



Meeting Procedural Rules

Introduction

General Faculties Council (GFC) has on many occasions confirmed its commitment to having a set of rules that assist rather than impede the conduct of business. GFC rules are not meant to unduly restrict debate or limit opportunities for participation. Their purpose is to facilitate inclusive and respectful dialogue, while ensuring efficient decision-making. It is the responsibility of the Chair, with the support of GFC, to employ the rules governing general meetings in a manner consistent with these principles. Substantive motions should be handled with considerable formality, but whenever possible the Chair should deal with matters of procedure by general agreement.

The following rules and procedures are based on a number of fundamental principles that encourage participation and engagement of members. These principles include:

- A commitment to inclusive and participatory decision-making.
- A commitment to openness, transparency and respectful communication.

1. Procedural Rules

- 1.1 GFC and its standing committees are governed by the procedural rules set out below. For matters not covered by these rules, or by the Post Secondary Learning Act (PSLA) reference shall be made to the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*. If this does not provide clear direction regarding a point in question, then the Chair shall decide how to proceed. However, such rulings by the Chair may be overruled via a motion supported by a vote of the majority of those present.
- 1.2 The chairs of GFC and its standing committees will be responsible for guiding meetings of GFC and its standing committees, enforcing rules, and deciding questions pertaining to those rules. Any decisions of the chair are subject to challenge (see 10.3).
- 1.3 The Chair will not participate actively in debate regarding a motion before GFC without passing the role of the Chair to the Vice-Chair for the duration of the debate and the subsequent vote.

2. Meetings

- 2.1 GFC and its standing committees shall meet regularly during the academic year, the schedule of which will be published on the governance website at least one month before the beginning of each academic year. GFC meetings will not be scheduled during the period set aside for final examinations or Reading Week, however committee meetings may occur during this time.
- 2.2 Cancellation - GFC Executive Committee may cancel a meeting of GFC if it determines that the number and nature of the agenda items make it reasonable to defer consideration, and provided that notice of such cancellation is given to members at least one week prior to the date of the meeting. The Chair of a GFC standing committee may cancel a meeting if the agenda items make it reasonable to defer

consideration, and provided that notice of such cancellation is given to members as early as possible.

- 2.3 From time to time, the Chair of GFC may call special meetings of GFC, provided that notice of such meetings is given to members at least one month in advance.
- 2.4 GFC meetings shall normally be scheduled and planned to end two hours after being called to order.
- 2.5 Debate on new items of business will not be entertained after GFC has been sitting for three hours.
- 2.6 No audio or video recording of meetings shall be permitted unless by express authority of the Chair.

3. Open Sessions

- 3.1 Meetings of GFC and its standing committees are normally held in open session, with the exception of those dealing with nominations and adjudication which are always held in closed session.
- 3.2 Subject to the limitations of space and orderly conduct as determined by the chair, members of the university community and the general public may attend open meetings as observers. Observers may only speak if expressly invited to do so by the Chair.

4. Closed Sessions

- 4.1 From time to time, GFC or its committees may hold meetings or portions of meetings as closed meetings; at that point, proceedings will be confidential and all non-members, except those specifically invited, will be asked to withdraw.

5. Questions

- 5.1 If more information than is provided as part of the meeting agenda is required, information requests may be made of the University Governance office.
- 5.2 Questions on an issue within GFC's jurisdiction may be submitted in writing to the GFC Secretary up to six working days before the next GFC meeting to receive a written response.
- 5.3 Every GFC meeting has Question Period as a standing item wherein members may raise a question during the time set aside for this item (see 6.5). Procedures for Question Period are available at governance.ualberta.ca
- 5.4 Questions with regard to a specific item on an agenda may be raised during consideration of that item at the GFC meeting.

6. Agendas

- 6.1 The agenda of each GFC meeting will be proposed by the GFC Executive Committee and approved by GFC. The GFC Executive Committee will ensure that items put before GFC are complete and ready for discussion and published in advance of the meeting.

