

Bye-Law 5 - Conference of Common Rooms



FUNCTIONS

- 5.1 Conference of Common Rooms recognises the representative legitimacy of common room representatives as the primary representatives of their respective common rooms within their respective colleges.
- 5.2 The Conference of Common Rooms is a forum for common rooms to deal with matters of shared interest and common purpose, and the primary democratic mechanism for student voice across the collegiate university.
- 5.3 Conference shall provide a democratic space to:
 - 5.3.1 Build a collective voice between the Officers of the Students' Union (as defined in Bye-Law 3) and the representative bodies of individual common rooms
 - 5.3.2 Gather the views of students and determine positions deemed to be representative of wider students at the University of Oxford
 - 5.3.3 Provide student-led direction for the Students' Union work
 - 5.3.4 Discuss, consult and receive reports on the representative work of the Officers of the Students' Union (as defined by Bye-Law 3) and the wider Trustee Board

MEMBERSHIP

- 5.4 The members of Conference of Common Rooms shall be each common room with Junior/Student Members of the University of Oxford.
- 5.5 The voting membership of the Conference of Common Rooms shall consist of:
 - 5.5.1 One Conference member nominated by each of the common rooms operating at each College, Society and Permanent Private Hall (by their meaning and definition by University Statute V) of the University of Oxford.
 - 5.5.2 Each common room shall nominate their President to represent the Conference member by default but may delegate voting rights to a proxy Common Room committee member by notifying the Chair of Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.6 Any student may attend, observe and speak at a meeting of Conference of Common Rooms but may not vote except in all student votes, which shall take place electronically outside of the Conference of Common Rooms.

POSTHOLDERS

- 5.7 The meeting shall be Chaired by a Sabbatical Officer Trustee.
- 5.8 There shall be an MCR Deputy Chair and JCR Deputy Chair elected from within the Conference of Common Rooms. They shall serve for three terms, or until they vacate the position.
- 5.9 The Postholders shall be responsible for chairing the meetings of Conference of Common Rooms and ensuring that decisions are taken in line with these Bye-Laws.
- 5.10 A Deputy Chair may act on behalf of the Chair in their absence.
- 5.11 The Deputy Chairs' Common Rooms may be represented at Conference by an alternative Common Room committee member mandated to speak on behalf of the Common Room.

OFFICERS OF THE STUDENTS' UNION



- 5.12 Officers of the Students' Union (as defined in Bye-Law 3) shall not be voting members of Conference of Common Rooms but shall be in attendance as executive members.
- 5.13 Each Officer shall provide a report to each meeting in relation to matters arising and any Conference Mandates.
- 5.14 Officers of the Students' Union may submit agenda items and motions subject to the normal process as outlined in Bye-Law 5.29 below.

MEETINGS

- 5.15 Conference shall meet twice a term; the dates for each academic year shall be decided by the prior Trinity meeting but will normally be Week 3 and Week 7.
- 5.16 The dates of the meeting shall allow for Conference members to consult with their respective constituents before any vote or decision is made should this be requested.
- 5.17 Oxford SU shall provide staff resource and support for the meeting of Conference of Common Rooms including minute taking and providing advice and guidance on decision-making and adherence to the Bye-Laws and Articles of Association.
- 5.18 Oxford SU shall ensure that meeting minutes are published on the Oxford SU website and shall include a record of Conference member votes.
- 5.19 An extraordinary meeting of Conference may be called at the discretion of the Chair if a request is received, in writing, by five Conference of Common Rooms members or Officers of the Students' Union.
- 5.20 The date of any meeting must be published to all students with at least 7 days' notice.

DECISION MAKING

- 5.21 When making decisions, the Conference of Common Rooms may make any of the following types of decision:
- 5.22 **Conference Policy** – Setting a position which should be deemed to be representative of students, but which does not require any specific action to be taken. Such a decision shall require consensus.
 - 5.24.1 Conference Policy may include a matter of policy but may not include the attribution of Students' Union resources towards that position.
 - 5.24.2 All Officers of the Students' Union shall be expected to respect conference policy once passed at conference until it lapses or is succeeded or repealed.
 - 5.24.3 Consensus shall be achieved by amending motions until such a time as all conference members vote in favour of the motion. If a simple majority of conference members vote against the motion, it shall be dropped without amendment.
- 5.23 **Conference Mandate** – A decision which **directs** the Students' Union and its Officers to take a specific action. Such a decision shall require a simple majority vote.
 - 5.25.1 Conference Mandate may request the use of SU resources, both financial and otherwise, towards a particular action. As such, a Conference Mandate must relate only relate to issues which relate to students as students.



