

Your handy Dandy Plain Language Guide to the UMSU Standing Orders and Students' Council FAQ

Here's your simple, plain language question and answer guide to the UMSU Standing Orders. Is it handy? Yes! Is it a replacement for reading the full Standing Orders? No. Heck NO. Please make sure you read and become familiar with the full [Standing Orders](#). This guide should help when you have a specific question or just need a quick reference – but it is not meant to substitute for the real deal.

1. WHAT ARE THE STANDING ORDERS FOR?

Q: How should all meetings of the Students' Council be conducted?

A: All meetings must follow the Standing Orders and comply with the UMSU Constitution.

Q: Do the Standing Orders apply to Committee meetings too?

A: Yes, the Standing Orders apply to Committee meetings as well.

Q: Do the same Standing Orders apply to Operations Sub-Committee meetings?

A: Yes, the Standing Orders also apply to Operations Sub-Committee (Op-Sub) meetings.

2. ATTENDANCE

Q: What happens if an Office Bearer or Students' Councillor misses meetings?

A: If they arrive later than 30 minutes into two regular (not special) meetings in a row or five in an academic year without leave granted by Council, they will be terminated from their position.

Q: What happens if a Committee member misses meetings?

A: If they miss three Committee meetings in a row without leave granted by the Committee, they will no longer be a member.

Q: Does a meeting that fails to reach quorum still count as a meeting?

A: Yes, even if a meeting doesn't have enough people to make decisions, it still counts as a meeting.

Q: Does taking leave affect the attendance rule?

A: No, taking leave doesn't breach the rule about attendance at consecutive meetings. For example, a Councillor who has been granted leave for two consecutive meetings has not broken the attendance rule.

However, a Councillor who has been absent without leave at one meeting, absent *with* leave at the next and then absent without leave on the third will still be deemed to have been absent on two consecutive occasions because of R2.4 which states that *a leave of absence does not disrupt a consecutive attendance requirement*. That is, the leave of absence does not break the chain.

Q: Do Office Bearers and Students' Councillors have to attend meetings in person?

A: Yes, they must attend in person unless they get permission from the General Secretary to attend via video for access and inclusion reasons. This rule doesn't apply to Committee meetings.

Q: Does sending a proxy count as attendance?

A: No, sending a proxy means they didn't attend so that will be counted as a missed meeting.

Q: What are the rules for attending via video link?

A: Attendees must have their camera on and be alone during the *in camera* (not public) parts of the meeting. If they can't do this, they will need to provide other proof of their identity. If they don't comply, their permission to attend via video link will be revoked.

3. REGULAR MEETINGS

Q: When do meetings need to start and end?

A: Meetings must start at the scheduled time as indicated in the notice of the meeting and providing there is a quorum. Unless adjourned, the meeting will run until all items on the agenda are addressed, or it loses quorum.

Q: How often must the Students' Council meet?

A: The Students' Council must meet at least once a month throughout the year.

Q: When must the General Secretary call a Students' Council meeting?

A: The General Secretary must call a regular meeting monthly, or if the Students' Council asks for one.

Q: When is the regular meeting schedule set?

A: The regular meeting schedule must be set at the first meeting of each semester.

Q: Do all Office Bearers and Students' Councillors need to sign an attendance sheet?

A: Yes, everyone attending must sign the attendance sheet which is provided at the beginning of the meeting. Anyone joining the meeting needs to sign it when they arrive/join.

Q: Where must meetings be held?

A: Meetings must be held on university grounds at locations that are accessible to students.

Q: Can a meeting be held at a different location than specified?

A: No, a meeting cannot be moved to a different location from the one given in the notice of the meeting *on the same day* as the meeting.

Q: What if a meeting is adjourned to a different day?

A: Any change to a different day must be notified to all Office Bearers and Students' Councillors.

Q: What is the Order of Business in a meeting?

A: The order of business must follow the agenda - but it can be changed by a simple majority vote.

Q: How long can meetings last without a break?

A: Meetings must take a 10-minute break after two hours unless decided otherwise.

Q: How should speaking order be handled to ensure women get a chance to speak?

A: If three male office bearers or Voting Council representatives have spoken in a row, the Chair must prioritise any woman who wishes to speak, if she hasn't already spoken in that debate.

4. NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETINGS

Q: Who is responsible for giving notice of meetings?

A: The General Secretary is responsible for giving notice of meetings.

Q: When must the General Secretary issue the notice for a regular meeting?

A: The General Secretary must issue the notice at least four *academic* days **before** the meeting. That means for example, for a meeting to be held at 12pm on Friday, 5 December, the General Secretary issues the notice by Sunday 1 December. If the meeting is to be held at 2pm on Thursday 16 January, the notice needs to go out no later than the previous Thursday to ensure *at least four* clear academic days.

Q: How is notice of a Students' Council meeting given?

A: Notice must be given to each Office Bearer and Students' Councillor via email (if an email address was provided) and by posting it in the relevant place on the UMSU website.

5. SPECIAL MEETINGS

Q: What are special meetings?

A: Special meetings are held outside the regular schedule set at the start of each semester.

Q: When must a special meeting be held?

A: A special meeting must be held if directed by the Students' Council or if at least four Voting Councillors request it in writing or by email.

Q: What must be included in a request for a special meeting?

A: The request must include the specific items of business for the meeting.

Q: How are special meetings conducted?

A: Special meetings are conducted like regular meetings with two exceptions: the usual reporting schedule is suspended, and only the items in the request for the special meeting can be on the agenda. That means, there won't be OB Reports or a CEO report – only the items of business which were included in the request for the special meeting. There are no motions without notice or anything else in a special meeting.

6. NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETINGS

Q: When must the General Secretary issue the notice for a special Students' Council meeting?

A: The notice must be issued by the end of the second day after receiving the direction or requests for the meeting, unless more than half of the Voting Councillors agree that it should be held with less notice.

Q: How should the notice be given for a special meeting?

A: The notice must be given to each Office Bearer and Students' Councillor by email (if they provided an email address) and by posting it on the UMSU website.

7. QUORUM

Q: What is the quorum for a Students' Council meeting?

A: A majority of voting Councillors must be present *in person*. That means if there are no vacancies, there must be *at least* 12 voting councillors in attendance in person to make quorum.

Q: Can a proxy be counted towards quorum?

A: Yes, if they are not a Councillor or Office Bearer and, if relevant, they must belong to the same Restricted Constituency.

Q: What happens if there's no quorum within 30 minutes of the start time?

A: The meeting will lapse.

Q: What happens to the business on the agenda if the meeting lapses?

A: It must be included on the agenda of the next meeting and takes precedence over new business.

Q: What happens if a meeting loses quorum after it has started?

A: The meeting can continue for up to 30 minutes, but any decisions made once quorum has been lost must be ratified once the meeting becomes quorate again, or by a later quorate meeting. If quorum is not regained within 30 minutes, the meeting lapses.

8. AGENDA

Q: Who is responsible for the agenda?

A: The General Secretary is responsible for the agenda.

Q: What must each regular Students' Council meeting consider?

A: Each meeting must consider the items of business and follow the order of business set out in Appendix 1 of the Standing Orders.

Q: When must the agenda and documentation for a regular meeting be circulated?

A: They must be circulated at least two academic days before the meeting. That means for a meeting to be held on Friday 13 December, notice should go out on Tuesday 10 December.

In some cases, there are longer notice requirements for particular documents. For example, proposed changes to UMSU Regulations need to be circulated with at least 14 days notice. For changes to UMSU Policy, the proposed amendments or policies need to be circulated at least 4 days before the meeting.

Q: Does the agenda need to include an acknowledgement of country?

A: Yes, it must include an acknowledgement of country in the form set out in the appendix of the Standing Orders.

9. THE CHAIR

Q: How is the Chair chosen?

A: The General Secretary opens nominations for Chair at the start of each meeting. The Chair is elected by a simple majority vote. If there's a tie, the Chair is chosen by lot - that means by some random method, such as flipping a coin or drawing a name out of a hat or any random method of selection to ensure an impartial decision where votes are evenly split.

Q: What are the Chair's responsibilities?

A: The Chair keeps the meeting in order and doesn't join debates unless they cede the chair (step down from their role) prior to the start of that debate. They do not have a vote unless they are also a voting Councillor, and then they do not have a casting vote, but they can impose certain procedural motions without a vote.

