

LECTURE : 1

TOPIC : Organise and plan a meeting, event or conference.

AIM : To understand the basic procedure in organising and planing a meeting, event or conference.

LEARNING OUTCOMES :

After completing this chapter you should be able to understand:

- 1. The requirements in organising a meeting, event and conference.**
- 2. The secretarial role in organising and servicing a meeting, event and conference.**
- 3. On how to find the correct information from the right sources.**

TOPIC OUTLINE:

1.1 Organise and plan a meeting event or conference.

1.2 Identify and explain the secretarial role and procedures.

1.3 Outline sources of information and services.

NOTES:

1.1 Organise and plan a meeting, event or conference.

Meetings

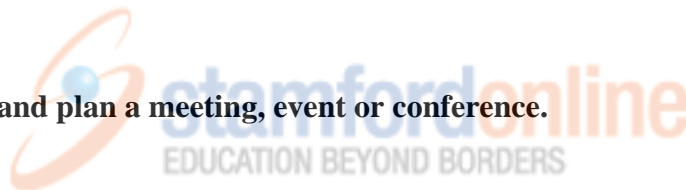
Before making arrangements for meetings five main points should be considered: when the meeting is to be held, where the meeting is to be held, who is to be invited, how the meeting will be called, why the meeting is being called.

Meetings: booking venues, organisation's own premises, external venues, use appropriate communication protocols, monitor all arrangements

Organise Equipment: audio-visual equipment, flipchart, tele-and video-conferencing facilities

Documentation and Advertising: generate documents (notice of meeting, agenda, minutes of previous meeting), check accuracy, meet deadlines, collate documents, organise statutory press advertisement/notice (where appropriate)

Refreshments: confirm arrangements, timing, options, numbers participating



Check arrangements for extra copies of documents at short notice, information required by participant, provision of materials and equipment at short notice, re-scheduling of start time, agenda, meals.

Events: research venue types, availability, suitability; booking procedures for hotels and conference centres, prepare a report form researched data, book venue, confirm arrangements and number of participants, organise refreshments and necessary equipment, prepare invitations, finalise venue details, prepare and provide directional maps and despatch final details to delegates if appropriate, confirm and co-ordinate with others.

Documentation and publicity: assist in preparation of publicity and other conference/events documentation, i.e. leaflets, brochures; check proofs for accuracy; meet deadlines; collate document; organise despatch of final details of refreshments: in-house catering, external catering; confirmation of time options, arrangements, participant numbers.

Seminars, presentations and conferences: inform/invite delegates, book and prepare room; audio-visual equipment and materials to be used; organise refreshments; provide administrative support

Speakers: confirm arrangements made, maintain written records of discussions and arrangements made

Refreshments: in-house catering, external catering; confirm time, options, arrangement, participant numbers, and contingency provisions

Events and conferences: emergency procedures/contact; provision of equipment at short notice, extra copies of brochures, etc; rescheduling of start time, programme and meals

To organize a conference successfully takes time and careful planning. Below is the checklist to guide you in the planning process.

Choosing A Venue

- a) The venue should be large enough to hold the expected number of delegates.
- b) The venue should be easily accessible with ample parking space.
- c) Check if the venue offers the necessary equipment and facilities like overhead or slide projector, television and video cassette recorder, whiteboard, flipchart, podium, microphones, sound systems, lighting equipment, etc. Also check that there are enough power points for all.
- d) Ensure that a suitable coffee/catering service is available
- e) There should be adequate space in the meeting room or foyer where tea and coffee may be served.

Guest Speakers

- a) If guest speakers are to be invited, do so well in advance. Get them to confirm their attendance in writing.
- b) Keep speakers informed on details of their accommodation, transport, meals, and entertainment if these are arranged/provided by your company.
- c) Ensure that speakers receive full briefing on what is expected from them.
- d) Try to get copies of the speeches or papers to be presented in advance for press release or advertising purposes. Check if copies have to be made for distribution to the delegates.

Conference Program

- a) The printed program should define clearly each day's events, giving details of the time, place, names of the speakers and their designations, the topics, tea and lunch breaks, the evening's entertainment, etc.
- b) Sufficient time must be allowed for speakers to cover their topics and for discussion of paper.
- c) There should be a balance between business and relation, formal and informal discussions.
- d) If possible, try to build in time to compensate for over-running as well as contingency items when papers delivered are shorter than originally planned.

Catering

- a) Arrange times when morning and afternoon tea/coffee and lunch are to be served.
- b) For a formal dinner, a seating plan and place cards should be prepared.
- c) Take into consideration religious eating habits, e.g. vegetarian, Muslim, etc.

