A Student Guide to Student Council

In this guide you will find information on:

- What is Student Council?
- Sabbatical Officer Accountability
  - Motions
  - Amendments
- Expenditure Requests
  - Voting
  - Online Ballots
- More Information & Guidance
  - Democratic Meeting Code of Conduct
  - Safe Space Policy
What is Student Council?
Student council is the Democratic decision-making body of the Students’ Association and, all students are welcome to submit motions for discussion, attend meetings and vote.

At each student council meeting you will:
1. Hear the sabbatical officers’ accountability reports and, have the opportunity to ask some questions about their work.
2. Discuss and vote on motions and expenditure requests which had been submitted by students.

Student council is chaired by a trained and impartial Student Council Facilitator to ensure that meetings are run fairly, smoothly, and in accordance with the relevant Students’ Association policies. The facilitator sets the running order of the meeting and this is published with the agenda one week before the meeting.

For the 2020/21 academic year all Student Council meetings will be held online via Microsoft Teams – more information on how to access Microsoft Teams can be found on the University webpage. The link to the meeting will be shared on the Student Council webpage.
To see an example of an online Student Council meeting watch the March 2020 meeting.

Sabbatical Officer Accountability
This is a chance to hear about what your elected sabbatical officers have been working on and, ask them questions about their work. This is an opportunity for students to hold them to account and make sure they are being effective in their roles. Sabbatical officers will be given time to update on their work as well as an opportunity for students to directly ask them questions.

You can see an example of this by watching the March 2020 Student Council Meeting (4:40-35:23).

Motions
Student Council motions ask the Students’ Association to do something: change the way we run, start a new project or encourage the University to make a change. Once a motion is passed at Student Council it becomes Students’ Association Policy, meaning we will take action on the issue.

Motions can be submitted through the Student Council webpage. All motions must be submitted by 10am nine days prior to the meeting. All deadlines can be found on the Student Council webpage.
There are two types of motions:

- **An Ordinary Motion** sets Association policy. To submit a motion, you need 20 student signatures.
- **An Extraordinary Motion** calls to censure an officer, amend democratic regulations or submit a Referendum Proposal. To submit an extraordinary motion, you need 40 student signatures.

At the meeting, students discuss whether or not motion submitted should pass and become Students’ Association policy. Discussion of motions happens as follows:

1. The motion proposer introduces the motion
2. Students ask questions about the motion
3. Students make short speeches for/against the motion
4. The motion proposer provides a summation *(a short speech to sum up the debate and why you should vote for the motion)*
5. Students and representatives vote on the motion

You can see an example of this by watching the March 2020 Student Council Meeting (35:54-42:29).

**Amendments**

Students are able to submit amendments to motion in advance of the meeting. An amendment is a change or series of changes to improve the motion. Student Council must decide whether or not to make these changes to the motion before they pass or fail the motion as a whole.

All amendments must be submitted by 10am on the Monday before the meeting by emailing makeachange@eusa.ed.ac.uk.

At the meeting, students can discuss whether the motion should be amended this happens as part of the motion discussion. This happens as follows:

1. The motion proposer introduces the motion
2. The amendment proposer introduces the amendment
3. Students ask questions about the amendment
4. Students make short speeches for/against the amendment
5. Students and representatives vote on the amendment

Motion discussion then continues as normal either voting on the amended motion or the original motion:

6. Students ask questions about the motion
7. Students to speak for/against the motion
8. The motion proposer provides a summation *(a short speech to sum up the debate and why you should vote for the motion)*
9. Students and representatives vote on the motion
Expenditure Requests
Each year Student Council has a campaigns budget of £3000 which is controlled by our elected representatives. This budget exists to cover the costs of student-led projects or campaigns which will benefit University of Edinburgh students.

Expenditure Requests can be submitted through the Student Council webpage. They must be submitted by 10am 9 days prior to the meeting. All deadlines can be found on the Student Council webpage.

At the meeting, students discuss whether or not expenditure request submitted should pass. Discussion of expenditure requests happens as follows:
1. The proposer introduces the expenditure request
2. Students ask questions about the expenditure request
3. Students make short speeches for/against the expenditure request
4. The motion proposer provides a summation
5. ONLY representatives vote on the expenditure request

As the campaigns budget is controlled by representatives ONLY student representatives can vote on expenditure requests.

