

## SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES AT SENATE MEETINGS AND RULES OF ORDER

---

### Table of contents

- A. Meetings of Senate
  - B. Standing Committees
  - C. Agenda and Supporting Documents
  - D. Consent Agenda
  - E. Question period
  - F. Committee reports
  - G. Eligibility requirement
  - H. Voting at meetings of Senate
  - I. Rules of order
- 

This summary was drafted based on provisions enshrined in University policies as well as past custom and practice.

### **A. Meetings of Senate**

The President shall chair all meetings of Senate and shall vote only in the case of a tie. In their absence or inability to act, the Provost and Vice-President, Academic shall chair the meetings of Senate. In the absence or inability to act of the Provost and Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies shall chair the meetings of Senate. When the President wishes or is required to speak to the substance of issues being debated on the floor of Senate, they will ask the Deputy Chair to assume the Chair pro tem, and will then resume it following the intervention.

Quorum shall be the majority of voting members for Senate meetings held from September 1 to June 30 of each year, while ten voting members constitute quorum for any special meeting held between July 1 and August 31. The rules of order set out at the end of this section shall guide all discussions.

The Agenda for Senate meetings shall include reports from the President, committees, and other University bodies as well as a 15-minute question period. Senate is entitled to monthly reports on all on-going academic matters of significance. The business of the meeting shall be confined to the Agenda items, unless introduction of a new matter is approved by a majority of members present. When controversy, ambiguity or uncertainty prevents Senate from reaching a conclusion, a matter will be referred back to the appropriate committee or other originating body for clarification, and voting will be postponed. Provisional wording for motions, insofar as they are known beforehand, is

drafted by the Secretary of Senate and, when deemed useful, distributed to all members of Senate.

**B. Standing Committees**

Committees shall be responsible for the work of Senate in their respective areas, for reporting in writing to Senate, and for facilitating Senate discussion regarding their recommendations. All committees, unless otherwise specified, meet at the call of the Chair, and will make progress reports to Senate.

Committees shall consult with appropriate members of the University, especially where specified in Committee mandates. Clear executive summaries or interpretation of documents shall accompany all reports and materials submitted by a committee to Senate.

**C. Agenda and Supporting Documents**

The Agendas of the Open and Closed sessions of Senate meetings are the responsibility of the Secretary of Senate. They are approved by Steering Committee of Senate before being distributed to Senators. Senators wishing to submit agenda items may do so by submitting them to the Secretary of Senate. Agenda items and all supporting documents must be received by the Secretary of Senate no later than three working days prior to the meeting of Steering Committee of Senate which approves the Agenda for any given Senate meeting.

The notice of meeting, Agenda and supporting documents for Closed and Open session meetings are forwarded via electronic means, normally on the Friday of the week preceding the date of the Senate meeting.

**D. Consent Agenda**

Agenda items deemed by Steering Committee to be of a routine and uncontroversial nature shall be listed on the agenda under the heading of "Consent Agenda", and shall be voted as a single item without discussion, with the proviso that proposals for new academic programs shall not be placed on the Consent Agenda. Items listed on the Consent Agenda shall be moved to the main agenda for discussion and separate vote at the request of any two voting members of Senate.

**E. Question period**

The normal maximum duration of Question period in Senate meetings shall be fifteen (15) minutes, though the Chair may issue a ruling permitting the extension of this period for a fixed maximum time. In order to ensure timely provision of information to Senate, and to ensure that those normally expected to respond to specific questions have the wherewithal to provide considered and in-depth responses, priority shall be given to questions submitted in writing to the Secretary of Senate, to be brought to the attention of Steering Committee. Written responses shall be provided to all questions submitted in writing. Should there be no questions submitted in writing, or should the list of written questions

be exhausted prior to the expiration of the normal time limit, the Chair shall call for questions from the floor.

**F. Committee reports**

All standing committees of Senate are required to submit a written report of their activities since the last meeting of Senate.

In order to permit careful consideration of substantive issues that may be contained therein, reports of standing committees shall be submitted to the Secretary of Senate in sufficient time to be circulated to members of Steering Committee for consideration in advance of each meeting of the Steering Committee, normally no later than one week prior to the meeting of the Steering Committee. Reports not submitted in time for consideration by Steering Committee shall be deferred to the subsequent meeting of Senate, with the proviso that the Chair of the Steering Committee, in consultation with the Secretary of Senate, may elect to place a report requiring urgent consideration on the main agenda. In such cases, the report shall be clearly identified on the Agenda as urgent and as not having been considered by Steering Committee.

**G. Eligibility requirement**

Members appointed to Senate must fulfill the eligibility requirements set out in article 64 of the General By-Laws.

**H. Voting at meetings of Senate**

The Chair will determine the will of the members in one of the following ways:

*Acquiescence*

When it is obvious to the Chair that a great majority of members has arrived at a common conclusion, he or she may declare "the motion is passed (or defeated) by common consent." The recorded Minutes of this resolution will constitute prima facie evidence of Senate's decision. Any Senator may, following the declaration of the Chair, request a vote. The Chair must grant this request unless the meeting decides against it.

*Show of Hands*

The Chair may decide to obtain a decision by a show of hands. The calls will be made in this order: 1) All in favour; 2) All opposed. Both calls must be made.

If there is a large majority in favour, the Secretary may so inform the Chair, without a formal count. Members who wish their abstentions to be recorded in the Minutes can so inform the Chair.

