

# CONSTITUTION

Aberystwyth Debating Union

Aberystwyth, Wales

1872

## 1 Name and Aims of the Debating Society

### 1.1 Article 1

The name of the organisation shall be the “Aberystwyth Debating Union”, herein referred to as the Union

### 1.2 Article 2

The motto of the Union shall be “Qui tacet, consentire videtur”

### 1.3 Article 3

The aims of the Union are:

- The discussion, analysis and investigation of local, national and international issues through the use of debate;
- The promotion of the use of debate as a means of discussion and communication;
- To foster the communications development of the membership of the Union;
- To equip Union members with skills necessary for life

## 2 Membership of the Union

### 2.1 Article 4

Eligibility for membership of the Union is derived from past or present student status at Aberystwyth University or current staff status at Aberystwyth University

### 2.2 Article 5

There are three categories of membership of the Union: Ordinary Member, Life Member, Honorary Life Member

### 2.3 Article 6

An ordinary membership is obtained by payment of an annual membership fee levied by the committee of the Union and no impediment to membership being decided by the committee of the Union. All current students or staff of Aberystwyth University are eligible to apply for Ordinary Membership

### 2.4 Article 7

Life Membership shall be available to any member who has been a member of the Union for two academic years on payment of two times the annual subscription. No-one shall enjoy any benefits of Life Membership of the Union while a student at Aberystwyth University

## 2.5 Article 8

Honorary Membership is bestowed on recipients for life, and may only be bestowed on past Auditors of the Union (or its previous entities), or any other person deemed to be worthy recipients of the honour. All past Auditors are entitled to claim Honorary Membership who have served at ten academic weeks in office. A motion to present Honorary Membership on any person except for past Auditors, must be carried at a quorate meeting by a two thirds majority. No-one shall enjoy any benefits of Honorary Life Membership of the Union while a student at Aberystwyth University

## 2.6 Article 9

Membership shall be refused to persons of previously revoked membership or members currently under suspension, as set down in Section 8 of this Constitution

## 2.7 Article 10

All members of the Union are charged with upholding the aims of the Union. Only members are entitled to vote in the Union elections, serve on any Union committee, compete in the Union's competitions and represent the Union externally

## 2.8 Article 11

Non-members of the Union may speak at Ordinary Meetings with the permission of the Auditor, or on the recommendation of the House deciding by simple majority. The House is defined as all attendees at an Ordinary Meeting. All members of the House may vote on issues discussed at Ordinary Meetings of the Union, except for Committee Elections, Amendments to this Constitution, motions to suspend or expel a member or motions to dismiss a Committee Officer. Only members may vote on these issues

# 3 Administration of the Union

## 3.1 Article 12

The Union shall have an Executive Committee elected by the membership (hereafter "the Committee") to direct ongoing activities and foster the aims of the Union

## 3.2 Article 13

The Committee shall be composed of Officers and Co-options. Only Officers may exercise voting rights

## 3.3 Article 14

The full membership shall be composed of the Auditor, Vice-Auditor and External Convenor, Internal Convenor of Debates, Treasurer, Fundraising Officer, Secretary, Publicity and Events Officer, Social Secretary, Speaker Development Officer, up to three Officers without Portfolio and an Ex-Officio Officer where necessary and practicable

### 3.4 Article 15

The Committee shall fill assistant positions by co-option as the need arises

### 3.5 Article 16

The Committee shall meet at least once a week during term, and where necessary and practicable outside of term. The quorum for such meetings shall be 50% plus one of the elected Officers

### 3.6 Article 17

All Union Committees shall operate to a quorum of half the elected Officers plus one. All Committee Chairpersons shall have a deliberative and a casting vote. The committees shall be chaired by the most senior available Officer

### 3.7 Article 18

Sub-committees of the Union or Executive Committee such as are necessary to maintain specific functions of the Union shall be set up on a Standing basis. Only elected Officers have a vote on a Sub-Committee

