Hallam Students' Union

Standing Orders

These documents explain in detail how each meeting in the Hallam SU democratic structure functions. The Bye-laws and the Articles of Association explain the core functions and powers of the meetings that make up the Hallam's democratic decision-making, while the Standing Orders go into more detail about exactly how each meeting is run. This document doesn't form part of the Bye-laws but should be read alongside the relevant Bye-law for each meeting.

1. **Membership:** Who is allowed to attend, speak and vote at the meeting.
2. **Notice, Agenda and Papers:** When and how the meeting is advertised, and how items can be brought for discussion.
3. **Chairing/Facilitating:** Who chairs or facilitates the meeting and what their responsibilities are.
4. **Discussion & Decision-Making:** How discussion and debate are managed, including speaking rights and limits, and how the group makes decisions.
5. **Challenging Decisions:** What to do if you think a decision has been made unfairly.
6. **Records and Publicity:** What is recorded and what is published to students.

Suspending these Rules

These Standing Orders explain the standard way that meetings are structured, and decisions are made at Hallam SU. Sometimes, however, members of a meeting might feel that discussion or decision-making may be made more effective by doing things in a different way.

Therefore, the rules outlined in the Standing Orders can be suspended. To suspend the Standing Orders requires:

- a proposal from a voting member of the meeting in question, stating clearly which rule should be suspended, and what alternative should apply
- approval by a two-thirds majority of vote of all present voting members

Rules in the Bye-laws, Articles of Association, or rules relating to membership or quorum may not be suspended.

Policy Forum

1. Membership

The membership of the Policy Forum is:

1. The six HSU Officers
2. Three Lead Representatives, one per College
3. One Society member
4. One Sports Club member
5. One student from a Liberation background

For items 2-5, HSU will gather expressions of interest from relevant groups before the first Policy Forum of the year. If there is more interest than spaces available, HSU will select members at random from the list of interested students.

While elections for the roles will not normally be held, the majority of Policy Forum members must hold elected HSU roles. This includes the HSU Officers and Society Committee members.

Membership will last until the end of the current academic year.

Attendance at the Policy Forum should be prioritised for HSU Officers. If an HSU Officer misses a Policy Forum, this will be reported to the following Accountability Panel.

If another member misses a Policy Forum meeting without good reason, they will be considered to have resigned from Policy Forum membership. Any vacancy will be filled using the same process used to appoint the original member.

In the event of an Officer position becoming vacant, the Policy Forum will decide whether or how to fill the vacancy.

Associate Members of the Hallam Students' Union with relevant expertise may attend to contribute to discussion. No Associate Member can vote on any item.

2. Notice, Agenda and Papers

The HSU Democracy team will give notice of an upcoming Policy Forum at least ten working days in advance.

If the Policy Forum has been called to update the list of HSU Beliefs, there must be a period of at least five working days where Belief proposals are accepted. The deadline for proposals must be at least five working days before the Policy Forum.

All Policy Forum members and Hallam SU staff can submit a Belief proposal. Student Members of Hallam SU who are not SU staff or Policy Forum members may lobby an HSU Officer or other member of the Policy Forum to raise a topic.

After the close of the Belief proposal submission period, all submitted Belief proposals will be make available to Student Members and HSU staff, who will be able to raise a concern with a proposal. A concern may include direct opposition to the proposal or could provide additional context which the Policy Forum should be aware of before making a decision. This period should last at least five working days.

If the Policy Forum has been called to set the HSU Priorities, there must be a period of at least a week where feedback can be submitted by Student Members and HSU staff on what should be prioritised. This feedback is not binding on Policy Forum members but can be used to inform decision-making.

3. Facilitation

The Policy Forum will be facilitated by a member of HSU staff, appointed by the Head of Advocacy.

The facilitator will not be a member of the Policy Forum and will not have voting rights on any decision made by the Policy Forum.

The facilitator will ensure that:

- discussions are on topic and the meeting runs to time
- all Policy Forum members have a fair opportunity to contribute to discussions
- disagreements are managed respectfully.

The facilitator has the authority to decide who speaks and the order in which they speak.

