

Background information on standing and special rules of order

Proposed Standing Rules

- “Standing rules, as understood in this book except in the case of conventions, are rules (1) which are related to the details of the administration of a society rather than to parliamentary procedure, and (2) which can be adopted or changed upon the same conditions as any ordinary act of the society”. (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (RRONR) 12th ed, 2:23)
- According to RRONR (our parliamentary authority) if electronic meetings are to be authorized, it is advisable to adopt additional rules pertaining to their conduct. (RRONR 12th ed, 9:32).
- These rules were drafted to address the operation of meetings with an online/electronic component using the Zoom platform.
- The proposed rules have been adapted from a suggested set outlined in RRONR, 12th edition (Appendix: Samples Rules for Electronic Meetings) along with standing rules Faculty bodies have adopted at other institutions.
- The use of the chat features is limited in the proposal to ensure speaking rules from Robert’s Rules that safeguard members’ rights are protected. According to Robert’s Rules only one member may speak at a time and only after they have been recognized by the presiding officer. As a deliberative Assembly, the discussion of any pending question needs to be handled in a systematic manner to protect all members’ rights (the rights of the minority to be heard) while still allowing the majority to make a decision in the end. (see this link for more discussion of why the use of the chat feature should be limited according to Robert’s Rules: <https://civility.co/uncategorized/why-you-should-disable-the-chat-for-your-next-virtual-meeting/>)
- As with all other rules governing a deliberative assembly, the body can always appeal a decision of the presiding officer on the application of the rules if they believe the decision is not correct. This is outlined in RRONR 12th, Section 24.

Proposed Special Rules of Order

- “Special rules of order supersede any rules in the parliamentary authority with which they may conflict. The average society that has adopted a suitable parliamentary authority seldom needs special rules of order, however, with the following notable exceptions:
 - A rule relating to the length or number of speeches permitted each member in debate is often found necessary. “ (RRONR, 12th ed, 2:16)
- **Regular meeting agenda and documents**
 - These proposed rules are to address concerns about having enough time to review documents prior to regular meetings.
 - Also, in a hybrid format it is important to ensure documents are prepared in advance of meetings so all in attendance (both in-person and virtual) can view them and participate in discussion & debate.

- **Debate on pending motions**
 - Most parliamentary guides echo the suggestion outlined in Robert's Rules that bodies adopt limitations to the number and time limits for members to speak to pending motions.
 - The time limit proposed has been specified after reviewing special rules adopted by a variety of other groups.
 - Past practice has been to recognize Faculty Senators first when debating pending questions, so this proposal just formalizes this practice.
- **General Discussion**
 - It has been past practice for the Faculty Senate to engage in informal discussions. However, RRONR does not provide any mechanism to discuss a topic without a motion pending before an assembly.
 - The addition of a "General Discussion" agenda item with a fixed time limit and topic will formalize this practice and provide some guidelines as to how it operates.
 - This proposal has been adapted from similar rules that have been adopted by other Faculty governance bodies.
- "Rules of order—whether contained in the parliamentary authority or adopted as special rules of order—can be suspended by a two-thirds vote... provided that the proposal is not in conflict with the organization's bylaws (or constitution), with local, state, or national law prescribing procedural rules applicable to the organization or assembly, or with a fundamental principle of parliamentary law. (RRONR, 12th ed, 2:21, 25:1)