### 3.8 Article 19

Special Committees shall be set up for specific events and shall dissolve on the completion of their task, presenting a final report to the higher Committee or to the Members, depending on where the mandate for it to be set up was exercised. In the case of Selection Committees for external competitions, the membership shall comprise the Auditor, the Vice-Auditor, the Internal Convenor and the Speaker Development Officer. This committee may co-opt other members and may take opinion from members or other designated parties but only the aforementioned may vote

### 3.9 Article 20

Where such mandates do not infringe the Law, Aberystwyth University Code of Conduct or agreements with the Students Union or Aberystwyth University, the Committee shall be directed by motion of the membership in policy matters

### 3.10 Article 21

Committee members shall be, as far as reasonably practicable, indemnified against expenses owing by the society, where such expenses result from an action approved by the Executive Committee or Membership

## 4 Responsibilities of the Officers

### 4.1 Article 22

The Auditor functions as the embodiment of the will of the Union. The Auditor shall chair all meetings of the Union and the Committee. The Auditor is charged with protecting the aims of the Union and guiding its progression. The Auditor possesses the casting vote except in matters pertaining to himself or in matters where it can be shown by a two thirds majority that the Auditor has a vested interest to the extent that he cannot represent objectively the best interests of the Union. No member may become Auditor who has not been a Member of the Union for

at least 1 academic year and a committee member for at least six calendar months unless a situation arises where this is unavoidable. A situation shall be deemed so by the sitting auditor, or upon his death, a simple majority of the house

#### 4.2 Article 23

The Vice-Auditor and external convenor shall chair any meeting from which the Auditor is absent. The Vice-Auditor is charged with the management of the committee and various sub-committees, in accordance with the aims of the Union and ensuring its progression. On the resignation of the Auditor, the Vice-Auditor shall take over the duties and responsibilities of Auditor on a pro tempore basis until a bye-election can be called. As external convenor, the Vice-Auditor shall be responsible for organising participation in all competitions outside Aberystwyth University

#### 4.3 Article 24

The Internal Convenor is responsible for the organisation and administration of all debates hosted by the Union

#### 4.4 Article 25

The Treasurer is responsible for all financial matters pertaining to the Union's activities. The Treasurer is charged with keeping an accurate record of the Union's income and expenditure and making reports on a regular basis to the Executive Committee of the Union

#### 4.5 Article 26

The Sponsorship Director shall be responsible for obtaining sponsorship of Ordinary Meetings of the Society and other Special Events held by the Society

#### 4.6 Article 27

The Secretary shall be responsible for all correspondence pertaining to Union activities. The Secretary shall be charged with the recording of an accurate set of minutes for each meeting. Before each meeting proceeds, the minutes of the previous week's meeting must be voted in as being a true and accurate view of the previous meeting. The Secretary is also charged with keeping an accurate record of all current members of the Union

#### 4.7 Article 28

The Publicity and Events Officer shall be responsible for the preparation and hosting of all public debates and events, and for the promotion of all Union activities

#### 4.8 Article 29

The Speaker Development Officer is responsible for the development of the debating abilities of the members of the Union. The Speaker Development Officer is appointed by the Auditor on the advice of the Executive Committee. Another member of the Committee may be appointed with the additional duties of Speaker Development Officer if the Auditor so decrees. On the resignation of the Auditor, the Speaker Development Officer is deemed to have resigned this post

#### 4.9 Article 30

The Social Secretary is responsible for the organisation and administration of all Debating Union reception and social activities

#### 4.10 Article 31

The Officers without Portfolio shall be elected to assist the senior officers in carrying out their duties in an effective manner

#### 4.11 Article 32

The Ex-Officio is appointed by the Auditor from the outgoing committee of the previous session to ensure the smooth progression between sessions. This post will only be filled where no Officer on the current committee has been on the previous committee. This Officer has no vote on the Committee

#### 4.12 Article 33

Provision may be made for the chairing of any meeting by any other designated person on the direction of the Auditor, Vice-Auditor as provided for in article 23, or in their absence, the most senior officer present

### 5 Eligibility, Nomination and Election of Officers

#### 5.1 Article 34

Eligibility in the case of all Officers is derived from current student status at Aberystwyth University and membership of the Union

