

EQUITY

CONFERENCE BUSINESS COMMITTEE STANDING ORDERS

Approved by the Council: 12 September 2023

* References to Rules in these Standing Orders refer to the Rules in the Union's Rulebook

Establishment

1. The Union shall have a Conference Business Committee in accordance with Rule X1.
2. The Committee shall be made up of nine members elected in accordance with Rules X2 to X6.

Role

3. The role of the Committee shall be to:
 - (a) arrange the business for the Equity Conference;
 - (b) arrange the business for any other Union conference or meeting if delegated to do so by the Council; and
 - (c) in consultation with the Secretary, respond to any questions or matters that arise during the Equity Conference, in respect of the Rules and procedures that shall apply.
4. The Committee shall act in accordance with these Standing Orders, the Rules and the policies of the Union at all times. If there is any inconsistency between the Rules and these Standing Orders, the Rules shall apply.

Term

5. Committee elections shall take place every two years. The Committee term shall run from and to the dates on which the election results are declared.

Chair & Vice-Chair

6. The Committee shall have a Chair and a Vice-Chair elected from amongst the Committee members at or before the first meeting of its term.
7. The Chair (or in their absence, the Vice-Chair) shall preside at all Committee meetings.

The Secretary

8. The work of the Committee shall be supported by the Secretary, who shall be a member of Equity staff appointed from time to time by the General Secretary. The Secretary shall:
 - (a) convene the Committee's meeting/s at 9. and 16. below;
 - (b) prepare the meeting agenda in consultation with the Chair;
 - (c) record the date, attendees, apologies for absence, decisions and agreed action points;
 - (d) advise the Chair on the Rules and procedure; and
 - (e) maintain liaison between the Committee and the General Secretary.

Committees & Branches Motions

9. In advance of the Equity Conference, the Committee shall meet to consider if the conference motions, submitted by the Union's Equalities, Industrial and National Committees and branches to the Union's Governance Officer, are "in order".
10. In order, for these purposes, means that a motion:
 - (a) is concerned with a matter (or matters) of general policy as defined by Rule T22;
 - (b) is not proposing action that is outside of the Unions' Aims and Powers at Rules B and C or otherwise contrary to the Union's Rules; and
 - (c) does not exceed 250 words.
11. The Committee may amend the text of any motion at 9. to correct any grammar or misspelling and/or for clarity.
12. With the consent of the mover of the motion, the Committee may also:
 - (a) amend any motion at 9. to bring it in order; and/or;
 - (b) composite two or more of the motions at 9. that concern the same or a substantially related matter.
13. The Committee's considerations shall be reported back to the Council by the Secretary and the Chair (or the Vice-Chair in their absence) for its decision.

14. The report at 13. shall also advise if any of the motions concern matters that have been discussed by Equity Conference within the past three years and whether any of the proposals within the motions represent existing policy.

Annual National & Regional Meetings

15. Proposed motions for Equity Conference received by the Union from the National Committees and branches that are in order shall be submitted by the Secretary to the relevant annual National or Regional meetings. Members shall then vote on which motions are to be submitted to Equity Conference in accordance with Rule T20.

Conference Agenda & Timetable of Business

16. Following the National and Regional meetings at 15. the Committee shall meet again to prepare the Equity Conference agenda and timetable of business.
17. In advance, the Secretary shall provide the Committee with:
 - (a) the final list of motions submitted by the Union's committees and selected by the National and Regional meetings; and
 - (b) the Council's own motions and amendments.
18. In consultation with the Secretary, the Committee may amend the text of any of the Council's motions and/or amendments to correct any grammar or misspelling and/or to provide for clarity.
19. With the consent of the Council, the Committee may composite Council motions and/or amendments with one or more of the motions at 17(a).
20. The Council shall approve the substance of the agenda and the Committee shall then prepare the agenda and order of business.

Conference Duties

21. During the Equity Conference the Committee, in consultation with the Secretary, shall be available to respond to any procedural questions that arise.
22. In addition, the Committee shall:
 - (a) monitor the clock to ensure speakers remain within their allotted times; and
 - (b) if appropriate, alter the timetable to accommodate any absences or other event that requires that business be re-ordered.

Review Meeting

23. Following the Equity Conference, the Secretary shall convene a meeting of the Committee to review any procedural questions or issues that arose during the conference. The General Secretary shall be invited to attend.

Vacancies

24. If a Committee seat becomes permanently vacant, the Committee shall co-opt another eligible member to fill the seat in accordance with Rule X8. Co-options shall be submitted to the Council for approval. Co-opted members shall not exceed the number of elected members.

Union Officers

25. Officers of the Union may attend and speak at Committee meetings.

Quorum

26. The minimum number of attendees for Committee meetings shall be three Committee members. If three members are not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the meeting to start, the meeting shall be dissolved.

Agenda

27. The Secretary, in consultation with the Chair, shall prepare the agenda for Committee meetings. The agenda shall be circulated with notice of the meeting to all Committee members at least seven days in advance of the meeting.

Conflict of Interest

28. A conflict of interest is any situation in which a Committee member's personal interests (financial or otherwise) may unduly influence or, may appear to unduly influence, the member's participation in Committee business.
29. A member who believes that they may have a conflict of interest shall declare that this is the case before the relevant item is discussed. The declaration shall be recorded in the minutes.
30. A member who declares a conflict of interest may remain in the meeting and speak and/or vote on the item.
31. In addition to the continuing obligations above, all Committee members must complete a Declaration of Interest form within two months of being elected or co-opted to the Committee.

Decisions Outside of Meetings

32. The Committee may make decisions by email or in an online forum outside of scheduled meetings if necessary to complete its business.
33. A decision made outside of a scheduled meeting shall only be valid if agreed by a majority of all Committee members and approved by the Secretary.
34. Committee members shall provide the Secretary with their email addresses.

Chair's Vote

35. The Chair (or Vice-Chair, if presiding in their absence) shall not vote on any question at a meeting unless there is a tied vote when they may exercise a casting vote.

Decisions of the Chair

36. The Chair's decision (on any point) shall be binding unless it is challenged by not less than two Committee members, in which case, all Committee members present shall then immediately vote on whether to uphold the Chair's ruling. If passed by a simple majority, the Chair's decision shall apply.
37. No challenge is permitted to the Chair's decision whether or not to accept a motion to suspend Standing Orders.

Conduct

38. Attendees at Committee meetings shall:
 - (a) abide by the procedures set out in these Standing Orders; and,
 - (b) refrain from behaviour that contravenes Rule D14.
39. A failure to do so may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Rule S.

Alteration & Suspension of Standing Orders

40. These Standing Orders shall not be altered without the prior approval of the Council.
41. The Chair may accept a motion to suspend these Standing Orders to allow a matter of urgency not on the agenda to be discussed. A motion to suspend shall be proposed and seconded by two Committee members.
42. If passed by a two-thirds majority of those voting for and against, the suspension shall apply for not more than 30 minutes.

Interpretation

43. The Council shall interpret these Standing Orders if in dispute. The Council shall decide on any Committee matter where the Standing Orders are silent. In both cases, the Council's decision shall be final and binding.

Copies of the Rules & Standing Orders

44. Copies of these Standing Orders and the Union's Rules are available to view and download on the Union's website at <https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/rules-of-the-union/>