



Navigating Diverse Opinions

For the purpose of this document, "committee" refers to any governance or decision-making body with membership from both students and staff. This may include, but is not limited to: working groups, steering groups, councils, and boards.

The more diverse the committee the larger the pool of ideas and opinions that can be represented. Although this is overall a good thing, there are obstacles that must be managed to get the best out of a committee.

While some committees will have a code of conduct and rules outlined strictly in their Terms of Reference, others may not.

What is ok:

- **Disagreeing** with the a point or idea that has been raised based on its merits.
- **Seeking clarification** about why an idea has been dismissed, or why an idea was adopted in the first place.
- **Providing clarification** or updated information if something is incorrectly presented as a fact.

What isn't ok:

- **Dismissing** ideas based on **personal attributes**, such as age, gender or ethnicity, but also job title or apparent role on the committee.
- Making **accusations or comments** about someone's **physical or mental health**, even if you think it provides context.
- Using **discriminatory language** or making comments that could be interpreted as racist, sexist, ageist or discriminatory towards a particular person or group.

More tips:

- The loudest voice in the room does not always represent the consensus of the committee.
- Decisions made during committees will often impact a large demographic of students and staff.
- Speak up on your committee if you feel there are particular cohorts whose perspectives are not being considered.
- If you notice that particular voices are not being listened to (either on your own committee or more broadly) you can address this with the Chair.



Note: These tips are not just for you but for all members on the committee. If you see someone else exhibiting unacceptable behaviour, raise it with the Chair after the meeting. If your concerns are about the Chair, you can contact the USASA Student Voice team for advice.