

# UGM Guide for Students

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## Background

Union General Meetings (UGMs) are a form of student democratic participation in SOAS SU, whereby students can propose policy motions, to be voted upon by the present student body.

UGMs are organised by the Democracy & Education Co-President and the Governance, Communication & Sustainability Coordinator, and are directed by the [SOAS SU Constitution](#) and [Schedule 1](#). We advise you read through these documents to fully understand the rules surrounding UGMs, however the following points (paraphrased) answer some of the main questions surrounding UGM rules for students:

- There should be at least 1 UGM per term, as organised by the Democracy & Education Co-President
  - Students may call an Extraordinary UGM by submitting a petition signed by at least 80 students to the Governance, Communication & Sustainability Coordinator, no less than 3 working days before the proposed UGM
- The quora for a normal UGM is 50 people
  - If a UGM calls for a vote of no confidence or has motions to amend the Constitution or Schedules, the quorum is 80 people
  - If quora is not met within 30 minutes of a UGM starting, the UGM shall be postponed and the meeting may continue without any voting at the discretion of the Chair
- Policy motions must be submitted no later than noon 3 working days before the UGM
- The UGM Chair should be someone external to the SU and is responsible for the smooth running of the UGM
- A simple majority is required for a motion to pass
  - A 2/3 majority is required for a vote of no confidence or motion to amend the SU Constitution
  - A 7/8 majority is required for a motion to suspend a section of the SU Constitution
- Once passed, a motion is active SU policy for 3 years

## Before the UGM

UGMs will be advertised in advance to the student body by SOAS Students' Union. It is important you note the deadline for submitting policy motions to be discussed at the next UGM and submit your motion before this in order to ensure it will be presented at the next UGM.

The SU offers [guidance on writing a UGM motion](#) through our website. We recommend, if you can, speaking with our [Democracy & Education Co-President](#) or [Governance, Communication & Sustainability Coordinator](#) before submitting your motion in order to be provided with the most detailed guidance and advice on your motion. As UGMs are a well structured space, ensuring your motion is formatted correctly and has thought about and addressed all of its wider implications on the SOAS SU student body, can help ensure a smooth meeting and potentially the success of your motion.

Once motions have been submitted and the motion deadline has passed, all motions will be uploaded to the [SU Governance Library](#) in the form of an agenda for the upcoming UGM. The SU will also circulate the titles of each of the motions and a link to the agenda to the student body to ensure that students are aware of what will be discussed in the upcoming UGM and can plan to attend if wanted.

If your motion has been submitted before this deadline you should now prepare for the UGM meeting.

## UGM Ground Rules

The following ground rules have been established for UGMs to ensure a safe and productive space for all. The Chair may use violation of any of these rules as grounds to make decisions.

- In this room there are varying opinions, beliefs, experiences and privileges. Collectively we recognise the power dynamics that exist here. Be aware of the space you take up, your assumptions and prejudices. It is the role of the Chair to intervene when inappropriate dynamics manifest.
- There will be opportunities for POIs, questions, and arguments for and against the motions proposed. Please use these designated opportunities to intervene.
- When making a POI or argument for or against, please do so in a constructive manner.
- Where motions are particularly sensitive, please remember to use content warnings.
- We establish an understanding that proposing an amendment to a motion does not indicate the criticism of an overall idea or an individual.

- While we encourage open discourse, we will not tolerate any hate speech. If any member of the union speaks inappropriately, disrespectfully or insensitively, it is the role of the Chair to intervene. Please use a POI if you are having issues with the point being raised.
- There will be zero tolerance to verbal hostility under any circumstances. Disruptive individuals may be asked to leave the space.
- If you have any concerns about the way the UGM is running or any issues regarding the application of ground rules during the UGM please mention it to the designated UGM Welfare Contact (who will be noted at the start of each meeting).

## Running of the UGM

Before the start of a UGM students may approach the Chair with an Emergency UGM Motion. This motion should be something which by its nature cannot wait until the next UGM to be addressed, and should be formatted in the correct way for UGM motions. It will then be up to the discretion of the Chair whether or not to address the Emergency Motion within the current UGM.

SOAS Students' Union's Constitution outlines the running order of UGMs:

1. Welcome from the Chair
2. Ratifying the minutes of the previous meeting for accuracy
3. Reports from the Union Executive Committee
4. Questions to the Union Executive Committee
5. Debates on Submitted Motions
6. Debates on Emergency Motions
7. Any Other Business

Points 1 - 4 will run by organisation of the Chair.

**Debates on motions (point 5, and 6 if applicable) run in the following order:**

1. The motion proposer introduces the motion and the plans for if the motion passes (2 minutes)
2. Amendments to the motion are welcomed
  - a. Amendments are addressed in the order received
  - b. The amendment proposer makes a speech (1 minute)
  - c. An argument against the amendment is welcomed (1 minute)
  - d. A balanced number of for and against arguments on the amendment are welcomed (1 minute per argument)
  - e. Questions on the amendment are welcomed
  - f. A vote on the amendment takes place
3. A speech against the motion is welcomed (1 minute)

4. A balanced number of for and against arguments on the motion are welcomed (1 minute per argument)
5. Questions on the motion are welcomed
6. The motion proposer may summarise the motion (with amendments) (1 minute)
7. A vote on the motion takes place

Points of Interest (POIs) are welcome at any time by students raising their student card. POIs are a chance to announce a fact relating to the current discussion which may be important for those in attendance to know.

Due to confusion surrounding having amendments on a motion before questions, the Chair may propose a change to the above running order to allow for students to ask questions on a motion *before* proposing amendments. This change is subject to approval by those in attendance.

It is important that students respect others when they are speaking, and use the running order points correctly - announcing arguments and questions only during the allotted periods.

## After the UGM

If your motion passes in a UGM it will then become active SU policy for 3 years. A sabbatical officer will be assigned as the lead SU contact for your motion, and you should be prepared to work with the SU to complete the resolutions of your motion.

It is important to note that SOAS Students' Union is a registered charity, and as such there are certain actions we are unable to take due to charity law. Please be aware that a UGM motion should be viable, and even if passed, if a motion is not viable we will not be able to complete the resolutions in their entirety.

## Further Questions

If you have any further questions on the Union General Meeting process, please feel free to contact our [Democracy & Education Co-President](#) or [Governance, Communication & Sustainability Coordinator](#), who will be able to answer your questions.