

# **University and College Union**

## **Standing orders for the conduct of Congress and sector conferences**

*As amended by Congress 31 May 2024*

### **PREAMBLE**

In these standing orders, the term 'Conferences' refers to both Congress and the two sector conferences, and the term 'Sector Conferences' to those conferences only.

### **A. ANNUAL REPORT AND SUBMISSION OF MOTIONS**

1. Not less than 16 weeks before the meeting of Congress and Sector Conferences is to take place, the General Secretary will issue a calling notice to branches and local associations, and other bodies entitled to submit motions to Conferences, which will include notice of the deadlines for the submission of motions and amendments.
2. The National Executive Committee shall prepare its Annual Report, including sections for each Sector, which shall be circulated to Branches and Local Associations at least ten working weeks before the first session of the annual meetings.

### **3. Submission of motions and amendments**

- 3.1 Motions, including motions to amend rules and standing orders, must be submitted in accordance with rule 16. Motions must be submitted by the deadline set out in the calling notice, set in accordance with rule 16.8. Motions submitted by a branch/local association must have the approval of a quorate general meeting of that branch/local association. Motions submitted by those committees listed in rules 16.7.4 and 16.7.5 must be approved by a quorate meeting of the relevant committee. The officer or committee chair submitting the motion must certify that the motion was passed by a quorate meeting. However, in the case of special meetings of National Congress or Sector Conferences called under rule 16.11 motions submitted by those Committees listed in 16.7.4 will be accepted if the Committee Chair submitting the motion can certify that at least one third of the voting representatives have expressed an opinion and that a majority of those expressing an opinion are in favour of the motion.
- 3.2 Where a branch/local association general meeting called for the purpose of approving motions for submission to Congress or Sector Conference is not quorate, a quorate meeting of the branch/local association committee may approve these motions for submission, or may approve an alternative means of ascertaining the views of members in order to approve such motions. In these circumstances, the motions and the committee's decisions must be circulated to

all members of the branch/local association. The officer submitting the motions must certify the way in which the motions were approved.

- 3.3 Amendments to motions must be submitted in accordance with rule 16. Amendments must be submitted by the deadline set out in the calling notice, set in accordance with rule 16.8. Amendments submitted by branches/ local associations must be approved by same means as motions in 3.1 and 3.2 above, or by a quorate meeting of a branch/local association committee. Amendments submitted by those committees listed in rules 16.7.4 and 16.7.5 must be approved by a quorate meeting of the relevant committee. The officer or committee chair submitting the amendment must certify the way in which the amendment was approved. However, in the case of special meetings of National Congress or Sector Conferences called under rule 16.11 amendments submitted by those Committees listed in 16.7.4 will be accepted if the Committee Chair submitting the amendment can certify that at least one third of the voting representatives have expressed an opinion and that a majority of those expressing an opinion are in favour of the amendment.
4. It shall be in order for motions from national bodies to take the form 'That Conference endorse the contents of Document XXXX'
  5. Motions must be no longer than 150 words, not including titles: in order to facilitate the ordering of business, submitting bodies may include titles to motions of not more than 10 words. Amendments must be no longer than 75 words, not counting rubrics or words to be deleted. There shall be no word limits for motions to amend the rules or amendments thereto.
  6. As far as is practicable, provisional order papers setting out motions and proposals to alter Rules and amendments to be considered by Conferences shall be sent to Conference delegates, Regional Secretaries and the relevant Branch Secretaries not later than two working weeks before the first session of the annual meetings.
  7. It shall be within the discretion of the Chair of the relevant Conference, on the advice of the Congress Business Committee as appropriate, to accept motions or amendments which were submitted by the due date but failed to be included in the published documentation.
  8. Each section of the Annual Report shall be moved by a member of the NEC who shall speak for not longer than 5 minutes. In moving sections of the Annual Report, speakers may briefly update Congress on developments since the preparation of the Annual Report. Speeches moving sections of the Annual Report shall be seconded formally. The agenda will include timetabled items for the purpose of moving, debating and voting on each section of the annual report, which will require a simple majority for approval.
  9. Proposals with respect to changes to the Rules shall be accompanied by a statement of the purpose of the proposal.
  10. Motions submitted after the deadline for the submission of motions, which are urgent, timely and require a decision of Congress, and could not have been