Voting
Once sabbatical accountability, motions, amendments and expenditure requests have been discussed students and student representatives are able to vote.

Student representatives (Students elected in the Students’ Association’s March or October elections) represent other students so their vote counts for 1.5.

Students will have access to the voting records of Sabbatical Officers, School Representatives and Activities Representatives from September 2020.

Ordinary students get 1 vote each.

*In the 2020/21 academic year, voting will be conducted online via a Microsoft form shared during the meeting on Microsoft Teams.*

All students and representatives can vote on sabbatical accountability, motions and amendments. Only student representatives can vote on expenditure requests.
The table below explains the different voting outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>&lt;33% of votes in favour</th>
<th>33-66% all votes in favour</th>
<th>67% or more votes in favour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ordinary motion</td>
<td>motion does not become Association policy</td>
<td>motion is referred to online ballot</td>
<td>motion becomes Association policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extraordinary motion</td>
<td>motion does not become Association policy</td>
<td>motion does not become Association policy</td>
<td>motion becomes Association policy if it passes at two consecutive meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amendment</td>
<td>amendment does not pass</td>
<td>amendment does not pass</td>
<td>amendment passes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenditure request</td>
<td>expenditure request does not pass</td>
<td>expenditure request does not pass</td>
<td>expenditure request passes</td>
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Sabbatical Accountability passes if it receives 50% or more votes in favour.

Results will be announced on the following Monday via the students Association website, email and social media. The voting records of Sabbatical Officers, School Representatives and Activities Representatives will be made accessible via a secure link from September 2020.

**Online Ballots**

Student Council online ballots take the form of a secret ballot in which all members are asked to **vote on an Ordinary Motion which has failed to receive enough votes in favour at Student Council to pass (33-66%)**.

Online ballots are different to regular Student Council votes as they are open for a longer period. This gives an opportunity for more students to vote on a particular motion so that a consensus can be reached by the wider student population.

Ballots will be posted on the Students’ Association website and communicated to students within four working days after the associated Student Council meeting.

Ballots will normally be open for two working days, with results being announced within two working days after the ballots close.

Online ballots will need to obtain a quorum (**a minimum number of votes**) for motions to pass. Quorum for an online ballot is the original number of votes cast (not including abstentions) plus one. E.g. if there were 50 votes for / against a motion then quorum would be 51.

If the online ballot is quorate and passes (67% or more votes in favour) it becomes Students’ Association policy and will subsequently be published on the **Students’ Association website**.
More Information & Guidance

For more information and guidance on Student Council please contact the Representation & Democracy Team on makeachange@eusa.ed.ac.uk.
Safe space policy and Democratic meeting code of conduct

Student Council meetings are governed by our safe space policy and our Democratic meeting code of conduct which exists to ensure that all students who attend feel safe, respected and, able to fully participate.

You can find these documents in full below.

**Edinburgh University Students’ Association Democratic Meeting Code of Conduct**

Introduction

The Students’ Association’s democratic meetings including Student Council Meetings, Committee Meetings, and General Meetings are the Students’ Association’s primary policy-making bodies. It is therefore vital that all students feel safe, respected, and able to fully participate.

Edinburgh University Students’ Association strives to be a place where contentious topics can be debated accessibly and with consideration for the needs of all participants. However, we recognise that some topics may be particularly difficult or distressing for some members to discuss.

The purpose of this policy is to enable us to facilitate productive debate in a way which is respectful and enables all members to participate.

**Code of Conduct**

Attendees of democratic meetings are expected to conduct themselves in a manner which is respectful and does not disadvantage or discourage others from participating in the discussion. This includes but is not limited to:

- Allowing others to speak when called upon by the meeting facilitator.
- Refraining from behaviour that discourages others from speaking or prevents others from hearing the speaker including speaking over, interrupting, heckling, or laughing.
- Where appropriate, using content warnings to highlight – in advance – discussion of sensitive topics. This would generally take the form of “I am about to mention [insert subject here]” and should be followed by a pause to allow members to remove themselves from the meeting if they wish.
- Respecting others’ experiences, even if they differ from your own.
- Refraining from utilising social media to harass or intimidate others.

