word processing file and load it to your document repository, use “Minutes” and the meeting date in the title of the document. This will ensure that the word appears in the automatically generated email sent from the repository.

Put your minutes in the text of your email

We recommend putting your minutes directly into the text of the email message to the committee’s mailing list. That is the most convenient format for searching and linking. You are welcome, of course, to keep minutes in a stand-alone document like OpenOffice, MS Office, or PDF so long as they are stored in the committee’s document repository and an email including the link to the document is sent to the mailing list. This should happen automatically when you upload the file.

Note that you can keep draft minutes in a mutable format such as a wiki or a Google Doc. However, you should treat these as scratch pad formats - e.g. for drafting live minutes during a meeting. The final, approved form must be fixed and immutable. (A word processing document qualifies once it is loaded into your document repository.) Note that TC Administration will not act on motions documented in wikis or other mutable formats.

List changes of TC status in the minutes

One helpful addition to TC minutes is a statement of who gained or lost voting rights as of the last meeting and other changes in status such as Leaves of Absence. For example:

Name	Affiliation	Role	Present
Kevin Mangold (KM)	US National Institute of Standards and Technology	Chair, Voting Member	Yes
Ross Micheals (RM)	US National Institute of Standards and Technology	Secretary, Voting Member	Yes
Anne Wang (AW)	3M HIS (Cogent)	Voting Member	
Cathy Tilton (CT)	Daon	Member (may vote <i>after</i> the end	Yes

		of <i>this</i> meeting)	
Sander Fieten (SF)	Individual	Voting Member	Yes
Jeff Dunne (JD)	Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory	Leave of Absence	
John Smith (JS)	University of Southern California	Voting Member (will lose voting rights after this meeting)	

Recording these in your minutes can help alert your members to their change in status so that they are not surprised at their next meeting.

Draft minutes as soon after the meeting as possible

It is best to draft TC minutes as soon after the meeting as possible while the memory of the event is fresh in your mind.

You don't have to capture every detail in the minutes

Minutes are not a transcript of every comment or response made during a meeting. Minutes should capture enough detail to identify issues and record the decisions for subsequent readers.

Minutes should typically contain:

- the date and time of the meeting;
- the meeting agenda;
- the list of attendees and whether quorum was achieved;
- action items assigned including agreed editorial changes to a specification;
- any announcements made;
- record of any standing items addressed;
- all motions made along with who made the motion and whether it passed or failed;
- details of votes, whether formal or informal, straw polls, etc.;
- any subcommittee reports including who gave them.

If you keep a chat log during your meeting, it is perfectly acceptable to append the chat log to the minutes.

Include all decisions taken in your minutes

The meeting agenda should include major decisions to be taken during the meeting.

Circulating drafts of expected motions to the members ahead of the meeting can save valuable working time while you are together. You can discuss and fine-tune the wording of the motion and gauge whether it has enough support to pass ahead of time, not during the actual meeting time. This also enables your minutes to be pre-populated with the motions beforehand.

Minutes are draft until approved

Minutes should be considered 'draft' until approved in a meeting of the TC. Note that TC Administration will generally accept draft minutes in requests for support. Typically, the draft minutes should be reviewed by the Chair first, followed by circulation to the full TC membership.

It is good practice to indicate if changes are made to draft minutes when they are approved. For example, the minutes might state: "Minutes are approved with the following modifications..."

Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions on this document. Send comments to tab-askthetab@lists.oasis-open.org.

Appendix A. Meeting Minutes Template

Here is a simple template that you can use for your meeting minutes.

Title: Minutes of the <tc-name> meeting on <date>

Agenda:

<list of agenda items with any pre-planned motions listed>

Attendees:

<list of TC members attending>

The meeting <had / did not have> quorum (XX of YY Voting Members).

Action items:

- <name of assignee> - <action item assigned and status>

Announcements:

<list of any general announcements made>

Standing business:

<list and disposition of any business items addressed at every meeting>

< Individual agenda items >

<for each item on the agenda, list of topics raised, motions made and outcome, straw polls taken, etc.>

<subcommittee reports>

<for each subcommittee, summary of what was reported and by whom>

Any other business

Next meeting date and time: