

A faint, light gray background graphic of a hand, palm facing forward, with fingers slightly spread, positioned behind the text.

# Students' Council **Handbook**



*I am not here for me. I am here for the people that lent me their power in exchange for a promise. I will keep that promise to make decisions with their interest in mind. I will vote after knowing the facts, not before. I will use Robert's Rules for their purpose, not my own. I will oppose ideas, not people. I will think before I speak, not speak just to think. I will take the job seriously or not take the job at all. I will represent my fellow students' interests, not my own. I am not here for me. – **Students' Council Oath of Office***

# Table of Contents

---

5	<b>Students' Union</b> About the Students' Union SU Strategic Plan SU Organizational Chart
8	<b>Students' Council</b> About Students' Council Committees of Council DIE Board Council Documents Standing Orders
11	<b>Executive and Councillor Roles</b>
14	<b>Roberts' Rules of Order</b> Overview Why Use Rules? Simplified Glossary Summary Chart of Important Terms
18	<b>In Camera FAQ</b>
21	<b>SU Bylaw and Policy</b>
23	<b>Asking Effective Questions</b>
24	<b>Advocacy Guide</b>
29	<b>Conflict Management</b>
35	<b>Governance Acronym Cheat Sheet</b>
36	<b>Important Contacts</b>

# University of Alberta Students' Union

---

## About the Students' Union

The University of Alberta Students' Union (SU) is the official body that represents all undergraduate students and acts as an advocate for students at the university, and at all levels of government. We operate a variety of businesses intended to appeal to students (from bars and a deli, to a convenience store and a full service print shop), and provide access to a wide range of student services designed to meet the needs of all of our members. We also operate - and own - the Students' Union Building, and run a budget of more than \$11 million, with around 200 staff.

The SU is a student-centric organization that is run by students for students, and prides itself on being a proactive organization that is sensitive to the needs of individuals and the student body as a whole. We are committed to ensuring that education is affordable and of the highest quality, and that the student experience is a positive one.

### *Values of the SU:*

#### Do what is right, not what's easy

Acting with integrity and respect is essential to an open, collaborative, and democratic organization.

#### Inspire change for the world

Demonstrating students' power to effect change inspires the next generation of citizens and leaders.

#### Act with unbridled compassion

Providing an inclusive and caring environment empowers students to make the most of any challenges they face.

#### Always keep moving

Adapting and innovating fulfills the expectations of our dynamic community.

#### Learn from the past to improve tomorrow

Understanding our history is key to building an equitable and sustainable future.

# STUDENTS' UNION STRATEGIC PLAN

The SU's Strategic Plan helps define the long-term direction and priorities of the SU. It is updated every 4-5 years by a Strategic Planning Committee made up of Councillors, Executives, students, and SU staff.

## *What We Do*

Our mission is to serve, represent, and engage students.

## *Where We Are Going*

We aspire for students to shape every aspect of the university experience.

Our vision of a successful future is one where students:

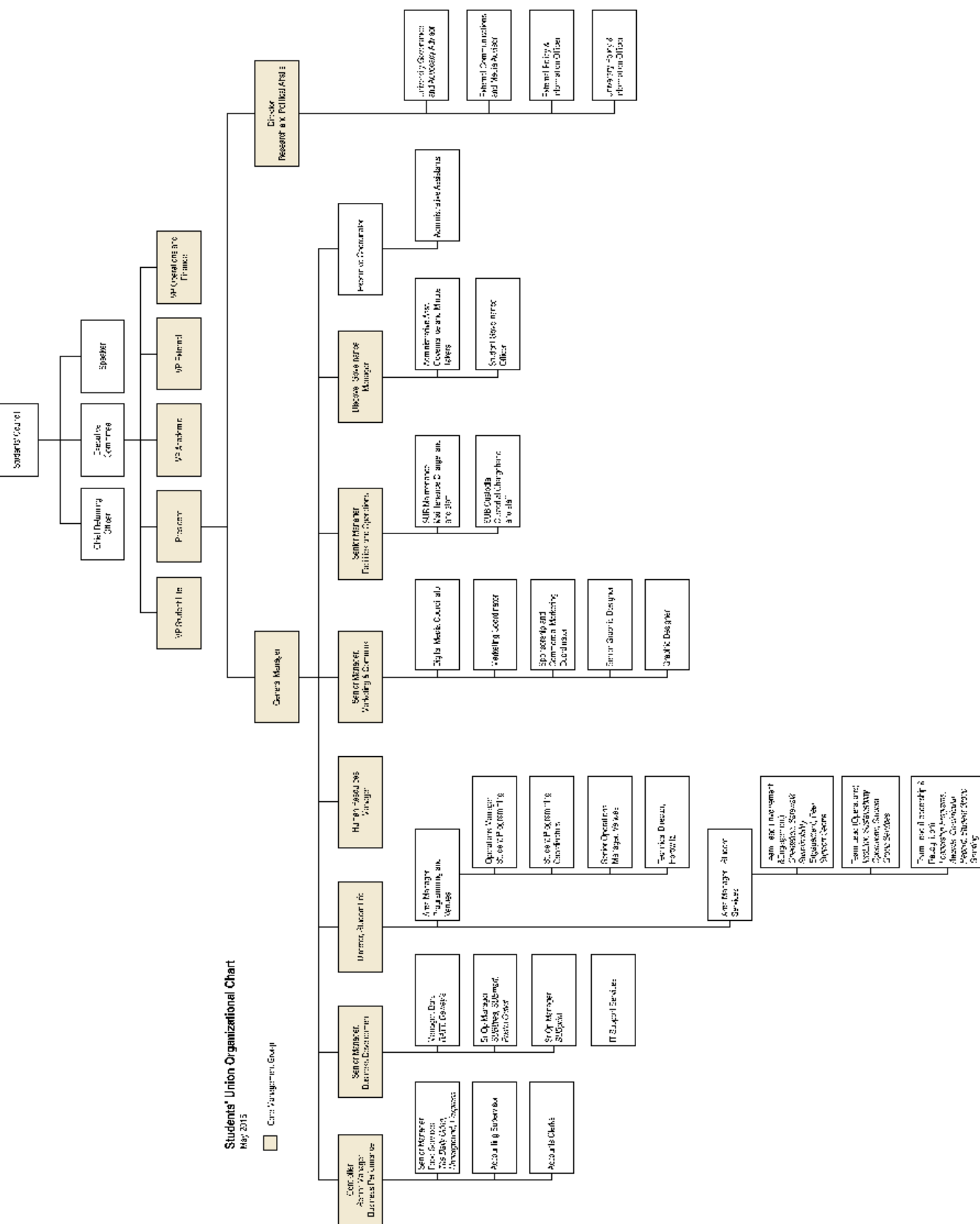
- Feel safe, accepted, and welcome on campus;
- Thrive in a diverse intellectual community;
- Are empowered and confident in their ability to succeed;
- Contribute to society as active citizens and effective leaders; and
- Know they have a voice and the power to effect change.

