

TEAM AGREEMENTS ABOUT NORMS

TEAM NORMS

Norms are the written and unwritten social rules of work. They might include how we function in meetings, how we communicate in times of difficulty, or how we agree to manage shared workspace. It is important for a team to reach agreement on their norms. Otherwise, individuals will behave and expect others to behave in a way that is preferential to them or was learned in previous work environments, rather than what would be most useful to the current team context. Holding conversations about team norms allows each person to clarify understanding and demonstrate their responsibility and commitment to upholding them.

It is a good idea to review all or some of your norms regularly *and especially* after a significant team change such as: when someone new joins or leaves the team, after completing a large initiative, following a shift in service or structure, when implementing new policy, following an office move, adjusting to a remote or hybrid schedule, or if there is confusion or conflict about a particular practice.

The following guide will help you have conversations with your team to create your own team norms that are short, clear and meaningful. Team norms should be reviewed regularly and adapted as needed. Pages 4 and 5 address Team Meetings in particular. It may be helpful to first review any team documentation you currently have:

- Team charter (Purpose, Mission, Vision, Values, Purpose, Existing Norms, Communications or Conflict Principles)
- Service Plans & Unit Standards
- Policies & Procedures
- Team Meeting Agenda Templates

**Note:* Review of formal Organization Charts and Job Descriptions are outside the scope of a team norms conversation.

As you review the topic categories below, ask/discuss...

- What is the existing practice or default behaviour in regards to this topic? Is that behaviour serving our team goals right now? Is that behaviour agreeable to all team members?
- Is there any team behaviour or expectation you are currently confused about?
- What team behaviours have organically emerged in recent months that we should articulate and maintain?
- What team behaviours did we previously have that we no longer need?
- How can we be intentional in developing and communicating new team norms?
- How will we ensure new team members understand our team norms?
- If deeper conversation and review is required, how will we prioritize and schedule to ensure this conversation moves forward

TEAM AGREEMENTS ABOUT NORMS

TOPIC	SAMPLE AGREEMENTS
<p>TEAM CONNECTION/WELL BEING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of team environment do we want to create? How can we build it? • How will we take care of ourselves as a team? How will we support each other? • How will we recognize and celebrate our team members' professional and/or personal successes? • How will we create a strong sense of inclusion? How will we account for different schedules and work locations in doing so? • How do we make room and time for relationship building? How can we be intentional when we may not have shared office time? • How do we manage shared space: opening/closing; locking/unlocking; cleaning/organizing/restocking; temperature control; noise control; fragrance policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We schedule time to check in outside of business meetings • We engage actively in recognition and appreciation • We schedule regular team development, learning, and social time • We organize a social fund/committee/club to coordinate holidays, birthdays, and other celebrations • We create and review our team values • We note and respect personal preferences (dietary, communication, and otherwise) • We share responsibility for our space and coordinate a schedule to share the load, we clean up after ourselves • We all do our part to create a safe and healthy environment and adhere to agreed upon process
<p>COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we be sure to communicate with the whole team? • How will team members communicate outside of meetings? • How do we communicate about important matters outside of working hours? Eg. Absences, significant life events? • What acronyms/shorthand language do we use internally that might need explanation? • How will we ensure collaboration as we balance different work schedules and locations? • Where are shared documents located and updated? • Which communications channels do we use for which kind of content? • How will conflict be identified and resolved? How can we apply Uvic's conflict principles to our team context? • How will we give each other feedback? What is our process when we notice an agreement that is not being upheld? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We understand and agree on how each communications channel is to be used • We prioritize relationship and connection whether in person or remotely • We assume positive intent and address conflict early • We agree to respectfully share and receive constructive feedback • We know that it's ok to disagree and hold different perspectives. • We ask questions to clarify, not to debate, and listen to understand what others are saying • We keep confidences and trust others to keep ours • We avoid gossip and don't share other's confidential information • We agree to communicate with the team leader informing them when we are unable to attend work.

TEAM AGREEMENTS ABOUT NORMS

- What are our individual understandings of what is confidential or private information (eg. health, family) What level of personal sharing are we comfortable with? How will we demonstrate respect for varying levels of comfort and maintain confidentiality?

- We follow [record keeping protocols](#) and keep ourselves accountable for appropriate storage, privacy and archiving of information.

