

Student Congress

RULES OF ORDER

I. PURPOSE

After utilizing Robert's Rules of Order, it became clear that the Student Congress needs its own specified rules of order to clarify procedure and streamline the legislative process. The nature of the Student Congress is unique and thus has unique needs. These rules of order are intended to guide procedure during official meetings.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STUDENT CONGRESS

The Student Congress may conduct business after the Fall Semester Elections. The budget may be approved only after congressional elections occur.

III. MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Voting Members:

1. Consists of all class, academic, and residential representatives.
2. Voting members have the privilege of making motions, obtaining the floor, and voting on all motions.

B. Non-Voting members:

1. Consists of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and the Administrative Officers.
2. Non-Voting members shall have the privilege of making motions and obtaining the floor.
3. They shall not have the privilege of voting under any circumstance.
4. Non-Voting members may not sponsor legislation.

IV. MEMBER RIGHTS

All Congress members physically present at Student Congress meetings, voting and non-voting, have certain rights that cannot be suspended. These rights are:

1. To make a statement of defense before one's own impeachment proceedings.
2. To state a motion as long as one is not presiding.
3. To challenge any decisions made by the chair or parliamentarian.
4. To call to the attention of the Student Congress the abuse of the rights of any member of the Students' Association.

V. QUORUM

The Student Congress shall conduct business only with a majority of voting members present; this is known as having quorum. If in the course of the meeting quorum is lost, debate may continue, but no vote may be taken except to adjourn. Congressional committees may conduct business with three or more members unless a member objects or the committee has additional rules of order requiring a specific quorum. Motions carry by a majority of voting members present unless otherwise stated.

VI. ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

A. Governing Documents:

It is the duty of the President and the Parliamentarian to ensure adherence to all laws governing the Student Congress and answer questions concerning these laws. The hierarchy of documents is:

1. The Constitution
2. The By-laws
3. The Rules of Order

B. Motions and points: May be submitted during old and new business by voting and nonvoting members. Appropriate motions and points include:

These Points Are Debatable.

Main Motion: Used to begin discussion of a new matter. Requires a majority vote.

Move to Amend: Used to alter a proposal and begin discussion of the amendment proposal. Requires a majority vote.

These Points are not Debatable

Move to Adjourn: Used to end a meeting. Requires a majority vote.

Lay on the Table: Used to suspend legislation indefinitely. Requires a majority vote.

Take from the Table: Used to bring legislation back into discussion after previously being tabled. Requires a majority vote.

Move the Previous Question: Used to end a debate on a motion. Requires a 2/3 vote.

Point of Order: Used to call the attention of the chair to a violation of procedure. Does not require a vote.

Point of Information: An inquiry as to facts affecting the business at hand.

Withdrawal: Used to withdraw a stated motion before it is put to a vote. Does not require a vote.

Bolded motions require a 2nd.

C. Decision Making Process: The order shall address old business then new business. The President should make an agenda available, though members may choose to change the order of business.

- 1. Gaining Recognition:** When the chair recognizes a member of the student congress, the member may propose a main motion. This can be either written down or pronounced orally.
- 2. Sponsorship Speech:** The sponsor or sponsors of a main motion may make a sponsorship speech for a length of time predetermined by the chair. Following the speech, the sponsor may answer questions for a length of time determined by the chair. All present at the meeting are allowed to ask questions to the sponsor in order of recognition by the chair.
- 3. Debate:** If there are no more questions, or if the chair has decided to end questioning, then the congress shall move immediately into a time of debate. Members wanting to debate must be organized into in favor and in opposition of the motion lines at the front of the chamber. Members shall be given an amount of time for their speeches predetermined by the chair, typically one minute. The speeches should alternate between speeches in favor and in opposition of the motion.
- 4. Motions Appropriate to Make During Debate:** These motions can be made during debate.
 - a. Move to amend the main motion, or any subsidiary motion.
 - b. Move to table the motion until a further time.
 - c. Move to the previous question.
- 5. Voting:** Upon approval of the Student Congress to vote on a matter, the following methods may be used:
 - a. Ballot: Ballots shall be passed out and must include the member's name, vote, and name of the matter under consideration.
 - b. Raise of Hands: Members may raise their hands to vote on a matter.
 - c. Voice: At times it may be appropriate to do a voice vote, if the result of a voice vote is unclear another form of voting must be used. This should only be used in very small matters where it would not be necessary to keep record of each person's vote.
 - d. Absentee Vote: Members who are unable to attend the meeting (this includes Study Abroad students) have the right to review legislation on the docket and to submit a vote on the matter before the time of the meeting.

