Annual General Meeting and Election Guidance for Student Groups- March 2020

The restrictions due to Covid-19 have presented many challenges, one of which being how student groups can ensure that they hold a successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) and elect a new committee in accordance with their constitution. Considering these changes, this document contains important updates on how to hold your AGM and election online.

Each student group must hold an AGM and elections before the end of the Academic Year (31st August 2020). Although student groups can take the risk of waiting to see if the restrictions are lifted before this date, it is advisable that they plan on using alternative methods as outlined in this guide.

Holding your AGM online

Please consider the following:

1. **REMEMBER**: Before anything, it is essential that you read through your constitution to ensure you are doing everything to follow the guidelines for your specific group.
2. **Where to hold my AGM**: you can hold an AGM online on platforms which allow you to host meetings via a shareable link, made accessible only to your members. If you can choose a platform which allows for recording of the meeting (with consent of your members), this is preferable as it may help with minute-taking.
3. **How to invite people to my AGM**: It's best to use a link to invite people to the meeting, which you should send out via the 'messaging' function on the control panel of your SU page, this should ensure that only your members are invited. Ensure that you give your members sufficient notice to propose motions (usually two weeks), and share any papers (e.g. proposed constitution changes) and an agenda in advance of the meeting. Guidance: how to message members.
3. **What to do in my AGM**: Usually, AGMs include a summary of committee achievements throughout the year, a financial breakdown, and an opportunity to discuss any constitutional amendments. **No voting may happen during your video-AGM.** All discussions must be minuted usually by the General Secretary, and the minutes should include an attendee list.

Constitutional Amendments/ Referendums

1. How to vote on constitutional amendments: This should happen online, on your page on the SU website to ensure it is held fairly and democratically. Any motions which need voting on, can go through the 'referendum' function, which can be set up by SU staff. You can request to have the referendum put on your page here: referendum request form.
2. It's important to remember to only request a referendum if you are reasonably confident that you can achieve quorum (this should be on your constitution, and is usually 20 full members or 1/3 of your membership, whichever is fewer). Referendums can take a lot of time to set up, which is time spent away from helping groups with other issues! **Here's some guidance to help you hit quorum the first time:**
   a. Advertise on as many platforms as possible. Social Media is great, but make sure you also send emails to your group members via the Messaging function on the website, to make sure everybody sees it. Even message members individually to encourage them to vote if you can. Guidance: how to message members.

b. Make sure group members understand what they're voting for, and why it is important. Write a sentence or two explaining why their vote matters, and encouraging them to help towards quorum- or your changes won't get made!

c. Give people ample time to vote! If you keep voting open for a few days to a week, it's more likely that people will have the chance to vote in the time window (especially if you have members overseas!). Not to mention, this also gives you more time to advertise.

d. Speaking of, don't just promote it once! Post, Post, and post again!

e. There's no harm in incentivising! Think of something fun to encourage people to get involved. For example, for every vote in the AGM, committee will run a km (or do something else!). This way, you could even set up a fundraiser for your chosen charity off the back of this too.

3. It is advised that groups adopt the [new constitution template](#).

4. If the constitutional amendments pass, please send a copy of your updated constitution to your Development Coordinator and to suonlineservices@nottingham.ac.uk. Please also upload the updated version to your group's page by using the resources function on the admin panel. Information: [how to upload resources guide](#).

5. If the constitutional amendments don't pass, please get in touch with [socsportadmin@nottingham.ac.uk](#) to discuss why this might be, what you could do differently, and next steps. Whilst the referendum <u>can</u> be repeated, this should be considered the same as running an EGM, and shouldn't be repeated multiple times over. You can speak to your Development Coordinator about the best way to move forward.

Online Elections

The **only democratic way** to hold elections now is to follow Section 4 guidance in the original guidance document. Most groups should already have completed their election request form during the main election period, if you haven't done so, please make sure you do so ASAP following the steps below. If groups are seen to hold elections not in line with the following process, they will asked to repeat their elections in line with this process.

Steps to hold an online election:

1. Note: you <u>cannot</u> hold an election for a position that is not in your constitution. Make sure you check this before submitting your election request form.

2. You can request an election here: [online election request form](#). Please allow a few working days before the opening of nominations, to allow for staff to process your request.

4. SU staff will approve candidates and notify you in advance of nominations opening.

a. You will need to contact your members with details of your election period (nominations and voting), the positions available, and a position description for each role. Information: [how to message members](#).

b. Candidates can upload their manifesto and photo to the website. Info Sheet: [how to stand in a committee election](#).

7. **Only members of the student group can stand and vote in your election** (please ensure the current committee members have joined the group). If you wish, we can take all memberships sales offline during or shortly before the voting period. Information: [How to vote in an online election](#).

5. SU staff will send you the results of your election as soon as possible after the close of voting.

6. IMPORTANT: You must complete the committee details form immediately as we need their contact information. Please fill out the [committee details form](#).

7. Inform the incoming committee members that they will hear from us shortly regarding compulsory training: new committee training.

8. If you need to hold a by-election for unfulfilled positions, you can do this by completing another online election form.

Online Handover

Due to the changes, you may be required to complete an online handover.

- Handover from the outgoing to the incoming committee is important for continuity of the student group, preparing and empowering the incoming committee, learning from past mistakes and successes, and passing on valuable knowledge and skills.
- Inform the incoming committee members of the new compulsory committee training. Information will be uploaded here: new committee training.
- Tips to consider:
  - Hold an online committee meeting with your outgoing and incoming committee members to discuss the past year, the future plans, the constitution, and other important aspects of your student group.
  - Hold individual online meetings with outgoing and incoming committee members of the same role to discuss the role requirements, achievements in the past year, potential for improvement, and to empower the incoming committee members to take on the responsibilities. You can use the handover document template for this: handover document template.
  - Create and update a handover document containing information and insights from the outgoing committee that can be used in future years to guide the handover process.

Other useful links and information for online handover period:

- Committee section of the website with essential information: committee
- Handover website section: committee handover

FAQs

1. What if my group needs to make small changes or don't know whether a change should go through the referendum process?
   a. You can propose whatever changes you like, however if it is only a small change you may want to consider whether you want to wait until you can do this in person, or just later in the year. Remember that any change to your constitution MUST be passed by a quorate vote of a general meeting.
2. How many constitutional amendments can I propose?
   a. You may propose as many constitutional changes as you deem necessary, either as one motion, or as several small motions. For example, if you want to bring the constitution in line with the new template, you may wish to do this as one motion 'Do you agree with the proposed changes to bring the constitution in line with the SU recommended template'. Or, you might wish to propose it by section, such as 'Do you agree with the proposed changes to section 10 of the constitution'. Try to keep the amount of motions to a reasonable number for members to digest, separating motions only where necessary.
2. Can we use another platform to vote on changes to the constitution (e.g. SurveyMonkey, Facebook polls)?

  a. Unfortunately these platforms are not secure enough to ensure that we are adhering to democratic practices, so any elections held on platforms outside of the SU website are deemed illegitimate. All elections must be run via the SU website.
3. If we have already held our AGM online and voted on different platforms than those here, do we need to re-do our AGM?
  a. You will need to re-run any votes you have run on different platforms, in the way we have outlined above, in order to ensure fairness, transparency and democracy throughout all groups. If you would like to discuss this, please contact socsportadmin@nottingham.ac.uk or your relevant officer (suactivities@nottingham.ac.uk or susports@nottingham.ac.uk)