

Debating By-Law

BL-D-3



This By-law is designed to provide a comprehensive guide to debate at formal meetings of the Union. Provisions which also exist in the Rules (which take precedence, and cannot be altered by this By-law) are italicised.

This By-law applies to General and Annual General Meetings and meetings of Union Council (including meetings of Open Union Council).

You should read it in conjunction with Rule 2 (Decision Making).

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PROCEDURE IN MEETINGS

1. Debate: general

- 1.1 *The Chair shall ensure that meetings run smoothly and that the Rules are followed.* [s 7.1(d)]
- 1.2 The Chair shall ensure that every remark that is made is relevant to the motion (or amendment, as the case may be) under discussion.
- 1.3 A person may not speak more than once on a particular motion (or amendment), except where a proposer makes a summation.
- 1.4 The Chair shall not take part in debate on any matter (except if they step down from the chair to speak on a procedural motion (g) or (h)).
- 1.5 The Chair shall have the power to amend or suspend the Order of Business where they see fit.

2. Debate: order of debate

- 2.1 Every motion (other than a procedural motion) shall be debated as follows.
- 2.2 A proposer of a motion is required to attend and speak on that motion. If both proposers are absent, the motion shall not be debated.
- 2.3 The order of speeches on a debate shall be:
 - (a) a speech proposing the motion, which shall last no longer than three minutes,
 - (b) amendment debates (where necessary), as to which see section 3,
 - (c) a speech opposing the motion, which shall last no longer than three minutes,
 - (d) an open debate (basket debate) providing that there are an equal number of speakers supporting and opposing the motion, in which each speech shall last no longer than two minutes,
 - (e) a speech summarising the motion, which shall last no longer than one minute, and must not contain any information that has not been introduced by a previous speaker (but a proposer of the motion does not have to take this speech).
- 2.4 After the summation speech on the main motion, a vote on that motion shall be held immediately.

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- 2.5 Where an amendment substantially changes the content of a motion, the Chair may determine that the motion moves and becomes the property of the amender, who then acts as the proposer.

3. Amendments: order of debate

- 3.1 The Chair shall determine the order in which amendments shall be debated, taking into account the requirement that debate be balanced and fair where possible.
- 3.2 The submitter of an amendment is required to attend and speak on that amendment, and may, with the leave of the Meeting, move that another person speaks in their place. If the submitter is not present, the amendment shall not be debated.
- 3.3 The order of speeches on an amendment shall be:
- (a) a speech proposing the amendment, which shall last no longer than two minutes,
 - (b) a speech opposing the amendment, which shall last no longer than two minutes,
 - (c) an open debate (basket debate) providing that there are an equal number of speakers supporting and opposing the amendment, in which each speech shall last no longer than one minute,
 - (d) a speech summarising the amendment, which shall last no longer than one minute, and must not contain any information that has not been introduced by a previous speaker (but the submitter of the amendment does not have to take this speech).
- 3.4 After every amendment has been debated, the debate on the main motion, amended or otherwise, shall continue from the interruption.

4. Procedural motions: classes

- 4.1 The procedural motions are:
- (a) To give the current speaker an extension
 - (b) To take the proposal in specific parts
 - (c) To refer the question to another body or person
 - (d) To move to the vote
 - (e) To move to an informal discussion

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- (f) To withdraw the question
- (g) To challenge the Chair's ruling
- (h) To remove the Chair for a specified time during the meeting
- (i) That a non-member be allowed to contribute
- (j) That a particular person be excluded from the remainder of the meeting.

5. Procedural motions: debate

- 5.1 Any member may move a procedural motion.
- 5.2 Where a person wishes to move a procedural motion, they shall clearly state the type of the motion and give specific details (where applicable). There shall then be a speech against the motion, and the motion shall then be voted on. Each speech will last no longer than one minute.
- 5.3 Procedural motions shall be dealt with in the order in which they are moved, except where more than one motion is moved simultaneously, in which case they shall be dealt with in the order they are listed.
- 5.4 *The Chair shall step down when motions (g) or (h) are being considered, and may speak against them.* [s 7.3(a)]

6. Points that may be raised

- 6.1 Any Member may at any time raise a Point to the Chair, as follows:
 - (a) **Point of Order.** May be raised if it is believed that the relevant laws have been broken. The Chair will rule on the Point of Order and inform the speaker of their decision.
 - (b) **Point of Information.** May be raised during a speech to assist or challenge the speaker in their motion by providing additional supporting information or to contest, on factual grounds, a statement made during the speech.
 - (c) **Point of Clarification.** May be raised to request an explanation of a certain part of a speech, an explanation of jargon or to request an interpretation of the relevant laws by the Chair.
- 6.2 No person shall be under an obligation to deal with or respond to a Point if the Chair reasonably believes that to do so would constitute an abuse of the Meeting or would severely and disproportionately prejudice the interests of the majority.

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VOTING

7. Votes

- 7.1 The Chair shall decide whether to take each vote on a show of cards or with an electronic voting system.
- 7.2 Where a show of cards does not produce a clear majority, an electronic voting system (or if it is unavailable, a counted vote) shall be used.
- 7.3 The votes that may be given are "yes", "no" and "abstain".
- 7.4 *The Chair does not vote, except (in the case of an equality of votes) to use their casting vote.* [s 7.3(b)]

8. Results of votes

- 8.1 The result of every vote shall be announced in an audible form and displayed in a visual form as soon as is reasonably practicable after that vote.

CONDUCT DURING MEETINGS

9. Order during Meetings

- 9.1 *When the Chair is speaking, no other members may remain standing or speak.* [s 5.6(c)]
- 9.2 A person present at any Meeting who engages in conduct likely to prejudice the good order of that Meeting may be directed to discontinue such conduct by the Chair.
- 9.3 A person present at any Meeting who:
 - (a) engages in conduct that is grossly disorderly or grossly offensive,
 - (b) disregards the authority of the Chair, or
 - (c) persistently and wilfully obstructs the business of the Meeting;may be directed to leave the Meeting by the Chair.
- 9.4 If a person ignores a direction to leave a Meeting given under section 9.2, the Chair shall immediately put a motion to the Meeting (procedural motion (j)) that that person be excluded for the remainder of the Meeting.

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- 9.5 A Member who refuses to leave the Meeting following the passage of a motion made under section 9.3 commits a breach of good order and shall be dealt with under Rule 9 (Disciplinary Procedure).
- 9.6 In case of grave disorder arising during any Meeting, the Chair may suspend the Meeting for as long as they see fit.
- 9.7 A person who:
- (a) is directed to leave the Meeting under section 9.2, or
 - (b) in respect of whom it is resolved that they be excluded for the duration of a Meeting under section 9.3;
- shall immediately withdraw from the premises in which that Meeting is being held and shall not return until that Meeting is concluded.

10. Interpretation

- 10.1 In this By-law:
- (a) "Chair" means the Chair at the material time,
 - (b) "Meeting" means a General Meeting, Annual General Meeting, meeting of Union Council, or a meeting of Open Union Council,
 - (c) "the relevant laws" means the law of England and Wales, the Charter of the University and any statute, ordinance, standing order, rules or regulations made thereunder, and the Articles of Association, rules, by-laws and policies of the Union.