**Chair Guide**

**The Role of the Chair**

The role of the Chair is to assist the meeting to achieve its goals. This means taking directions from the meeting (e.g. via a procedural motion) as much as being a dictator.

The main tasks include

* helping people stick to the topic at hand and to the order of business
* ensuring that decisions are made where necessary
* silencing people who keep interrupting or repeating points already made
* ensuring the appropriate process is followed
* helping to achieve a resolution between conflicting viewpoints via a procedural method

During the meeting, discussion should occur through the Chair. This position can therefore have a lot of power, although in theory it is responsible for maintaining a fair and democratic process throughout the meeting. In small/less formal meetings it can be reasonable for the Chair to enter into the debate, provided that they take their turn. However, if they intend to speak frequently, the better practice is to hand the Chair to another person for the duration of debate on that issue.

No matter what type of meeting is involved, the Chair needs to be an articulate speaker, a good manager of people and information flow, respectful, aware of the procedural requirements and protocols for meetings and able to summarize key points and decisions reached.

The Chair must act with confidence, be comfortable leading a group of people, maintain objectivity and exercise good judgment.

**The Chair is usually required to undertake the following duties:**

* Approve agenda items and inclusion of papers
* Manage, guide and direct the conduct of business at meetings
* Facilitate discussion by members
* Ensure business is conducted in a timely fashion
* Clarify and confirm final decisions and actions to be taken
* Note the time of adjournment
* Review and sign off on minutes for presentation at the next meeting
  + Minutes in their final form are not approved until the next meeting

**The Chair has responsibility for:**

* calling, cancelling or adjourning meeting
* placing any items of business, notices or motions on the agenda or for circular resolution
* requesting a complicated question to the committee be divided and put in the form of a number of motions
* determining the vote on a particular motion by having a casting vote (when there is a tied vote).

**Good Practice Tips for Chairpersons**

* Arrive early
* Start the meeting at the time specified on the formal notice.
* Lead each item and identify whether they are for information, noting, discussion or decision.
* Keep people focused on the agenda and guide members back to the agenda if discussion wanders too far. However, a balance needs to be achieved between adherence to the agenda and encouraging or allowing a free exchange of ideas.
* Be sensitive to signals from the Minute Secretary.
  + The Minute Secretary may be watching the clock for you.
  + The Minute Secretary may also be unsure of an outcome reached and require clarification.
* Prior to the meeting, ensure that you are across the procedural requirements for the meeting, including voting rules, quorum issues, ballots needed to be taken, etc.

**The Agenda**

The agenda sets out the items of business in the order of discussion. It can contain items such as specific issues or proposals, reports from sub committees or particular people.

Normally the agenda will be circulated prior to the meeting to allow people to prepare for particular items. Not all agenda items are automatically discussed. The convention is that any reports or recommendations which are not discussed (as identified in a motion) are regarded as having been approved.

**During the Meeting:**

1. **Ensuring quorum –** 
   1. The quorum is the whole number next above one-half of the positions on Guild Council. If the committee’s quorum is not present within thirty minutes of the meeting time, the meeting shall be adjourned. If the business is important, the President may deem that the meeting should proceed inquorate, however no motions can be passed.
2. **Opening the meeting**
   1. The Chair shall open the meeting by stating the time and acknowledging the Traditional Owners.
   2. The Chair shall use the voice recorder for Guild Council meetings.
   3. The Chair shall ensure that all present members have signed the Guild Council attendance sheet
3. **Motions**
   * A motion is a proposed resolution. The Chair will usually attempt to focus debate on the content of a motion. Whoever drafts the wording of a motion can ‘set the agenda’ for any given debate.
   * Any motion or amendment to a motion which takes place (not on notice or submitted to the agenda) must be submitted to the chair in writing. This motion must be read aloud at the time when it is handed to the chair (if accepted) and then again later when it is to be voted on.
   * Most motions require a mover and a seconder. However, it is usual for the mover to speak in favour before the Chair asks for a seconder. It is also acceptable for a motion to be seconded by someone who does not support the motion, but wishes it to be discussed.

**Amendments to Motions**

* An amendment (or motion to amend) is a proposal to change a motion. It enables a motion to be improved or its intent to be slightly changed. These can be used to get a compromise position.
* Strictly speaking, an amendment should not result in a motion which contradicts the original motion nor should it change its focus to a different subject. Amendments require a mover and a seconder. If the proposed amendment is acceptable to the mover and seconder of the motion, the change can simply be incorporated.
* If not, the amendment is treated as a new motion and its acceptance voted on by the meeting, usually after some debate.

