

EQUITY

NATIONAL COMMITTEES STANDING ORDERS

Approved by the Council: 12 September 2023

* References to Rules in these Standing Orders refer to the Rules in the Union's Rulebook

Establishment

1. The Council may establish and maintain such National Committees as it decides from time to time.
2. The Union's National Committees are:

Committee	Committee's Area
Northern Ireland	Members engaged in a professional capacity in Northern Ireland
Scotland	Members engaged in a professional capacity in Scotland
Wales	Members engaged in a professional capacity in Wales

Role

3. The role of the National Committees shall be to:
 - (a) advise the Council and take action on any matters that fall within their area;
 - (b) work with others, including government, TUC, ICTU, STUC, WTUC and other bodies relevant to their area; and
 - (c) serve as a channel of communication between the Council and members in their area.
4. The National Committees shall act in accordance with these Standing Orders, the Rules and the policies of the Union at all times. If there is any inconsistency between the Rules and these Standing Orders, the Rules shall apply.

Authority

5. Any action taken on behalf of the Union by the National Committees shall be subject to prior approval by the Council or the General Secretary acting on its behalf.

Elected Members

6. Each National Committee shall consist of nine elected members who ordinarily reside in the Committee's nation.

Company & Production Deputies

7. The Deputies from each company or production who are currently working in a National Committee's nation (or in their absence, a substitute nominated by the company/production members) may attend the relevant Committee's meetings. Deputies may speak but may not vote or propose or second motions unless elected or co-opted to the Committee.

Term

8. Committee elections shall take place every two years. The Committee term shall run from and to the dates on which the Committee election results are declared.
9. A Committee member found to have committed a disciplinary offence may be removed before the end of the Committee term in accordance with Rule S9(4).

Committee Elections

10. Candidates shall be:
 - (a) members in benefit who ordinarily reside in the Committee's nation and satisfy any work requirements that the Council may make from time to time; and
 - (b) proposed and seconded by two other Equity members in benefit who shall declare that they are also qualified to stand for the Committee.
11. Members who fall into any of the groups at Rule J17 shall not be eligible to stand for election to the National Committees.
12. Members elected to the National seats of the Council shall not stand for election to the National Committees. If a Committee member is elected to a national seat of the Council, they shall be considered to have resigned their Committee seat. The vacancy shall be dealt with in accordance with 26. below.
13. No member shall stand for election to more than one of the National Committees.
14. Nomination forms for candidates shall be sent to all members in benefit who reside in the Committee's nation not less than 28 days before the close of nominations.

15. Voting papers shall be sent to all members in benefit who reside in the Committee's nation not less than 14 days before the close of voting.
16. Candidates may submit a written election statement of not more than 150 words to be circulated with the voting papers.
17. Candidates may not stand on a job-share basis.

Secretary

18. Each Committee shall have Secretary who shall be a member of Equity staff appointed from time to time by the General Secretary. They do not form part of the quorum and may not vote or propose or second a motion.
19. The Secretary shall:
 - (a) convene Committee meetings;
 - (b) prepare the meeting agenda in consultation with the Chair;
 - (c) record a note of meetings to include the date, attendees, apologies, motions/decisions and agreed action points;
 - (d) conduct the elections for the Committee's Officers, Equity Conference representatives and national TUC, ICTU, STUC, WTUC or other delegates;
 - (e) advise the Chair on the Rules and procedure; and
 - (f) liaise between the Committee and the General Secretary.

Committee Officers

20. The National Committees shall have a:
 - (a) Chair; and
 - (b) Vice-Chair.
21. The Chair and the Vice-Chair shall be elected from amongst the Committee's members between the Committee's first and second meetings of its term.
22. Committee Officer candidates may stand on a job-share basis.

23. The ballot shall be conducted by the Secretary by email. Candidates are not required to have a proposer or seconder. They may submit an election statement of up to 150 words to be circulated with the ballot papers.
24. The Chair for the Committee's first meeting only shall be elected by the Committee members at the start of the meeting.
25. The Chair or, in their absence, the Vice-Chair, shall preside at all meetings.