## *Critical Success Factors and Goals*

These are goals laid out in the Strategic Plan that outline ways in which we intend to fulfill our mission, strive towards our vision, and uphold our values. They include:

1. Empowering Our Students
2. Building Our Relationships
3. Strengthening Our Organization
4. Serving All Students

## STUDENTS' UNION ORGANIZATONAL CHART



# Students' Council

---

## ABOUT THE STUDENTS' COUNCIL

Students' Council is the ultimate authority in the Students' Union. It consists of 40 members:

- The Speaker (non-voting)
- The President of the Students' Union
- The four Vice-Presidents' of the Students' Union
- The Undergraduate Board of Governors Representative
- 33 Faculty Councillors (distributed on a representation by population principle).
- The General Manager (non-voting)

Together, these individuals are responsible for fulfilling the mandate of the Students' Union. This mandate comes from the Post Secondary Learning Act.

Meetings of Students' Council are generally every second Tuesday at 6:00 PM. Meetings are open to the public except when Council moves in camera to discuss sensitive business. All meetings of the Council observe Robert's Rules of Order.

While Students' Council has delegated some of its authority to its various committees, notably the Discipline, Interpretation, and Enforcement Board and the Executive Committee, it retains ultimate control and authority over the elected Executive Officers, all monies collected under its authority, and any subsidiary body created under its auspices.

## COMMITTEES OF THE STUDENTS' COUNCIL

There are several committees under Students' Council to assist Council in its work. They allow Council to greatly expand the amount of business it can deal with by carrying out delegated activities and refining suggested actions to be taken by Council:

<i>Committees of Council</i>			
<b><i>Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Committee</i></b> <i>Assists in the SU's implementation of the TRC Calls to Action.</i>	<b><i>Audit Committee</i></b> <i>Reviews financial and credit card statements, audits representative associations.</i>	<b><i>Bylaw Committee</i></b> <i>Makes draft recommendations of bylaws, and referendum and plebiscite questions.</i>	<b><i>Council Administration Committee</i></b> <i>Maintains Council Standing Orders and oversees the Speaker and CRO.</i>
<b><i>Finance Committee</i></b> <i>Disperses grants, oversees DFUs, and recommends the annual operating budget.</i>	<b><i>Nominating Committee</i></b> <i>Organizes recruitment efforts and screens candidates for various governance positions.</i>	<b><i>Policy Committee</i></b> <i>Makes draft recommendations of political policy and evaluates Executive advocacy.</i>	<b><i>Student Group Committee</i></b> <i>Oversees discipline and other issues regarding all undergraduate student groups.</i>



## DIE Board

The Discipline, Interpretation, and Enforcement Board is the judicial branch of the Students' Union. It is responsible for interpreting and enforcing the legislation of the Students' Union, and for making rulings on appeals to decisions made by the Chief Returning Officer or the Student Group Committee.

Any undergraduate student may initiate a complaint about the contravention of SU legislation, and any member of Council or the Chief Returning Officer can request an interpretation of SU legislation. To initiate a hearing, you must fill out a Hearing Application Form, which can be found on the DIE Board webpage.

## Council Documents

Students' Council has four types of documents to record its business:

1. Order Papers
2. Late Additions
3. Votes and Proceedings
4. Audio Recordings

### *Order Papers*

This is the main agenda of Students' Council meetings. It contains all the business Council will be going over at the next meeting, and is published on the Friday before the meeting.

Any member of Council may submit items to the Order Paper. Items can be submitted by e-mailing [council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca](mailto:council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca) and are due by 8:00 AM on the Friday before the meeting.

### *Late Additions*

This is a second agenda for items that are submitted after the Order Paper deadline. It exists to catch urgent business that may come up between the Order Paper deadline and the Council meeting. Items on the Late Additions can only be dealt with in Council if it gets voted or special ordered onto the main agenda at the meeting. If an item on the Late Additions doesn't make it onto the main agenda, then it will be added to the Order Paper for the next meeting.

Any member of Council may submit items to the Late Additions. Items can be submitted by e-mailing [council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca](mailto:council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca) and are due by 2:00 PM on the Tuesday before the meeting.

### ***Votes and Proceedings***

Instead of keeping detailed minutes, which can get quite long when you have four hour meetings, we have a Votes and Proceedings document. This records all motions and votes for each meeting. Although it is not required, we usually include some notes regarding the debate around each motion and presentation as well, to give context to people who are reading the Votes and Proceedings but don't have time to listen to the entire audio recording.

### ***Audio Recordings***

All meetings of Council are recorded, and the recordings are uploaded to the Students' Union website. We do recordings in place of detailed minutes, as it saves us staff time and paper, and ensures accuracy.

## **Standing Orders**

The rules governing how Council and Committee meetings are carried out are contained in Standing Orders. Council and each committee has its own standing orders document. These documents outline who is a member, how members are chosen, how and when meetings are scheduled, how a chair is chosen, what kind of business gets done, and anything else you may need to know. Standing Orders are approved by Council and each committee at the beginning of the year, and may also experience changes throughout the year.

### ***Making Changes to Standing Orders***

If you are a member of Council or a committee, you may submit a motion to the relevant body to change its Standing Orders if you feel something should be done differently. If Standing Orders are changed, be sure to contact Discover Governance immediately so that they can update the documents on the website.

# Executive and Councillor Roles

---

## EXECUTIVE ROLES

### *President*

#### Primary Spokesperson of the SU

- Sits on the Board of Governors
- Talks to media and attends events

#### Supervises SU Affairs

- Chairs Executive Committee meetings
- Oversees projects of the Vice Presidents and track their progress

#### Heads Major Initiatives

- Directs the activities of the General Manager
- Chairs the Strategic Planning Committee
- Coordinates efforts on major projects like Fall Reading Week

#### Internal Advocacy

- Sits on the General Faculties Council and most of its standing committees

#### Faculty Associations

- Coordinates advocacy activities as they relate to academic affairs
- Chairs the Council of Faculty Associations
- Gives advocacy support on major faculty issues

### *Vice President Academic*

### *Vice President External*

#### External Advocacy

- Represents the SU on CAUS and CASA
- Advocates to Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments

#### U of A Involvement

- Represents the SU on the Senate
- Represents the SU on the Alumni Council

### *Vice President Operations and Finance*

Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversees the operation of all businesses</li><li>• Chairs Executive Committee budget process</li><li>• Chairs Executive Committee and directs General Manager in absence of President</li></ul>
---------	---

### *Vice President Student Life*

Non-Academic Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Directs advocacy efforts on non-academic issues that impact students</li><li>• Works with RHA and Residence Services</li></ul>
Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chairs the Council of Residence Associations</li><li>• Supports advocacy on major residence issues</li></ul>
Student Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coordinates advocacy for student groups</li><li>• Communicates with the Dean of Students on student group issues</li></ul>

