

## Running your Annual General Meeting (AGM)

### Handing over to a new committee

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) is where new committee members are elected by members of the student group. As it is an election, there are certain procedures that need to be followed or the validity of the outcome could be called into disrepute.

It is very important that you undertake a thorough handover meeting with the old committee - this will ensure that there is a consistency between the two committees and relevant knowledge and information is not lost.

### When should we hold an Annual General Meeting?

An Annual General Meeting is a formal meeting - It is a compulsory requirement for all student groups (except Residents Associations and some community volunteering groups) for new committee members are elected. Each group has a section within its constitution which deals with AGMs, and this gives guidance as to how the AGM should be run and what matters should be dealt with.

You must hold your election between January and March, [except if you have had authorisation from the Student Group Executive (SGX) to hold it at a different time]. We don't recommend leaving it right to the end of term as people may be busy with other commitments.

You must give at least 14 days notice to your members that the AGM is happening to give them time to ask questions/think about standing for election. You must also contact StuDev ([studentgroups@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:studentgroups@guild.bham.ac.uk)) to let them know about it; you need to confirm the date of your AGM by mid-February.

### Attracting candidates

It is advisable (but not essential) to ask for nominations before the AGM so you know if you need to spend more time encouraging people to stand for positions. Candidates need to be current students at the time of the election. If they stop being a student before the end of their term of office, they'll need to stand down at that point; they should let the voters know if they expect that to happen. External members can't have a committee role.

## Publicity and venue

It's a good idea to make your notice as public as possible by emailing all your members, as well as other methods such as a Facebook event and talking about it at meetings in the weeks beforehand. The agenda see below should be sent along with the invitation, as well as descriptions of the roles and what is involved, and the minutes of the previous meeting, so that everyone knows how the meeting will run.

The venue needs to be as accessible as possible, so make sure that your members know where it is and will be able to get there—that's why most groups have elections in a booked room on campus. Try to find out beforehand if attendees have particular requirements, e.g. wheelchair access, translation services.

## Running order (agenda)

- **Apologies**

Apologies from individuals who have been unable to attend are read out

- **Approval of previous minutes / Matters Arising**

It is usual to make copies of the previous minutes, the group's constitution and any other papers available. They should also have been sent out beforehand.

- **Reports by outgoing committee**

The Chair of the group will normally give a review of the year, and all committee members will summarise what they have done in their roles.

- **Presentation of Accounts**

A summary of the accounts are presented by the Treasurer. The Treasurer will highlight some of the figures in the accounts, explaining any that need explanation, and give a general overview of the financial position

- **Amendments to the constitution**

Any proposed amendments to the constitution are also discussed; they should have been discussed by the present committee and emailed to members in advance. Examples are to update committee role descriptions, change the membership fee, or change the aims/objectives of your group

- **Election of Committee**

See below for details of how this works, usually starting with the chair, and working through the rest of the committee so that if anyone loses an election, they can re-stand for other positions

- **Any Other Business**

AOB can be a useful opportunity for those who are involved with, or interested in your group to have their say on any issues. It can sometimes take a long time and throw up unexpected questions and comments.

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## Voting procedure

Check in your group's constitution for any details about voting procedures. It is always preferable to vote by secret ballot for any contested election, in order to reduce the chances of voter intimidation or complaints later on.

Where a position is uncontested, apart from the option to vote for RON (to Re-Open Nominations and in effect re-run the election at a later date, giving other students the opportunity to stand for election), a group may choose to allow a show of hands, as long as the candidate is out of the room and no-one else objects.

The committee should provide voting slips for members and then collect them after voting, and count them discretely. If you would prefer, see if you can get an external neutral party to count your votes, such as a sabbatical officer or the Chair of Guild Council. Slips may just be bits of paper, or you can print up templates beforehand if you'd prefer.

Most groups prefer to elect the chair first, then run down the other committee positions, so that any person who does not get a position can then re-stand in elections for subsequent posts.

If someone wants to run for committee but can't attend the meeting, they can send in a speech to be read out on their behalf, either by a friend or by the group Chair.