- 6.2 If GFC members want to have an issue debated, they are asked to submit the issue to the GFC Executive Committee. Whenever possible, members wishing to add items to the agenda should contact the Chair or GFC Secretary two weeks in advance of the GFC Executive Committee meeting to allow time for the item to be added to the agenda.
- 6.3 Should a member wish to add an item to the agenda at a meeting of GFC, a two-thirds vote of those present is required; the Chair will then determine where the item appears on the agenda. In cases where the Chair or GFC Secretary has been informed in advance of a planned request to add a new item, but after the agenda has been published, the proposal shall be circulated to members through the normal means.
- 6.4 When the Agenda is being approved, the Chair will entertain a request to change the order of items, for specified reasons.
- 6.5 Each agenda of GFC and its standing committees will include Question Period of one half hour in length that may be extended with the approval of members.
 - a. Question period is comprised of both written questions and, time permitting, questions from the floor.
 - b. The Chair will rule on whether a question from the floor can be answered expeditiously; if not, it will be referred to the appropriate officer for response at the next meeting.
- 6.6 Reports from standing committees are included on the GFC agenda for information only. Questions may be asked for clarification, but no debate may take place on such items.
- 6.7 Reports for Information may be moved to the discussion part of the agenda if a member gives two days notice to the GFC Secretary to ensure that an appropriate person is present to answer questions that may arise during discussion.
- 6.8 Agendas and materials for open session meetings are posted at governance.ualberta.ca

7. Quorum

- 7.1 General Faculties Council - The quorum for a GFC meeting is one-third of the total membership, except in the months of May through August when the quorum shall be one-quarter of the total membership.
- 7.2 GFC Standing Committees – The quorum for standing committee meetings is one-half of the voting members or, in the case where this is an even number, one-half plus 1 member.
- 7.3 Vacancies on committees are not included when establishing quorum.
- 7.4 Maintaining quorum - A duly-called meeting which starts with a quorum present shall be deemed to have a continuing quorum, notwithstanding the departure of voting members, unless the quorum is challenged by a voting member. In the event of a challenge, the remaining members may choose to adjourn or continue the meeting. In

the event of a decision to continue a meeting without quorum, the minutes shall record this fact and any decisions taken must be ratified at the next meeting.

8. Motions

- 8.1 Normally, all motions concerning substantive matters shall be published in the agenda materials.
- 8.2 All motions must be moved and seconded by members of GFC. Motions to appoint new members may only be moved and seconded by statutory members of GFC.
- 8.3 Motions pass with a majority vote, except for the following: (1) motions to add an item to the agenda require a two-thirds majority of those present; (2) motions to rescind a motion require a two-thirds majority of total members.
- 8.4 To make a motion, a member must be recognized by the Chair. (In the interest of clarity and to expedite business, it is advisable to provide a written motion to the GFC Secretary). The person making a motion will be invited by the Chair to speak first in any ensuing debate.
- 8.5 **Amendments to Motions** - A member may make a motion to amend the wording – and within certain limits the meaning – of a pending motion before the pending motion itself is voted upon. The amendment must be germane and cannot be used to introduce a new subject. An amendment is debatable.
- 8.6 **Motion to Adjourn** - A motion to adjourn is a motion to close the meeting. It must be seconded, is not debatable or amendable, and typically requires a simple majority vote. During the months of March and April, motions to adjourn require a two-thirds majority if substantive items of business remain on the agenda.
- 8.7 During the course of a GFC meeting, members may make a Notice of Motion for debate at the next GFC meeting. In such cases GFC Executive will be responsible for placement of the motion on the next GFC agenda.

9. Motions for Specific Purposes

- 9.1 **Motion to Table** – Enables the pending question to be laid aside until some future time. The motion cannot be debated. The mover may make a statement regarding what information they believe would be required to remove the item from the table, and the proposer of the item may make a brief comment on the impact of tabling the motion.
- 9.2 **Motion to Take From the Table** – Brings the motion back before GFC and cannot be debated.
- 9.3 **Motion to Reconsider** an item which was voted upon at the current or the last meeting. If passed, proceedings are restored to the point immediately prior to the vote to which it applies.
- 9.4 **Motion to Rescind a Motion** is only used when a Motion to Reconsider is out of time. Motions to Rescind require support of two-thirds of the total membership if no Notice of Motion was given, but only a simple majority if Notice was given.