4. Discussion & Decision-making: Beliefs & Bye-law Changes

When the topic of discussion is the introduction, renewal or removal of a Belief, or an amendment to the Bye-laws, the usual structure of discussion is:

1. The proposer of the item has two minutes to introduce their proposal.
2. Once the proposer has finished speaking, other Policy Forum members or attendees may speak for or against the proposal:
    2.1. If there are speeches for and against the proposal, the facilitator will alternate between speeches for and against.
    2.2. Any concern submitted in advance will have priority over reservations raised in the meeting.
3. Any Policy Forum member or attendee may suggest an amendment to the proposed Belief wording. Policy Forum members can discuss the amendment as in point 2. Amendments are decided by a majority vote.
4. Once there are no further discussion and amendments, the proposal will be put to a vote:
    4.1. Changes to the HSU Beliefs are decided by a majority vote.
    4.2. Changes to the HSU Bye-laws require a two-thirds majority vote.

5. Discussion & Decision-making: Priorities

When the Policy Forum is setting the HSU Priorities, it uses **consensus decision-making**. This means decisions are not made by simple majority vote. Instead, the Forum works together to develop a package of priorities that members can collectively support, while ensuring that concerns are properly discussed and addressed.

The three main stages of the consensus process are:

1. dot voting
2. creating a draft list of Priorities
3. consensus-building

Stage 1: Dot voting

Before discussions on the Priority list start, Policy forum members indicate their initial support via **dot voting**. Dot voting involves the Policy Forum member placing a dot, or other marker, on the Belief or Beliefs that they think are most important for Hallam SU to work on. This can be done physically or digitally. Dots are not anonymous and must be clearly linked to a Policy Forum member.

Each Policy Forum member must place six dots on their chosen Beliefs. The dots can be distributed in any pattern: a member can choose to put one dot on six different Beliefs or indicate a stronger opinion by putting multiple dots on one Belief.

Stage 2: Priority List Drafting

Once all Policy Forum members have placed all six of their dots, a draft Priority list should be created. The facilitator shall propose a draft list based on the result of the dot voting. If there are fewer or more than six Priorities with similar support, the facilitator may invite suggestions from the room to create the draft list.

Every element of the draft list can be changed by the Policy Forum. The final list of Priorities may have none of the Beliefs initially included in the draft list.

Stage 3: Consensus-building discussion

At this stage, members can indicate their view of a proposal:

1. **Support**: content with the proposal as it stands
2. **Minor concerns**: broadly supportive but with some issues to address
3. **Major concerns**: significant issues that may prevent support

This helps the group and the facilitator to understand where further discussion is needed. Discussion is usually informal, but the facilitator may rule that structured debate is needed if it seems likely that discussions will overrun or become disorderly, or to ensure that all members have a fair opportunity to speak. In this case, the facilitator will formally assign members speaking rights.

During the discussion, Policy Forum members can:

- suggest changes to wording
- merge or split items
- replace or remove items
- raise concerns or conditions for support

Priorities may differ from the exact wording of Beliefs (for example, two Beliefs could be combined into one Priority), but no Priority may contradict an existing Belief.

The Policy Forum should consider whether the current list of Priorities would:

- represent a meaningful but achievable workload for Officers
- benefit a broad range of student demographics
- deliver an acceptable programme of short-term and long-term impact

The Policy Forum is not responsible for setting the action plans of agreed Priorities, but considering potential activities for the Priorities can help to further discussion.

The Forum continues to discuss and refine the proposal until it is broadly considered ready to be confirmed. Once the facilitator feels that discussion has come to a close, or if a majority of the Policy Forum is in agreement, Policy Forum members indicate their final position on the proposed list of Priorities:

- **Agree:** The member is fully supportive of the proposed list
- **Agree with reservations:** The member is generally supportive of the proposed list, but with some concerns *(which should be clarified to the group)*
- **Block:** The member believes that the proposed list contains a serious flaw and should not proceed in its current form.

If all Policy Forum members vote to Agree to the proposed list, the list becomes the final list of HSU Priorities.

If any Policy Forum member votes to Block the proposed list, the Policy Forum must return to discussion to address concerns.

If no Block is present, but one or more members have voted to Agree with Reservations, then the members should explain their concerns and outline changes that would address them. The Policy Forum then decides by a majority vote whether it should return to discussion to resolve the reservations.

6. Challenging Decisions

Priority-forming: Failure to Reach Consensus

If a vote on the Priorities has been blocked at least once, and the group cannot reach consensus through discussion, then the group may decide, by a two-thirds majority vote, to take a vote on the currently proposed Priority list. If this vote passes, the most recently proposed list of six Priorities can be approved by a simple majority vote.

