

The Constitution of Oxford University Liberal Democrats

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Chapter 1: Name and Aims

Rule 1: Name

The Society is called “Oxford University Liberal Democrats”.

Rule 2: Aims

- a) The Society aims to promote awareness and understanding of the history, principles, values and policies of the Liberal Democrats amongst members of the University of Oxford and the surrounding community, and to promote discussion of liberalism and social democracy.
- b) The Society aims to organise addresses by distinguished political speakers, discussion forums concerning matters of relevance and interest to Liberal Democrats, and debates against other political societies within the University of Oxford.
- c) The Society aims to campaign for the Liberal Democrats in all local, national and European elections in which resident members of the University of Oxford are eligible to vote.
- d) The Society aims to organise social and recreational events for its Members.

Chapter 2: Membership of the Society

Rule 3: Membership

A: Full Members

- a) Any student member of the University of Oxford, or any visiting student studying at the University of Oxford, is entitled to be a Full Member of the Society. Anyone eligible for Full Membership may become a Full Member by attending one of the Society’s meetings and filling in and signing the registration form provided by the Secretary, or by writing to the Secretary and asking for Full Membership.
- b) A Member is no longer eligible to be a Full Member once he or she is given permission to supplicate for his or her degree, diploma or certificate.

B: Associate Members

- a) Any person who is interested in the Liberal Democrats, including students at Oxford Brookes, who wishes to be present at Society events, and who is ineligible for Full Membership can become an Associate Member of the Society at the President’s discretion.
- b) Associate Members are entitled to attend all meetings of the Society, but are not able to vote or to stand for membership of the Society’s Executive Committee.

Rule 4: Membership Records

- a) The Secretary must keep a database of all current Members. The database must include each Member's name, Membership status, and College or institution, and where applicable, current year of study, and the expected length of course.
- b) The Secretary must not enter a Member into the database unless he or she has a copy of their signature on a registration form or a letter, indicating that they desire Membership. The Secretary is responsible for keeping copies of all signatures and requests for Membership.

Rule 5: Cessation of Membership

- a) Any Member may resign his or her Membership by writing to the Secretary.
- b) The Executive Committee may revoke any Member's entitlement to Membership of the Society under exceptional circumstances where a Member has wilfully or recklessly caused harm to the Society. Only a 60% majority at a meeting of the Executive Committee can revoke the Membership of a Member of the Society under this rule. Any Member so excluded has a right of appeal to the Senior Member, who can overturn the Executive Committee's decision for good cause.
- c) A former Member whose Membership has been revoked by the Executive Committee can only be readmitted to the Society by writing to the President, who must then put the matter to the vote at a meeting of the Executive Committee. Only a 60% majority at a meeting of the Executive Committee can restore a Membership.

Chapter 3: The Executive Committee

Rule 6: The Executive Committee (General)

- a) In order of seniority, the Executive Committee consists of four Officers: the President, the President-elect, the Treasurer, and the Secretary; and the following members: the Campaigns Officer, the Social Secretary, the Press and Publicity Officer, and the Senior Member. The IT Officer is appointed by the Executive Committee, and is entitled to speak but not vote at meetings. Former Executive Committee Members are eligible to be *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee for six terms after the term in which they served, if invited by the President, they are entitled to speak, but not vote at meetings.
- b) The Executive Committee is chaired by the President, or by either the Treasurer or Secretary if the President is unavoidably absent. It is the Governing Body of the Society, with overall responsibility for the administration of the Society, and control of its finances and assets. It must meet at least once during each full term, with at least a week's notice being given to all members by the President before each meeting. A meeting of the Executive Committee requires a *quorum* of three, which must include either

the President, Treasurer or Secretary. If any financial business needs to be discussed, the Treasurer must be present.

- c) The President can call an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee at 24 hours' notice, provided that he or she takes all reasonable steps to alert all members of the Executive Committee. An emergency meeting of the Executive Committee has no power to revoke a Membership under Rule 5 b), or to restore a Membership under Rule 5 c).
- d) Each Member of the Executive Committee shall serve from midnight on Sunday of 9th Week in the term during which they are elected, or from the earliest point after that at which they can take office, until midnight on Sunday of 9th Week of the following term with the exception of the Treasurer who will serve until Sunday of 9th Week of the term subsequent to that.
- e) Any member of the Executive Committee may resign by writing to the President, except the President, who may resign by writing to the Returning Officer.

