

Best Practices for Inclusive Meetings

Planning a meeting? Maximise attendance and engagement by planning an **inclusive meeting** in a few simple steps! These are just guidelines, so don't feel like you need to do it all for every meeting. Whatever steps you can take will make a difference towards inclusivity.

Plan ahead:

- Provide advance notice of meeting times so attendees can make alternative arrangements for other responsibilities if needed.
- Share the agenda ahead of time so people can prepare.

Think about the timing:

- Avoid weekends and major cultural and religious holidays.
- Allow attendees to nominate preferred meeting times and consider what times will work best for *your* attendees (e.g., core business hours, “family-friendly” hours, etc.).

Choose the right meeting style:

- Face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid? Some styles won't work well for some attendees – figure out what *your* attendees need.
- Create opportunity for attendees to identify any support they need to participate.

Book the right room:

- For face-to-face or hybrid meetings, consider physical accessibility.
- For hybrid meetings, make sure “dual delivery” technology is available.

Don't forget the people who can't attend:

- Provide opportunity for input before or after the meeting.
- Record the meeting and distribute the recording to those who weren't present.

For more details see the SMAH [Best Practices for Inclusive Meetings Guidelines](#).

Best Practices for Inclusive Meetings

The Faculty of Science, Medicine and Health (SMAH) recognises that many staff, including those with caring responsibilities and other personal commitments, may be unable to attend essential meetings if they are scheduled too early or too late in the day. SMAH also recognises that many staff may not be able to attend meetings that are exclusively face-to-face or run wholly online. Meeting scheduling and planning can limit a staff member's opportunity to actively participate in meetings and may also impact networking and development opportunities.

The intention of these recommendations is to provide suggested guidelines holding inclusive meetings that provide opportunity for as many staff members as possible to participate and contribute. Adopting these recommendations will provide several benefits:

- promote a more inclusive work environment and culture within SMAH;
- ensure the maximum number of people can attend meetings;
- minimise unintended exclusion and disadvantage of staff with caring and other responsibilities;
- improve communication between management and team members;
- support staff to manage their work and personal commitments.

The following recommendations are some examples of best practices that you can adopt. No one is required to follow all recommendations for all meetings – putting into place even one recommendation is a step in the right direction.

Recommendations

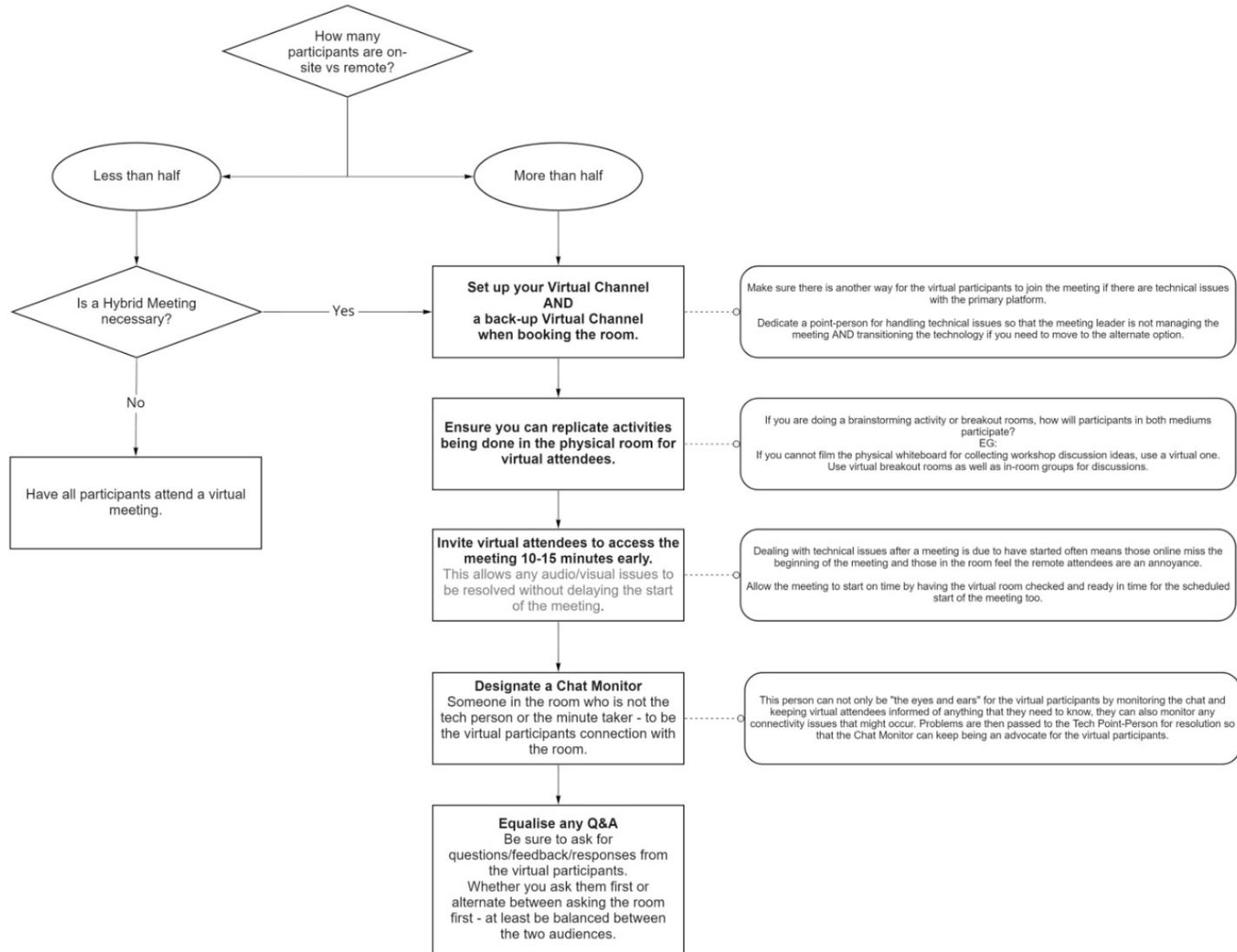
1. Provide attendees with sufficient advanced notice of meeting times so that attendees can make alternative arrangements to cover their other responsibilities (especially if meetings will happen outside normal working hours).
2. Avoid scheduling meetings on cultural and religious holidays¹, on weekends, and outside of core business hours (9am-5pm).
3. Give meeting attendees the option to nominate their preferred meeting times and accommodate these requests where possible. This practice is more inclusive for attendees who have not publicly disclosed their individual requirements (e.g., caring responsibilities, specialist medical requirements, clinical work, etc.).
4. It may not always be feasible to give attendees their choice of meeting times. In these instances, if attendee requirements are well-known, schedule meetings to accommodate those needs (e.g., so-called “family-friendly” meeting hours of 10am-4pm adopted by some universities²).
5. Share the agenda ahead of time so those who want to can prepare if needed. If there is a big decision to be made, provide people time and relevant information to think about it before the meeting.