*Balloting*

A vote by ballot may be desired in exceptional circumstances. The decision to use a written ballot may be made by the Chair, or at the request of a member, in which case a vote by ballot can be ordered, without debate, by a majority vote of the members. The Secretary will distribute ballots and the Chair will arrange to have them scrutinized after the vote.

## I. Rules of order

The purpose of these rules is to ensure that the meetings of Senate are purposeful and efficient and are carried out with fairness, reasonableness and good faith toward all who participate. Robert's Rules of Order shall be used as a guideline in assisting the Chair in conducting the business of Senate. In the case of a challenge to a ruling of the Chair on a particular procedural question, the will of Senate, as determined by a majority vote, shall decide the issue. These rules shall also be used for the Committees of Senate.

### 1) Motions

A motion must be moved and seconded before the subject matter of the motion is open for debate. The following motions may be considered without a seconder: to raise a point of privilege, point of order, objection to the consideration of a question, leave to withdraw a motion, and inquiries of any kind.

### 2) Withdrawal of a Motion

Custom permits the withdrawal of a motion by consent of the mover and the seconder. If either objects, the motion to withdraw must be put to a vote and the main motion can be withdrawn only by a two-thirds majority of votes.

### 3) Amendments

Any substantive motion may be amended. An amendment may also be amended. However, no further amendment to an amendment is allowed until the vote on the original amendment has been considered. When an amendment has been accepted or defeated, another amendment may be introduced, but only if it is different in purpose from the one previously defeated. An amendment does not require previous notice.

An amendment must fall within one of the following categories: 1) the deletion of certain words; b) the addition of certain words; or c) the deletion of certain words and the substitution of others in their place. An amendment cannot alter the spirit or intent of the motion, nor can it negate the motion.

Voting on amendments is as follows: a) on the amendment to the amendment (the second amendment); b) on the amendment; and c) on the motion if the amendments have been defeated or on the motion as amended if an amendment has carried.

### 4) Special Motions

#### *Motion to rescind a resolution*

A motion to rescind must meet any requirements for notice that were applicable to the original resolution, may be passed at a subsequent meeting, and requires a two-thirds majority of those voting for or against.

*Motion to put (or to call) the question*

The effect of this motion is to end the debate with a right of reply by the mover of the question before the vote, is permissible on recognition at any time, and can be moved only by someone who has not spoken on the question being discussed. It is at the Chair's discretion to refuse to entertain the motion. The motion is not debatable. It requires a two-thirds majority of those voting for or against. Once adopted, this motion takes precedence over all other procedures except points of order and privilege.

*Motion to adjourn*

This motion is permissible at any time when there is no question before the meeting. It must yield to a point of order or privilege, is not debatable, and requires a simple majority of those voting for or against. If defeated, the motion to adjourn cannot be revived until after an intermediate proceeding. A motion to adjourn to cut off debate requires a two-thirds majority of those voting for or against.

*Motion to table or to lift from the table*

These motions are not debatable, they cannot be reconsidered, nor can they be interrupted except by points of order or privilege. The motion to table can only be moved by someone who has not spoken on the question being discussed.

5) Point of Order

Only on a point of order or privilege can a member interrupt another member who is speaking (except that, with the consent of that member, questions may be asked). If a member feels that improper language has been used, irrelevant arguments introduced or a rule or procedure broken, the member is entitled to *rise to a point of order* interrupting the member who is speaking. The point of order must be stated definitely and concisely. The Chair shall decide, without debate, though he or she may ask opinions. The Chair should state opinions authoritatively.

This ruling may be appealed by any two members (one making the appeal and the other seconding it). If appealed, the Chair states his or her decision and the point of the appeal and then puts the question, which is not debatable: "Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of this meeting?" A simple majority determines the issue. This process settles a point of procedure and is not a vote of confidence in the Chair.

6) Point/Question of Privilege

A point of privilege (or *personal* privilege) is a request or motion relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly or its member(s). For example, if a member feels that a statement reflects on his or her reputation or that of Senate, a committee, or the University, the member is entitled to raise a *question of privilege*. It may also include such things as: noise, ventilation, etc., or may relate to the conduct of a person or people at the meeting.

7) Voting

The vote will be by a simple majority of those voting for or against a motion except where a two-thirds majority of those voting is required. An abstention is not a vote and is not factored in the tallying of the vote. The Chair is entitled to vote only in the case of a tie.

8) Termination

The meeting terminates either by declaration of the Chair or by vote of the meeting.

9) Summary of Procedures

*Order of precedence*

- Point of order (may interrupt Chair)
- Point of privilege (may interrupt Chair)
- Motion to table
- Motion to put (to call) the question
- Motion to request to split the motion
- Motion to amend
- Motion to adjourn

All other proceedings may be raised only on recognition and when there is no question before the meeting.

*Motions that can be moved only if someone has not participated in debate*

- Motion to table
- Motion to put (to call) the question
- Motion to adjourn

*Motions that are NOT debatable*

- Motion to table
- Motion to lift from the table
- Motion to adjourn
- Motion to put (to call) the question
- Motion to request to split the motion

*Motions requiring a two-thirds majority of members voting for or against*

- Motion to rescind a resolution
- Motion to withdraw a motion (unless mover and seconder voluntarily withdraw it)
- Motion to adjourn when effect is to terminate the debate
- Motion to put (to call) the question
- Motion to limit or extend debate

*Adopted by Senate on March 20, 2009, amended on May 21, 2010, updated on August 6, 2012, on July 21, 2014, on December 14, 2016 and on December 11, 2019.*