# SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING GUIDELINES

## Introduction

These guidelines have been created to help our societies hold effective general meetings (including Annual General Meetings) that are accessible for everyone and adhere to the Heriot-Watt University Student Union Articles and Bye Laws.

If you need help with running your AGM or general meetings, [please ask our Activities Coordinator](mailto:p.glynn@hw.ac.uk), who will be more than happy to assist.

[Schedule 2 of Heriot-Watt University Student Union Articles of Association](https://www.hwunion.com/pageassets/about-us/policies-and-references/HWUnion-Articles-of-Assocation.doc) describe the rules for General Meetings of the Union. These have been adapted to suit the needs of our societies, but you can refer to these Articles if you need more information.

## Principles

General Meetings should always adhere to the [Student Union](https://heriotwatt-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/pg24_hw_ac_uk/EcP0cQuDq9hCg6xLrqOQCLUBAvn2KS6HsFNeAZ7475zsnw?e=uQgv7X) Standards and Behaviours Policy. Society meetings should maintain the following principles at all times:

* Welcoming;
* Respectful;
* Accessible for all society members; and
* Demonstrate transparent decision making.

## The role of the Chair

The Chair of a General Meeting will usually be an Office Bearer, normally the President of your society. Their role is to ensure the smooth and timely running of a meeting. They have the authority to set the agenda, make decisions about how the meeting runs and ensure that the rules are followed.

The Chair may vote in a meeting if they are an ordinary member of the society.

If there is a tie, the society must have a mechanism for ensuring a decision is made. This mechanism is at the society’s discretion, but may involve repeating the vote or something as simple as a coin toss.

## Before a meeting

Before a meeting takes place, the Chair should agree and publish the agenda and any other papers, such as the previous meeting minutes. The Chair should also ensure someone is identified to take the minutes of the upcoming meeting. Often this is the society’s secretary, but might be a different committee member.

It is important to give members as much notice as possible, so that they are able to attend the meeting. The minimum amount of time you should allow is 10 days , but more notice is better.

You should ensure the venue or platform where the meeting is taking place is accessible for all your members. It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the location/platform does not actively exclude members.

## Agenda

Agendas should be published before the meeting (ideally 1 week) so that everyone knows what is going to be discussed. Here is a template agenda:

* Welcome
* Quorum count
* Minutes of previous meeting
* Request for Any Other Competent Business
* Reports
* Elections
* Other Business
* Close

## What is inappropriate business?

The Chair has the authority to not allow business to be discussed that is considered inappropriate. Members are able to challenge a Chair’s decision using the appropriate processes (see Chair’s Guide below). Members who are not satisfied with a Chair’s decision can complain to the Student Union, [using our complaints process](https://www.hwunion.com/pageassets/about-us/policies-and-references/HW-Union-Complaints-Procedure.docx).

Types of issues not appropriate to discuss might include:

* Discussions about personal conduct that require proper investigation before being brought to a meeting to discuss
* An issue brought up without notice in a meeting where the society needs more time to investigate before making a decision
* An issue that should be handled confidentially
* An issue that the Student Union should be directly involved in dealing with

These are just examples. The Chair should remember to consider whether any business is appropriate and make decisions accordingly.

## After the meeting

Minutes of a meeting should be produced shortly after the meeting and made available to Society members.

The Chair is responsible for ensuring people are clear on what actions they have been mandated to undertake during the meeting and when to report on progress of actions.

# Chair's Guide

Use this guide to help you through a meeting.

## WELCOME

Welcome everyone to the meeting. Introduce yourself and the Office Bearers present.

Tell everyone what is on the Agenda for the meeting.

Explain that all ordinary (student) members have equal voting rights. Remind everyone to remain respectful and that bad behaviour won’t be tolerated.

## quorum count

Count the number of members present. You need to have 1/8th of your ordinary student membership for any decisions you take in the meeting to be valid; unless otherwise stated in section 4.4 of your society’s constitution.

If you don’t have 1/8th of your members present, you still can go ahead with the meeting, but any decisions will need to be approved by your society members afterwards. We suggest this happens through secret ballot.

## minutes

If there are any matters arising from your previous General Meeting, cover them first.

Approve the minutes by taking a vote.

|  |
| --- |
| VOTE REQUIREDSimple Majority  **FOR AGAINST ABSTAIN** |

If the vote does not pass the Minutes are not adopted as a record. Move on.

## ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Open the floor to Any Other Competent Business. Ask Members to raise their Hands then state their request.

You can refuse or accept at your discretion. Reasons to refuse can include, but not limited to:

* Too many items making the Agenda unreasonably long
* The issue is not appropriate for this meeting
* The issue is of such importance that adding it to the Agenda without proper notice is not reasonable
* The item is in breach of Union Policy

## REPORTS

Invite the Treasurer to give their report on the Society bank accounts and funding.

Approve the report by taking a vote:

|  |
| --- |
| VOTE REQUIREDSimple Majority  **FOR AGAINST ABSTAIN** |

Invite any other speakers due to give a report.

## Elections

If you (the Chair) are standing for election, you need to ask someone else to Chair the part of the meeting relating to your election. You can still chair the other elections, just not one you’re involved in.

For each post you are electing, invite each candidate to speak.

Give each candidate an equal amount of time. They don’t need to use it all. 2 minutes should be plenty.

Depending on time, you can allow questions. Ensure all candidates get equal treatment.

Vote using your agreed method (i.e. paper ballots, online, raising hands etc.). Please speak to the Activities Coordinator in advance if you need help with your election voting.

## Other business

Go through your agenda and Any Other Competent Business. It is at the Chair’s discretion whether a point needs to be voted on.

Things which should be voted on include something which impacts how the society will operate, relates to Student Union business and if the point is of a political nature.

If you require a vote, remember

|  |
| --- |
| VOTE REQUIREDSimple Majority  **FOR AGAINST ABSTAIN** |

You must ensure that equal time is given to anyone speaking for or against an issue. The Chair has the right to determine how long to spend on each agenda item.

Remember to be transparent about why you allow some items more time than others so everyone understands.

## Date of next meeting

If necessary, agree the next meeting date.

## Close meeting

Thank everyone for attending and close the meeting.