

MBARARA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



GUIDELINES FOR HOLDING ONLINE MEETINGS

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1.0 Introduction

With the Covid pandemic and the “new normal” we are forced to find ourselves in for our own safety, Online meetings have been adopted by most companies and Government institutions as the most suitable and cost-effective mechanism.

The University Council in its last seating permitted the use of Online meetings in exceptional circumstances like the current situation by the University, and in due process mandated management to come up with a Uniform set of guidelines to streamline these meetings. This justifies these guidelines.

Online conferencing technologies provide individuals and organizations the ability for work and collaboration to be done remotely. In the world today, people are no longer required to be in the same physical location for them to work together.

These technologies provide organizations the opportunity to host meetings, conferences and webinars using desktops, laptops and mobile devices. Participants are able to attend meetings as long as these electronic devices have access to the internet.

The proliferation of computing devices and their access to the internet continue to make online collaboration a preferred option for many individuals and organizations.

Online conferencing presents obvious benefits that include;

- Providing a platform for convenient and effective communication irrespective of physical location
- Elimination of several costs related to hosting physical meetings. These include travel costs and time, venue hire, meals etc.

In spite of these positives, it is important to note that unstructured adoption to these technologies can be disadvantageous in ways like;

- Allowing access to meetings by individuals not authorized to attend
- Failing to hold meeting discussions that can yield conclusive and collective resolutions
- Failing to manage participant conduct during meetings

It is for such reasons that it is considered important to lay out guidelines to ensure optimal use of online collaboration technologies.

This document provides a procedural framework on how online meetings shall be arranged and conducted at Mbarara University of Science and Technology.

In this document, an Online conferencing technology shall be considered as a software tool that allows participants to meet online, with or without video using existing internet, computer and mobile device technologies.

A tool(s) that can appropriately ensure adherence to the guidelines in this document shall be adopted by the university.

It also assumed that meeting hosts/moderators/chairpersons and participants shall have the basic familiarity in using the tool including joining/leaving meetings; muting/unmuting microphones; “raising hand” and posting to chat.

2.0 Before the Meeting

- i. The meeting organizers/secretariat shall choose an appropriate date and agenda and notify the MUST Computing Services Unit to schedule a meeting before the meeting
- ii. A meeting shall be scheduled in the tool, specifying
 - a) The Meeting Name
 - b) The Meeting Date and Start Time
 - c) Duration of the meeting
 - d) Meeting ID
 - e) Meeting password
- iii. A meeting invitation shall be generated and shared to the intended participants by email at least ONE week before the meeting
- iv. The meeting agenda shall also be circulated to members before the meeting.
- v. In scheduling the meeting, participants shall have to register and be approved, before they can join the meeting. This is to ensure that no unauthorized persons attend the meeting.

3.0 Meeting Settings

- i. Meeting host privileges shall be assigned to the Chairperson and the secretariat;
- ii. Participants shall not be able to join before the host;

- iii. Waiting rooms shall be used and only the host shall admit participants into the meeting from the waiting room;
- iv. By default, participants shall not be allowed to share screens. The host shall allow for screen sharing to participants if need be;
- v. The meeting shall be recorded and minutes derived through these recordings that will be legally binding as though it was the physical meeting.

4.0 General Etiquette

- i. Participants shall indicate their wish to speak by raising their hand. The Chairperson shall decide on whether to grant a participant, whose hand is up, permission to speak ii. Participants shall mute the microphones throughout the meeting until they are called upon to speak
- iii. After speaking, participants shall re-mute their microphones and lower their hands iv. Participants shall be allowed to post comments, contributions and questions to the meeting chat. The chairperson shall read out aloud comments on the chat, as time will permit
- v. Participants shall be allowed to turn on their videos, as long as their appearance and background environment do not distract the meeting proceedings
- vi. An audio recording of the meeting shall be posted, a transcript of which shall form the basis of the official minutes of the meeting. The chat log will be saved and posted.
- vii. The meeting can adopt other guidelines but should ensure not to steer away from the spirit of these guidelines in its handling of meetings to promote uniformity and accountability.
- viii. The Secretariat shall endeavor to keep the meetings as private and secure as possible with the help of the MUST Computing Service Unit, considering the sensitivity of the meetings and in case of any hacks find ways of limiting any exposure.