¹ See: <https://www.uow.edu.au/science-medicine-health/about-us/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/#tab-188499>

² Examples including Queen Mary University, London and Macquarie University, Australia.

6. If key decisions will be made, provide opportunity for people who cannot attend to have input, either before or after the meeting. Where possible, record the meeting and distribute the recording to those who could not attend.
7. When sending the meeting invite, create opportunity for people to identify any support they may need to attend. For example, include a statement such as: “*If you need any support to take part in this meeting, let me know.*” This gives people a chance to let you know if they need any adjustments or have specific needs that would enable their attendance and full participation.
8. Consider whether holding a hybrid meeting is right for your circumstances. Staff may not be able to attend face-to-face meetings for a number of reasons (e.g., based on different campuses, medical needs, caring responsibilities). Alternatively, online meetings may not be suitable for all staff, in particular people with certain disabilities. It is important to note that in some circumstances, people may not feel safe to identify these reasons. Therefore, to encourage an inclusive culture, providing options for hybrid meetings as much as possible is encouraged. The Appendix to this document provides a flow chart that may be a useful tool for setting up hybrid meetings.
9. When booking meeting rooms for hybrid meetings, ensure appropriate technology is available for virtual attendees to participate fully. The [Common Teaching Venues](#) list is a good place to start. Hybrid meetings should generally be booked into rooms classified as “*Category 4: Dual Delivery*”, which include audience microphone so that virtual attendees can hear in-person attendees. Note that securing an appropriate room may be difficult when on-campus teaching resumes—if an adequate room is not available, you may want to consider whether the meeting could be fully virtual instead, or whether there are other ways you can ensure remote participants are fully engaged.
10. When booking meeting rooms, consider whether the space is physically accessible. For more information consult the [UOW Disability Policy](#).

Appendix: Flowchart for Hybrid Meetings



Appendix: Legal Requirements

The following is taken from the Fair Work Ombudsman:

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/tools-and-resources/best-practice-guides/flexible-working-arrangements#flexible-working-arrangements>

Legal requirements

“Anyone can request flexibility – but certain employees have a legal entitlement to request flexible working arrangements under the Fair Work Act. Employees who have this legal entitlement include employees (other than casual employees) who have worked with the employer for at least 12 months and long term casuals who have a reasonable expectation of continuing employment with the employer on a regular and systemic basis. Also, the request must be because they are:

- a parent of, or have responsibility for the care of, a child who is school age or younger
- a carer (within the meaning of the Carer Recognition Act 2010)
- a person with disability
- aged 55 or older
- experiencing family violence, or
- providing care or support to a family member, or someone they live with, who is experiencing family violence.”