Importantly, when the Chair speaks, everyone else must be silent unless raising a [point of order](#).

Q: What authority does the Chair have?

A: The Chair has very broad powers in a meeting. They must follow the Constitution and Regulations where they apply, but otherwise they can rule on procedural matters not covered by the Constitution or Regulations. The Chair also has the authority to interpret Standing Orders, subject to appeal via a motion of dissent (see rule 15 [below](#)).

Q: What are the rules about who can be the Chair?

A: Every second meeting, the Chair must be a woman, unless no woman is willing to chair the meeting.

Q: What happens if someone disrupts the meeting?

A: The Chair can name any person disrupting the meeting, which goes on record in the minutes. If someone is named three times, they must leave the meeting unless the Chair withdraws the naming. A named voting Councillor can proxy their vote before leaving.

Q: What if I disagree with the way the meeting was chaired or a decision of the Chair?

A: There is provision to move a motion of dissent (see [below](#)), or no confidence in the Chair (see [below](#)). However, yelling at the Chair will most likely result in the attendee being named – so never an appropriate method of disagreeing.

10. REPORTS

Q: Who must report in writing to each regular Students' Council meeting?

A: The following Officer Bearers must report to each regular meeting:

- President
- General Secretary
- Activities Officer(s)
- Clubs and Societies Officer(s)
- Creative Arts Officer(s)
- Disabilities Officer(s)
- Education (Academic Affairs) Officer(s)
- Education (Public Affairs) Officer(s)
- Environment Officer(s)
- Indigenous Officer(s)
- Media Officer(s)
- People of Colour Officer(s)
- Queer Officer(s)
- Welfare Officer(s)
- Women's Officer(s)
- UMSU International President
- UMSU International Vice President
- Burnley Campus Co-ordinator
- Southbank Campus Co-ordinator

Q: What if there's more than one OB?

A: If there's more than one OB, each must provide a separate report.

Q: Who else must provide written reports at each meeting?

A: Written reports must also come from:

- Operations Sub-Committee (via the General Secretary)
- Any sub-committee formed by Students' Council
- Any sub-committee or person with delegated power from the Students' Council
- The Chief Executive Officer

Q: What happens if reports are not submitted in writing?

A: They will not be considered.

Q: When must reports be submitted to be included at a meeting?

A: Reports must be presented to the General Secretary and made available to Office Bearers and Voting Council Representatives at least **two academic days** before the meeting – so with the agenda and any other papers.

Q: How can reports and any recommendations in them be handled at the meeting?

A: They can be discussed, received, adopted, rejected, or referred back.

Q: Can a report submitted late be considered?

A: No, late reports must not be considered by the meeting.

11. MOTIONS:

Q: What are Motions on Notice?

A: Motions submitted to the General Secretary by the deadline specified in the notice of the meeting.

Q: What are Motions without Notice?

A: Motions submitted after the deadline. They are included in the agenda only if the General Secretary decides they are urgent and can't be dealt with by the Operations Sub-Committee and can't be deferred to the next regular meeting. Otherwise, they become Motions on Notice for the next regular meeting.

Q: How must all decisions of Students' Council be made?

A: All decisions must be in the form of motions and must be affirmative in nature.

Q: How should motions be presented?

A: All motions must be written in the form set out in Appendix 2 of the Standing Orders and provided to the Chair before the mover can speak to it.

Q: Do motions need a seconder?

A: Yes, all motions must have a mover and a seconder (unless they are [procedural motions](#)). The Chair can move a procedural motion without a seconder or a vote, but all financial or otherwise contentious motions must be seconded. A motion can be deemed contentious by any Office Bearer or Voting Council Representative, and where this is the case, the Chair must require a seconder for the motion. The Chair cannot themselves second any motion while presiding as Chair.

Q: Can the General Secretary and/or Chair reject motions?

A: Yes, they can rule out any motion that is disrespectfully worded, restates a previously adopted resolution, is inconsistent with the Constitution or Regulations, or is otherwise out of order. An example of an 'out of order' motion would be one that exposes UMSU to risk or is against the best interests of UMSU. Prior to a meeting, it is the General Secretary's responsibility, during a meeting it falls to the Chair.