#### 5.2 Article 35

The full Officers of the Union shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting which shall be held in the second semester of every session on a date deemed appropriate by the Auditor. Appointees of the Auditor are not elected at this meeting. Officers without Portfolio shall be elected by the end of Week 3 of the Autumn Semester. No person may hold a position beyond the last day of the academic term unless re-elected

#### 5.3 Article 36

On the resignation or dismissal of a Committee Officer the Union shall hold a bye-election for that post. This bye-election shall take place before the end of the second Ordinary Meeting following the resignation or dismissal of the Committee Officer

#### 5.4 Article 37

No person shall be elected to the position of Auditor more than twice

#### 5.5 Article 38

To seek election as an Officer of the Union, each candidate shall require a member of the Union to nominate him. Another member of the Union must second the candidacy. No member may nominate or second himself. No member may act as a nominator or seconder for more than one person seeking the same post. The counting of the votes must be done in public view. Specifically, every candidate must watch the counting for their own election or must nominate

someone to watch in their place. It is preferred, but not required, that the counter of the votes be the Societies Officer of the Guild.

#### 5.6 Article 39

Elections shall take place in the order in which the committee are listed in Article 14, except for Auditors appointees. This also represents the order of seniority referred to elsewhere in the Constitution

#### 5.7 Article 40

Where more than one candidate is nominated for the same post, the election of an Officer for that position shall be done by the Single Transferable Vote system using a secret ballot. An option to reopen the nominations must be included. Each candidate shall be allotted an equal period of time to address the House in support of his own candidacy. The amount of time allotted shall be decided by the Auditor. This time shall not exceed three minutes.

#### 5.8 Article 41

Where a candidate is nominated for election, the nominee must indicate his willingness to take up the post. This may be done informally before the vote. Where this is not possible, it is the duty of the candidate to inform the Auditor or Secretary of his willing candidacy. It is the duty of the candidate to inform the Auditor or Secretary by verifiable communication

#### 5.9 Article 42

Where a Committee Officer stands for election for a post, he is deemed to have resigned his previous post on nomination

### 6 Meetings of the Union

#### 6.1 Article 43

The Union shall hold at least ten meetings every semester

#### 6.2 Article 44

A quorum for all Ordinary or Annual General Meetings shall be five or more Ordinary Members in addition to half the Committee plus one Officer.

#### 6.3 Article 45

All Union meetings shall adhere to Standing Orders as listed in Annex 1 of this Constitution. Parliamentary Debates may have Special Standing Orders, to be decided by the Executive Committee in advance

#### 6.4 Article 46

Where votes are to be taken on any issue not already specified in this constitution, in any committee or in the Union, simple majorities shall be counted from those entitled to vote. Abstentions shall be discounted from the calculation. There shall be no voting by proxy in any committee of the Union vote

## 7 Dismissal of an Officer

### 7.1 Article 47

Any Officer may be dismissed by the Committee where 50% plus one Officer of the Committee vote to pass a motion of no confidence

### 7.2 Article 48

A motion of no-confidence shall be submitted in writing by eight Members to the Secretary of the Union

### 7.3 Article 49

The accused shall be notified of the motion at least three academic days before the hearing of charges at a committee meeting

### 7.4 Article 50

The accused shall be granted no less than seven minutes to make a defence. A designated representative of the accused shall have the same privilege. Where the accused makes no answer to the allegations, the Committee shall appoint a representative to defend the accused. The motion to dismiss shall be proposed by the most senior Committee member not in the Chair

### 7.5 Article 51

Where an Officer fails to attend four consecutive Ordinary Meetings or two consecutive Committee Meetings, without adequate notice being given to the Auditor, the Officer may be automatically dismissed from his position by the Committee on the advice of the Auditor

### 7.6 Article 52

The dismissal of a member as an Officer does not affect the right of that member to stand for future elections

### 7.7 Article 53

Any dismissal may be overturned at an Ordinary Meeting where three-quarters of the House, those three-quarters comprising at least 15 Ordinary Members, two of whom must be Officers, vote in favour of a motion to overturn