*For example –*

If the Guild President has proposed a motion, and the EVP wishes to amend it and the Guild President is happy to take on board the amendment, no additional motion is required. The amended motion can be voted on immediately (or after a discussion).

However, if the Guild President does not wish to incorporate the EVP’s amendment into their motion, a new \**procedural*\* motion, one which the Council must pass which agrees to the amendment of the original motion, must first be passed or voted down before the FINAL (and thus either **amended** or the **original**) motion can be addressed (and subsequently voted on).

**Procedural motions**

* Procedural motions are motions not about an issue, but how a meeting should deal with a particular issue. They can cover such things as the order of business, whether to amend a motion, whether a series of motions should be voted on as a bloc, a deferral of debate on a particular motion, or be about the conduct of debate (e.g. “That the motion be put” or “That discussion be moved to formal debate”) and even dissent in a ruling of the chair.
* Procedural motions require a mover and a seconder and must be dealt with before any other motions or business except a point of order. Those concerning the conduct of debate usually are put to the vote without discussion.

**Point of Order**

A point of order is taken (rather than moved) when a person believes that an irregularity has occurred in the proceedings. A point of order takes precedence over all other business and must be taken at the time the alleged irregularity occurred. Normally a point of order is open to discussion to enable a case to be made before the Chair makes a ruling. A point of order should not be taken just because someone disagrees with the speaker or believes they have made an incorrect statement.

A person taking a point of order must prove that the speaker is:

* not speaking to the motion or is covering areas outside the scope of the question
* they are using offensive or inappropriate (e.g. Sexist or racist) language
* they are infringing some rules of the organisation
* they’re infringing the standing orders, the Guild’s Regulations/By-Laws, Code of Conduct or acting contrary to the general custom of debate

**Rejecting motions**

The Chair of a meeting may reject any motion or point of order that is:

* Ultra vires to the meeting, meaning it is outside the scope of the meeting, it is beyond the powers of authority of that particular committee or board
* Irrelevant, it bears no relation to the original motion or its subject matter
* Redundant, proposing something already resolved upon by the meeting
* Inconsistent, incompatible with a decision previously made by the meeting
* Vexation i.e. Frivolous, designed merely to annoy or to disrupt the meeting and its dealing with business

This usually is done by saying “I rule that motion out of order”

## Dissent from the Chair’s ruling

A member of a meeting who disagrees with a ruling or decision of the Chair may move:

* “That the Chair’s ruling be dissented from”.

The intent of a motion of dissent would be to correct a bone fide mistake on the Chair’s part or to give legitimate effect to the will of the meeting. It is not a motion of no confidence.

A dissent motion should generally follow a ruling on a point of order taken, for example, on the Chair’s acceptance of a motion or some irregularity. Dissent must be moved at the time of the ruling and the motion does not need to be seconded.

A common practice is for another member of the meeting to act as Chair whilst the dissent motion is considered. The mover of dissent and the Chair of the substantive debate then speak to the motion, explaining why the original ruling should be overturned or upheld. At the conclusion of these speeches the members of the meeting vote on the motion of dissent which is usually worded “That the Chair’s ruling be upheld”.

## Order of debate

When discussion surrounding a particular issue is becoming circular or is starting to move away from the original issue then it is common that a procedural motion be made that discussion move to formal debate. As with Standing Orders, order of debate can seem very official and imposing. However, the basic idea is to give each proposal the same opportunity to be debated. So this really applies to those situations where more than one motion is before the meeting. In many cases the correct procedure for the moving of motions and dealing with them will be set down in Standing Orders.

One fairly standard rule is for each person to be given only one turn to speak or ask questions during debate in a particular issue. You might get another opportunity, but only after everyone else has had the chance to speak and depending on the length of the debate the meeting (and especially the Chair) will indulge in.

Apart from the basics of the form of a motion there are some other points to keep in mind. As part of the official minutes, any motion which is passed will become the record of decision. It needs to be as clear in six months’ time to an outsider as to those at a particular meeting. So a motion must:

* be clear in what it is proposing
* state what is actually intended
* contain the key element of the decision
* be framed in the affirmative

**In Camera**

Matters discussed at an in-camera meeting are confidential. Members may move that the meeting proceed in camera to discuss confidential matters, usually relating to employment matters or matters of a sensitive nature. Any non-members of the Guild Council, including observers, the Minute Secretary, and the Managing Director, will have to leave the meeting unless otherwise authorised to stay for the discussion. No minutes are taken during this ‘in camera’ portion of the meeting.