The Chair can also refuse to recognise unwritten motions (see [above](#)).

Attendees who disagree with the Chair's ruling can move a [motion of dissent](#).

Q: Can movers or seconders withdraw their support?

A: Yes, they can withdraw their support at any stage before Council votes. The seconder has the option to move the motion as originally proposed if the mover withdraws.

Q: What if both mover and seconder withdraw?

A: The Chair must ask if anyone else wants to take up the motion if both withdraw. All withdrawals must be recorded in the minutes.

Q: What are foreshadowed motions?

A: A motion which has been put together during debate can be foreshadowed at any time and then at the end of debate, those motions must be considered in the order they were foreshadowed during debate.

Q: But what does ‘foreshadowed’ mean?

In this context, “foreshadowed” means motions that are suggested or proposed during a debate but are intended to be discussed or voted on at the end of the debate. It’s basically giving a heads-up about a motion that will come up after the current discussion.

Q: Can the Chair require amendments to motions?

A: Yes, the Chair can ask the mover to reword the motion if it is constructed with poor grammar, is ambiguous/confusing or otherwise hard to understand, or if it’s not in the correct form as set out in the appendix to the Standing Orders.

The Chair can rule a motion out of order if it is unconstitutional or poses a potential risk to UMSU.

Q: What must the Chair do before putting a motion for vote?

A: The Chair needs to read it out or have someone else read aloud the motion to the meeting. They must also read motions, amendments, or foreshadowed amendments if reasonably requested, unless a speaker has the floor, in which case they should do so once they have finished.

Q: What if I want to change the motion as put by the mover - can a mover accept an amendment?

A: Yes, and if they are amenable then it becomes part of the motion. See more under [Amendments](#) below.

RESCISSION OF MOTIONS

Q: What does it mean to ‘rescind’ a Students’ Council resolution?

A: To rescind a resolution means to officially cancel or reverse a decision that was previously made by the Students’ Council. It’s like saying, “We take back our earlier decision.” The Council votes again to undo the original resolution.

Q: What is required to rescind a Students' Council resolution?

A: The same majority needed to pass the *original* motion is required to rescind it. For example, if the original motion required a supermajority, then a supermajority is also required to rescind that resolution. If it was passed by a simple majority, then a simple majority can rescind it.

Q: OK – but what is a supermajority?

A: A supermajority is a higher threshold of votes required to approve a motion. Instead of a simple majority (more than half), a supermajority under the UMSU Constitution would be two-thirds. It's used for more significant decisions where broader consensus is needed.

Q: What must be done if a rescission motion is made?

A: It must be recorded in the minutes.

Q: Can a rescission motion be moved again if it is lost?

A: Yes, it can be moved again at a later meeting.

AMENDMENTS

Q: When can an amendment be made?

A: An amendment can be made any time before the original motion's mover exercises their right of reply.

Q: What do you mean 'right of reply'?

A: The 'right of reply' is the opportunity given to the person who proposed a motion to respond to the debate or discussion about their motion before a final vote is taken. It's like having the last word on the topic to address any points raised and reinforce their argument.

Q: How must amendments be presented?

A: Amendments must be written in the form set out in Appendix 2 of the Standing Orders and given to the Chair before being discussed, unless the meeting gives permission otherwise.

Q: Can the Chair rule out amendments?

A: Yes, the Chair can rule out amendments that are disrespectful, restate a previous resolution, are inconsistent with the Constitution or other UMSU Regulations, or are otherwise considered out of order.

Q: But what would make them 'out of order'?

A: "Out of order" refers to a judgement by the Chair that the motion doesn't follow the Constitution or Standing Orders or other UMSU Regulations, but it can also mean the Chair has judged the motion to be inappropriate because it poses a risk to UMSU or is not in UMSU's best interests.

Q: What should discussions focus on when an amendment is presented?

A: Discussions should be confined to the amendment and not go off on tangents into other issues.

Q: How are foreshadowed amendments handled?

A: They must be considered in the order they were foreshadowed at the end of the debate.

PROCEDURAL MOTIONS

Q: What is a procedural motion?