Rule 7: The President

- a) The President has overall responsibility for the running of the Society's affairs. The President must organise, to the best of his or her ability, addresses by distinguished political speakers, discussion forums concerning matters of relevance and interest to Liberal Democrats, and events with other political societies within the University of Oxford.
- b) The President must coordinate and oversee each term's programme of activities carried out by the Society, ensure that members of the Executive Committee are carrying out their duties under this Constitution, and give them any help they may need in so doing.
- c) The President must make sure that the President-elect is made a moderator of the mailing list before the end of each term.

Rule 8: The President-elect

The President-elect must prepare the programme of events for the forthcoming term, when he or she expects to succeed to the position of President.

Rule 9: The Treasurer

- a) The Treasurer has responsibility for the Society's finances. The Treasurer must ensure that the Society's funds are being correctly managed, and must report any problems to the Executive Committee.
- b) The Treasurer is responsible for keeping the Society's accounts up-to-date, and publishing them termly.
- c) The Treasurer must make sure that Members are reimbursed promptly for any money which they spend on behalf of the Society under the direction of the President.
- d) At the end of their period of office, the Treasurer must make sure that the incoming Treasurer is made a signatory of the Society's account and ensure

that the other signatories are members who will be in resident in Oxford for the next two terms.

Rule 10: The Secretary

- a) The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes at meetings of the Executive Committee.
- b) The Secretary is responsible for providing a registration form for new Members at each meeting of the Society, for receiving and recording written requests for membership or resignation, and for maintaining the Membership database with details of all current Members.
- c) The Secretary must, to the best of his or her ability, ensure that the Society is registered with the Proctors of the University of Oxford at the start of each term, inform the Proctors of any changes in the Society's Officers or Constitution, and inform the Proctors if the Society is dissolved.
- d) The Secretary is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date copy of this Constitution, and for updating it with any changes in the Rules.
- e) The secretary is responsible for the mailing list.

Rule 11: The Campaigns Officer

- a) The Campaigns Officer is responsible for coordinating any political campaigning carried out by the Society on behalf of the Liberal Democrats.
- b) The Campaigns Officer is responsible for maintaining good links between the Society and the Liberal Democrat constituency parties in Oxford West & Abingdon, and Oxford East.

Rule 12: The Social Secretary

The Social Secretary must, to the best of his or her ability, organise social and recreational events for Members each term.

Rule 13: The Press and Publicity Officer

- a) The Press and Publicity Officer is responsible for handling any press or media enquiries concerning the Society's activities, under the direction of the President.
- b) The Press and Publicity Officer is responsible for publicising the Society and the Society's events to members of the University of Oxford.
- c) The Press and Publicity Officer must, to the best of his or her ability, obtain positive coverage for the Society within the student press.
- d) The Press and Publicity must take all reasonable steps to address any negative, unfair or unjustified coverage of the Society by the press or media.
- e) To the best of his or her ability, the Press and Publicity Officer should release a newsletter each term to be distributed to Members of the Society.

Rule 14: The IT Officer

- a) The IT Officer is appointed by the Executive Committee, and is entitled to speak but not vote at meetings of the Executive Committee.
- b) The IT Officer is responsible for maintaining the Society's website.
- c) The IT Officer must make sure that details of the members of the Executive Committee are available on the website.
- d) The IT Officer must make sure that details of the Society's termcard and events are available on the website.
- e) The IT Officer must make sure that an up-to-date version of this Constitution is available on the Website.
- f) The IT Officer must make sure that a brief summary of how to stand in the Society's elections is available on the website.
- g) The IT Officer must make sure that the details of any election results, any complaints, and the reports of any election Tribunals or Disciplinary Committees are available on the website.

Rule 15: The Senior Member

The Senior Member is a member of Congregation. He or she must sign the Society's termly re-registration documents once they are in order. He or she must hear appeals against any removal of Membership, and the results of an Election Tribunal or Disciplinary Committee.