submitted in accordance with the timetable, but would otherwise have been appropriate business for the annual meetings of Congress or the sector conferences, may be taken as business by the relevant Conference passing a motion to do so by a two-thirds majority of those voting. Proposals to move such motions must be notified to the Congress Business Committee by a time prior to the commencement of that Conference specified by Congress Business Committee for that purpose, and the Committee will make a recommendation on the handling of them in its report to Congress.

11. After the start of Congress, the Chair is responsible for the business of Congress, subject to the advice of Congress Business Committee.
12. Emergency motions on matters which could not have been submitted other than during the course of Congress may be accepted for consideration if submitted to Congress Business Committee in the name of at least 10 delegations; Congress Business Committee shall make a recommendation on acceptance for debate to the Chair, who shall put the recommendation to Congress, acceptance to be by a two-thirds majority vote.
13. No motion or other business that does not appear on the agenda or arise directly there from shall be brought before the Conference.
14. The proposers of any uncomposited motion or amendment, or in the case of a composite motion all parties to the composite, may, with the agreement of all parties, withdraw it at any point up to ten working days prior to the opening of the Congress. Thereafter they may seek permission of Congress to withdraw it at any subsequent point prior to the Session at which the motion or amendment is to be moved. Such a subsequent request shall be communicated to Congress Business Committee which shall report it to Congress; the motion may also be withdrawn during the session at which it is to be moved. In either case, the decision is by a simple majority of those delegates present and voting.
15. The structure of the Annual Report shall be used as a guide to the ordering of Congress business.
16. All delegates shall comply with the reasonable registration requirements issued by head office, including adherence to deadlines.

## **B. FORMAT OF CONGRESS AND THE SECTOR CONFERENCES**

17. Annual meetings of Congress and the sector conferences will be held in person, or on a hybrid basis, and will be held on a wholly on-line basis only in response to exceptional circumstances. The format of the annual meeting of Congress and the sector conferences will be determined by the NEC.
18. Special meetings of Congress and the sector conferences may be held in person, or on a hybrid basis, or wholly on-line. The format of a special Congress will be determined by the officers in consultation with the General Secretary. The format of a special sector conference will be determined by the UK officers in consultation with the General Secretary and vice chairs of the relevant sector committee.

19. In respect of the formal conduct of business, members participating remotely in a hybrid meeting of Congress will have all the rights of members participating in person. Members participating remotely will count toward the quorum, and will have the right to speak and to vote. Members participating remotely will have the ability to vote in elections to the Congress business committee and in any other relevant elections.
20. Where a meeting is held on a wholly on-line basis, an amended version of these standing orders will be approved by the officers and circulated with the calling notice for that meeting. Standing orders 3.1-5, 10, 11 and 13 (submission of motions and business of meeting), 17, 19 and 20 (chairing and quorum), 36 and 38 (delegates' conduct, admission to private session) will not be amended. Special conferences held on-line will normally include real-time voting.
21. In the event of technological difficulty or failure during a hybrid meeting of Congress, the chair shall suspend the conference for not more than 30 minutes whilst every effort is made to rectify the situation. In the event that the technical difficulty or failure persists for more than 30 minutes, the business of the conference will resume amongst those delegates present in person, providing that the meeting remains quorate in accordance with standing order 20. The re-starting of business without remote delegates will not prevent remote delegates from rejoining the conference at a later time when the technical issue has been resolved.
22. The 'technological difficulty or failure' referred to in these standing orders refers to the technology and connectivity used by UCU to deliver a conference, and not to any issues experienced by individual delegates as a result of their own hardware, software or connectivity issues. Remote delegates are responsible for their own equipment and connection, and for taking note of instructions circulated prior to each event.