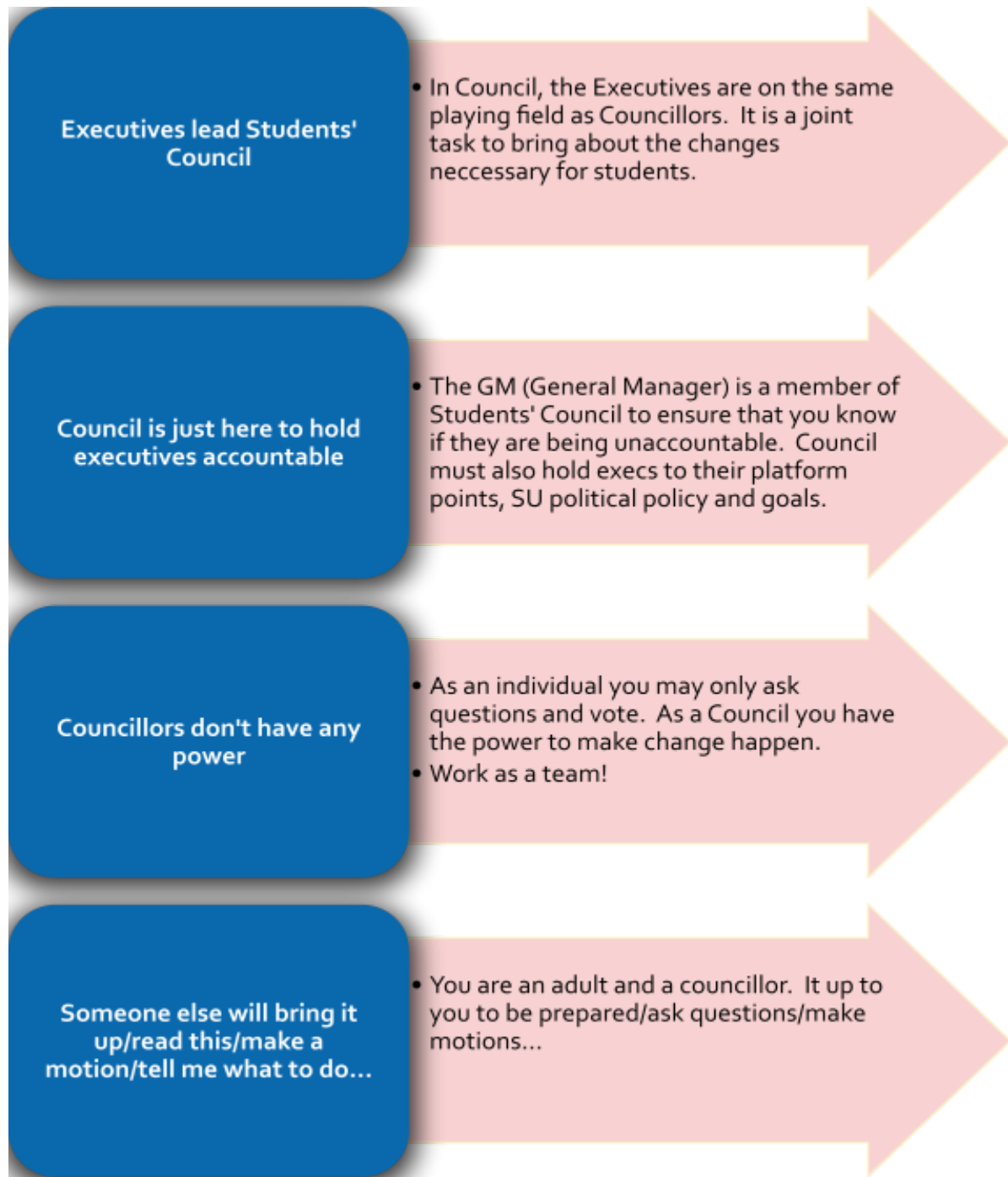
## Councillor Roles

Being a Councillor with the Student's Union brings with it its own responsibilities and rewards. As a Councillor it is necessary for you to develop working relationships with other Councillors and Executives, stay informed, seek information from the executives and be fully prepped for Council meetings. You are the connector between your students and the Students' Union so be prepared to bring council awareness to developing issues on campus, keeping your constituents informed and engaged. Develop your understanding of the Students' Union and maintain a respectful and welcoming Council environment.

In order to fulfill the role you have accepted you can make motions, ask questions, submit information items, strike committees or task forces, make legislative changes, raise awareness of issues, engage with constituents, engage with student groups and associations, and engage with councillors.

You are stewards of the Students' Union and with a majority you can make changes to Council Standing Orders, Political Policy, Bylaws, and the Budget.

### *Common myths and misconceptions*



# Roberts' Rules of Order

---

To understand how to use Robert's Rules of Order to run a meeting, you should understand a little bit about parliamentary law. Parliamentary law is a branch of common law that governs the proceedings of deliberative assemblies. *Robert's Rules of Order* is a specific variant of it that is both a theoretical basis and a 'how-to' guide for conducting business in democratically elected deliberative assemblies.

*Robert's Rules of Order* balances these 3 fundamental principles:

- Protection of the rights of members, and those whom they represent.
- The requirement for a deliberative process of full and free discussion as a prerequisite to democratic decision-making.
- Protection against instability.

## ***Protection of the rights of members, and those whom they represent.***

1. All members have the right for their views to be heard.
2. 'Points' allow members to ask questions that enable them to participate more fully.
3. Members who are absent have the right to attempt to have business reconsidered.
4. Quorum requirements ensure that a vocal minority cannot 'take over' the business of an assembly.

## ***The requirement for a deliberative process of full and free discussion as a prerequisite to democratic decision-making.***

1. Every member is guaranteed at least one speaking turn.
2. Limiting debate in any fashion requires a 2/3 majority.
3. Those with strong views to the contrary need not feel like they must compromise their views to let the business of the organization go forward.
4. They are, however, expected to respect the will of the assembly once a decision is made *because* they had a fair opportunity to convince the majority that they were right.

## ***Protection against instability.***

1. It is always harder to reverse a decision than it was to make it in the first place.
2. The Chair is always right about procedure, unless her/his ruling is successfully overturned by a vote of the assembly.
3. Quorum requirements ensure that an assembly does not vary in composition between meetings.
4. Minutes provide a record of business that serve as institutional memory for the organization.

## Why use rules at all?

There are several common myths about parliamentary rules that tempt assemblies into 'just having meetings.' Below, we discuss four common myths and why they're wrong.

