Policy Committee

Transition Manual

*Information for the Members of the Policy 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 You should always read them in addition to this manual in case information in the manual has become out-of-date.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 Policy Committee?**

The Policy Committee makes recommendations on political policy, writes drafts of proposed political policies, receives reports from the SU Executive Committee regarding their advocacy activities, evaluates the effectiveness of SU advocacy, and makes editorial changes to political policies. 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 You should always read them in addition to this manual in case information in the manual has become out-of-date.

Policy 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. **Make recommendations on SU political policy.**

   Policy Committee must develop an understanding of the SU’s political policies, and may choose to make recommendations for changes to current policies or for the creation of new policies. When recommending changes to existing policies, it’s important to have a good idea of the conditions laid out in that policy, as each one has its own expiration timeline and may have specific rules relating to how, when, and why that policy may be amended.

2. **Draft political policies.**

   Occasionally, Students’ Council or the Executive Committee may send an intention or request for the drafting of political policy to the Policy Committee. When this happens, one member of the Policy Committee will be chosen to draft the policy in question, and will be responsible for drafting the first principles and details of the policy for approval in Students’ Council. Details of the legislative process for policies can be found in the Policy Committee’s Standing Orders.

3. **Evaluate SU advocacy efforts.**

   Policy Committee will receive reports from the Executive Committee regarding the SU’s recent advocacy activities, and it is the Policy Committee’s job to evaluate how effective those activities have been, in a method to be determined by the committee.

4. **Make editorial changes to political policies.**

   It is the responsibility of Policy Committee to review the SU’s political policies each year and make any necessary editorial changes. This includes editing for grammar, spelling, and punctuation, but cannot include any changes that may change the meaning of the policy.
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 Policy 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 Policy Committee first.

In addition to making sure Policy 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 Policy Committee.
2. Submit report to Students’ Council.
3. Ensure there is an agenda for each meeting.
4. Work with Speaker and SU staff to ensure the logistical needs of Policy Committee are met.
5. Receive reports on the SU’s advocacy activities.
6. Delegate tasks to committee members as required.

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 Policy Committee Chair…

If you’re starting at the beginning of the year, SU staff should have coordinated the first meeting of Policy 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 Policy Committee 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 Policy 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 Policy 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 Policy Committee missed any important deadlines, and have all time-sensitive duties of Policy Committee been fulfilled up to the current date? Check the timeline below for important dates and deadlines.
5. What projects has Policy Committee been working on, and what’s the progress so far? Ask other committee members, or check past meeting minutes.

Policy Committee Timeline

Most of the Policy Committees activities are self-directed or done on an ad hoc basis, depending on what they are, so there isn’t really a set timeline of important deadlines. The following timeline includes some general dates you should keep aware of.

May:
- Create a strategic plan for Policy Committee’s activities and goals for the year.
- Do an overview of all duties 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

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.

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 Policy Committee Chair.