## **C. CONDUCT OF CONGRESS AND CONFERENCE BUSINESS**

23. Congress can be curtailed (ended early) in one of the following circumstances only:
  - 1) All the scheduled business of Congress and sector conferences is finished early.
  - 2) Credible communication is received about a natural disaster or other imminent threat (for example, fire) and advice from the relevant authorities requires Congress to be ended.
  - 3) A vote of two-thirds of delegates is carried to end Congress/sector Conference.

### **The chair of conferences**

24. The President shall take the Chair at National Congress. If the President is unavailable the Chair shall be taken by the Vice President, if available, or by the Immediate Past President. In the event that none of these Officers are available a

person shall be appointed by Conference to take the Chair until one becomes available.

25. To achieve this election, the Chair of the Congress business committee (or if the Chair is unavailable, another member of this group, or if none are available a self-nominated delegate) will temporarily assume the Chair with the sole purpose of holding this election. Candidates for Chair must then declare themselves and a vote be taken. The successful candidate will take the Chair for the remainder of Congress / Sector Conference.
26. The Vice President elected for each Sector shall chair the relevant Sector Conference. In the event that the Vice President is not available a person shall be appointed by that Sector Conference to take the Chair.
27. For any hybrid conference, the chair shall be a member present at the conference in person.
28. The quorum for National Congress shall be 150 members, and for Sector Conferences shall be a fraction of 150 members proportionate to the membership of each sector, except where, by convention, the chair asks that only a subset of the branches in a sector should vote on the topic under discussion, in which case the quorum shall be a fraction of 150 members proportionate to membership in that subset. Quora shall be rounded up to the nearest whole number.
29. The mover of a motion or of a section of the Annual Report, shall be allowed five minutes and all succeeding speakers shall be allowed three minutes, unless shorter periods are determined by a simple majority in a vote of Congress.
30. Speakers shall introduce themselves by name and the body on behalf of which they are speaking, and address themselves to the Chair.
31. No member shall speak more than once on the same motion or amendment except that the mover of the motion shall have a single right of reply before the vote is taken on motions and amendments within that debate. This single right of reply may be exercised at any time during the debate.
32. Congress Business Committee shall advise the Chair, who will advise Congress/the relevant sector conference on the consequential effects on passing an amendment on subsequent amendments, and may also advise that the debate on all the amendments to a motion be taken together if this facilitates debate. The Chair may also take a motion or amendment in parts for the purpose of voting, or take related motions and/or amendments in a group, in a single debate.
33. At any time a member of Conference who has not hitherto spoken in the debate may move that the motion or amendment under discussion be remitted to the National Executive Committee. The mover of the motion to remit shall have the right to speak to move it. Only one speech against the proposal to remit shall be permitted.
34. A proposal to remit a motion or amendment shall be taken as a procedural motion, but shall be taken as the first vote on the conclusion of the debate on the motion concerned, following immediately after the right of reply is exercised.

Remission of a motion requires the body to which it is remitted to report on the motion to the next Congress or sector conference.

35. When the Chair indicates a wish to speak all members of a Conference shall resume their seats and remain silent.
36. The Chair shall decide points of order. Any decision on a point of order may be challenged by a member of a Conference moving the motion "That the ruling be not upheld". If such a motion is moved the person whose ruling has been challenged shall hand over the Chair which shall be occupied in accordance with Standing Order 17 - 19 until the motion is carried or defeated. There shall be only one speech for the motion and one against, after which the person whose ruling has been challenged shall be given the opportunity to make a statement before the question is put. The decision not to uphold the Chair's ruling shall require a simple majority of the delegates present and voting in the Conference concerned.
37. A proposal to refer back a paragraph or part of a paragraph of the Annual Report shall be dealt with for the purposes of debate as an amendment not requiring notice, and shall be taken immediately before the vote to accept that section of the Annual Report.
38. At the end of the consideration of each section of the Annual Report, adoption of that complete section (as amended) shall be put formally to the vote.
39. Any procedural motion which is not provided for in these Standing Orders shall not be in order.

### **Procedural motions**

40. Subject to the discretion of the Chair, who shall consider whether there has been a sufficient and balanced debate, a member of a Conference who has not previously spoken in that debate may propose that the debate be closed by moving formally "That the question be now put". If formally seconded, such a motion shall be put to Conference without debate. No speech may be interrupted for the purpose of proposing such a motion.

