



JPPF Registry Resources – Approach for Minute taking

Introduction:

In any judicial system the keeping of court records and recording evidence is an integral part of the role of a court-taker, whether by hand or electronically.

New Zealand is fortunate to have a digital evidence recording system, but we know that many of the Pacific Island countries must rely on manual records and minute taking. We have looked to share what New Zealand resources could be of benefit, while trying to source and share more relevant Pacific experiences.

All these resources for minute taking go hand in hand with the decision-making training undertaken by judicial officers, where they are provided with a template for capturing and making their decisions. Following such a template means judicial decisions should be clearly and fully set out and thereby require less determination from the minute taker as to what should be recorded.

The following resources are available for minute taking with suggestions on how they can be utilised to help your staff understand the part they play and how to ensure the court records are maintained;

- We identify and explain some of the different components of the court proceedings and what needs to be recorded.
- We have provided an example of a New Zealand template for recording the log notes of a trial and another for a list court. These log notes will show you how the different components of a hearing occur and identify what needs to be recorded or transcribed. You may wish to use the log note examples to consider formatting your own template so that minute takers have a customised checklist to operate from.
- We hope to record video interviews of resident Pacific minute takers for you view to hear their experiences and suggestions for strategies to keep up to speed.

- We have already compiled a list of those strategies for you to share with staff.
- We also hope to build a library of transcribed minutes as examples to demonstrate good techniques that can be used for practice and training purposes.
- If your minute takers use a typewriter to take minutes, there is also a glossary with suggested abbreviations and links to Word resources about creating auto text. These will help increase speed.

We hope that these resources make it easier for the minute taker to determine what to record and how to achieve that.



Toolkit Resource List

1. Components of a court hearing

During an interview of Pacific registry minute takers, they identified as being self-taught, learning from their experiences what needed to be recorded and upskilled themselves over time to be quick, accurate and thorough.

This led to the creation of a resource that identifies and explains some of the components of a trial hearing, setting out what should be recorded and the importance and reason for keeping those records. If a minute taker understands the different components, I hope that this helps identify what should be recorded in full and what just needs to be noted in order to make their task easier and more efficient.

This resource expresses the need for a minute taker to be accurate and thorough in their role and can be used both as an introduction resource for new minute takers to help clarify their role and responsibilities and as a training aid to assist the understanding of existing staff.

It also uses and explains generic court hearing procedures that may function differently in your court. Check that the components correspond to how your courts operate and customise it to be specific to include any jurisdiction, procedure and local situations that are not covered here.

2. Video Interview of a minute taker

To obtain background information relevant to the Pacific courts, we hope to record an interview with resident expert, Salome Moala, a court clerk from Tonga with five years' experience as a minute taker.

You can listen and compare her experiences to your own and consider whether there are learnings that can be applied to your courts and shared with your staff.

3. Strategies for taking full minutes

During interviews with court takers and minute takers, they identified actions that they can take or things that would help make their jobs easier.

The strategies resource is a list of those things that they have shared that other minute takers might find useful.

Review the list to see which ones are appropriate for your situation and then share those with your staff.

4. Log Note templates

This resource should be used in conjunction with the components of a court hearing. Looking through the log notes, minute takers should see if they can identify the specific components and whether it should be transcribed. This will in turn lead them to identify what they should be taking a record of.

The template can also be adapted into a checklist for new minute takers to use, to provide direction about what to record in full or to minute.

5. Library of transcribed minutes

Transcripts of hearings have been typed back from actual manual minutes and English translations provided. The transcripts are deliberately incomplete, have defects as well as great examples of good minute taking.

The transcripts can be used as a training aid and shown to minute takers, allowing them to practice by asking them to identify what is good, what is missing and what else should be done.

At the moment, this training will need to be delivered by a competent experienced minute taker who can readily identify all those things but we have included a list of things to look for.

Over time, other examples can be added and a list what is good, what is missing and what else should be done could be developed to create a tailored standard that could be used in any future training.

6. Glossary of terms and abbreviations

One of the identified strategies for taking minutes quickly is to use abbreviations for commonly used terms and phrases.

We have compiled a list of terms and definitions and these can be added to depending on your jurisdiction, language and court situations.

It is also useful to help explain legal terms for a new minute taker so that they understand what is being referred to.

We have left it for the minute taker to set their own abbreviations – these may already be in place as acronyms and will also be dependent on their language and translations.

As a training aid, you could provide a list to any new minute taker and ask them to study the list and set up their own abbreviations. You could easily check their understanding and clarify any questions they may have.

7. Auto text

There are minute takers who can type faster than they can take long-hand minutes!

This resource is for minute takers who have good typing skills and can take minutes using a computer. It requires both speed and IT access to word processing that may not be available to everybody.

Auto text is still used in the New Zealand courts for efficient production of document templates and wording - like the use of macrons.

When auto text is set up and available, typing specific combinations of keystrokes will automatically be replaced or corrected to provide a pre-set text.

Given that court proceedings are generally uniform and follow the same sequence, the auto-text allow a minute taker to quickly set up minute templates and populate text.

We've provided a list of website links for suggested reading about this topic.