Registration of Delegates

- a) Arrange that delegates receive on arrival a “conference kit” which should include the following:
 - document folder/file
 - name tag
 - conference programme
 - names of delegates and where they are from
 - meals provided and details
- b) Arrange for the participants to meet at the registration area and direct them to their seats.

Before the Conference

- a) Check that the meeting room has:-
 - water flasks and glasses
 - whiteboard, marker pens and duster
 - flipchart, rostrum, whiteboard
 - microphones: neck, standing table
 - audio-visual equipment
- c) Ensure that the seating arrangement is correct.
- d) Large lettered name cards for all speakers and delegates should be placed on their respective tables.
- e) Appoint someone to control the lighting and sound system.
- f) Have in hand, the name of the technician in case any equipment should fail during a session.
- g) Check that the banners or backdrop has been correctly done.
- h) Ensure that the conference area has clear signposts throughout the duration of the conference.
- i) If the press is invited, check that the press table has been arranged for. Appoint a person to look after the press and to provide them with the necessary programmes, press release, etc.

After the Conference

- a) Collect all evaluation forms and prepare an analysis/summary.
- b) Send thank you letters where necessary.

CONFERENCE PLANNING

1. Before any arrangements can be made, decisions must be made by the employer on conference organising committee concerning:
 - a) Theme or purpose of the conference
 - b) Date and time
 - c) Place

2. Select the conference venue and hotels suitable for accommodating the delegates. You will need to consider the rooms and conference facilities available including cost and accessibility.
3. Arrange a meeting with the employer on conference organising committee to discuss the programme.
4. Write to the chairman and speaker for each session inviting them to take part. Make arrangements for the social activities and reception.
5. A preliminary notice of the conference should be circulated to delegates and possibly a notice in a professional journal.
6. Discuss the programme with the conference hotel or centre and make the necessary arrangements for rooms, catering or refreshments, etc.
7. Make arrangements for the printing and despatch of the conference programme, booking form (giving details of recorded hotels) and invitation cards for the social events. At this stage the charges for delegates can be calculated and included in the programme. If it is a company conference the company may meet the charges.
8. If there is to be a conference dinner, the following arrangements may be necessary.
 - a) Invite special guests and arrange for the after dinner speeches.
 - b) Arrange for cocktails.
 - c) Discuss the menu, wines and floral decorations with the hotels.
 - d) Book a photographer.
 - e) Arrange for the printing of the menu card.
 - f) Draw up a table plan with place names.
9. Book a room at the conference centre to serve as a conference office to deal with the registration of delegates, preparation and issue of conference papers and to supply any other information to the delegates. Arrange for staff to take turns to work in the conference office for the duration of the conference.
10. Arrange for the recording of the conference proceeding by video or audio and if appropriate, for the press to be invited to the public sessions.
11. Make arrangements for visual aids to be available for speakers and check on the provision of sound systems.
12. Arrange direction signs to be installed in the respective places.
13. When the booking forms and cheques arrive, make arrangements with the bank to open a special conference account and bank in the cheques into it. Acknowledge receipt of the booking forms and cheques. Check carefully the number of bookings received so that you do not accept more people than can be accommodated.
14. On the date to be agreed, confirm the number of bookings with the conference centre and hotels concerned.
15. After the conference:
 - a) Write letters of thanks to the Chairman, Speakers and all who contributed to the conference.
 - b) Arrange for the payment of speakers, entertainment, florist, hotels, etc.
 - c) Prepare a report of the conference, for issue to delegates and possibly for the press.
 - d) Despatch conference photographs to delegates.

- e) Prepare a receipt and payment account for the accountant or for submission to the next meeting of the conference organising committee.

PROGRESS CHART

A progress chart is used when a secretary has to plan a conference or function in which she must know the progress of the arrangements made on a progress chart. When each stage is completed the secretary will put a coloured marker against the name of the person in the correct column as shown below.

NAME	INVITATION SHEET	ACCEPTED	REJECTED	HOTEL RES. MADE
MR BROWN	/		/	
MISS CAROL	/		/	/
MR SMITH	/	/		/
MR IMRAN	/	/		
MISS NADIA	/	/		
MR RAMA	/		/	/
MR CHOO	/	/		/
MISS RINA	/		/	

DEALING WITH THE PRESS

1. Press representative should be greeted politely.
2. Be co-operative. However great care must be exercised when giving information.
3. Emphasise that information could only be supplied by authorised personnel probably the Public Relations Officer.

1.2 Identify and explain the secretarial role and procedures

- preliminaries: clarify date, time, duration; venue; own responsibilities; documentation (range, sources, deadlines for approval and despatch to participants; security for confidential documents; invitations)
- meetings: book venue, arrange refreshments and car parking, re-direct telephone calls, book and check audio-visual equipment, prepare documentation.