Vacancies

26. If a Committee seat becomes permanently vacant, the Committee may vote to co-opt another eligible member to fill the seat. Co-options shall be submitted to the Council for approval. Co-opted members shall not exceed the number of elected members.

Union Officers

27. Officers of the Union may attend and speak at meetings of the National Committees but may not vote, propose or second motions or form part of the quorum at a meeting unless elected or co-opted to the Committee.

Councillor Observers

28. Councillors elected to a national seat on the Council shall attend the meetings of the corresponding National Committee as observers. If, for any reason, there is no representative Councillor, the Council shall appoint an observer from among its number.
29. Observers shall not vote, propose or second motions or form part of the quorum at a meeting unless elected or co-opted to the Committee. Their role is to observe the meeting and act as a direct channel of communication between the Committee and the Council.

Committee Delegates

30. The Committee shall elect delegates from amongst their number to attend the meetings of national TUC structures in their nation.
31. The Committee may elect delegates from amongst their number to other organisations, meetings or events relevant to the Committee's work.

Committee Meetings

32. The Committee shall meet five times a year on dates to be decided by the Secretary in consultation with the Chair. A year for these purposes runs from the date on which the Committee Elections result is declared.
33. If further meetings are considered necessary these may be convened at the discretion of the General Secretary.
34. All meetings (including the joint meetings at 38. and 39. below) shall end no later than 3 hours after their start. If business is not complete, time may be extended by up to 30 minutes on a simple majority vote.
35. Attendance shall be in person or online (or a combination of both) at the discretion of the Secretary in consultation with the Chair.
36. Votes are passed by a simple majority.
37. The Secretary may record meetings to assist them with minute keeping but no other recording shall be permitted.

Annual National Meetings

38. A meeting of members in each of the National Committee's nations shall take place once each calendar year in accordance with Rules F2 to F4. The rules and procedures that apply to the annual meetings are available to view and download on the Union's website at <https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/rules-of-the-union/>

Chairs' Joint Meetings

39. The Chairs (or in their absence, the Vice-Chairs) of the National Committees shall meet twice a year to share information on the work and priorities of their respective Committees.
40. In addition, the Chairs (or in their absence, the Vice-Chairs) of the National Committees shall meet together with the Chairs of the Union's Equalities and Industrial Committees twice a year to share information on the work and priorities of their respective Committees.
41. The joint meetings shall be chaired by the President or another officer of the Union.

Committee Priorities & Report

42. At its first meeting, each Committee shall identify and record its priorities for its term. The Committee shall review and update the record as directed by the General Secretary.
43. At the end of its term, each Committee shall produce a report detailing what has been achieved and provide its report to the new Committee.
44. Copies of all priorities and the report shall be provided to the Council for information.

Working Parties

45. With the prior approval of the relevant member of the Secretariat, the National Committees may establish working parties, made up of Committee members, to look at specific issues relevant to their area.
46. With the prior approval of the relevant member of the Secretariat, up to four non-Committee members with the relevant experience may also sit on a working party.

Working with Others

47. With the prior approval of the Council, the National Committees may work with other organisations whose aims are the same or similar to the Union's Aims.

Quorum

48. The minimum number of attendees for Committee meetings shall be one-third of Committee members including any co-opted members plus one. If this number are not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the meeting to start, the meeting shall be dissolved.

Agenda

49. The Secretary, in consultation with the Chair, shall prepare the agenda for Committee meetings. The agenda shall be circulated with notice of the meeting to all Committee members at least seven days in advance of the meeting.

Motions to Committee

50. Members of the Committee, including co-opted members, may bring a motion to the Committee on any issue they reasonably believe merits Committee discussion.

51. All motions shall be:
- (a) in accordance with these Standing Orders, the Rules and the policies of the Union;
 - (b) proposed and seconded by two Committee members; and
 - (c) received in advance by the Secretary not less than 14 days before the meeting.
52. A motion that arises directly from a matter on the agenda and that does not propose any additional matter for discussion may be proposed, seconded and voted on without the need for prior notice.