10. Debate

- 10.1 Normally, a member may not speak for a second time until the Chair is satisfied that all members wishing to speak for their first time have done so.
- 10.2 A member who has the floor may not normally be interrupted. However, the Chair may interrupt a speaker if the speaker is out of order by using unacceptable language, is abusive of other members, or is not speaking to the motion. If the Chair does not do so, a member may raise this as a point of order.
- 10.3 **Point of Order** - It is the right of any member who notices a breach of the rules of Council to insist on their enforcement. If the Chair fails to notice such a breach, any member may make the appropriate Point of Order, calling on the Chair for a ruling. A Point of Order does not require a seconder, it is not debatable or amendable, and cannot be reconsidered.
- 10.4 **Calling the Question** - Upon hearing a member call the question, the Chair will ask members if they are ready to vote on the motion being discussed. If there appears to be opposition to closing the debate, the Chair may ask for a motion to close debate. If seconded, members will then vote on this motion and proceed accordingly.

11. Debates without Motions

- 11.1 When discussion of an issue and the formal rules pertaining to making motions, debate, and voting seem to be a hindrance to thoughtful discussion, the GFC agenda can allow for a less structured discussion guided by the Chair and the consensus of the members in attendance.

12. Attendance

- 12.1 Delegates – members who serve on GFC or its standing committees by virtue of their office may send a delegate; such delegates shall act with all the rights of membership. There shall be no alternates for other members.
- 12.2 GFC attendance - If a student misses two consecutive meetings or more than three meetings, the Students' Union or the Graduate Students' Association may request that the Chair declare the position vacant. If a faculty representative or a non-student appointed member misses two consecutive meetings or more than three meetings in one academic year without a reason satisfactory to the members of the GFC Executive Committee, the Executive Committee may declare the position vacant.
- 12.3 Standing committee attendance - If an elected member is absent from three consecutive meetings or is frequently absent without a reason satisfactory to the remaining members of the Committee, the Chair shall declare the position vacant.

13. Voting

- 13.1 All members of GFC are charged with the responsibility of examining issues before Council and voting as they judge fit on such issues. No member of GFC, regardless of how that person gains membership on Council, is an instructed delegate.
- 13.2 Motions shall normally be adopted on a simple majority of members present except to add items to the agenda which requires a two-thirds majority of those present, or for a Motion to Rescind which requires a two-thirds majority vote of total membership.

- 13.3 An abstention is not considered to be a vote cast.
- 13.4 The Chair votes only in the instance of a tie. When there is a tie vote, the motion is lost if the Chair abstains.
- 13.5 All members may participate in discussions; only voting members may move, second and vote on motions.
- 13.6 Electronic Votes by Committees – In cases where extensive deliberation is not essential to determining a course of action and it is necessary for a business item to be decided before the next scheduled meeting, the Chair and Secretary of a GFC standing committee may hold an electronic vote. The motion will be duly moved and seconded and all normal procedures will be followed in conducting the e-mail ballot. However, upon receiving the item of business and ballot, any committee member may request that the matter be debated at the next meeting or at a special meeting and the vote delayed until after that debate, with the Chair determining the appropriate course of action.
- 13.7 Electronic Votes by GFC – In cases where GFC is the electing body to populate certain selection committees and other bodies, the election process may use e-vote mechanisms.
- 13.8 Electronic Approval of Committee Reports by GFC – Reports from the Nominating and Replenishment Committees may be distributed electronically to GFC members and are considered approved by the deadlines indicated on the report subject to receipt of additional nominations.

14. Records of Proceedings

- 14.1 Official Record – The official record of meetings of GFC shall be the minutes taken by the Secretary and approved by GFC.
- 14.2 Minutes – The minutes shall reflect the decisions made and reasons for the decision.

15. Amendment of these Rules and Procedures

Rules and procedures governing meetings of General Faculties Council may be amended by a majority vote of those present and voting at a duly constituted meeting of GFC, provided that notice of the proposed amendment has been given and that a quorum is present at the time the vote is taken. Rules are reviewed every three years.

16. Links

GFC terms of reference
Question period procedures