A: A motion that relates to **how** meetings are run is a procedural motion - so, things like controlling the flow of formal debate by limiting or extending speaking time, extending the duration of the meeting, adjourning the meeting, switching from Committee Debate to Formal Debate, or vice versa, suspending the Standing Orders, revoking a person's speaking or attendance rights, and generally any other rulings of the Chair, [points of order](#), adding items to the agenda etc.

Q: When can a procedural motion be moved?

A: Anytime during a meeting by a member *who hasn't already spoken on the current agenda item*.

Q: Does a procedural motion need a seconder?

A: No, it only needs a mover.

Q: How are procedural motions voted on?

A: They must be voted on immediately without amendment or debate.

Q: What majority is needed for a procedural motion?

A: It requires a simple majority of Voting Council Representatives – except for a vote to [suspend the Standing Orders](#) – which needs a two-thirds majority to pass.

Q: Can members abstain from voting on procedural motions?

A: No, *everyone* must vote either for or against.

Q: Can the same procedural motion be moved again if it fails?

A: No, it cannot be moved again during the discussion of the *current agenda item*.

Q: Can the Chair impose a procedural motion without a vote?

A: Yes, the Chair can do this on their own without going to a vote.

Q: What is a point of order?

A: It's a point raised to address irregularities in the meeting process and takes precedence over other business. Basically, it's when someone raises a concern or correction about how the meeting is being conducted. It's like waving a flag to say, *'Hey, something isn't right according to the rules, and we need to address it.'* It takes priority over other business to ensure the meeting stays on track and follows proper procedures.

For example, it might be pointing out that the meeting isn't following the standing orders, but it could also be a situation where for example, if everyone is talking at once, an attendee may raise a point of order that this is making the meeting inaccessible for them.

Importantly, a point of order must be raised at the time the alleged irregularity occurred, not sometime later in the meeting. You also can't use a point of order to simply explain or contradict something someone else has said.

Q: What can a member do if they disagree with the Chair's ruling on a point of order?

A: They can move [dissent](#) in the Chair.

DISSENT MOTIONS

Q: How can a ruling by the Chair be challenged?

A: Move a motion to dissent from the Chair's ruling. The Chair steps down, and the General Secretary, President, or another Office Bearer takes over for the debate and vote.

Q: What happens after a motion of dissent is moved?

A: The Chair steps down. The mover must propose an alternative ruling, and the Chair whose ruling has been challenged may reply, the motion is then voted on. If carried, the alternative ruling takes effect. If lost, the Chair's ruling stands. The Chair can then resume their role as Chair.

NO CONFIDENCE MOTIONS

Q: What is a no confidence motion?

A: It's a motion that states the Chair does not have the confidence of the meeting. That is, that Councillors believe the chairing of the meeting is not being done appropriately for some reason or reasons.

Q: What happens when a no confidence motion is moved?

A: The Chair must step down and a new Chair appointed for the debate. If the Chair is not the General Secretary, then the General Secretary takes over the Chair, otherwise the President will, and if the President is not in attendance, then another Office Bearer elected by Council must Chair. The motion is debated and voted on. If carried, a new Chair is elected. If lost, the previous Chair resumes their role.

12. TYPES OF DEBATE:

COMMITTEE DEBATE

Q: What is Committee Debate?

A: It is the default form of debate during meetings – that is, meetings are held in Committee Debate unless decided otherwise.

During Committee Debate, discussions are confined to agenda items, the Chair controls the meeting, speakers talk for up to five minutes and can speak more than once, and multiple propositions can be considered.

FORMAL DEBATE

Q: How does Formal Debate work?

A: At any time, the Chair or Council may decide to move into formal debate, by way of a [procedural motion](#). Formal debate is confined to motions or amendments which *have already been moved and seconded*.

Importantly, in Formal Debate, speakers address the Chair, have fixed time limits, and can only speak once unless they are making a personal explanation or have permission of the Chair.

Q: How do speakers “address the Chair”?

A: Speakers may only speak when called upon by the Chair. That is, there’s no interaction with other Councillors or meeting attendees during formal debate.

Q: What are the time limits for the mover and other speakers?

A: The mover gets *six minutes* to present their argument and *three minutes* to reply after all others have spoken. The seconder and all other speakers have *three minutes* each.