- 5.24 **Accountability Actions** – There will be two types of Accountability Action: a motion of censure or a motion of no confidence.
- 5.26.1 A motion of censure is similar to a warning, and may be passed in relation to any Officer of the Students' Union, or in any of the Postholders of Conference of Common Rooms. Such a motion shall be submitted in accordance with Bye-Law 5.29 and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.26.2 A motion of no confidence may be passed in any Postholder of the Conference of Common Rooms. Such a motion shall be submitted in accordance with Bye-Law 5.29 and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.26.3 A vote of no confidence in Officers of the Students' Union shall require a referendum. Such a referendum can be triggered in accordance with Bye-Law 4. Such a motion shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.25 Each Conference member shall have one vote.
- 5.26 Quoracy shall be 50% of all Conference members; Conference members who choose to abstain from votes shall be counted towards quorum, but their vote will be considered neutral.
- 5.27 All Conference members shall be expected to vote in line with mandates received by their constituent Common Room members; for this reason, individual Conference member votes shall be made public.
- 5.28 Any decision taken by Conference of Common Rooms shall normally be considered to have lapsed after three years or where it is superseded by an alternative decision.

SUBMISSION OF MOTIONS

- 5.29 Motions must have either been passed at a Common Room or Representative Committee (RepCom) meeting prior to submission to Conference of Common Rooms or must be proposed and seconded by 4 other members of Conference of Common Rooms or Officers of the Students' Union.
- 5.30 Officers of the Students' Union may submit motions, but these must be proposed and seconded by other 2 members of Conference of Common Rooms or other Officers of the Students' Union.
- 5.5.1 Motions must be submitted with 10 working days' notice of any meeting and on the required form which must include an Equality Impact Assessment including evidence that relevant Part-Time Officers and/or RepComs have been consulted prior to submission (see Bye-Law 6).
- 5.31 Motions & agendas shall normally be published five working days ahead of the Conference of Common Rooms meeting.

ROLE OF OXFORD SU TRUSTEE BOARD

- 5.32 These Bye-Laws recognise the role of the Trustee Board as outlined in Bye-Law 2. Whilst the Board has a legal duty to oversee governance and finances, it does not seek to override student democracy. Instead, the Board supports, implements, and safeguards decisions



made through democratic processes, ensuring they are legally sound, financially sustainable, and in the best interests of all students.

- 5.33 For any motion proposed, Oxford SU shall provide a risk assessment including an assessment of any financial, legal or reputational risks on behalf of the Oxford SU Trustee Board. This shall normally be provided within five working days of the motion being submitted, however the Trustee Board may extend this timeline where necessary.
- 5.34 In cases where decisions or discussions may present legal, financial, or operational risks, the Board will work collaboratively and transparently with Conference of Common Rooms to find solutions that balance student interests, manage risks, and protect Oxford SU's long-term stability. Where a collaborative resolution is not forthcoming, members of the Trustee Board shall be invited to attend Conference of Common Rooms and discuss the resulting decision openly and transparently.
- 5.35 Rules around the role of employees are described in Bye-Law 2 and should be adhered to at all times in Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.36 The last meeting in Trinity Term shall be an Annual General Meeting of Student Members of Oxford SU. All Student and Sabbatical Trustees and Trustee-elects shall be in attendance. Trustees shall provide a report on behalf of the Trustee Board including (but not limited to) information about the Students' Union's finances.

RULES OF DEBATE

- 5.37 The Chair shall ask the proposer of the motion to present their motion.
- 5.38 The Chair shall invite any other Conference member or Officer of the Students' Union to speak against the motion. Non-members shall be invited to speak at the Chair's discretion.
- 5.39 The Chair may continue to allow speakers for and against the motion, ensuring an equal and balanced debate.
- 5.40 Each motion shall have a maximum of 30 minutes allotted time.
- 5.41 Votes relating to amendments shall normally be taken in the room and counted by a member of staff provided by Oxford SU.
- 5.42 Votes relating to any formal decision outlined in 5.23 will be taken online. An appropriate system shall be used and votes shall be made public.

DISAFFILIATION

- 5.43 Conference members may withdraw membership from the Conference of Common Rooms. Disaffiliation should be a democratic decision within the Common Room.
- 5.44 Conference members may withdraw their Common Rooms' membership at any time by submitting a written statement to the Chair.
- 5.45 An Officer of the Students' Union shall reach out to the President of each disaffiliated Common Room no later than week 1 the following Michaelmas to encourage the Common Room to decide democratically whether they wish to reaffiliate.
- 5.46 Common Rooms may re-join the Conference of Common Rooms at any time by submitting a written request to the Chair.

5.47 Withdrawal of membership of the Conference of Common Rooms will not affect automatic membership of individual student members of Oxford SU, who may opt out using the normal opt-out process in Bye-Law 1.