- 6. Tabulating Votes:** The Student Congress is in recess until the votes are counted and is back in order when the chair announces the results of the vote. No motions may be made during this time of recess. The chair must announce the results of the vote and by how many votes.
- 7. Adjournment:** The chair shall ask the Student Congress to make any new motions concerning old or new business. If no other motions are made, then a member should move to adjourn.
- D. Accountability:** Any member of the Student Congress may challenge the interpretation of the governing documents of the Students' Association. Since the misinterpretation of the governing documents is ultimately a violation of the rights of the members of the Students' Association, a member should rise and state a point of order immediately followed by a motion to discuss the matter. Upon the second of this motion, all other matters are tabled, even if a previous matter was still under discussion. After the interpretation matter has been resolved, discussion resumes on the interrupted matter or the floor is opened to new motions if no interruption occurred.
- E. Budgets and Appropriations Procedure:** The Treasurer or presenter of the proposal shall be given time, determined by the chair, to explain the reasoning of their motion. During this time, the presenter may entertain changes to their proposal without the normal voting procedure. After the time of reasoning has expired, amendments to the proposal, not entertained by the presenter may be brought up. These amendments will be entertained under the normal Congressional procedure.
- F. Impeachment Process:** In the event that any member of the Students' Association has charges to bring against an officer, the organization will follow the impeachment process described below to determine whether the officer is guilty of the charges. It is expected prior to the initiation of this process by the bringing of formal charges, appropriate efforts will be taken to resolve any disagreements or conflict.
- Declaration of Charges:** Any member of the Students' Association who has a charge to bring against an officer and therefore wishes to initiate the impeachment process must make his/her intentions known in writing to the president, who will acknowledge receipt in writing. In the event that the member has a charge to bring against the president, the member will submit the charges in writing to the vice president. The member must also submit a copy of the information to an Advisor.

Review of Charges:

A. With the assistance of the Advisor(s), the president [or vice president] will then call a meeting of the officers not being charged and the Advisor(s) to hear and review the matter. The member bringing the charge against the officer will be invited to present his/her case to this group, and the officer being charged will be invited to respond to the charges. Upon conclusion of the review of charges, the officers not being charged will review the matter and vote as to whether or not the issue should be brought before the SA Congress (the member bringing the charges will not participate in the voting). A simple majority of these officers is required to take the matter to the SA Congress. If this majority is not reached, or if the officers are able to resolve the matter at this hearing, the impeachment process will be considered “resolved” and will conclude at this step.

B. If it is voted upon that the matter goes to Congress, then the president [or vice president] will call a meeting of Congress to consider the officer’s removal. The member bringing the charge against the officer will be invited to present his/her case at this meeting, and the officer being charged will be invited to respond.

Hearing:

Once Congress has been called to a meeting by the president [or vice president] the meeting will be presided over by a neutral party selected as the Hearing Officer and conducted according to the following hearing procedures.

Step 1. Reading of and response to charges

- a. Complainant will have five minutes to read a charge verbatim and provide explanation
- b. Respondent will have five minutes to answer the charge. The respondent should first answer the charge with one of three responses:
 - Admit to the charge
 - Admit to the charge nothing mitigating circumstances
 - Deny as untrue
- c. Steps A-B will be repeated until the list of specific charges has been read and responded to. During this period, Hearing Officer may for sake of clarification ask questions of either complainant or respondent.

Step 2. Congress and cabinet members, other than the respondent and complainant, will be able to ask questions of the respondent or complainant for up to twenty minutes verbally or by submitting their questions in writing to be asked by the Hearing Officer. After the initial twenty minute time period Congress may vote to extend time of questioning at its discretion.

Step 3. Congress members, other than the complainant and respondent, will be allowed two minutes to make a statement if so desired for up to twenty minutes. After the initial twenty minute time period Congress may vote to extend time of questioning at its discretion.

- Step 4.** Complainant will be allowed five minutes for a closing statement.
- Step 5.** Respondent will be allowed five minutes for a closing statement.
- Step 6.** All parties not made up of the Hearing Officer or a voting member of Congress will leave the Congressional Chambers. Congress will be allowed 15 minutes to deliberate amongst itself. During this time there will be zero-tolerance of any new information of any kind not already discussed, questioned, or mentioned in the presence of both the Complainant and Respondent. This may include but is not limited to personal anecdotes, new charges or complaints against either party not formally charged, experiences with either party not previously discussed, new questions not previously asked of either party. The Hearing Officer reserves the right to revoke the speaking privileges of any voting member of Congress who brings up any new information of any kind not already discussed, questioned, or mentioned in the presence of both parties, and is expected to protect the rights of both parties by insuring new information is not brought up during this time of deliberation. Congress is expected to disregard any new information that may incidentally be brought up during this time of deliberation that was not already discussed, questioned, or mentioned in the presence of both parties.
- Step 7.** Congress will then vote by secret signed ballot on whether or not to remove from office. This will require a three-fourths majority of the “entire Student Congress,” as stated in the Constitution, Article V, Section 2.
- Advisors will then count the votes and inform the entire assembly of Congress’ decision. If a 3/4ths majority is not achieved, or if the membership votes to clear the officer of the charges, the matter will be considered “resolved” and the officer will remain in office.

VII. ORDER

- A.** The chair shall ensure decorum during all Student Congress meetings. Speaking without obtaining the floor is not permitted, and the chair has the privilege of calling for a vote to remove persons from the room who continue to disrupt order.
- B.** Discussion of a personal or sensitive nature requires all persons who are not members of the Student Congress to be dismissed from the meeting. Members shall also be dismissed when they are the subjects of discussion. Persons who are not members of the Student Congress may also be dismissed if a contract is in the process of negotiation.