Q: Can speakers speak more than once on a motion or amendment?

A: No, unless it’s for personal explanation, with permission from the Chair, or to exercise their right of reply at the very end.

Q: How is discussion on amendments handled?

A: Discussion is confined to the amendment currently before the Chair. No other amendments can be discussed until the current one is dealt with.

Q: How should speakers alternate in debate?

A: Speakers must alternate between for and against the motion. If there are no more speakers for one side, the other side also cannot speak. That means, speakers need to go on the speaking list by both putting their name and whether they are for or against the motion. The Chair will then alternate through the speaking list, alternating between for and against speakers until there is no opposing speaker – so once the speaking list has only speakers for (or only speakers against) the motion, the debate ceases and will go to a vote.

Q: Can speakers ask questions during debate?

A: Yes, they can ask for clarification from the mover or seconder via the Chair.

Q: What other rules apply to Formal Debate?

A: Other than as above, it follows the same rules as [Committee Debate](#).

13. VOTING:

Q: How many votes does each voting Councillor have?

A: Each voting Councillor has one vote.

Q: What majority is needed for decisions at Council meetings?

A: A simple majority, unless otherwise specified (such as for approving Regulations which require a supermajority).

Q: Can motions be carried without a vote?

A: Yes, if there is no dissent. If there is dissent, a motion must be put to a vote. In practice pretty much all motions will be put to a vote because it is difficult to know if there is any dissent without voting. The only exception is a procedural motion which the Chair can impose without a vote.

Q: What happens in the event of a tied vote?

A: If there is an even split of votes for and against, the motion fails, and the status quo remains.

Q: Can a dissenting representative request their dissent be recorded?

A: Yes, immediately after the result is declared a voting Councillor who voted against the motion can request their dissent is minuted.

Q: Can the vote be taken by secret ballot?

A: Yes, the Chair may direct a secret ballot if requested by two Voting Councillor, but it is in their discretion to refuse. The General Secretary acts as the returning officer, and all voting Councillors must record their vote in a way that can be counted by the General Secretary, or in the case of voting Councillors who are attending via video link, they may privately message the General Secretary with their vote.

Q: How is voting usually conducted?

A: By a show of hands, unless another form is specified by the Chair or a [secret ballot](#) is requested.

Q: How does the Chair determine the result?

A: By asking for those in favour, against, and abstaining.

Q: Can a recount be requested?

A: Yes, by a *third of those voting*. The result of the recount is final.

Q: What happens during a recount?

A: Access to the meeting is closed, and only those who participated in the original count can participate in the recount.

PROXIES

Q: Can a representative appoint a proxy?

A: Yes, they can appoint another representative as their proxy (under certain conditions) and must submit it in writing.

Q: What conditions are there for appointing a proxy?

A: It must be another voting Councillor, but only if they don't already hold another proxy (unless they are the Chair).

Q: Can I give my proxy specific instructions?

A: Yes, you can specify directions or limitations for your proxy. That way you can make sure they deal with agenda items in the way you would like.

Q: Can I appoint a proxy for multiple meetings?

A: Only if you have been granted leave of absence by the Students' Council.

Q: How many people can I appoint as proxies?

A: Up to four, with an order of priority specified.

Q: Does my proxy need to be from a specific group?

A: If you're from a Restricted Constituency, your proxy must also be a member of that constituency, but otherwise they do not need to be from the same ticket or any other specific group.

Q: When should I submit my proxy?

A: At least *one hour* before the meeting, *in writing* to the General Secretary.

Q: Can I submit a proxy late?

A: Only if the Students' Council passes an ordinary resolution to accept it.

Q: Can I appoint a proxy if I leave during a meeting?

A: Yes, with the Chair's approval and written details.

Q: Can my proxy appoint another proxy?

A: No, a proxy cannot appoint another proxy. If your proxy needs to leave the meeting, then that is the end of that.

OBSERVERS

Q: Can observers speak at meetings?

A: University student observers have full speaking, moving and seconding rights. Staff and other observers may be granted limited speaking rights at the discretion of the Chair or Council itself. Generally, anyone who wants to speak during [Committee Debate](#) should put themselves on the speaking list and wait to be recognised by the Chair.