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AND DECISION MAKING

- How will we ensure regular check-ins between employees and their supervisors?
- Which process will be used to make decisions, and what is the fallback in case a decision cannot be reached?
- How will we measure our team's performance?
- How will we determine what areas we can improve in?
- How will work be prioritized?
- What are the general key responsibilities of each team member? When will we step in to support and help each other?
- Who needs to know when certain decisions/actions are made? How do we communicate these updates?
- How will we ensure that we stay current in our work and look at new ways/avoid getting "locked into" old ways of working?
- How can we obtain and share knowledge that we don't already have?

- We aim to build consensus in our decisions when possible, and trust our leaders to make good decisions once they've incorporated our perspectives.
- We will all decide and share our expectations, and work with others to achieve them.
- We will each share the ownership for our team decisions and successes.
- We support each other during the high volume times
- We will get curious and explore others' ideas and suggestions. We look for ways to make new ideas work (not for reasons they won't.)
- We look to build on what is working and are open to new approaches
- We can ask for new ideas from beyond our team

TEAM AGREEMENTS ABOUT NORMS

TEAM MEETINGS

Team meeting norms are specific to the way in which you choose to come together to carry out your work. These norms may require their own conversation and review. It may also be helpful to conduct an occasional “meeting audit” where your team lists all of their internal meetings and reviews them for form, function, effectiveness and efficiency. Use this guide to create your own meeting norms that are clear, concise and relevant to the team.

As you review the topic categories below, ask/discuss...

- What is this meeting designed to accomplish? Could this objective be achieved in another more effective way?
- Is the meeting format appropriate to the objective (the right timing/frequency/duration etc.)?
- Are the people required to achieve the meeting’s purpose invited?
- Are there redundant meetings that could be combined, altered, or cancelled?
- Do we need more, less, or different meetings to accomplish our goals as a team?
- Do we need to review specific meeting processes to ensure the effectiveness of one or more of our meetings?
- Do meeting norms shift depending on the meeting context? (eg. Different behaviours online than in person)

Meeting Structures

- How and to whom will meeting roles be assigned? eg. Chair/facilitator/leader, recorder, participants, etc.
- How and by whom will meetings be scheduled? eg. Duration, frequency, and method of invitation
- What is the preferred meeting technology for virtual or hybrid meetings?
- When do meetings need to be in person (all in person), online (all online) or hybrid?
- How and by whom will agendas be created and distributed? How will expectations for meeting preparation be communicated?
- How and by whom will meetings be documented? Will they be recorded? Will someone take notes? How will this be shared?
- How will meeting records be managed and stored?
- How will we address off topic content that may emerge? Eg. additional meetings, parking lot, etc.?
- How will we ensure regular meeting technology settings align with our team norms and intentions? Eg. chat settings, mute settings, permissions for sharing etc.

TEAM AGREEMENTS ABOUT NORMS

Participation & Etiquette

- What are the communication expectations and ground rules for a meeting? Eg. Respect, confidentiality, sharing time, interruptions, distractions, etc.
- In a hybrid or online environment do we expect videos to be on? When might it be okay to be off camera? How do we want attendees to communicate their needs?
- What options are there to request to speak or take turns? Is it pre-decided? How might it differ online or in person? eg. Raising emoji or physical hand up on the screen, posting request in the chat, unmute and speak up. It may be helpful to select a few options for different styles.
- How will you monitor how participation time is shared fairly to allow all voices to be heard?
- Is it okay to call on people without notice? Is there an option to pass?
- What level of informality is acceptable in a meeting? eg Eating, fidgeting, pets/kids on screen, virtual backgrounds, fun filters, etc.
- What are our agreements for using the chat during virtual meetings?
- How will the mute function be managed in virtual meetings? Eg. Can a meeting host mute participants when there is background noise?

Attendance

- What is the expectation for attendance or how people prioritize this meeting?
- What is the minimum number of attendees for a meeting to move forward?
- How and to whom do we communicate absences and/or arrange for proxy or rescheduling?
- When are in-person meetings necessary? When are online preferred? Will an online option be available for in-person meetings if needed? When might hybrid meetings work for our team?
- How do we make and communicate decisions to change a meeting format? Eg. in-person to online, or online to in person)?