If there is no clear list of six proposed Priorities, or the currently proposed list is not approved by the simple majority vote, then a majority vote will take place on the approval of the top six Beliefs based on the dot voting in stage 1. Where Beliefs are tied in the dot vote, they will be voted on in alphabetical order as currently written.

Challenging Facilitator Decisions

The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the discussion is productive, on-topic, runs to time, and is inclusive of all members. However, if a member disagrees with the facilitator's decision, they should make this clear to the facilitator, who will put

the disagreement to a vote of the Policy Forum. A majority vote is required to overturn the facilitator's decision.

7. Records and Publicity

After every Policy Forum, Hallam Students' Union will make public:

Activity	Items
Belief-setting	- Voting records of all members - Updated list of HSU Beliefs
Priority-forming	- Voting records in formal vote *(Agree, Agree with Reservations, Block)* - Updated list of HSU Priorities
Bye-law changes	- Voting records of all members - Updated Bye-laws

Appendix A: Belief Wording

Hallam Students' Union's decision-making framework distinguishes between the values and direction the Union sets, and the practical work it chooses to focus on. This separation recognises that there are many important issues affecting Hallam students, but limited time and resources to address them all at once. Our linked, but distinct, lists of Beliefs and Priorities are designed to reflect this distinction.

Beliefs

Beliefs are political and aspirational statements that describe the kind of world Hallam Students' Union believes students should experience. Each Belief is a sentence that helps to describe the world that we think Hallam students deserve to live in. As more Beliefs are added, we get closer to completing our 'manifesto' for what it should be like to study at Sheffield Hallam University. They don't commit the Students' Union or the University to *action* (although Hallam SU must not act contrary to its Beliefs).

While they should be coherent statements, we're less concerned about how exactly they would be achieved – that's what makes them aspirational. If we had unlimited resource, we would work towards making all our Beliefs a reality. In practice, Hallam SU must decide which Beliefs to prioritise through its Priority-setting process.

Priorities

Priorities are practical, time-limited areas of focus that translate selected Beliefs into action. They represent the issues the Union chooses to actively work on within a defined period, taking account of available time, capacity, and resources. We limit the number of active Priorities to six to ensure that meaningful progress can be made. Priorities are drawn from the Beliefs but aren't always identical to them. A Priority may combine multiple Beliefs or interpret a Belief in a way that is appropriate for delivery within the current context.

To ensure that this two-part model stays consistent, it's important that Beliefs are written in a certain way. Beliefs should:

1. **Describe an end state**

   A Belief should set out what would be true if it were realised, describing the conditions that would exist for students, the institution, or wider society.

2. **Avoid prescribing actions**

   Beliefs should not specify how outcomes are achieved. Detailed actions are developed through the Priority-setting process and may change over time**.** A Belief must make sense even if it does not become a Priority.

3. **Stand the test of time**

   Beliefs should be framed in a way that remains relevant over multiple years, rather than reflecting short-term issues or operational detail.

Examples

Example 1: *"The university should introduce more lecture recordings across all courses."*

This is **not** a well-worded Belief, as it describes an action ("should introduce"), and could become outdated quickly. We don't know if lecture recordings are appropriate or feasible on *all* courses.

A better wording would be: *"Students are able to access high-quality learning materials, including recorded teaching content where appropriate, to support their learning and revision."*

This wording leaves the action-planning to later in the process and describes the *outcome* that we're looking for ("able to access").

Example 2: *"Hallam Students' Union will campaign for cheaper rent in Sheffield."*

This is **not** a well-worded Belief, as it commits the Students' Union to action (which a Belief should not do). It's also plausible that there are simpler or more impactful ways to save students money.

A better wording would be: *"Students are able to access affordable and secure housing in Sheffield without facing undue financial pressure***."**

Priority Workshop

1. **Membership**

All Student Members are entitled to attend and vote at the Priority Workshop.

Attendance at the Priority Workshop should be prioritised for HSU Officers. If an HSU Officer misses a Priority Workshop, this will be reported to the following Accountability Panel.

Associate Members of the Hallam Students' Union with relevant expertise may attend to contribute to discussion. No Associate Member can vote on any item.