### *Using Robert's Rules is inefficient. We should make decisions faster.*

*Robert's Rules of Order* are quite efficient in the context of deliberative assemblies. They keep discussion focused on the decision that needs to be made, encourage people to prepare in advance, and ensure a balance between the speed of decisions and the openness of discussion. Open discussion helps an organization be more transparent, and helps eliminate mistakes. It also lessens the chances of members becoming bitter with decisions they disagree with because they could see how and why the decision was made, and had the chance to participate themselves.

### *Robert's Rules generates unnecessary paperwork.*

*Robert's Rules* generates necessary paperwork; namely, agendas and minutes. That paperwork creates institutional memory for the organization, and allows people to participate in decision-making. It also creates a record that ensures that decisions are enforceable. Plus, using motions to make decisions makes it easier people to understand the outcomes of discussions that they were not present at.

### *This particular section of Robert's Rules doesn't make any sense. We should just get rid of it.*

Parliamentary law has been evolving since the 1500s, with contributions from some of the greatest thinkers of our time. The rules make sense, even if they don't make sense to you... yet. It might need some tweaking to work for your organization, but don't undertake to rewrite the rules from scratch without understanding them first, or without the some help.

### *Robert's Rules are too complicated. Isn't it simpler to just have a meeting without all this rules business?*

Sometimes, but probably not for your group. You need rules so that everyone is on the same page about what's going on and are equipped to participate effectively, so that no one can 'cheat' or pull the discussion really off-track, and so that people don't get bullied or unfairly silenced.

## Simplified Glossary

### ***MOTION: the 'unit of business' debated by an assembly***

Main Motions: must be seconded and are debatable, amendable, and reconsiderable. They are the motions to which all other motions react.

All Other Motions: There are 86 kinds of motion that can be made under Roberts' Rules of Order. They act on the business of the assembly in different ways.

### ***DEBATE: a structured discussion about a motion***

A member must be recognized by the chair as "having the floor". They have a limited time to speak, and must stay on topic and respect decorum.

### ***AMENDMENT: a formal process used to propose changes to motions***

Only certain types of motions can be amended.

### ***VOTE: how an assembly decides whether to support a proposed motion***

When put to a vote, motions pass or fail. A motion that passes has a majority (as defined in the organization's bylaws) in favour, and is carried or adopted. A motion that fails does not have a majority in favour, and is not acted upon.

### ***CHAIR: the person responsible for ensuring that the rules are observed***

A chair may be voting or nonvoting. It is their primary responsibility to facilitate the meeting by enforcing the rules, so they must be impartial.

### ***DECORUM: debating in a respectable and orderly manner***

Debate is confined to the merits of the motion before the assembly. Members refer to one another respectfully, do not attack motives, do not interrupt, and do not speak against their own motions.

### ***POINTS: allows a member to ask a question or interrupt debate***

**Point of information:** a member asks a question of another member. Cannot interrupt a speaker.

**Point of order:** a member believes procedure is not being followed and brings it to the chair's attention. Cannot interrupt a speaker, but must be raised as soon as possible.

**Point of parliamentary inquiry:** a member asks a question related to procedure. Cannot interrupt a speaker.

**Point of privilege:** something is preventing a member from participating. Can interrupt a speaker.



## Summary Chart of Important Terms

	Unde- bata- ble	Ope- ns mai- n que- stio- n to deb- ate	Can not be am- end- ed	Can not be rec- onsi- der- ed	Req- uire s a 2/3 maj- orit- y vot- e	Mus- t be Sec- ond- ed	Can inte- rrup- t a spe- ake- r
Adjourn	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Adjourn, Fix the Time to which to	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Amend	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Amend an Amendment	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Amend the Rules	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Appeal, relating to indecorum	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Appeal, in all other areas		-	✓	-	-	✓	✓
Call to Order	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Close Debate, motion to	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Commit to Refer	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Extend the Limits of Debate, motion to	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Fix the Time of which to Adjourn	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Continue Speaking after indecorum	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Lay on the Table	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Limit Debate, motion to	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Objection to Consideration of a Question	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓
Orders of the Day, motion for the	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
Postpone to a Certain Time	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Postpone Indefinitely	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-
Previous Question	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-
Priority of Business, questions relating to	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Privilege, Question of	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Reading Papers	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Reconsider a Debatable Questions	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Reconsider an Undeatable Question	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Refer (same as commit)	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Rescind	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Rise (in Committee equals Adjourn)	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Special Order, to make a	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Substitute (same as Amend)	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Suspend the Rules	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Take from the Table	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-
Take up a Question out of its Proper Order	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-

Withdrawal if a Motion	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

## In Camera FAQ

---

This FAQ is meant to help student representatives get a sense of the basics of navigating in-camera proceedings on elected bodies that use Roberts' Rules of Order.

### What does it mean to 'go in camera?'

'In camera' is Latin for "in chambers," and it means to go into a confidential or secret session. Whatever is discussed cannot leave the room.

### How do you make a meeting go in camera?

A motion to go in camera is undebatable, is in order as long as you don't interrupt someone who already has the floor, and requires a simple majority to pass. To go out of camera is the same motion except that you move out of camera instead of into it.

### What, exactly, is covered by the confidentiality of in camera proceedings?

Every single thing that happened in the meeting after you moved in camera is confidential. This often includes the topic of the discussion itself, and always includes every thing that every person in the room said. For groups that don't automatically make motions public, it also includes the text of motions and the results of votes.

#### ***What in camera doesn't cover:***

- Things that were already public.

For example, if you discussed the results of the 1967 World Series while in camera, the fact that the Red Sox lost doesn't suddenly become confidential. What you can't discuss outside the room is the fact that you talked about the 1967 World Series while in camera, or what anyone in the room said about it.

- Your opinion.

If you think that The Empire Strikes Back is the best of the Star Wars films and say so in camera, the fact that you believe that doesn't become a secret. However, you can't disclose that you shared this opinion while in camera. Opinions that you hold that are directly and obviously related to, or informed by, the business of your group should be kept to yourself.

- The behavior of people who aren't in the room.
- If your group is in camera discussing negotiations with a third party organization and that organization discloses things about your in camera proceedings, that doesn't automatically mean they did anything wrong. Most importantly with this point, if someone else spills your group's secrets, that does not necessarily mean that you are now free to discuss in camera proceedings publicly as well. You will need to consult your organization's rules.

## Should we take minutes when we're in camera?

Yes. In camera minutes should be stored separately from your public minutes and should only be accessible to members who were privy to the in camera session.

## Can a body move motions in camera?

Only if the motion will only affect people who are privy to the secret proceedings.

Exception: all motions made by the Students' Council of the University of Alberta Students' Union are public. Although a motion may be made in camera at one of these meetings, the motion itself will be published with the minutes. This is due to the fact that the organization's rules stipulate that all motions are automatically public.