Rule 16: Succession

- a) At the end of each term, the outgoing President-elect succeeds to the position of President.
- b) If a position on the Executive Committee is unfilled due to death or resignation or dismissal, a by-election must be held within a week. In the interim, the Executive Committee must take responsibility for filling the vacant position, except that no member may hold more than one Officer position, excluding President-elect. If the vacancy occurs after Sunday of 6th week, no by-election is held.

Chapter 4: Election of the Executive Committee

Rule 17: Appointment of the Returning Officer

- a) The Returning Officer is appointed each term in 6th week, and serves from his or her appointment until the next Returning Officer is appointed.
- b) Any Full Member of the Society except the President or President-elect may become Returning Officer.
- c) The Returning Officer is appointed by the Executive Committee. If the position becomes vacant, the Executive Committee must appoint a new Returning Officer as soon as possible.

Rule 18: The Returning Officer

- a) The Returning Officer is responsible for coordinating the Society's elections each term.
- b) The Returning Officer is responsible for applying and interpreting the Rules contained in this Constitution to the elections each term, and may make any necessary clarifications or interpretations. He or she must put any clarifications or interpretations in an appendix at the end of this Constitution.
- c) The Returning Officer is responsible for keeping a safe and up-to-date backup copy of this Constitution.

Rule 19: Eligibility to Nominate for Election

- a) Any Full Member except for the Returning Officer, the President-elect and a Treasurer who has another term in office may nominate himself or herself for election, unless he or she is ineligible to do so under this rule, or he or she has been banned from standing by a Disciplinary Committee of Election Tribunal.
- b) No Member may nominate for more than one position in any election.
- c) No Member may nominate for election if he or she is a member of a political party registered in the UK with the Electoral Commission, other than the Liberal Democrats or the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland.

Rule 20: Election Procedure

- a) Elections are held during 7th week of each term, for the positions of President-elect, Secretary, Campaigns Officer, Social Secretary, and Press and Publicity Officer, and every other term for Treasurer.
- b) The Returning Officer must send an email to all Full Members on Monday of 6th week inviting nominations.
- c) For a nomination to be valid, it must be sent from the Member's University e-mail address, to the Returning Officer's University e-mail address, before the end of Friday of 6th week.
- d) Candidates can submit a manifesto of up to 100 words, apart from candidates for President-elect who can submit a manifesto of up to 250 words.
- e) Manifestos must not make untruthful or misleading statements, or mention another candidate by name or implication.
- f) The Returning Officer must make sure, by checking the membership database, that all candidates are entitled to stand, and that all manifestos are legal – if not, he or she has the right to edit or change manifestos, and to disallow nominations.
- g) The Returning Officer must send an e-mail to all Full Members on Monday of 7th week, giving details of all candidates, along with their manifestos, and informing Members of time and date of the meeting at which voting will take place.
- h) The Returning Officer must list all candidates for each position, along with the option to vote to re-open nominations

- i) The Returning Officer must arrange for ballot papers to be available at a meeting of the Society to be held during 7th week, Full Members will be able to vote during the duration of the meeting. The poll will close when the President (or the chair) brings the meeting to an end.
- j) Any Full Member is entitled to a postal vote. To request a postal vote a Full Member must email the Returning Officer by midnight on the end of the day of the polling. The Returning Officer must deliver a ballot paper promptly. To be valid, the ballot paper must be returned to the Returning Officer by 9am on Saturday of 7th week
- k) Only votes by Full Members are valid
- l) The Returning Officer must validate each vote by checking it against the Membership database.
- m) No Member may campaign or canvass for votes on behalf of any candidate in the elections, except verbally to personal friends. No campaigning of any kind is permitted at a meeting of the Society.
- n) The Returning Officer must count the votes using the Single Transferable Vote system, and must announce the results on Saturday of 7th week, or as soon as possible after that date. They must give the results to the Webmaster to be published on the Society's website as soon as possible.
- o) The Returning Officer must not discuss the votes cast by any named Member in the Society's elections, and must make all reasonable efforts to keep the ballot secret.
- p) If any positions are not filled, or of there is a vacancy due to death or resignation or dismissal, or if Members vote to re-open nominations for a position, the Returning Officer shall call for a by-election to be held. The procedure is exactly the same as for an ordinary election, except that the timetable is set at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
- q) If any positions are still unfilled after two rounds of elections, the Executive Committee may co-opt any Full Member to the position, or share the portfolio amongst themselves.

