

# Essential Guidelines for Faculty Meetings



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Follow these essential guidelines to take the pain out of your meetings, hold productive discussions, and serve your organization better.

## INTRODUCTION

A faculty meeting is a gathering of employees who are addressing their organizational issues within the structure of their employment. These guidelines will help your discussion be fair and effective.

Note that in a faculty meeting, all discussion will be held and decisions made within the limits of your charter, bylaws, and labor agreements. It is critical:

- to be familiar with your organization's authority documents and how they apply to you;
- to know which type of faculty members have the right to attend, to debate, and to vote; and
- to be clear on the scope of your faculty's authority for a decision.

## BASICS

A quorum must be present for business to be done. Usually a quorum means a majority (more than half) of the voting faculty members holding positions.

The chair runs the meeting in the service of the faculty. The chair is not the “boss” but serves as a facilitator, helping the faculty to hold free and fair discussion and make good decisions.



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For large faculties, a motion is required before any discussion begins. For small faculties (up to about 12 people) it is fine to discuss issues before making a motion.

If a member makes a motion to amend the main motion, it is discussed and voted on before the main motion. After amending a motion, a vote must be taken on the main motion as amended.

After discussion, the chair calls for the vote and announces the result. The motion passes when a majority of those voting vote in favor, unless state law or your bylaws require a higher vote. This is different from the requirement for a quorum.

If someone “calls the question,” the chair must take a vote on whether to vote now or continue discussion. It takes a 2/3 vote to cut off discussion.

Telephonic participation, email voting and proxy voting pose special challenges. Be sure to operate within the limits of your authority documents and keep good records of any decisions made using these modes.

## **DISCUSSION**

Faculty members must be courteous and respectful. They may not make inappropriate remarks such as personal remarks or insulting language. Discussion must be relevant to the issues at hand. One thing is discussed at a time.

All faculty members have equal rights, privileges and obligations. This means that discussion is not a conversation, but follows some important rules:

- The chair recognizes speakers in turn.
- No one may speak a second time until everyone who wishes to do so has spoken once.
- Interrupting is not allowed.

If a faculty member breaks these rules, the chair may correct the member, or another faculty member may raise a Point of Order. The chair rules as to whether the point is correct, or not. The chair may also turn to the faculty first to decide whether a remark is appropriate or not.

A faculty member who disagrees with a ruling of the chair may appeal it. If another member seconds the appeal, the faculty decides.

The minority must be provided equal opportunity to debate, even if their views are unpopular. However, the decision of the majority voting at a properly called meeting is the decision of the faculty as a whole.