

# Student Group Committee **Handbook**



## Table of Contents

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<b>3</b>	<b>What is the Student Group Committee?</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Student Group Committee Annual Timeline</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Student Group Oversight Discipline and Appeal Process</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Tips for the Chair</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Roberts' Rules of Order</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>In-Camera FAQ</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Appendices</b> Appendix A: Policy Committee Standing Orders Appendix B: 2018/19 Transition Report

Where this transition manual deviates from Standing Orders or Bylaw, the Standing Orders or Bylaw will be taken as correct. You should always read them in addition to this manual in case information in the manual has become out-of-date.

## What is the Student Group Committee?

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The Student Group Committee exists to provide student-led oversight of undergraduate student groups at the U of A. They are responsible for providing decisions on registration of groups and group events when SGS is unable to automatically approve them, or when a group wants to challenge a SGS decision.

The Student Group Committee's duties are outlined in its Standing Orders and in Bylaw, and they're summarized here so they'll be more readily accessible to you:

### Student Group Discipline

When SGS conducts an investigation of a student group, a report will be forwarded to the committee, who will make a determination on what, if any, action is to be taken. Anyone involved in the case can appeal a committee decision to DIE Board.

### Student Group Oversight

The vast majority of day-to-day oversight of student groups will be handled by SGS, as this job is primarily an administrative one. However, there are two instances in which the committee will have to get involved in oversight. First, if SGS has made an administrative decision that a group or group members doesn't like, they can challenge that decision to the committee. Second, if for some reason SGS cannot easily make an administrative decision (for example, approving the registration of a very controversial student group) they may forward that decision to the committee to make a determination.

### Report activities to Students' Council.

This report should follow each meeting, and should consist of a summary of proceedings, a list of motions, and an appendix of documents voted on. This report is usually handled by the Chair, and may be compiled with the help of Discover Governance if necessary.

# Student Group Committee Annual Timeline

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## Winter

January	April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check committee progress to ensure all business will be finished by the end of the year</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prepare transition for next Student Group Committee</li></ul>

# Student Group Oversight

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## Overview

The Student Group Committee has oversight of student groups in the following ways:

1. Can recommend policies or procedures to Student Group Services regarding the administration of student groups.
2. Can recommend bylaw changes to Council regarding student groups.
3. Can make determinations on group registration or event approval where SGS is unable to make a decision, or where a group wants to challenge an SGS decision.

## Recommending Changes to SGS

Any changes the committee wishes to make to the way student groups are administered by SGS should be forwarded to the manager/director of Student Group Services. If you're unsure of who that is or how to contact them, Discover Governance can help you. These changes will only be recommendations, and can be enacted or disregarded at the discretion of SGS.

## Recommending Changes to Bylaw

The committee can recommend changes to bylaw by submitting a motion to approve first principles of the changes to Students' Council for consideration. Council can then pass or reject the first principles at their discretion. Once passed, the first principles will be sent to bylaw committee for drafting, and the final approval of the change will go through Council a second time.

### *What is a first principles document?*

The first principles of a bylaw is an overview of what you intend to achieve with the bylaw, and why you want it to be enacted. It is not the bylaw itself; that comes in the second principles. When voting on first principles, Council is not voting to enact a bylaw, but rather is voting on whether they agree or disagree that the bylaw should exist at all.

### *Submitting to Council*

First principles may be submitted to Council by the member of Council who wrote it, or by the committee Chair. E-mail them to [council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca](mailto:council.submissions@su.ualberta.ca) with the motion and complete text of the first principles.

Motions should be worded something like this:

*"NAME MOVES to approve the first reading of the changes to the Student Group bylaw:"*

*Example:*

Bill #5 - Department Association Regulations - *First Principles*

**BANISTER/CHRISTENSEN MOVE** to approve the first reading of Bill #5, on the recommendation of Bylaw Committee, according to these first principles:

First Principles

1. Department Associations shall be delegated authority by the Students' Union through their Faculty Associations to be official representatives for students in their departments, as well as provide advocacy and community building roles.
2. Departmental Associations already exist in the Students' Union hierarchy.
3. Bylaw 8100 shall be amended to provide clearer definitions for Departmental Associations. This will clarify their roles, give them legitimacy under the Students' Union, and allow the Students' Union and Faculty Associations to better connect with and support them.
4. Bylaw 8100 shall describe the minimum requirements for being a recognized Departmental Association.
5. Bylaw 8100 Schedule shall contain a list of all currently recognized Departmental Associations.

## Making Determinations

The Student Group Committee will generally only have to make determinations on group or event approval when the group or event is controversial or when a group challenges a decision made by SGS. When making such a determination, the following should be considered:

1. Has the group fulfilled all administrative requirements set out by SGS and the Student Group bylaw?
2. Does the group or event break any of the rules set out in the Student Group bylaw?
3. Will the group or event create serious risks for the group, the SU, or the community?
4. Would approval of the group or event cause the SU to violate its fiduciary duty to act in its members' best interests?