Chapter 5: Complaints

Rule 21: Complaints Against Election Results

- a) If any Member believes that the rules regarding elections have not been correctly observed, or that a candidate or the Returning Officer or another Member has obtained an unfair advantage for a candidate or candidates, they may complain in writing to the Returning Officer by 12 noon on the day after the election results are announced. The complaint must be made against a specific Member or Members.
- b) Any complaints will be considered by an election Tribunal consisting of three Full Members, appointed by the President, who have been Members for at least three terms, are not implicated in any complaints, and were not candidates in the elections.

- c) Any complainant has the right to present their complaint before the Tribunal. Any Member who is the subject of a complaint has the opportunity to defend himself or herself before the Tribunal.
- d) The Tribunal must deliver an explicit verdict of guilty or not guilty. If the Tribunal considers that a Member against whom a complaint was made has broken the rules concerning the election, they may, at their discretion:
 - i) give that Member a verbal or written warning;
 - ii) disqualify that Member, if a candidate, from the election concerned;
 - iii) ban that Member from standing in any future election;
 - iv) make a formal recommendation to the Executive Committee that that Member have his or her Membership revoked;
 - v) order that the election for any one position, or for all positions, be annulled and re-run at the earliest possible convenience.
- e) If the entire election is annulled at the end of term, then the President-elect shall succeed to the position of President as normal, but all other outgoing members of the Executive Committee except the outgoing President carry on in their roles until the new election can be held. If any outgoing member of the Executive Committee is unable or unwilling to carry on in the role, or the elections for some but not all positions are annulled, then the other members of the Executive Committee shall share the duties and responsibilities of those positions between them until the positions can be filled.
- f) Any Member found guilty under d) has a right of appeal to the Senior Member, who may overrule the Disciplinary Committee for good cause.

Rule 22: Complaints Against Members of the Executive Committee

- a) Any Member may bring a complaint in writing to the Returning Officer against a current member of the Executive Committee or the Returning Officer, or a former member of the Executive Committee or former Returning Officer who has served within the previous three terms (if such persons exist), if they believe that that Member has shown substantial weakness or failure in carrying their duties, or wilfully or recklessly brought the Society into disrepute, or abused their position.
- b) The Returning Officer, (or, if the complaint is against the Returning Officer, the Executive Committee) must appoint a Disciplinary Committee, consisting of three Full Members of the Society, of three terms' standing within the Society.
- c) Any complainant has the right to present their case before the Disciplinary Committee. Any Member against whom a complaint is made has the opportunity to defend himself or herself.
- d) The Disciplinary Committee must consider the complaint, and give an explicit verdict of guilty or not guilty. If the verdict is guilty, at their discretion, they may:
 - i) give that Member a verbal or written warning;
 - ii) if the complaint is made against a current member of the Executive Committee, immediately dismiss that member from the Committee;
 - iii) ban that Member from holding a position on the Executive Committee in any subsequent term;

- iv) make a formal recommendation to the Executive Committee that that Member have his or her Membership revoked.
- e) If a Member is dismissed from a position on the Executive Committee, he or she may not stand in the by-election triggered by that dismissal.
- f) Any Member found guilty under d) has a right of appeal to the Senior Member, who may overrule the Disciplinary Committee for good cause.

Chapter 6: Rules

Rule 23: Status of Rules

- a) The Rules in this Constitution are full, authoritative and binding upon all Members.
- b) Rules may be changed by a two-thirds majority vote at a meeting of the Executive Committee.
- c) If a petition signed by 30 different Full Members calling for a change in the Rules is delivered to the President, then the Returning Officer must call a referendum of all Members of the Society. A two-thirds majority in a referendum is required to pass the change in the Rules.
- d) A decision by a Referendum takes precedence over a decision by the Executive Committee.

Chapter 7: Dissolution

Rule 24: Dissolution of the Society

The Society can be dissolved by a unanimous vote of the Executive Committee.

Appendix 1: Returning Officers' Interpretations and Clarifications:

1. The Returning Officer shall not cast a vote during elections, but in the case of a tie between candidates, shall decide which of the candidates with the lowest number of votes is to be eliminated.

Chris Stanley, Trinity, 2007