Subject to the discretion of the Chair, who shall consider whether the debate has gone on for a reasonable period, any member of a Conference may propose that the debate be closed by moving formally "That the meeting proceeds to the next business", which shall have the effect of closing the current debate without further speeches or a vote, and moving on to the next substantive item of business. It is for the Chair to determine what constitutes the next item of business.

After any amendment has been put, a motion "That the main question be now considered" may be moved and put to the meeting without debate. Otherwise all amendments shall be disposed of and the Chair shall decide whether debate on the main motion is necessary and when the time has come when the main motion may fairly be put.

41. Questions on specific items in the Annual Report or Financial Report or other Reports circulated prior to the Conference shall be submitted in writing to the General Secretary or nominated official before the opening of the First Public Session of Congress or a Sector Conference respectively. Questions on Reports

circulated during the Conference shall be submitted in writing to the General Secretary or nominated official as appropriate prior to the commencement of the Session of Conference at which the question is to be answered. Questions on matters of the Order of Business only must relate to the business being (or about to be) transacted and must be submitted in writing to the Chair.

42. In the event of an inconsistency between any adopted paragraph of the Annual Report and a motion duly carried by a Conference within whose remit the matter falls, the motion shall take precedence.
43. In the event of grave disorder or of technological difficulty or failure the Chair may suspend a session for a period not exceeding 30 minutes. Any subsequent decision to suspend Conference during the same session shall be open to challenge in accordance with Standing Order 36.
44. It shall not be in order for any participant on the floor of, or addressing, Conference, to utter or display offensive language (including discriminatory language) or criticisms of individual Union employees or individual members who have no right to address Conference and complaints against whom should be pursued through properly established procedures. In the event that any of these occur, the Chair shall immediately ask the participant to withdraw the remarks and apologise to the Conference and the individual(s) concerned. If the participant refuses to do this, or persists thereafter, the Chair shall exclude that individual (or individuals) from the rest of the Conference proceedings.
45. Decisions on the circulation of any material within the Congress or conference halls shall be the responsibility of the Chair, who shall ensure that guidance is issued to delegates prior to the commencement of Congress.
46. Only members of a Conference, members of Congress Business Committee, Trustees, observers who are members of the Union and Union employees may be admitted to a Private Session.
47. It shall not be in order for any participant to smoke in the hall where any Conference meets or in the offices and public spaces adjacent to the hall which are used by UCU for the business activities associated with any Conference.
48. Delegates, observers and guests may not film or otherwise record the proceedings of conferences. Delegates participating remotely in any on-line or hybrid conference will not make the proceedings available to others who are not registered as delegates or observers for that conference.

#### **D. VOTING PROCEDURES**

49. Voting in hybrid and on-line conferences shall be by secure electronic means, in accordance with instructions given by the chair. During a hybrid conference, those delegates who have registered to attend the event in person must normally be present in the conference hall to cast their vote (exceptions being permitted as a reasonable adjustment, if technically possible).
50. The chair shall announce the result of all votes to the meeting.

51. For an in-person only conference, voting shall be by a show of voting cards. A count of voting cards shall be taken either at the discretion of the Chair or if one-third or more members of that Conference who are present hold up their voting cards.
52. During any vote, electronic or by voting card, the doors of the Conference Hall shall be closed and delegates shall remain in their seats. Once the Chair has ordered that the doors shall be closed and/or asked delegates to cast their votes, no one shall be admitted until the count is complete.
53. In the event of an equality of votes the Chair will declare the proposition 'not carried'.
54. An abstention does not count as a vote when calculating a two-thirds majority.

#### **E. SPECIAL MEETINGS OF CONFERENCES**

55. The notice of a special meeting of a Congress or sector conference shall be circulated to Branches and Regions at least three working weeks before the date of the meeting, as provided in rule 16.11. This notice shall include the intended business of the special meeting which may include a motion or motions, and only that business shall be transacted.
56. The notice of a special meeting of a Congress or sector conference shall include a timetable for the submission of motions and amendments in respect of convened meetings under rule 16.11, and amendments to the motion in respect of requisitioned meetings.
57. No motion or other business that does not appear on the agenda or arise directly therefrom shall be brought before the Congress/sector conference.