- documentation: prepare and check accuracy (i.e. agenda, notice of meeting, chairman's agenda, reports); complete within time scale, distribute notice and agenda to all participants, collate documents, check distribution of previous minutes, provide folder to minute items, provide committee files, prepare paper for circulation.

Documents required in connection with meetings are as follows:

1) Notice of Meeting

Those required to attend a meeting must be informed of the time, date and place, at least 7 and 14 days for normal business, with perhaps, 21 days for company annual general meeting or if special business has to be discussed. This is usually done by means of a formal notice.

2) Agenda

It is a list of items to be discussed at a meeting. The agenda for the meeting of members of a committee, which meets regularly, always begins with minutes of the last meeting and ends with date of next meeting. Some agendas are simply a brief outline or summary consisting of numbered headings: others are more detailed. There are three typical forms of agenda:

Skeleton - this is brief outline or summary consisting of numbered headings. Usually used as part of the notice circulated to members.

Detailed - identifying the meeting, items will be listed in detail. This format commonly found where constitutional changes are proposed and voting is to take place such as AGM.

Chairperson's Agenda - as mentioned below.

3) Chairman Agenda

A special agenda is prepared for the chairman including details, which will help him to conduct the meeting. Usually it contains more information than an ordinary agenda. Beside each item on the agenda, details are given of action already taken or the person who has been asked to investigate. A wide space is left on the right hand side of the paper so that the chairman can make his own remarks.

4) Minutes

Minutes are summary of the main points of discussion at a meeting. Motions and amendments must be recorded verbatim and names of proposers and seconders. They must be brief, accurate and clear.

- 5) **Treasurers Report**
The treasurer will have to take out a report of the financial aspects of the committee i.e. last balance, expenses incurred and present balance. The chairman on approval will then sign this book.
- 6) **Memorandum and Articles of Association**
These are regulations drawn up by a company setting out the objective for which the company is formed and the manner in which its business shall be conducted.
- 7) **Committee Files**
All papers relevant to any committee on which you serve notices, agendas, minutes, reports, supplementary papers – should be filed together.
- 8) **Attendance Register**
The secretary's duty is to record the names of those present. If the group is small, names can be called out. If the group is large a sheet of paper or the attendance register can be passed around for signatures. If there are latecomers, the attendance register can be left at the entrance of the meeting room. As members come in, they would be required to sign and the book will be collected later.

List of arrangements entailed in organising meeting

- **day before meeting:** check accommodation, confirm availability of reference books, start work on chairman's agenda, prepare name plates, check sufficient pencils, paper, spare copies of minutes, agenda, paper for all members.
- **day of meeting:** check room preparation, equipment (working order and safety), sufficient chairs, blotting pads, ashtrays (if smoking permitted) or 'No Smoking' signs, glasses and water; place pencils, paper and spare copy of agenda in each participant's place; file reference books, spare copies of agenda and minutes of previous meeting and attendance register near chairman's place; place notebook and pencils where secretary will sit.

Inform reception of meeting venue: display directional signs, confirm parking arrangements and time of refreshments.

Be in meeting room 15 minutes before start of meeting; place name plates on table; check with chairman any last minute details, i.e. type, retype chairman's agenda.

- **during meeting:** have 'Meeting in Progress' on door of meeting room, take notes of main points of discussion - record motions and amendments verbatim, make separate notes of action to be taken.
- **after meeting:** remove notices, directional signs; notify switchboard and catering staff; clear and destroy surplus papers; draft minutes; draw chairman's attention to action points; put in the diary relevant dates including date and time of next meeting; open file for next meeting.

Duties of a secretary in setting up and servicing meetings

Before Meeting

1. Prepare agenda in consultation with the Chairman.
2. Send out the notice convening the meeting together with the agenda to members 7-14 days before the meeting or as stipulated by the Chairman.
3. Find out how many members will be turning up to ascertain size of room or conference table.
4. Reserve conference rooms in the company or book a suitable room.
5. Book and make arrangements for the setting up of any audio visual aids, which may be required.
6. Minutes can be sent out or given at the meeting.
7. Carefully note any apologies for absence as they are received.
8. Make extra copies to be circulated at the meeting if required.
9. If meeting is to be held at a hotel, request for audio visual aids if necessary i.e. microphone, projector, screen, etc.
10. Organise refreshments, if required.
11. Book car parking spaces if representatives from other organisations or guests are expected.
12. Prepare nameplates where it is a new committee or where a number of guests are expected and representatives may be unknown to one another.