14. SUB-COMMITTEES

Q: Can the Students' Council form sub-committees?

A: Yes, with a motion stating their terms and powers. Sub-committees exist until the next regular meeting when powers may be renewed – that is – there is no standing delegation. If the delegation is not renewed, then it lapses. All sub-committees must report decisions to the next regular Council meeting.

15. DELEGATIONS

Q: Can the Students' Council delegate its powers?

A: Yes, some, but not all of its powers can be delegated. Delegations must be in the form of a motion and reported to the next regular meeting. However, sub-committees cannot delegate their powers.

16. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Q: How can leave of absence be granted?

A: By resolution of the Students' Council.

Q: Can leave be granted retrospectively?

A: Yes, but only if there's documented evidence of the circumstances which caused the application not to be timely and as long as the person wasn't already absent without leave from two consecutive meetings or five occasions within a year. An example of these circumstances would be where someone was too unwell or incapacitated so it was not reasonable to expect them to apply for leave in advance.

Q: How much leave can be granted?

A: No more than three months in a calendar year, unless there are exceptional or special circumstances.

Q: What if a Council member has a disability?

A: They can apply for leave in advance if they know that their disability will require leave, or retrospectively if they meet the criteria for retrospective leave (above). If they have a permanent disability, they can apply for leave for the balance of their term.

UMSU must make reasonable accommodations where requested so that everyone can attend and participate in Council meetings, but also to ensure that no one is disadvantaged if they have legitimate reasons for not attending.

17. MINUTES

Q: Who is responsible for minutes?

A: The General Secretary is responsible for ensuring minutes are taken, the minutes are subsequently confirmed and that they are posted to the UMSU website in a timely way.

Q: What must minutes include?

A: Details of the meeting, attendance, proceedings, elections, and motions.

Q: When must minutes be available to students?

A: Unconfirmed minutes must be available as soon as possible after a meeting and the confirmed minutes as soon as possible after confirmation by the next meeting.

18. STANDING ORDERS

Q: How can Standing Orders be made or altered?

A: new Standing orders can be made, or existing ones amended by a two-thirds majority vote of Council after 14 days' notice of the proposed changes.

Q: Can Standing Orders be suspended and what does that mean?

A: Yes, the Standing Orders can be suspended during a meeting with a two-thirds majority vote. Suspending standing orders allows the business of the meeting to be carried out in a way which would not otherwise be allowed by the Standing Orders. For example, by suspending the Standing Orders (and moving a procedural motion), extra speaking time could be granted above the time allowed under the Standing Orders, or certain motions can be considered *en bloc*, or the order of the agenda can be changed.

19. DEFINITIONS

Q: What do words or expressions mean in these Standing Orders?

A: They have the same meaning as in the UMSU Constitution unless the specific context requires otherwise.

Q: What happens if these Standing Orders are inconsistent with the Constitution?

A: The Constitution prevails.

20. STUDENTS' COUNCIL FAQ

A curated selection of other frequently asked questions for your edification.

Q: Can the General Secretary decline motions put forward, and if so, how/ on what basis?

A: The new version of the standing orders has clarified that the General Secretary, in putting together the agenda for Students' Council meetings, can rule motions out and refuse to put them on the agenda under certain circumstances.

See [Motions](#) above, and especially [Motions without Notice](#) and [rejecting motions](#).

Q: There's nothing in the current standing orders that says a motion without notice can be refused. On what basis can a motion without notice be refused?

A: Where standing orders are silent (don't say how something must be done) then the General Secretary has broad discretion to decide what goes into an agenda. The role of the General Secretary is to ensure Students' Council runs in a way that conforms with the UMSU Constitution and Regulations. The General Secretary must, as do all members of Council, fulfil their duty to put the interests of the organisation first, and in a way that is consistent with the requirements of the UMSU Constitution.

Q: So there doesn't have to be express powers for the Chair or the General Secretary to do something?

A: While it's always best for clarity that the Standing Orders expressly set out the powers of the chair and General Secretary, it is impossible to include every potential decision. Accordingly, the overarching requirement is for the Chair and General Secretary to comply with the UMSU Constitution and satisfy their [fiduciary duties](#).