For each position:

Get all the candidates to do a short speech of equal length (2/3 minutes) about why they are the best person for the job, any relevant experience and what their plans/ideas are for if they get elected

Allow people to ask questions – each question must be addressed to every candidate standing for a position – candidates opposing one another cannot ask each other questions. If not all candidates are in the room, you can't ask questions for that position.

As well as the candidate(s), your members must have the option to vote to Re-Open Nominations (RON), where they feel that there needs to be a chance for more people to stand for the position at a by-election at a later point.

If the number of votes for a position is tied (equal), then the result must be decided by chance, which would normally be by flipping a coin (or may be drawing straws/picking cards from a deck).

## General tips

The AGM is normally conducted by the Chair, although if they are re-standing in the election, another committee member will need to take over that section of the meeting.

Make sure that everyone knows what the voting procedure is before the first vote, to reduce the chance of confusion

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It is usually good practice to combine your AGM with another activity, such as a social, to encourage people to come along. The length of your AGM will vary according to how many committee positions you have, how many people run for election, and how many members you have.

They can vary from half an hour for a small group to three hours, so allow more time than you think you need to avoid having to rush, which may lead to issues or complaints later on.

If any post isn't filled, or someone subsequently resigns from their position and needs to be replaced, you'll need to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), which is just like an AGM but shorter and only called for one purpose; it could also be referred to as a by-election. Similar guidelines about publicity and voting procedures still apply, but you can give only a week's notice (although longer is better if possible).

If you've got any questions at all about running elections, please speak to Student Development staff and we'll try to help.

Any complaints about elections should be forwarded to the VPAD for investigation.

## Minutes

The secretary, or another committee member if needed, should keep detailed minutes of the meeting, so that all members are able to read what happened even if they could not attend. For the reference of the new committee, and because you will need to provide a copy of the minutes for Guild records: they should be emailed to [studentgroups@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:studentgroups@guild.bham.ac.uk), make sure that these are written up and are detailed enough to give a reasonable picture of the elections.

There is a template set of minutes you can look at if you're not sure what they should look like. Detailed minutes often help if problems arise later on, and is a good record of ideas for the new committee to try out based on members' feedback. It does not need to be word-for-word, but should accurately paraphrase what happened without losing any significant details. Minutes should include a note of anything in the meeting, but especially:

- : List of people that attended, and those that sent apologies.
- : Summary of the outgoing committee's reports.
- : Summary of the candidate speeches.
- : Record of the number of votes cast for each candidate.
- : Any other business or discussions, especially votes on constitutional changes.

If in doubt, it is always best to include more detail rather than only giving a vague impression of the proceedings.

## Handing over to your new committee

A handover happens when a newly elected committee is prepared for their roles by the outgoing committee. Usually this combines meetings, written documents and shadowing.

When you encounter a problem during the year, make a note of it. It is likely your successor will encounter the same problems unless you tell them how to avoid it, or, if it is inevitable, how you dealt with it. Put yourself in the position of your successor, and try to involve all committee members, old and new, in the handover.

Handing over properly ensures:

- Continuity and long term planning and development for your group
- That the work and achievements of your year on the committee are not lost
- Fully preparing the new committee to take on responsibility
- Making sure new committees don't waste time trying to rebuild things or find out basic information

Why not spend a bit of time creating a group handover file, wouldn't that make life easier? Things you could include:

- Details of individual committee roles
- A timeline of what committees need to do and when
- Review of events and activities you have run
- Minutes of committee meetings & AGMs
- Training notes
- Copies of flyers and posters used
- Passwords/codes and useful contacts and resources

Most groups have joint committee meetings, and one-to-one meetings between old and new holders of each position.

## Committee training and code of conduct

Full details of the process that the new committee should follow are in the 'new Committee' guide, but the basic things that you should ensure that they are aware of are these timescales

- All of the new committee need to complete online training within 4 weeks of the AGM
- After they've done the training, all of the new committee need to come to Student Development to sign the code of conduct; no later than 8 weeks after the AGM
- The new committee need to review the group's current annual risk assessment and update/edit it as needed, and resubmit it to cover their activities; this needs to be received no later than 8 weeks after the AGM.

After the new committee have taken over, try to help them with any questions please don't ignore them after you've stepped down, as they may need you!

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