**Edinburgh University Students’ Association Safe Space Policy**

Introduction

Edinburgh University Students’ Association operates under a Safe Space Policy which covers all Students’ Association spaces and events.

The aim of this policy is to create an environment in which all students, staff and visitors feel welcome, respected, and able to fully participate in our events and activities. It sets out our
collective commitment to the principles of liberation, equality, diversity, and inclusion which we place at the heart of everything we do.

We are aware that certain social structures may serve to disadvantage particular groups (including but not limited to people of colour, women, the LGBT+ community, and disabled people) and therefore this policy aims to redress that imbalance by actively challenging oppressive and discriminatory behaviour. It is also important to note that this policy exists within a legal framework that includes the Equality Act (2010) and Hate Crime legislation.

Zero Tolerance
To ensure this environment is maintained we operate a Zero Tolerance policy to the following behaviours towards both students and staff, as well as anyone visiting our venues or attending our events:

- **Harassment**: defined as any behaviour which is directed at an individual or group which is non-consensual. This includes sexual harassment such as cat-calling, groping or stalking.
- **Abuse**: covering both verbal and physical abuse, including sexual assault, which results in an individual or group feel intimidated or unsafe.
- **Discrimination**: including verbal and physical expressions of discrimination, based on any characteristics, including but not limited to:
  - Age
  - Class
  - Disability or Mental Illness
  - Gender
  - HIV/AIDS Status
  - Marriage and Civil Partnership
  - Nationality and Country of Citizenship
  - Political Affiliation
  - Pregnancy and Maternity
  - Race or Ethnicity
  - Religion and Belief
  - Sex Worker Status
  - Sexuality
  - Trans Status
- **Violence**: defined as any act of physical intimidation or aggression, including threats of violence.

All students, members of staff, and visitors to the Students’ Association are accountable for their own conduct and should refrain from any of the behaviours listed above. We would also encourage everyone to:

- Be aware of the connotations of their language.
- Avoid making assumptions about another person’s gender, pronouns, sexuality, disability, ethnic identity, or life experiences.
- Be prepared to challenge harassment and discrimination if they are witness to an incident, and where appropriate to report it.
- Be open if challenged on their own behaviour, and to learn from the experience.
• Be respectful of other’s physical and emotional boundaries. Event organisers are responsible for ensuring that all attendees, including external speakers, are aware of and adhere to the Safe Space Policy.

Breaches of the Policy
We actively encourage the reporting of incidents that constitute a breach of the Safe Space Policy.

It is the collective responsibility of all to uphold good conduct and challenge others’ unacceptable behaviour.

If you experience or witness an incident which you believe is in breach of the Safe Space Policy you can report it either:
• At the time, to a member of Students’ Association staff, the meeting facilitator, or the event organiser
• At a later date, by emailing complaints@eusa.ed.ac.uk

The Students’ Association’s Complaints Procedure is confidential and impartial.

Incidents will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If an individual is found to have breached the Safe Space Policy they may face one or more of the following actions, at the discretion of Students’ Association staff, the meeting facilitator, or the event organiser:
• Verbal Warning
• Request for an Acknowledgement of Wrong-doing and Apology
• Removal from Venue

Incidents may also be referred for investigation under the Students’ Association’s Student Disciplinary Procedure or the University’s Student Disciplinary Procedure.

Complaints against members of Students’ Association staff, including those against student staff in their capacity as employees of the Students’ Association, will be referred to the Students’ Association’s Staff Disciplinary Policy and handled by the Human Resources department.

If you would like to report an incident to the Police, you can access support and advice (including information on Third-Party Reporting) through the Advice Place, the Students’ Association’s impartial and confidential advice service.

More Information
If you have any questions regarding the Students’ Association’s Safe Space Policy or would like more information about how you can implement the policy at your events please contact the Vice President Welfare by emailing vpwelfare@eusa.ed.ac.uk.