Q: If I submit a motion by the required time but the General Secretary says it is out of order, can't I just amend it and resubmit?

A: Yes, the General Secretary should provide reasons for ruling it out of order and allow you to resubmit a motion which complies with the Constitution and Standing Orders.

Q: Can they refuse to accept it if I amend as advised?

A: Not unless it still fails to comply with the UMSU Constitution and/or Standing Orders. If it is resubmitted after the cut off for motions on notice, and it is not deemed an urgent motion it should be accepted but deferred to the next meeting

Q: Why can't I just then amend it and put it forward as a motion without notice?

A: Unless the amended motion is urgent and cannot be deferred, it will not be considered a motion without notice by the Chair.

Q: What is the big deal about Students' Council considering non-urgent matters as motions without notice?

A: There is a good reason for the requirement to give notice of motions to Students' Council. Students' Council has a number of [legal duties](#) which all Councillors must meet, including the duty to act in good faith and for a proper purpose, the duty to act with reasonable care, skill and diligence, and the duty to disclose and manage conflicts of interest. If Councillors do not have adequate notice of motions they will need to make decisions about, it can make it difficult or impossible to satisfy these duties.

For that reason, only very urgent matters which can still be properly considered by Councillors should be accepted as motions without notice.

Q: As an Office Bearer, if my Committee refuses to pass a financial motion, can I take it to Students' Council?

A: No. Under the UMSU Financial Regulations (R6), the Committee governing a student department is the only body who can authorise expenditure.

The Constitution also makes it clear (C17.1(h)) that while Students' Council can subsequently alter the UMSU budget, it can't alter the *allocations within a Committee's budget, nor direct a Committee to do so*, except in the resolution of an appeal (see [below](#)).

It's different for departments which do not have a Committee, in that situation, expenditure must be authorised by Students' Council or the Operations Sub-committee (depending on the amount).

Q: What about the Operations Sub-committee (Op Sub) – can they overrule the Committee decision?

A: No, under the Constitution (C16.9), Op Sub can only authorise a student department's expenditure under two circumstances:

- Where there is an express delegation from the Committee that sets out the guidelines to the Op Sub specifying limits to expenditure and budget lines from which expenditure may be authorised; or
- If the Committee is vacant and the Office Bearer requests it.

Q: So, a Committee can basically make whatever decision it likes about expenditure?

A: No, Committees can only authorise expenditure:

- within the budget allocated to that department by Council during the budget process,
- relating to its area of activity (e.g. Welfare can only spend on activities within the terms of reference of the Welfare department), and
- which is not otherwise unallowed under the Constitution, Financial Regulations, Funding Agreement with the University, or the Higher Education Support Act (HESA).

Q: But I disagree with the Committee's decision – can't I do anything?

A: Yes! The Constitution provides for a process to appeal Committee decisions (C15.1). There is a window of time after the Committee posts notice of a budgetary decision or a decision to spend money on the website (either 14 days or 5 academic days – whichever is shorter) and in that window the decision can be appealed to Students' Council.

However, an appeal requires either three voting representatives of the Committee which made the original decision, or four voting representatives of *any other Committee*, or thirty Students to lodge the appeal with the General Secretary. Provided these conditions are met, then Council must make a decision about the appeal at or before its next regular meeting – while the appeal is undecided, the decision is on-hold.

Q. Can someone move a motion in Council to compel an individual Councillor (such as the President) or anyone else to do something?

A: Yes and No.

Council does have the power to direct certain individuals to do things. Those powers are expressly contained in the Constitution.

Q: What ARE Council's powers to direct individuals?

A: Under the Constitution:

- Council can direct the General secretary to hold a General Meeting
- All directions of the Students' Council in relation to UMSU Staff Members must be transmitted to the Chief Executive Officer for implementation.
- Office Bearers and Councillors are accountable to and subject to direction by the Students' Council in their roles as Office Bearers and Councillors – but are not able to be directed by Council outside of those responsibilities.

For example, Council cannot direct an individual to do a somersault, jump off a cliff or participate in any activity they are not comfortable with as an individual. Elimination of hazing, bullying and harassment and UMSU's commitment to ensuring a safe environment is paramount.