## Can I discuss in camera proceedings with people outside of the meeting?

Only if they're a member or they were specifically authorized to hear about the in camera proceedings. In other words, you can talk to people who were present during the in camera discussion or had the right to be present either because they're a member of the group or because the group explicitly authorized them to be there. You cannot talk to anyone else about what was discussed.

## Is it bad for a democratic body to do things in secret?

No. All organizations will occasionally need to have private discussions. Certain issues, such as intra-group conflicts, member discipline, private personal information related to group business (e.g. executive health, academic, or family issues), discussions about ongoing legal proceedings, or other kinds of sensitive negotiations require more candid, confidential conversations. Robert's Rules places no limits on the content of in camera discussion except suggesting that some things must always be handled in executive session (e.g. member discipline).

However, in camera session, like any tool, is open to abuse. The decision to move your group in camera should always be made carefully. In camera should not be the default setting for your group's discussions.

## Can in camera proceedings be retroactively made public?

Yes. For either minutes or motions, the easiest way to make things retroactively public is to move a new motion specifying which motion or which part of the in-camera proceedings you would like to see made public. That motion is handled the same as any other main motion. However, making proceedings that are not recorded in the minutes public may not be possible. You should consult with your own organizational rules before trying to retroactively publicize proceedings.

## What happens if I disclose in camera proceedings?

You can face disciplinary action. Depending on the severity of the breach that could include anything from censure to fines to expulsion. You may even be sued or charged with a criminal offence. You also breach the trust of your organization and the other members of your group, which almost always severely damages its ability to operate effectively. You may also cause other kinds of damage, such as opening your organization to being sued or causing resignations of other members who feel like they've been professionally compromised by your actions.

**Don't breach confidentiality. It's a bad idea.**

# SU Bylaw and Policy

---

## Bylaw

The SU Bylaws are high-level governing documents through which Students' Council directs the operations of the Students' Union. Typically, they are written or amended by the Bylaw Committee, and then ratified at Council.

### *Bylaw Summaries*

Bylaws 100, 500, 600	Outlines Students' Council and the documents that govern the SU.
Bylaws 1100, 1500	Outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Executive and Judicial branches of the SU.
Bylaws 2100, 2200, 2300, 2400, 2500	Outlines all elections processes and staff.
Bylaw 3000	Contains the rules and processes governing SU finances.
Bylaw 4000	Governs the creation and maintenance of the SU Strategic Plan.
Bylaw 5100	Governs the oversight of student groups.
Bylaws 6100, 6200, 6300	Outlines the creation, oversight, rights, and responsibilities of SU Dedicated Fee Units.
Bylaws 8100, 8200, 8400	Outlines the creation, oversight, rights, and responsibilities of Student Representative Associations.

### *Legislative Process for Bylaws*

#### Stage 1: Idea Generation

An idea for a change is researched and consulted on as necessary.

#### Stage 2: First Principles

The idea is brought to Council as first principles. This is typically a concise outline of the basic principles of the idea that you wish to see turned into bylaw, outlined in point form. This should not be the bylaw itself, but rather an idea of what the bylaw will be.

#### *Example:*

*Whereas the SU has a large budget that requires careful management;  
Therefore a bylaw shall be drafted outlining responsible financial practices.*

#### Stage 3: Drafting

Bylaw Committee takes the first principles and uses them to draft the actual bylaw that will be enacted if approved at Council. This is called the second principles.

#### Stage 4: Second Principles

Council debates and votes on the final version of the bylaw drafted at committee.

## Political Policy

Political policies are the documents through which Students' Council directs the advocacy positions and efforts of the Executive Committee. They constitute the official political position of the SU on a number of important political issues, and must be followed by any group or individual speaking on behalf of the Students' Union or undergraduate students. Typically, they are written or amended by the Policy Committee, and then ratified at Council.

### *Political Policies*

Academic Materials	Assessment and Grading	Campus Saint-Jean
Capital Projects	Deferred Maintenance	Engagement
Equity, Diversity & Inclusivity	Experiential Learning	Food
Health and Wellness	Internationalization	MNIFs
Nonpartisan	Public Transit	Quality Instruction
Residence	Scholarships and Bursaries	Sexual Violence
Student Employment	Student Financial Assistance	Student Space
Students in Governance	Truth and Reconciliation	Tuition

### *Legislative Process for Political Policies*

#### Stage 1: Idea Generation

An idea for a change is researched and consulted on as necessary.

#### Stage 2: First Principles

The first principles of political policy looks a little bit different than for bylaw. It includes a list of the reasons why a policy needs to be created, and Council votes on whether or not they agree with it and want to draft a policy.

*Example:*

*Facts*

*University is too expensive.*

#### Stage 3: Drafting

Policy Committee drafts the political position the SU is going to take on the issue, and adds it to the facts agreed on in the first principles.

#### Stage 4: Second Principles

Council debates and votes on the political policy put forward by the committee. It may look something like this:

*\Facts*

*University is too expensive.*

*Resolutions*

*The SU will advocate for lower costs of education.*

# Guide to Asking Effective Questions

---

## Before you ask a question

Preparation is key. Take a moment to reflect before you ask.

- Are you sure your question hasn't been answered in the meeting materials?
- Why are you asking it?
  - You may discover you don't actually have a good reason.
  - If you have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish it will help you structure your question to get a better answer.
- What kind of answer do you want?
  - Yes or no answer
  - Clarification of facts
  - Presenter's opinion
- Would it be better to email your question?

## Strategies for asking effective questions

<b><i>Come prepared</i></b>	Read the materials in advance and understand your role as a representative.
<b><i>Ask questions respectfully</i></b>	You will be more successful if you treat others with the respect you wish to be treated with yourself.
<b><i>Draw from your own expertise</i></b>	Draw from skills you're learning in your studies to structure coherent, meaningful questions.
<b><i>Listen carefully</i></b>	Don't cause repetition, and listen to others to learn how to say what you want and get the best reaction.
<b><i>Practice</i></b>	Ask lots of questions, learn by trial and error.

## Basic Question Theory

How do you get the kind of answer you're looking for?

<b><i>Open Question</i></b> Deeper, more complex answers.  <b><i>Closed Question</i></b> Specific answers.	<b><i>Factual Question</i></b> Data or clarification.  <b><i>Evaluative Question</i></b> Assessment of strengths, weaknesses, or progress.  <b><i>Interpretive Question</i></b> Opinion or speculation.	<b><i>Hypothesis Testing</i></b> You think you already know the answer but want to test it.  <b><i>Leading Question</i></b> Lead the respondent to a particular answer.	<b><i>Convergent Question</i></b> Has one answer.  <b><i>Divergent Question</i></b> Has multiple answers.
--	--	---	---





# Student Advocacy

---

## Step 1: Discover the issue, and its scope.

When an issue arises that affects your constituents, collect as many details as you can, figure out who has direct power in relation to the issue, and how you can interact with them, make a list of potential other stakeholders and/or allies, and determine potential courses the issue may take in the future so you can be prepared.