#### **F. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE CONGRESS BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

58. The transaction of all Conference business shall be planned by the Congress Business Committee, who shall be responsible for circulating the motions and amendments for Congress and sector conferences (rule 16.10); Congress Business Committee shall be responsible for making recommendations to each Conference about the conduct of the annual meetings, in particular the ordering of business and the acceptance of emergency motions onto the agenda of the Conferences.
59. For a meeting of Congress Business Committee, the quorum shall be five. For a meeting of a sectoral sub-group of CBC, in respect of annual or special sector conference meetings, the quorum shall be two.
60. The President and President elect shall be invited to attend, but will have no vote at, meetings of the Congress Business Committee, and the Chairs of the Sector Conferences shall be invited to attend, but will have no vote at, meetings of the sector sub-committees of the Committee.



61. The Congress Business Committee shall be reconstituted for the coming UCU year, immediately after the closure of Congress. The Committee shall elect its own chair and vice chair annually, and they shall be from different sectors. The Congress Business Committee shall meet as soon as is practicable after the deadline for the submission of motions. At this meeting, and at subsequent meetings as necessary, Congress Business Committee shall determine its recommendations on:
- i which motions are appropriate to each conference;
  - ii which motions and amendments are not appropriate for debate, for example because they are out of order because they are in conflict with the objects of the union; or because motions criticise individual employees who have no right to address Congress/conference, or on legal advice provided to the committee, that they are deemed to be defamatory and therefore may not be published.
  - iii whether any motions received after the deadline for receipt of motions are urgent, timely and require a decision of Congress or Conference.
- iv whether any amendments submitted are out of order because they would materially change the policy of the motion.
- v whether any motions and amendments received should be composited, and on the text of the composites.
  - vi in consultation with the General Secretary and Chair, which motions and amendments shall be discussed in private session.
  - vii whether any motion should be re-drafted to form an amendment to another motion, and if so, to do any necessary re-drafting.
  - viii the grouping of motions under paragraph headings within appropriate sections of the Annual Report.
  - ix. the addition of an amendment to include all appropriate protected characteristics in the categories covered by a motion.

These recommendations will form the Congress Business Committee's first and subsequent reports, which will be published as soon as practicable after the committee's first meeting.

62. The Congress Business Committee will meet as soon as practicable after the deadline for the submission of amendments. At this meeting the Committee will decide on the order of motions and amendments and arrange for the circulation thereof.
63. Congress Business Committee is authorised, if a majority of its members agree, to subdivide its membership in order to deal more effectively with Sector Conference business.
64. In so far as is practicable, Congress Business Committee shall have the same functions in respect of special meetings of Conferences as in the case of the annual meeting. In particular, Congress Business Committee shall be consulted

about the arrangements for submitting amendments, and at its discretion, shall consult representatives of the submitting bodies concerned, on any compositing of such amendments, and shall make recommendations on the conduct of the business of these Conferences.

