

Bye-Law 5 - Conference of Common Rooms



FUNCTIONS

- 5.1. There shall be a Conference of Common Rooms.
- 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. Gather the views of students and determine positions deemed to be representative of wider students at the University of Oxford
 - 5.3.2. Provide student-led direction for the students' union work
 - 5.3.3. Formulate a majority view among common rooms and form agreement amongst common rooms that a particular course of action shall be undertaken by all common rooms and Officers of the Students' Union
 - 5.3.4. Receive reports on and discuss the representative work of the Officers of the students' union (as defined by Bye-Law 3) and the wider Trustee Board
 - 5.3.5. Facilitate informed and transparent debate over collegiate and university issues.

MEMBERSHIP

- 5.4. The members of Conference of Common Rooms shall be each Common Room 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. There shall also be 1 space each for:
 - 5.6.1. Matriculated students from the Department of Continuing Education
 - 5.6.2. Associate Members, as defined in Bye-Law 1
- 5.7. Any student may attend, observe and speak at the Chair's discretion 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

- 5.8. For the first meeting of Conference of Common Rooms, the meeting shall be Chaired by a Sabbatical Officer Trustee.
- 5.9. The postholders and process for election shall be decided at the first meeting of Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.10. It is proposed that there shall be an MCR and JCR Co-Chair elected from within the Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.11. It is proposed that, for any meeting after the 1st of July 2025, the Communities & Common Rooms Officer shall be the Deputy Chair.



- 5.12. 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.
- 5.13. The Deputy Chair may act on behalf of the Co-Chairs in their absence.
- 5.14. The Co-Chair's 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

- 5.15. Officers of the students' union shall not be voting members of Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.16. Officers of the students' union (as described in Bye-Law 3) shall be in attendance as Executive Members at the Conference of Common Rooms.
- 5.17. Each Officer shall be required to provide a report to each meeting in relation to matters arising and any Conference Mandates.
- 5.18. Officers of the students' union may submit agenda items and motions subject to the normal process as outlined in Bye-Law 5.36 below.
- 5.19. Individual staff of Oxford SU who are not Officers of the Students' Union must not be referenced in motions policy, debate or discussion.
- 5.20. Co-CEOs of the Union may be invited by the Chair to speak at Conference, but must be given 5 working days' notice

MEETINGS

- 5.21. 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 2 and week 7.
- 5.22. 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
- 5.23. 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.
- 5.24. Oxford SU shall ensure that meeting minutes are published on the Oxford SU website and shall include a record of Conference member votes.
- 5.25. 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. There shall be no more than 1 extraordinary meeting per term.
- 5.26. The date of any meeting must be published to all students with at least 7 days' notice.
- 5.27. The last meeting in Trinity Term shall be an Annual General Meeting of student members of Oxford SU. All Student & Sabbatical Trustees and Trustee-elects shall be expected to attend. The Sabbatical Officer Trustees shall provide a report on behalf of the Trustee Board including (but not limited to) information about the students' unions finances.

DECISION MAKING

- 5.28. When making decisions, the Conference of Common Rooms may make any of the following types of decision:



- 5.28.1. **Conference Policy (CP)** – 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 vote.
- 5.28.1.1. Conference Policy may include a political position or matter of policy but may not include the attribution of students' union resources towards that position.
- 5.28.1.2. All members of Conference and 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.
- 5.28.2. **Conference Mandate (CM)** – A decision which **directs** the students' union and its Officers to take a specific action. Such a decision shall require a simple majority vote.
- 5.28.2.1. 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. Bye-Law [XXX] allows the Trustee Board to reject such a mandate where this threshold is not met.
- 5.28.3. **Conference Collective Action (CCA)** – An agreement amongst Common rooms that a particular course of **action** shall be undertaken by all Common Rooms and Officers of the Students' Union. Such a decision shall require consensus.
- 5.28.3.1. Conference may require individual Common rooms to provide evidence that they have delivered the CCA and may hold those who do not accountable in whichever way Conference determines.
- 5.28.3.2. Consensus shall be achieved by amending motions until such a time as all Conference members vote in favour of the motion.
- 5.28.4. **Accountability Action (AA)**. There will be two types of Accountability Action – a motion of censure or a motion of no confidence.
- 5.28.4.1. A motion of censure 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 (XXX) and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.28.4.2. 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 (XXX) and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of Conference members.
- 5.28.4.3. 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 (5.46).
- 5.29. Each Conference member shall have 1 vote
- 5.30. 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.



- 5.31. 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.
- 5.32. 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.
- 5.33. Any Conference member at any time may request for a decision to be put to all referendum. Such a decision shall require a simple majority vote of all Conference members present, see Bye-Law 5.46 for rules on referenda.

SUBMISSION OF MOTIONS

- 5.34. Motions must have been passed at a Common Room, RepCom meeting prior to submission to Conference of Common Rooms, or must be proposed and seconded by 5 other members of Conference of Common Rooms or Officers of the Students' Union.
- 5.35. Officers of the students' union may submit motions, but these must be proposed and seconded by other 5 members of Conference of Common Rooms or other Officers of the Students' Union.
- 5.36. Motions must be submitted with 10 working days' notice of any meeting and on the required form which must include:
 - 5.36.1. An Equality Impact Assessment including evidence that relevant Community Officers and/or RepComs have been consulted prior to submission (see Bye-Law XXX).
- 5.37. Oxford SU shall provide a risk assessment including assessment of any financial, legal or reputational risks on behalf of the Oxford SU Trustee Board. This shall normally be provided within 5 working days of the motion being submitted, however the Trustee Board reserves the right to extend this timeline where necessary.
- 5.38. In line with [Article XX] the Trustee Board or nominee may request changes to or prohibit any motion where it can demonstrate that it may result in legal, reputational or financial detriment to the students' union. This may include where the motion relates to Officers of the Union, particularly those who are also employees.
- 5.39. In all circumstances, where the Oxford SU Trustee Board prohibits a motion or is unable to deliver or enact a motion for whatever reason, the sabbatical officer trustees shall be required to provide a written response to Conference of Common Rooms as soon as practicable.
- 5.40. Motions & agendas shall normally be published 5 working days ahead of the Conference of Common Rooms meeting

RULES OF DEBATE

- 5.41. The Chair shall ask the proposer of the motion to present their motion.
- 5.42. 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.
- 5.43. The Chair may continue to allow speakers for and against the motion, ensuring an equal and balanced debate
- 5.44. Each motion shall have a maximum of 30 minutes allotted time.

- 5.45. Votes shall normally be taken in the room and counted by a member of staff provided by Oxford SU.
- 5.46. Where a vote is required to be taken online, an appropriate system shall be used; in all cases votes shall be made public



REFERENDA

- 5.47. Referenda may be called in any of the following circumstances:
 - 5.47.1. By Conference of Common Rooms in relation to any decision and following the procedure set out in accordance with Bye-Law (XX)
 - 5.47.2. The Trustees alone in relation to any decision including but not limited to changes to these Bye-Laws, changes to the Articles of Association, and affiliation to external organisations such as NUS
 - 5.47.3. Student members, where 2% of individual student members have voted to hold a referendum on a particular issue using the SU Ideas function on the website
 - 5.47.4. Referenda shall also be subject to Bye-Laws (XXX) in that the Trustee Board must be given 14 days' notice of the referendum and may prohibit a referendum, or the outcome of a referendum in accordance with Bye-Law (XXX)
- 5.48. Quoracy for referenda is 5% of all individual student members of the students' union.
- 5.49. Referenda require a simple majority vote.
- 5.50. Referenda will only be considered valid if conducted through the Oxford SU voting system (see Bye-Law XXX – elections).

DISAFFILIATION

- 5.51. Conference members may withdraw their Common Room's membership to the Conference of Common Rooms. Withdrawal is subject to a referendum, which must be run through the Oxford SU voting system. A Conference membership referendum will only be valid where a quoracy of 20% of all students' union members within that Common Room have voted, and the referendum must pass by a two thirds majority vote.
- 5.52. Common Rooms will be automatically re-affiliated in Week 1 of the following Michaelmas but may re-join the Conference of Common Rooms at any time by following the same process as disaffiliating
- 5.53. 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 XX].