On the day of the meeting

1. Check the meeting room for heating, ventilation, lighting and seating.
2. Confirm the refreshments and ensure that they will be served at a convenient time.
3. Confirm the parking arrangements.
4. Contact reception if guests are expected.
5. Liaise with switchboard to reroute calls for the duration of the meeting, making arrangements for emergency calls to be routed to the meeting room should this be considered necessary.
6. Prepare the attendance register, which all members will sign on arrival.
7. Either arrange the nameplates around the table if the chair person requests this, or have them ready for individual collection by members on arrival.

8. Have available spare copies of the agenda and other relevant papers.
9. Place papers, pens and pencils on the table.
10. Have drinking water and glasses available.
11. Finalise the chairperson's agenda.
12. Collect all necessary files and documents, which may be called upon during the meeting.
13. Have the minute book ready for the chairperson's signature.
14. Place a 'Meeting in Progress' sign outside the room.

During the meeting

1. Take attendance of those present or ensure that members sign the Attendance Register.
2. Read the minutes of the previous meeting, letters of apology and any other correspondence.
3. Assist the chairman in supplying information from files as required during the meeting.
4. Take minutes and record details of the decisions reached, making note names of proposers and seconders and results of voting.
5. Note any authorized changes in the order of agenda items.
6. Deal with any crisis or emergency that arises, e.g. leave the room to seek information when requested to do so by the chairperson.
7. Answering the telephone should it ring.
8. Help to serve refreshments when necessary.
9. Assist the chairperson, particularly when there may be a lengthy agenda with a number of items to get through.

After the meeting

1. Ensure that all documents are returned to the office.
2. Remove the notice of the meeting.
3. Notify the switchboard that the meeting has finished (if meeting is held in the company).
4. Notify catering staff or tea lady that they (or she) may collect the refreshments trolley.
5. Clear and destroy any surplus papers.
6. Escort guests off the premises or hotel, if required.
7. Prepare a draft of the minutes for the attention of the chairman before reproducing them for the next meeting.
8. Deal with any matters you were asked to attend to at the meeting such as writing letters, etc.
9. If the chairman is your employer, record the date of the next meeting in his diary and yours.
10. Draft agenda can be prepared of items not completed at the meeting or of times requested to be included for the next meeting.

1.3 Outline sources of information and services

- **sources of information:** libraries, Internet, directories, reference books, timetables; hotel guides; trade and professional magazines.
- **local suppliers and services:** venues, caterers, audio-visual equipment, video and teleconferencing, courier services, car parking facilities.

Secretaries must be aware of the sort of information, which is used and usable within organizations they work for and then learn how to find, process, apply and protect it.

Sources of information are categorised in three sections:

Those available within an organisation - Internal Resources

- personal systems
- office files
- reports
- minutes
- central records (master filing)
- other specialist departments, e.g. Data processing
- staff - the human resource department
- reference books
- office database

Available from outside - General Resources

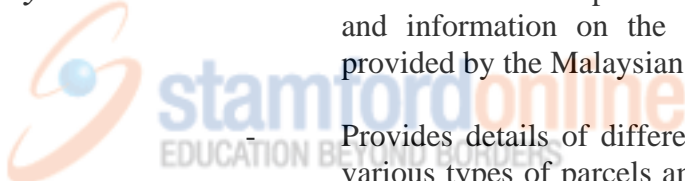
- newspaper, journals and periodicals
- radio and television
- public libraries
- travel agents
- labour office
- tax offices
- Post Office
- Chamber of Commerce

Those from specialist agencies - Specialist Resources

- Specialist Libraries
- Embassies and Trade Delegation
- Government Department
- The Ministry Office
- Registrar of Companies
- Tenaga Nasional Berhad
- Professional and Trade Associations
- Training boards
- Specialist Agencies e.g. Accommodation, advertising, conference organisers, debt collecting.

- Security Systems
- Labour Office
- Telekom Malaysia Berhad
- Industrial Society
- Stock Exchange

Suggest suitable reference books to which a secretary might refer.

- 1) *A Good English Dictionary*, for example the Oxford English Dictionary.
- 2) *Shorthand Dictionary*, which provides both meanings and shorthand outlines.
- 3) *Telephone Directories*, together with the corresponding Yellow Pages and the appropriate dialling codes.
- 4) *Malaysian Guide Book*- Provides useful details of all major towns and cities in Malaysia.
- 5) *AA or AAM Handbook*- Information on garage facilities and other details of use to any motor travellers.
- 6) *Malaysian Postal Book*- Provides details of postcodes of districts, and information on the other services provided by the Malaysian Post.

 - Provides details of different weights for various types of parcels and letters to be sent to places within the country and overseas.
- 7) *Travel Guide Book* - Published three months once.
 - Provides details of travelling schedules to various destinations within the country and overseas.
- 8) *Periodicals and Magazines*- Selected accordingly by the secretary, e.g. Business Times, Asia Week, Newsweek.