# Student Group Discipline Process

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## Overview

The Student Group Committee is responsible for the discipline of student groups. The vast majority of problems that student groups run into are administrative in nature, and can be dealt with cooperatively by SGS and the student group without getting the committee involved. Even when the issue is more serious, SGS will encourage groups to seek informal mediation to fix the problem, rather than having the committee exact punitive measures against them. As such, the committee won't see very many discipline cases throughout the year.



## Making a Disciplinary Decision

All disciplinary decisions made by the Student Group Committee should be:

1. Relevant to the infraction
2. Acceptable to any damaged parties or complainants involved
3. Feasible for the Student Group

If irreparable or unrestitutionable damage was caused to any party, you may have to derecognize or suspend the student group. You may also want to derecognize or suspend a group if there have been significant ongoing problems with the group that they have not taken adequate steps to resolve, or that will not or cannot be improved.



# Tips For The Chair

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## Duties of the Chair

Generally, your duties as the Chair involve making sure that the duties of Policy Committee are fulfilled. This can mean handling them yourself, delegating them to other Councillors or SU staff, or facilitating the entire committee in carrying them out, depending on the situation. However you get things done, everything should be discussed and approved at Policy Committee first.

In addition to making sure the Student Group Committee fulfills its mandate, the Chair also has some more specific duties outlined under the Standing Orders:

1. Preside over debate at meetings of the Student Group Committee.
2. Submit reports to Students' Council.
3. Work with Speaker and SU staff to ensure the logistical needs of the Student Group Committee are met.

Being a Chair can be stressful and time-consuming, so don't be afraid to ask for support from SU administrative staff, Discover Governance, fellow Councillors, or SU Executives.

## So, you've just become the Student Group Committee Chair...

If you're starting at the beginning of the year, your first meeting as Chair should include some kind of strategic planning and goal-setting session to keep the Committee on track during the year. Your plan/goals should reflect your mandate, the broader goals of Council, and the SU's strategic plan.

If you've taken this position in the middle of the year, you should read the Standing Orders to better understand the committee and check up on the following:

1. Does the Student Group Committee have a strategic plan for the year and, if so, what is its progress? If it doesn't, consider creating one at your first meeting as Chair.
2. Who is your recording secretary, and have all minutes been received, approved, and updated on the committee page of the SU website? Discover Governance should be able to help you with this.
3. Has the Student Group Committee missed any important deadlines, and have all time-sensitive duties of the Student Group Committee been fulfilled up to the current date? Check the timeline for important dates and deadlines.
4. What projects has the Student Group Committee been working on, and what's the progress so far? Ask other committee members, or check past meeting minutes.

## Other Tips

### ***Ensure your agenda is strategic.***

Know areas that need to have more discussion, and which are contentious. Usually you want to deal with the less important items first.

### ***Put tentative times by each item.***

That way every one knows how much time they have to formulate their ideas.

### ***Always go into the meeting with an outcome or goal in mind.***

Have a plan to ensure that the committee will have resolved X, formed a group to discuss Y, etc. Having a focused approach keeps every one working. You do not need to share this with the group.

### ***After each agenda item, summarize what was said.***

It keeps members involved. It also helps keep people organized and following along with the agenda.

### ***At the end of the meeting, summarize the key points.***

This means you need to jot down notes so you can do the high level summary at the end.

### ***Try to have action items and delegate work.***

People like ownership of items and having a tangible way to contribute to the committee. Ensure they can report back their accomplishments and that the group will respect their contributions.

### ***If there is conflict, welcome it.***

This means you will get better discussion, ideas, and energy. The Chair's job is to get the best thinking out of the group.

### ***Some members like to dominate. You have to let them have the floor, but then you have to move them off their soapbox.***

You may have to interrupt or they will take over the meeting. It's okay if you're doing it with a view to moving the committee in a positive direction. Thank them, then ask if others have an opinion.

### ***As Chair, do not take sides. Your job is to facilitate.***

Make sure all sides of an issue have equal speaking time at the meeting, and do your best to keep your role as the chair and your role as a voting committee member separate.

### ***If there is a hot issue, have a pre-meeting or post-meeting.***

Your goal is to try to get more information. It's important for you to get clarity on why something is contentious and also to support members.

# Roberts' Rules Of Order

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## 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. See the summary chart examples.

***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. Debate proceeds until the motion is put to a vote.

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

Only certain types of motions can be amended. See the summary chart for more information.

***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

	Undebatable	Opens main question to debate	Cannot be amended	Cannot be reconsidered	Requires a 2/3 majority vote	Must be Seconded	Can interrupt a speaker
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 Undebatable 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

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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.**

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Student Group Committee Standing Orders

[https://www.su.ualberta.ca/legislation/wiki/Student\\_Group\\_Committee:Standing\\_Orders](https://www.su.ualberta.ca/legislation/wiki/Student_Group_Committee:Standing_Orders)

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## APPENDIX B

### 2018/19 Transition Report



The student group committee standing orders are not yet available.

# Student Group Committee Transition Report

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There is no transition report for the 2018-19 year.