Rescinding a Motion

53. A motion passed at a Committee meeting shall not be rescinded at any subsequent meeting unless Committee members are provided with notice of the motion to rescind of not less than seven days.

Motions to the Council

54. The Committee may submit motions to the Council. Such motions shall be received by the General Secretary by 9am on the Monday immediately preceding the circulation of the Council agenda on the following Friday. The Council shall consider the motion and provide a written response. The Council shall consider no more than one motion from each branch or committee at each of its meetings.

Rules of Debate

55. Rules V1 to V14 shall apply to Committee meetings.

Conflict of Interest

56. A conflict of interest is any situation in which a Committee member's personal interests (financial or otherwise) may unduly influence or, may appear to unduly influence, the member's participation in Committee business.
57. A member who believes that they may have a conflict of interest shall declare that this is the case before the relevant item is discussed. The declaration shall be recorded in the minutes.
58. A member who declares a conflict of interest may remain in the meeting and speak and/or vote on the item.

59. In addition to the continuing obligations above, all Committee members must complete a Declaration of Interest form within two months of being elected or co-opted to the Committee.

Decisions Outside of Meetings

60. The Committee may make decisions by email or in an online forum outside of scheduled meetings if the decision relates to:
- (a) an industrial agreement including claims and on-going negotiations;
or
 - (b) a debate which was started at a scheduled meeting and where it was agreed by a majority vote that further discussion was needed.
61. A decision made outside of a scheduled meeting shall only be valid if agreed by a majority of all Committee members and approved by the Secretary. At their discretion, the Secretary may require the matter to be taken to a vote at the next scheduled meeting.
62. Committee members shall provide the Secretary with their email addresses.

Chair's Vote

63. The Chair (or Vice-Chair, if presiding in their absence) shall not vote on any question at a meeting unless there is a tied vote when they may exercise a casting vote.

Decisions of the Chair

64. The Chair's decision (on any point) shall be binding unless it is challenged by not less than two members entitled to vote, in which case, all members entitled to vote shall then immediately vote on whether to uphold the Chair's ruling. If passed by a simple majority, the Chair's decision shall apply.
65. No challenge is permitted to the Chair's decision whether or not to accept a motion to suspend Standing Orders.

Equity Conference

66. The National Committees may each elect two representatives to send to the Equity Conference (and any Special Conference) from amongst their members, including any co-opted members.
67. Candidates shall be proposed and seconded by two other Committee members. The vote shall be by a secret ballot of all Committee members, including any co-opted members.

68. If an elected representative is unable to attend any day of the Conference, they shall immediately notify the General Secretary who shall invite the next unsuccessful candidate to attend in their place for that day.
69. The elected representatives shall discuss the conference agenda with the Committee in advance of the conference and report back to the Committee on conference business.
70. Each representative shall be free to decide how to vote at Conference.
71. Each of the National Committees may submit one motion to the annual national meetings in their area proposing a motion for debate at the Equity Conference in accordance with Rule T19.
72. The annual national meetings shall each decide on one motion to be submitted for debate at Equity Conference in accordance with Rule T20.

Conduct

73. Attendees at Committee meetings shall:
 - (a) abide by the procedures set out in these Standing Orders; and,
 - (b) refrain from behaviour that contravenes Rule D14.
74. A failure to do so may result in disciplinary action in accordance with Rule S.

Alteration & Suspension of Standing Orders

75. These Standing Orders shall not be altered without the prior approval of the Council.
76. The Chair may accept a motion to suspend these Standing Orders to allow a matter of urgency not on the agenda to be discussed. A motion to suspend shall be proposed and seconded by two Committee members.
77. If passed by a two-thirds majority of those voting for and against, the suspension shall apply for not more than 30 minutes.

Interpretation

78. The Council shall interpret these Standing Orders if in dispute. The Council shall decide on any Committee matter where the Standing Orders are silent. In both cases, the Council's decision shall be final and binding.

Copies of the Rules & Standing Orders

79. Copies of these Standing Orders and the Union's Rules are available to view and download on the Union's website at <https://www.equity.org.uk/about-us/how-were-run/rules-of-the-union/>