Uncovering potential issues before they blow up can make all the difference in your advocacy efforts.

<i>Keep in contact with...</i>			
<i>Your constituents</i>	<i>Students' Council</i>	<i>Your Faculty Association</i>	<i>Department Associations</i>
<i>Board of Governors Representative</i>	<i>GFC Representatives</i>	<i>Faculty Council Representatives</i>	<i>Department Council Representatives</i>

**State your issue in one sentence:**

**Who are the most important stakeholders in making decisions on the issue?**

•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Rank the Stakeholders based on the power they have to bring change to or affect your issue.*

**What methods can you use to interact with your highest ranked stakeholder?**

•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>
•	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 2: Consult constituents to fairly represent them.

Get feedback from your constituents through social media, tabling in faculty buildings, sending out feedback forms, holding town halls, or attending the meetings of clubs and associations in your faculty. The feedback you collect should be incorporated into your advocacy activities as much as possible.

### *Informing your constituents about an issue:*

Media – Quickest way to get word out to many people. You can also use this as a tool to put public pressure on someone. Easy, but not always effective.

- o Social Media and online videos (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- o Newspaper Articles (The Gateway, Metro, Local Newspapers)
- o Television or other interviews (CJSR, TV, etc.)

Advertising – Less urgent way to get word out to people. Can be used to direct constituents to more information about an issue.

- o Paid Ads (Gateway, SUTV, etc.)
- o Newsletters
- o Posters and handbills
- o Tabling
- o Class Talks

In Person – Explains issues more thoroughly to fewer constituents but in an impactful way.

### *Describe your information plan:*

---

### *Consulting constituents on an issue:*

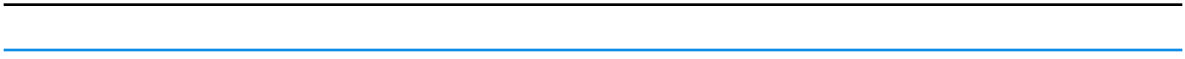
Petitions – Used to show quantifiable support/opposition to a particular issue, change or question.

- o Paper
- o Online
- o Email

Consultation – Shows what you should be advocating for and gives you material to use.

- o Surveys
- o Focus Groups
- o Town Halls

### *Describe your consultation plan:*



## Step 3: Formulate possible outcomes for the issue.

Determine what your ideal outcome would be so that you have a clear goal in mind, but also think about other possible outcomes and plan how you will respond should that scenario arise.

•		
•		
•		
•		
•		
•		

Use the right-hand columns to rank your top three results for this issue, and your constituents top three results for this issue.

What is the most realistic outcome you can achieve that satisfies your constituents' position while maintaining your organization's integrity?

---

***Complete a SWOT analysis on your preferred outcome:***

Strengths	Weaknesses

Opportunities	Threats

## Step 4: Convince decision makers and combat opposition.

Figure out the best way to convince each of the decision makers related to the issue to act how you want them to, and the best way to counter any opposition you face, and put that plan into action through lobbying, awareness campaigns, petitions, and any other methods of advocacy at your disposal.

*What will opposition say about the preferred outcome you determined in the previous section?*

Their argument	Your Counter-argument

How can your preferred outcome benefit the decision-maker and/or opposition?

---



---

*What method will you use to reach the decision-maker?*

Lobbying – Direct communication with the decision maker intended to influence a decision being made. Direct and powerful but can be difficult and intimidating

- o Meetings
- o Phone Calls
- o Emails and Letters

Protests – Used to visually show wider community support for or against a current issue and to publicly pressure for an outcome.

- o Marches
- o Sit Ins or Walkouts
- o Boycotts

Media – Can put public pressure on someone quickly.

- o Social Media
- o Newspaper articles
- o Television
- o Interviews

*Describe your plan:*

---

---

## Step 5: Evaluate.

Did you achieve the outcome you wanted? Why or why not? What would you do differently in the future? Evaluate your success, keep a record to help future advocates, and advertise your results (good or bad) to your constituents.

### *Reflection Questions*

Was the issue's outcome what you wanted?

---

---

Is there any way you can change the outcome moving forward?

---

---

How have your relationships with stakeholders changed from the process?

---

---

Has your organization's integrity been maintained in the process?

---

---

Is the chosen stakeholder the best-suited person to advocate to in the future?

---

---



What were some of the barriers in using the advocacy methods you used, and how can you overcome them in the future?

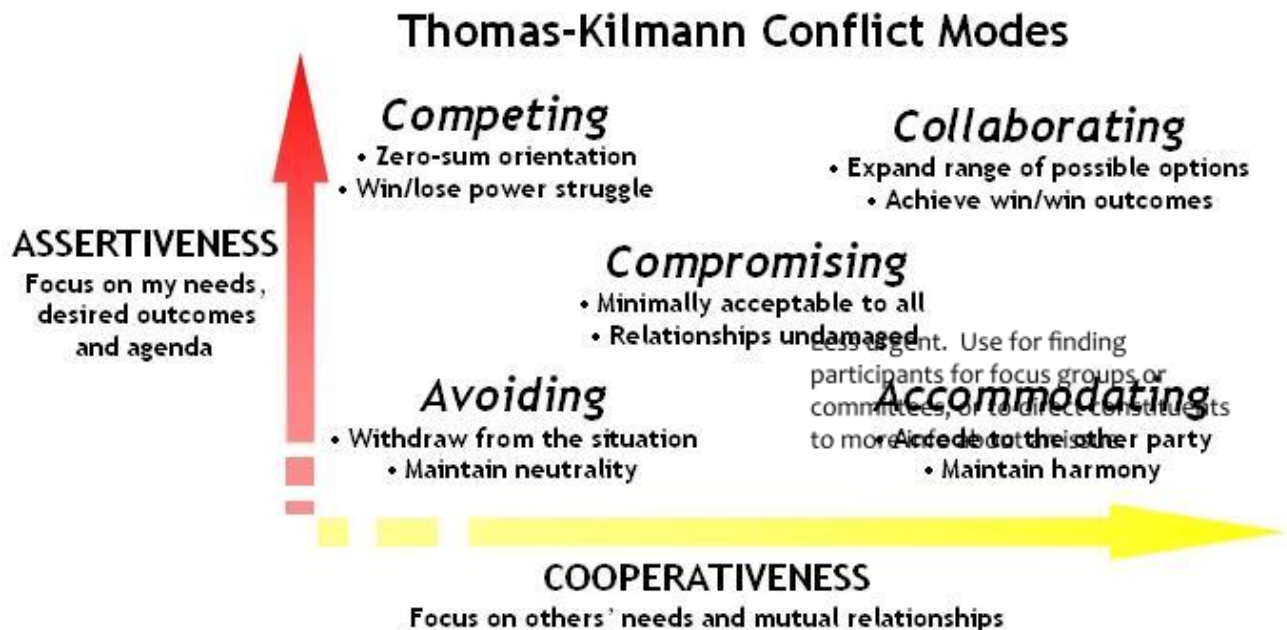
---

---

# Conflict Management

Conflict resolution is an important part of being able to reach constructive decisions. The following information has been based off the Emerging Leaders Program Conflict Resolution presentation.

