Bylaw Committee

Transition Manual

Information for the Members of the Bylaw Committee

Last updated: April 2015

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 You should always read them in addition to this manual in case information in the manual has become out-of-date.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 Bylaw Committee?

The Bylaw Committee is the steward of the Students’ Union’s bylaws. They are responsible for reviewing bylaws regularly, overseeing the writing of new bylaws or updating of current ones, and writing referenda and plebiscite questions as necessary.

Bylaw 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:

1. **Draft referendum and plebiscite questions.**

   Proposals may be received from the Chief Returning Officer or from Students’ Council for referendum or plebiscite questions. Bylaw Committee is responsible for drafting the question that will be seen on the ballot. If the referendum is being initiated by a petition, Bylaw Committee must also draft the petition question within 14 days of receiving the intent of the question. Referendum and plebiscite questions must reflect the original intent of the proposal, and may be challenged or sent back for re-drafting if they do not. Upon receiving a referendum or plebiscite proposal or petition, Bylaw Committee must draft, approve, and forward to Council a petition question within 14 days.

2. **Drafting bylaws.**

   When new bylaws are to be introduced, or major changes are to be made to existing bylaws, Bylaw Committee will draft a first principles bill to send to Council. First principles explains the intent of the bylaw or the changes to be made. Once Council has approved the first principles, Bylaw Committee then appoints one of its members to draft the bylaw or changes, and then sends a draft to Council for approval. The bylaw may then go back and forth between Council several times should Council require many edits before approving it. Bylaw Committee sometimes creates bylaw drafts in conjunction with SU staff, Executives, or other committees as needed. The full process can be found in Standing Orders.

3. **Make recommendations to Council on bylaws.**

   Bylaw Committee is responsible for reading and understanding all bylaws, and may in the process of doing so discover recommendations on those bylaws that should be forwarded to Council for consideration.
4. **Make editorial amendments to bylaws.**

Bylaw Committee may make small editorial changes (like correcting spelling, punctuation, grammar, formatting, etc) provided those changes do not alter the meaning of the bylaw.

5. **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.

**Duties of Chair**

Generally, your duties as the Chair involve making sure that the duties of Bylaw 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 Bylaw Committee first.

In addition to making sure Bylaw 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 Bylaw Committee.
2. Submit report to Students’ Council.
3. Assign tasks to committee members engaged in drafting bylaws.
4. Work with Speaker and SU staff to ensure the logistical needs of Bylaw Committee are met.
5. Recommend to Students’ Council the removal of any member who is not fulfilling their responsibilities to the Bylaw Committee.
6. Designating an alternate Chair should they be unable to attend.

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 Bylaw Committee Chair…

If you’re starting at the beginning of the year, SU staff should have coordinated the first meeting of Bylaw Committee at which you were elected Chair. Now you have a set Standing Orders for the year and a meeting schedule, so it’s time to get to work on Bylaw stuff. 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 Bylaw 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. It will help you get into the leadership role, and give you an idea of how you should be directing the committee.
2. When was Bylaw Committee’s last progress check on the activities of Council and its Committees? Does one need to be done?
3. 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.
4. Has Bylaw Committee missed any important deadlines, and have all time-sensitive duties of Bylaw Committee been fulfilled up to the current date? Check the timeline below for important dates and deadlines.
5. What projects has Bylaw Committee been working on, and what’s the progress so far? Ask other committee members, or check past meeting minutes.

Bylaw Committee Timeline

Bylaw Committee has a much less strict timeline than most other committees, as its work is largely determined by the activities of Council, the Executive, and the initiative of members of the Committee. However, there are a few important deadlines you should keep in mind:

May:
- Create a strategic plan for Bylaw Committee’s activities and goals for the year.
- Do an overview of all bylaws and ensure that all members understand them.
- Attend GovCamp at the end of the month.

August:
- End of August is the deadline for Councillors to resign their position if it is to be filled in the September by-election.

September:
- Week of Welcome
- By-elections

October:
- If Faculty Associations wish to create a Faculty Association Membership Fee (FAMF) they must send a letter of intent (usually to the VP Academic) by the end of October. If any FAMFs are about to expire, it’s a good idea to communicate with the VPA and Discover Governance about that FA and whether or not they wish to reapply for their FAMF.
January:

- At your first meeting in January, you should check in on last semester’s business to ensure that all business is on track to be finished by the end of the year.
- FAMF proposals are due January 15, at which point Bylaw Committee will have to draft a referendum question and send it to Council for approval.
- Most petitions or other proposals for plebiscite and referendum questions will be received during January.

February:

- Nominations for SU General Elections are due, and Campaigning begins.

March:

- At your first meeting in March, check in on the progress of your goals and business.
- General Elections and Councillor/GFC elections are held.

April:

- Ensure that all necessary documents, such as committee goals tracking documents and survey results, are prepared to be passed on to the next Bylaw Committee Chair.