2. **Facilitation**

The Priority Workshop will be facilitated by a member of HSU staff, appointed by the Head of Advocacy.

The facilitator will be an associate member and will not have voting rights on any decision made by the Priority Workshop.

The facilitator will ensure that:

- discussions are on topic and the meeting runs to time
- all student members have a fair opportunity to contribute to discussions on a priority action plan
- disagreements are managed respectfully.

The facilitator has the authority to decide who speaks and the order in which they speak.

3. **Agenda and Papers**

The HSU Democracy Team will give notice of an upcoming Priority Workshop at least ten working days in advance.

The workshop will be publicised widely to ensure accessibility and encourage broad student participation.

The agenda will normally include:

- Updates on each Priority from the relevant Officer.
- Consideration and approval of Priority action plans.
- Feedback and discussion on progress and challenges.
- Reports from Accountability Panels.
- Priority Action planning.

Priority action plans should be presented by the HSU Officers as leads.

Relevant papers, including action plans and accountability panel reports, will be shared in advance where available.

4. **Discussion & Decision-Making**

The Priority Workshop is designed to be participatory and collaborative, with a focus on developing high-quality Priority delivery.

Approach to Discussion

Discussion will normally be informal and workshop-based, allowing students to contribute ideas, feedback, and challenge.

The facilitator may introduce structured discussion where necessary.

Participants may:

- Provide feedback on Priority progress.
- Suggest new actions or changes to action plans.
- Raise concerns or highlight barriers.
- Share relevant student experiences or evidence.

Decision-Making

Formal Decisions

Decisions relating to:

- Accountability Panel recommendations
- Updates on existing Priority action plans

Will be made by a majority vote of Student Members in attendance.

Consensus Decisions

Workshop-based discussions on recommendations for Priority action plans will aim to reach consensus on an approach where possible. Recommendations are advisory and do not bind Officers to a course of action, but Officers should evidence to the Accountability Panel how they have incorporated Priority Workshop recommendations and justify any decisions not to take forward a recommendation.

5. **Challenging Decisions**

Challenging Facilitator Decisions

The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the discussion is productive, on-topic, runs to time, and is inclusive of all members. However, if a student member disagrees with the facilitator's decision, they should make this clear to the facilitator, who will put the disagreement to a vote of the Priority Workshop. A majority vote is required to overturn the facilitator's decision.

6. **Records and Publicity**

After each Priority Workshop, Hallam Students' Union will publish:

- Summary of discussions and key outcomes.
- Recommendations for Priority action plans.
- Reports from Accountability Panels.
- Any formal decisions taken.

Members' Meetings

1. Membership

The Bye-laws outline the following attendance, speaking and voting rights:

Group	Attendance	Speaking	Voting
Student Members	×	×	×
Lay Trustees of HSU	×	×	
CEO of HSU	×	×	
Associate Members	×		

Voting rights

Only Student Members of Hallam Students' Union may vote on any business at a Members' Meeting.

Speaking rights

Student Members, the Lay Trustees of HSU, and the Chief Executive Officer of HSU may speak on any item, provided the Chair of the Members' Meeting has given them permission to speak. The Members' Meeting may vote to allow an Associate Member or non-Member to speak on a specific item.

Attendance rights

Student Members, the Lay Trustees of HSU, the Chief Executive Officer of HSU, and any other Associate Member may attend any Members' Meeting. If the Members' Meeting reaches capacity, then Student Members should have preferential access.

2. Notice, Agenda and Papers

The time, date and location of any Members' Meeting will be agreed between the HSU Democracy team and whoever called the Meeting. The Members' Meeting should take place as soon as possible after the meeting was called, while allowing adequate time to prepare the agenda, book a suitable space and publicise the event.

Members' Meetings will be publicised to ensure maximum awareness among Student Members.

At the Annual Members' Meeting, Student Members will be able to submit agenda items for discussion, provided they fall under the criteria listed in Bye-law 7.3.

Members' Meetings other than the Annual Members' Meeting will be considered 'Special' Members' Meetings, meaning that the agenda may only cover topics included in the initial call for the meeting. For example, if a petition is submitted to call a Members' Meeting to debate the introduction of a new HSU Belief, the only action allowed to be taken at the Members' Meeting is the debate and vote on that HSU Belief.