The Thomas-Kilmann assessment graph below shows different conflict modes:



## Summarizing and Reflecting Back What You Hear

After hearing one party share her/his perspective, it is important to briefly summarize what you've heard before moving to the other person. Summarizing not only allows the speaker to know what you've heard and understood what he has to say, but it also gives the other person the opportunity to hear the concerns from a new source (you) and with new ears.

### **Reflecting Emotions**

Conflicts create strong feelings. It's important to recognize emotions and speak to them in others, so as the mediator of the conversation you need to spend some time understanding how to reflect another person's feelings. Reflecting isn't just repeating what you hear. It goes way beyond that by putting a voice to the emotions that you see or hear and it creates an openness and curiosity about the emotions you may not observe.

To reflect effectively, start by identifying what you think the speaker's emotion might be. When you relay your understanding of her emotions back in a way that allows her to know she's been heard, you're halfway to understanding why this conflict has had an impact on her. Here are some examples:

Statement: "I can't believe she botched another presentation!"

*Reflected: "You're concerned that the presentation didn't go well."*

Statement: "She places too much demand on us. We can't do everything she asks."

*Reflected: "You're feeling frustrated about the demanding workload."*

### ***Reframing Statements***

Parties involved in mediations have a tendency to talk about the things they don't like or disapprove of in other than what's personally important to them. Reframing is a way to capture what's important to the speaker while leaving out what's supposedly wrong with the other person. It is also a way of highlighting and drawing out interests or values, which is a tremendous asset to you as a facilitator. Highlighting the values shifts the conversation away from negative descriptions and toward describing what's important to each party; and that allows your participants to talk about the same thing without requiring them to see it the same way.

Statement: "He never shares any information. I don't understand why he just can't provide me with the numbers."

*Reframed: "It's important for you to work cooperatively."*

Statement: "She's so dismissive of everyone's proposals. She always says no to everything and insults us when"

*Reframed: "What I'm hearing is that it's important to you for teams to encourage each other and provide positive feedback."*

### ***Neutralizing Perspectives***

While summarizing statements and providing feedback, neutralize difficult language to take the sting out of the words without taking away from the message. You can capture the spirit of a message without minimizing or downplaying the meaning.

Statement: "The meeting is a total catastrophe!"

*Neutralized: "The meeting didn't go as you had hoped."*

Statement: "The project has hit a total dead end. It's done for."

*Neutralized: "The project is facing some obstacles."*

## Developing Solutions and Agreements

A good way to resolve and manage conflict is to develop a written solution or agreement. A written-down agreement will help everyone stay on the same page, and you can use your usual meeting procedures to help keep the discussion fair and cordial.

### *Recognizing the Non-negotiable Elements of a Agreement*

Doable – Agreements have to actually fit with reality. Don't be surprised when the parties begin to agree to things that aren't doable because they are on a roll or they are ready to agree on anything. Agreeing to something because it feels right in the moment can cause additional problems. You know your organization, so you should be able to gauge what you consider doable.

Specific – Clearly outline what each party is agreeing to do. Additionally, ensure that agreements describe the steps that each person will have to take in order to accomplish tasks and deadlines for taking them in a way that leaves no ambiguity as to the expectations each has of the other.

Durable – Although some agreements may be intended to be short-term or one-time actions, the outcomes that are to be achieved by having an agreement should have a reasonably long shelf life. The more questions you ask, and have answered, the more durable the agreement becomes.

Balanced – Balanced agreements are not necessarily ones in which the parties split their resources 50/50, or agree to do exactly half the work assigned. Balanced agreements show that both parties are all willing to give something or, where needed, to compromise. Even when one party has decided to do the lion's share of the responsibility for resolving the problem at hand, look for ways to include the other person. It goes hand in hand with durability.

Complete – Check that everything of important to the conflict is addressed by the agreement. If something was important to either party, address it in the agreement, even if the arrangement is to discuss it at a later date. Cover all agenda items. If you don't make it through the list, note that in the agreement as well. This will be a good starting point in follow-up meetings.

Fair – Fair can be a tricky idea, as it doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. Define what 'fair' is for this agreement early in the process, and make sure that everyone is both satisfied with that definition and satisfied with how the agreement incorporates fairness.

### *Troubleshooting Problem Areas*

Vague Language – Although using open-ended language is a good idea, when it's time to write up the agreements, be as specific as you can be. Avoid language that can be

interpreted by both parties differently. Use more specific language.

Settlement by Attrition – Sometimes people make agreements that they don't necessarily intend to live up to. They may feel as if their important issues haven't been addressed, or they feel as if they lack the power or the authority to make a change. When you hear language like "I don't care – write down whatever you want" or "Let's get this over with so we can move on" don't just move on. Explore what's happening for them when you hear this kind of language.

Fatigue – If the parties are tired or worn down, they may be more likely to settle for an agreement that's incomplete or unrealistic, which places the likelihood of lasting satisfaction in jeopardy. Watch for signs that the participants are settling because they're exhausted and just want to come to an end. Take a break if necessary, but make sure to take the time to craft your agreements thoroughly.

A party never intended to come to an agreement – It's not unusual for a party to come to a meeting because they think they have to, or with the assumption that they're right and everyone else is wrong. They went through the motions, did what they suspected you wanted them to, but didn't really negotiate in good faith. Try to call a private meeting to discuss the issue frankly and honestly.

A party's needs have not been met – In one way or another; the agreement isn't meeting his needs or delivering what's most important to him. Ask open-ended questions and see whether you can identify what's missing. Create an atmosphere in which he feels comfortable telling the truth.

Another plan is in play – Sometimes, one of the parties has something else in the works and isn't ready to spill the beans just yet. You may not be able to find out what's going on, but asking for a private meeting could help.

Incomplete Contingency Plans – Even the best plans fall apart if you don't address the "what if" questions. Pay attention to all the possible areas that may cause an agreement to become invalid or would cause it to be renegotiated.

### ***Writing it Down***

Use Plain Language – Avoid using unnecessarily complex or legalistic-sounding jargon. Complex language complicates your document and contributes to misunderstanding about content and context.

Address who, what, when, where, and how – Make sure that everyone involved can identify exactly what they're responsible for, and understands what everyone else is responsible for as well.

Remember Confidentiality – This whole process only works if everything that happens in the room to stay in the room. Make sure that, as part of the agreement, you have a

strategy for dealing with what happens if other people inquire for information. Encourage everyone involved to keep things confidential.

