

## **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.
  - 5.5.3 The person nominated to vote on behalf of the Common Room (President or otherwise) must also be a full member of the Students' Union in accordance with Bye-Law 1.
- 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. Each Deputy Chair must be a current President of a Common Room. If they cease to hold the position of President, they shall vacate the Deputy Chair role. A Deputy Chair may serve for a maximum of three academic terms.
- 5.9 These Postholders shall be responsible for setting the agenda of the meetings, including determining which items shall be 'below the line'. They will 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 5.30 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 a two-thirds majority.
  - 5.22.1 Conference Policy may include a matter of policy but may not include the attribution of Students' Union resources towards that position.
  - 5.22.2 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
- 5.23 **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.



- 5.23.1 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 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.
- 5.24.1 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 5.30 and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.24.2 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 5.30 and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.24.3 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.
- 5.24.4 A motion calling for a referendum shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.25 Each Conference member shall have one vote.
- 5.26 Quoracy in meetings shall be 30% of Common Rooms. Where this threshold is not met, the meeting may continue but no decisions (such as those on policy or amendments to mandates) may be taken in the meeting.
- 5.27 Quoracy for voting shall be 40% of all Conference members; Conference members who choose to abstain from votes shall be counted towards quorum, but their vote will be considered neutral.
- 5.28 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.
- 5.29 Any decision taken by Conference of Common Rooms shall normally be considered to have lapsed after three years.

#### **SUBMISSION OF MOTIONS**

- 5.30 Motions can be proposed by Conference Members or Officers of the SU.
- 5.31 Motion proposals will be considered valid if one of the following criteria has been met:
- 5.31.1 The motion has previously been passed within a Common Room or Representative Committee (RepCom) meeting prior to submission to Conference of Common Rooms
- 5.31.2 In the case of motions submitted by an individual Conference Member, that the motion is seconded by 4 other Conference Members or Officers of the SU
- 5.31.3 In the case of motions submitted by an individual Officer of the SU, that the motion is seconded by 2 Conference Members or other Officers of the SU
- 5.32 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).



- 5.33 Motions and agendas shall normally be published five working days ahead of the Conference of Common Rooms meeting.
- 5.34 The Chair has the ultimate discretion to accept or reject motions submitted which are substantively similar to existing Conference Policy or Mandates or which would supersede existing Policy/Mandates. Such motions will not normally be accepted if submitted within 12 months of the original motion being passed or rejected unless they add substantively to the existing motion.
- 5.35 The Postholders, in collaboration with the Trustee Board (or their nominee) shall have the discretion to postpone the hearing of a motion if it is determined that further consultation, information or risk mitigation is required.
- 5.36 The Postholders shall be responsible for setting the agenda of the meeting including determining which items shall be 'below the line' and allocating time for debate and discussion. Items which are 'below the line' shall not normally be allocated time for discussion in the meeting; Members may request that the Postholders bring an item above the line by emailing the Chair at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The Postholders shall have the discretion to approve or reject such a request.

#### **AMENDMENTS**

- 5.37 Amendments to submitted or existing Conference Policies/Mandates may be proposed and handled in the following way:
  - 5.37.1 An appropriate online form for submitting amendments shall be made available following the publication of the agenda and motions; this form shall remain open until 10am the day before the relevant Conference meeting.
  - 5.37.2 Amendments may be submitted by Conference Members and Officers of the SU.
  - 5.37.3 The Postholders, in collaboration with the Trustee Board (or its nominee), shall review the amendments, and assess the impact of each amendment on the overall motion if passed; this will include a risk assessment. The Postholders shall have discretion to accept clarifying and 'friendly' amendments, normally in discussion with the proposer.
  - 5.37.4 Amendments which significantly alter the risk profile of the motion will not be accepted.
  - 5.37.5 The Postholders, in collaboration with the Trustee Board (or their nominee) shall have the discretion to postpone the hearing of a motion if multiple significant amendments are submitted and deem that further consultation on the motion is required.
  - 5.37.6 The Postholders shall determine the order in which any amendments should be voted upon within the meeting. The order shall be based on the materiality of the amendment where possible, and otherwise in order of submission.
  - 5.37.7 Proposers of substantive amendments may be given time to propose their amendment, and debate may be had if there is sufficient time or if the Chair has deemed debate necessary.
  - 5.37.8 Amendments will be voted on by Conference members during the meeting. This shall normally be done online, to ensure accurate voting records

- 5.37.9 Once all amendments have been considered, the updated motion shall be published for voting purposes within 48 hours of the meeting.



#### **ROLE OF OXFORD SU TRUSTEE BOARD**

- 5.38 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.
- 5.39 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.
- 5.40 In cases where decisions or discussions may present legal, financial, reputational or operational risks, the Board will work collaboratively and transparently with the Postholders and 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.
- 5.41 In implementing a Conference Mandate, Officers and Trustees shall have discretion in how to achieve the goals of any proposal, allowing for flexibility and adaptation where new legal, financial, reputational or operational challenges and opportunities arise, but always in students' best interests.
- 5.42 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.
- 5.43 The Trustees may delegate responsibility to a nominee from within the Oxford SU staff team, but retain ultimate responsibility for any decision made
- 5.44 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 normally 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, affiliations and donations.

#### **RULES OF DEBATE**

- 5.45 The Chair shall ask the proposer of the motion to present their motion.
- 5.46 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.
- 5.47 The Chair may continue to allow speakers for and against the motion, ensuring an equal and balanced debate.
- 5.48 Each motion shall have a maximum of 30 minutes allotted time.
- 5.49 Votes relating to any motion will be taken online. An appropriate system shall be used, and votes shall be made public.

#### **DISAFFILIATION**



- 5.50 Conference Members may withdraw membership from the Conference of Common Rooms. Disaffiliation should be a democratic decision within the Common Room.
- 5.51 Conference Members may withdraw their Common Rooms' membership at any time by submitting a written statement to the Chair.
- 5.52 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.
- 5.53 Common Rooms may re-join the Conference of Common Rooms at any time by submitting a written request to the Chair.
- 5.54 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.