The agenda and papers for each Members' Meeting will be made available at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

3. **Chairing**

Annual Members' Meetings will be chaired by the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Hallam Students' Union. Other Members' Meetings will be chaired by the HSU President.

If the usual Chair is unable to chair the Meeting, they must appoint a substitute.

Where the Chair of the Board of Trustees would normally chair the Meeting, the substitute should normally be a Lay Trustee. If no Lay Trustee is willing and able to act as Chair, an HSU Officer may be appointed instead.

Where the President would normally chair the Meeting, the substitute should normally be an HSU Officer. If no HSU Officer is willing and able to act as Chair, a Lay Trustee may be appointed instead.

If no Lay Trustee or HSU Officer is willing and able to act as Chair, the Members' Meeting shall appoint a Chair from among those present by a majority vote. The appointed Chair may be either a Student Member or an Associate Member.

Where the Chair is a Student Member, they may only vote in a show of hands where their vote could affect the outcome. In a secret ballot, they may vote in the same manner as any other eligible voter.

4. **Discussion & Decision-making**

Where an item requires a decision or approval, the question will usually be decided by a simple majority vote. Changes to the HSU Priorities require a two-thirds majority.

Only the outcome of a vote need be recorded, unless a count is requested or voting is done by secret ballot. It is not required to record how each member voted.

Before any vote, the Chair should ensure that the question being voted on is clear to all members in attendance. Any member can request that the question is repeated or clarified before a vote is taken.

The usual way of running a vote at a Members' Meeting is by show of hands. In some cases, a secret ballot is the preferred process.

Voting by show of hands

The Chair will ask all Student Members in favour of the current proposal to raise their hands.

Example

Chair: *"All those in favour [of the current proposal/motion] please raise your hand."*

Chair: *"All those against [the current proposal/motion] please raise your hand."*

The Chair may ask Members to keep their hands raised to enable a count.

Abstentions are not usually asked for. If a Member would like to abstain from voting (they have no strong opinion either way), they should simply not raise their hand at any point.

Votes with a clear outcome

If a vote is taken that is unanimously or overwhelmingly in favour of one outcome, the Chair may decide to declare the vote passed (or not passed as the case may be). This should only be done when the Chair can clearly see all voting members, and all voting members can see each other. Any Student Member may require that the vote is counted to verify the outcome.

Example

Chair: *"All those in favour [of the current proposal] please raise your hand."*

[a clear majority of members raise their hand]

Chair: *"All those against [the current proposal] please raise your hand."*

[no members, or only one or two members, raise their hand]

Chair: *"The proposal clearly passes, unless there are any objections?"*

[Chair pauses briefly to allow a member to ask for a count of the vote]

Member [if the member disagrees with the Chair and feels that the outcome of the vote is not obvious]: *"I request a count."*

The Chair must honour the member's request and retake the vote, ensuring that all votes for and against are counted.

Unanimous Consent

The Chair may decide to assume unanimous consent for extremely uncontentious items. This helps to streamline the process when it is considered highly unlikely that there will be debate or disagreement on the matter. One common example of this is for the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting. Unanimous consent must genuinely be unanimous – an objection from a single voting member will cause the issue to be put to a vote.

Example:

Chair: [after all members have had the opportunity to read the minutes of the previous meeting] *"If there are no objections, the minutes of the previous meeting are approved as read."*

[Chair pauses briefly to allow any member to object]

Member [if the member disagrees with the Chair and feels that the outcome of the vote is not obvious]: *"I request a vote."*

The Chair must honour the member's request and take a vote on the current item.

Voting by secret ballot

If a vote could be contentious, or if there are concerns that members' votes might be influenced by others, the vote can be taken by secret ballot. Under this process, nobody sees how other members vote. This can either be done electronically or on paper.

The HSU Democracy team will confirm in advance with whoever called the Meeting the preferred method of running the vote. Any member can request in advance that a vote be held in secret. It may not be possible to accommodate a request for a secret ballot made during the Meeting.

5. Challenging Facilitator Decisions

The role of the Chair is to ensure that the discussion is productive, on-topic, runs to time, and is inclusive of all members. However, if a member disagrees with the Chair's decision, they should make this clear to the Chair, who will put the disagreement to a vote of the Members' Meeting. A majority vote is required to overturn the Chair's decision.

6. Records and Publicity

Minutes of the Members' Meeting will be made available to all Student Members.