## Conflict Resolution Framework

### *Develop a Plan and Prepare for a Meeting*

1. Request the meeting; don't demand it.
2. Describe the positive future you hope for as a result of the confrontation. In this case, you might say something like, *"I'd like us to have a better relationship and feel more comfortable working together."*
3. Other practices involve: Reassuring confidentiality, allowing enough time, facilitating a comfortable and neutral environment.

### *Describe the problem specifically and state why this behavior is problem*

You could say something like *"Three times in your last group meeting, you rolled your eyes as I spoke and you described my idea about the conversion as naïve."*

Adding to the previous statement you can say, *"When you do this, I feel insulted and belittled. We seem to spend too much of our energy fighting each other instead on working on the project."*

### *Offer-Listen-Compromise*

1. Offer a solution. Solutions do not include blame statements. They focus on the outcomes needed to move forward.
2. Listen to the feedback you receive. If needed, summarize and reflect it back to the speaker to help facilitate respectful dialogue and mutual understanding. active listening, clarifying and summarizing, rephrasing to focus on values and discovering what is important, narrowing possible solutions, and avoiding assumptive, leading and why questions.
3. Incorporate what you've heard into a solution that works for everyone involved. To make this happen, both sides are going to need to take responsibility for their actions to date and may need to give some ground. If one side gets to be right and gets to dictate the terms of the agreement, the conflict is not going to be resolved.
4. Repeat this cycle as many times as is necessary to come to an agreement that works for everyone. If possible (ie if this is in your exec) **write it down**.

### ***End on a Positive Note***

1. To close the meeting, thank everyone present for their time. Summarize 2 or 3 positive developments that stood out.
2. If the agreement was not written down, send an email after the meeting that thanks all parties, highlights the same things you highlighted in your closing comments at the meeting, and briefly summarizes anything you intend to do differently going forward. Do not assume to describe what you think other people took from the meeting.

### ***Monitor Agreements and Progress***

Keep communication channels open, and check-in periodically to ensure that everyone involved continues to feel comfortable and supported. It may be worthwhile to schedule regular check-ins.

# Acronym Cheat Sheet

<b>AAC</b>	Academic Appeals Committee	<b>FA</b>	Faculty Association
<b>ALES</b>	Agriculture, Life & Environmental Sciences	<b>FADRO</b>	FA Deputy Returning Officer
<b>APC</b>	Academic Planning Committee	<b>FAMF</b>	Faculty Association Membership Fee
<b>APIRG</b>	Alberta Public Interest Research Group	<b>FDC</b>	Facilities and Development Committee
<b>APSA</b>	Alberta Pharmacy Students' Association	<b>FAUnA</b>	Faculty of ALES Undergraduate Association
<b>ASA</b>	Augustana Students' Association	<b>GFC</b>	General Faculties Council
<b>ASC</b>	Aboriginal Students Council	<b>GFCSC</b>	GFC Student Caucus
<b>ASC</b>	Academic Standards Committee	<b>GSA</b>	Graduate Students' Association
<b>ASC SOS</b>	Subcommittee on Standards	<b>ISSS</b>	Interdepartmental Science Students' Society
<b>AUFSJ</b>	L'Association des Universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean	<b>KSRSS</b>	Kinesiology, Sport, and Recreation Student Society
<b>BAC</b>	Budget Advisory Committee	<b>LSA</b>	Law Students' Association
<b>BFC</b>	Board Finance Committee	<b>MNIF</b>	Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees
<b>BoG</b>	Board of Governors	<b>MOOC</b>	Massive Online Open Course
<b>BSA</b>	Business Students' Association	<b>MSA</b>	Medical Students' Association
<b>CAC</b>	Council Administration Committee	<b>NASA</b>	Non-Academic Staff Association
<b>CASA</b>	Canadian Alliance of Student Associations	<b>NSSA</b>	Native Studies Students' Association
<b>CATP</b>	Campus Association Transfer Payment	<b>NUA</b>	Nursing Undergraduate Association
<b>CAUS</b>	Council of Alberta University Students	<b>OASIS</b>	Organization for Arts Students and Interdisciplinary Studies
<b>CLE</b>	Committee on the Learning Environment	<b>POTSU</b>	President of the SU
<b>COFA</b>	Council of Faculty Associations	<b>PSLA</b>	Post-Secondary Learning Act
<b>CORA</b>	Council of Residence Associations	<b>RBAC</b>	Residence Budget Advisory Committee
<b>COSA</b>	Council on Student Affairs	<b>RO</b>	Registrar's Office
<b>CRO</b>	Chief Returning Officer	<b>UAB</b>	University Appeal Board
<b>CSL</b>	Community Service Learning	<b>UAPPOL</b>	U of A Policies and Procedures Online
<b>DA</b>	Departmental Association	<b>UASC</b>	Undergraduate Awards and Scholarships Committee
<b>DFU</b>	Dedicated Fee Unit	<b>URI</b>	Undergraduate Research Initiative
<b>DG</b>	Discover Governance	<b>UTAC</b>	University Teaching Awards Committee
<b>DIE Board</b>	Discipline, Interpretation, and Enforcement Board	<b>VPA</b>	Vice-President Academic
<b>DRO</b>	Deputy Returning Officer	<b>VPOF</b>	Vice-President Operations and Finance



<b>ESA</b>	Education Students' Association	<b>VPSL</b>	Vice-President Student Life
<b>ESS</b>	Engineering Students' Society	<b>VPX</b>	Vice-President External

# Important Contacts

---

Navjot Kaur Governance Manager	SUB 2-931 <a href="mailto:navjot.kaur@su.ualberta.ca">navjot.kaur@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-2666
Courtney Graham Governance Support Specialist	SUB 2-929 <a href="mailto:courtney.graham@su.ualberta.ca">courtney.graham@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Munira Bushra Administrative Clerk	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:munira.bushra@su.ualberta.ca">munira.bushra@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Abner Monteiro SU President	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:abner.monteiro@su.ualberta.ca">abner.monteiro@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Julia Villosio SU VP Operations and Finance	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:julia.villosio@su.ualberta.ca">julia.villosio@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Christian Fotang SU VP External	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:christian.fotang@su.ualberta.ca">christian.fotang@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Gurleen Kaur SU VP Academic	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:gurleen.kaur@su.ualberta.ca">gurleen.kaur@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Joannie Fogue SU VP Student Life	SUB 2-900 <a href="mailto:joannie.fogue@su.ualberta.ca">joannie.fogue@su.ualberta.ca</a> (780) 492-4241
Alex Dorscheid Board of Governors Representative	SUB 6-08A <a href="mailto:bog@su.ualberta.ca">bog@su.ualberta.ca</a>
Speaker of Students' Council	SUB 6-08A <a href="mailto:speaker@su.ualberta.ca">speaker@su.ualberta.ca</a>