## 8 Discipline of a Member

### 8.1 Article 54

Any Member not of Committee rank may have membership revoked or suspended by the Committee where 50% plus one Officer of the Committee vote to pass a motion of revocation or suspension

### 8.2 Article 55

The motion to revoke or suspend membership shall be submitted in writing by eight Members or 50% plus one of the elected Officers to the Secretary of the Union

### 8.3 Article 56

The accused shall be notified of the motion at least three academic days before the meeting of the Committee

### 8.4 Article 57

The accused shall be granted no less than seven minutes to make a defence. A designated representative of the accused shall have the same privilege. Where the accused makes no answer to the allegations, the Committee shall appoint a representative to defend the accused. The motion shall be proposed by the most senior Committee member not in the Chair

### 8.5 Article 58

The maximum length of suspension is ten academic weeks. No member may be suspended twice for the same offence

### 8.6 Article 59

Any disciplinary action may be overturned at an Ordinary Meeting where three-quarters of the House, those three-quarters comprising at least 15 Ordinary Members, two of whom must be Officers, vote in favour of a motion to overturn

## 9 Amendments to this Constitution

### 9.1 Article 60

Any article in this Constitution may be amended by a quorate Annual General Meeting or at any quorate Ordinary Meeting designated by the Executive Committee

### 9.2 Article 61

Amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted by the Committee or by six Ordinary Members. Amendments must be delivered to the Secretary no later than 12 noon, five academic days prior to the meeting at which it will be entered. These amendments must also be advertised to all Ordinary Members at least three academic days prior to the meeting

### 9.3 Article 62

The proposer and a seconder must speak in favour of a proposed amendment. No more than two opposition speakers shall be heard, after which the proposer may summarise for two minutes. The House shall be divided by hand or roll-call, with a three-fifths majority required to give assent

## 10 Annexes

### 10.1 Annex 1: Standing Orders

#### **Conduct of the Meeting**

1. These standing orders shall apply to all meetings of the Aberystwyth University Debating Union

2. The decision of the Auditor is final in all matters pertaining to the operation and interpretation of these standing orders
3. The Auditor may take all steps necessary for the preservation of order and decorum
4. Any matter not expressly dealt with in these Standing Orders shall be resolved by the Auditor having due regard to the maintenance of proper order and good debate
5. The Auditor or his designated representative shall open the meeting by declaring, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I now call this meeting to order"
6. The agenda for each meeting shall conform to the following order:
  - (a) Opening of Meeting
  - (b) Minutes and Matters Arising
  - (c) Private Members Bills under Section 9 of this Constitution
  - (d) Elections
  - (e) Public Business motions endorsed by the Auditor and, where possible, advertised in advance of the meeting
  - (f) Any Other Competent Business
  - (g) Adjournment
7. All speakers must first address the chair
8. No amendment may be moved to a Public Business motion before the house is in order
9. No amendment may be moved to a Public Business motion except where it is accepted by proposer and seconder without debate

#### **Private Members Time**

10. The time reserved for private members time may not exceed one hour
11. Private members motions may be presented for debate upon receipt, by the Auditor, of one proposer to the motion
12. The first proposer may speak to the motion. If no opposition is present, the motion passes unanimously
13. The initial proposer and opposer of a private members motion may speak for an equal limit of time to be decided by the Auditor or his designated representative in advance of their speeches
14. All other speakers may speak for a maximum of five minutes on any private members motion unless the Auditor or his designated representative reduces the time limit in advance of these speeches. Restrictions on time for Points of Information are suspended for these speakers
15. The initial proposer of a private members motion may exercise a final summation at the discretion of the Auditor. This speech will be the last speech on a particular private members motion taking place just before the vote. This speech will last up to three minutes and may not be interrupted by Points of Information

### **Points of Order**

16. A Point of Order shall consist of an objection to the conduct or procedure adopted at the meeting, based on provisions contained in these Standing Orders

17. A Point of Order may be raised at any time save during the act of voting, and shall take absolute priority over all matters. A Point of Order may only be raised during voting if it has to do with the conduct of the vote