## **G PROCEDURES FOR ELECTIONS HELD AT CONGRESS**

### **Election of congress business committee**

65. At each Congress, sector conferences shall each elect two members of the Congress Business Committee who must be members of the relevant sector, to serve for two year terms.
66. NEC members may be elected to the Congress Business Committee provided that, following the close of Congress, this will result in there being not more than two NEC members in each sector serving on the Congress Business Committee.
67. A call for nominations for two members of the Congress Business Committee to be elected by each of the Sector Conferences shall be made in the calling notice of Congress. Nominations shall be submitted to the General Secretary no less than 7 days before the start of Congress.
68. In the event that nominations do not exceed the number to be elected in any category, those duly nominated shall be declared elected by the Chair subject to standing order 56.
69. In the event of an insufficient number of nominations being received, no less than 7 days before the start of Congress, nominations for the remaining places on the committee will be re-opened, to be submitted during the meeting of Congress and the Sector Conferences, by a deadline announced by the Chair of Congress, which will not be earlier than the morning of the second day of Congress and the Sector Conferences.
70. In the event that nominations received by the deadline for re-opened nominations announced by the Chair does not exceed the number of remaining vacancies, those duly nominated shall be declared elected by the Chair, subject to standing order 56.
71. In the event that nominations received not less than seven days before the start of Congress, or, if applicable, nominations made on the re-opening of nominations at Congress, exceed the number of persons to be elected in any category, a ballot shall be conducted in accordance with a timetable determined by Congress Business Committee such that the result can be announced before the end of the Congress meeting. The elections shall be by single transferable vote.
72. In the event of a casual vacancy arising, the Congress Business Committee may co-opt a member from the appropriate sector, to serve until the close of the next meeting of Congress. Members who stood in the most recent ballot to elect CBC members from that sector will be approached for co-option onto the committee, the member who received the most support in the ballot being approached first.

In the event that the vacancy cannot be filled from these candidates, or where there are no such candidates, another eligible member may be co-opted. All co-options will be reported to Congress. Where a casual vacancy arises before the start of the Congress meeting at the end of the first year of a two-year term, the second year of the casual vacancy will be filled using the election process set out in standing orders 59-61.

## **H      SUSPENSION AND AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS**

73. Any Standing Order may be suspended at a meeting of a Congress/sector conference without prior notice provided that this shall not have the effect of suspending the effect of any Rule. Such suspension shall relate to the conduct of a session, a part of a session, an item of business, or the time and date of the next session. A motion to suspend a specified Standing Order or Orders must be supported by at least two-thirds of the members of the relevant Conference present and voting.

## **I      INTERPRETATION OF THESE STANDING ORDERS**

74. All references to the Chair in these Standing Orders are to the person occupying the Chair at the relevant time.
75. All references to Branches or Local Associations shall be taken to mean all Branches or Local Associations in the case of Congress, and Branches or Local Associations allocated to the relevant sector in the case of Sector Conferences.
76. These standing orders cannot be interpreted in ways contrary to the rules, and in any conflict between them, the rules take precedence over these standing orders.

## **J      ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR CONGRESS**

77. The order of business for Congress shall normally be as follows (provided that this order may be varied to allow invited guests to address Congress as timed business):

### **A.      First Public Session**

- 1      Welcome
- 2      Presidential address
- 3      Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee (which shall include proposals for Tellers and Scrutineers)
- 4      Adoption of minutes of last annual and any subsequent special meetings
- 5      Consideration of Annual Report and motions and amendments thereto

### **B.      Subsequent Public Sessions (except Final Public Session)**

- 1 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee
- 2 Consideration of Annual Report and motions and amendments thereto (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Congress)

**C. Private Session(s)**

- 1 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee
- 2 Adoption of Annual Financial Statements and Auditors' Report
- 3 Appointment of Auditors
- 4 Proposals to amend Rules
- 5 Consideration of appropriate Sections of the Annual Report and motions and amendments (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Congress)

**D. Final Public Session**

- 1 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee
- 2 Consideration of Annual Report and motions and amendments (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Congress)
- 3 Introduction of new President

78. The order of business for Sector Conferences shall normally be as follows (provided that this order varied to allow invited guests to Conference as timed business):

**A. First Public Session**

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee (which shall include proposals for Tellers and Scrutineers)
- 3 Adoption of minutes of last annual and any subsequent special meetings
- 4 Consideration of relevant Professional and Employment Sections of the Annual report and motions and amendments (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Conference)

**B. Subsequent Public Sessions (except Final Public Session)**

- 1 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee
- 2 Consideration of Annual Report and motions and amendments thereto (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Conference)

79. The order of business at Special Sector conference meetings shall be:

- 1 Welcome

- 2 Adoption of Report of Congress Business Committee (which shall include proposals for Tellers and Scrutineers)
- 3 Consideration of motions and amendments (as recommended by Congress Business Committee and agreed by Conference).