18. A Point of Order must be raised immediately on the occurrence of the alleged breach and the member who offers it must stand and inform the Auditor or his designated representative that the member rises on a Point of Order

### **Points of Information**

19. A Point of Information shall consist of a brief (15 Seconds Maximum) interruption for relevant information sought from or offered to the speaker on the floor

20. A member when offering a Point of Information must stand, raise one hand and say "On a Point of Information".

21. The Auditor or his designated representative may disallow any Point of Information if he considers it an abuse of privilege

22. During a competitive debate a Point of Information may only be offered by the speakers on the order paper, unless the Auditor or his designated representative decides in advance of the debate that Points of Information may be offered from the floor

23. A point of information may not be offered during the first and last minute

24. Points of Information are to be accepted at the absolute discretion of the speaker on the floor

### **Conduct of the Debate**

25. Speeches shall normally be five or seven minutes in length. A time signal shall be given at the end of the first and sixth/fourth minutes and a double time signal shall be given at the end of the seventh/fifth minute and every thirty seconds thereafter

26. The Auditor or his designated representative shall, where practicable, call on speakers alternately pro and then contra the motion

27. No debate shall open with an opposition speech

28. At the conclusion of the main debate, the motion shall be subject to an open period. The Auditor shall declare the motion "open to the house", and shall call for speakers pro and contra the motion

29. There shall be a time limit of five minutes on any speech during the open period, after which the speaker will be asked to conclude

30. Any person wishing to speak during the open period shall first raise his hand and await the Auditor's or his designated representatives signal to speak. When called upon to speak the member shall approach the podium, state his name and whether pro or contra the motion

Conclusion of Meeting

31. At the conclusion of the meeting the Auditor shall formally close the meeting by saying “the House now stands adjourned.”

### **Suspension of Standing Orders**

32. These Standing Orders may be suspended at the behest of the Auditor

### **10.2 Annex 2: Welsh Debating Commitments**

1. Recognising the importance of our relationship with the other University Debating Societies in Wales, the Union shall endeavour to participate in the Welsh leg of the John Smith Memorial Mace (henceforth known as the “Welsh Mace”) and an annual competition designed solely for novice debaters (henceforth known as the “Welsh Novices”)

2. The Union also recognises the right of every other society to host these competitions on a rotational basis if they so desire. However, it accepts that this right can be rendered void should a decision of all the Welsh Debating Societies deem it so. Such a decision shall be accepted as legitimate where it is supported by all but one of the Welsh University Debating Societies and communicated to that year’s designated host no less than two weeks prior to the date of competition. Abstentions shall be deemed as supporting the decision

3. The Union recognises that the first weekend in November and the first weekend in December respectively shall be the dates of the Welsh Novices and Welsh Mace, unless such circumstances arise as to render either or both of these dates impractical

### **10.3 Annex 3: Roster of Honorary Memberships**

The following persons are bestowed with Honorary Life Membership, as defined by Articles six and eight of this Constitution:

- **Dr. Michael Keary** as former Auditor of the Union, and again as bestowed by the first meeting of the Union in 2012 for founding the modern incarnation of the Union.
- **Nico Strauss** as former Auditor of the Union
- **Dr. Iain Wilson** as bestowed at the 2010 Aberystwyth Open Tournament for his substantial contributions
- **Kristian Hicks** as former Auditor of the Union
- **David Jones** as bestowed for his substantial contributions
- **Holly Tomlinson** as bestowed for her substantial contributions
- **Dr. Matthew Szeto** as bestowed at the 2011 Aberystwyth Open Tournament for his outstanding contributions to Welsh debating
- **Hamish Arnold** as former Auditor of the Union
- **Tom Coyle** as former Auditor of the Union
- **Zuzana Podracka** as former Auditor of the Union
- **Roberto Sarrionandia** as former Auditor of the Union
- **Professor April McMahon** as bestowed at the 2012 Aberystwyth Open Tournament for being the First Vice-Chancellor to attend such an event
- **Cal Paterson** as bestowed for his substantial contributions
- **Karolien Michiels** as former Auditor of the Union