

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY DEBATING SOCIETY

With changes per the AGM of Tuesday 4th September 2007

1. NAME & AIM

- (1) The name of the Society is "The Melbourne University Debating Society".
- (2) The aims of the Society are:
 - (a) To foster intellectual discussion and the art of debate, within the Society and the University.
 - (b) To provide a social community amongst members of the Society.
 - (c) To provide resources, training and access to competition for all members, in order to develop the skills of debating and public speaking.
 - (d) To promote access to high level debate, and participation in intervarsity tournaments.
 - (e) To facilitate debate as a means of knowledge transfer between the University and broader society.

2. AFFILIATION

- (1) The Society is affiliated to the UMSU Inc ('UMSU') and anything in this Constitution that conflicts with the Constitution of UMSU or with the Clubs and Societies Regulations shall be null and void. In all matters not specifically dealt with herein, the Constitution of UMSU and the Clubs & Societies Regulations shall apply.
- (2) During the course of affiliation with UMSU Inc., the Society shall comply with any requirements of the Clubs & Societies Committee of UMSU for the provision of records and documents and shall be under a duty to apply any grant monies received from the Clubs and Societies Committee in accordance with any conditions imposed by such a body.
- (3) The Society may affiliate with or disaffiliate itself from any other Debating or Public-Speaking organisation by resolution of the Committee.
- (4) In light of its aims, the Society shall be a non-partisan organisation. This means:
 - (a) That the Society will not provide resources (including funding and access to communications) to any candidate, political campaign or ideology. This applies to any election, whether based within the University of Melbourne or otherwise.
 - (b) The Society will not use public debates to promote any candidate or political campaign.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- (1) A person shall be entitled to membership of the Society if he or she is a student at the University.
- (2) Associate membership shall be open to any other persons who subscribe to the aims of the Society.
 - (a) Associate members cannot be members of the Committee.
 - (b) Associate members have no voting rights at general meetings.
 - (c) Associate members are ineligible for sponsorship.
 - (d) Participation by associate members in intervarsity tournaments will be subject to the rules governing that tournament.
 - (e) Associate members are ineligible to debate in the finals of the Society's internal competitions.

(3) There shall be a membership fee set by the Committee from time to time, payable annually to the Treasurer, at such time and in such manner as the Committee may decide.

(a) The Committee may waive payment of the membership fee in cases of hardship or outstanding contribution to the Society.

(4) A person shall not be considered a member unless he or she has:

(f) (a) Paid any required membership fee (subject to Part 3(3)(a)); and
(b) Provided to the Committee such details as required by the membership form.

4. COMMITTEE – COMPOSITION

(1) The Committee shall consist of an Executive and a General Committee all of whom must be members of the Society and students at the time of election, and shall have voting rights on the Committee.

(a) The Executive shall consist of:

- (i) President
- (ii) Vice President
- (iii) Secretary
- (iv) Treasurer,

at least two of which must be members of UMSU.

(b) The General Committee shall comprise:

- (i) Publications Officer
- (ii) Public Debates Officer
- (iii) Two Internal Competition Officers
- (iv) Schools Training Officer
- (v) Member Training Officer
- (vi) Social Officer
- (vii) Information Technology (IT) Officer
- (viii) Sponsorship Officer

(c) The immediate Past President shall have no voting rights on Committee unless also a committee member.

(d) At the first meeting of the newly elected Committee after the Annual General Meeting, the Committee shall select one Committee member to be the Equal Opportunity Officer for the period of one year.

(e) In addition to fulfilling their specific portfolios duties, the duties of the Committee members shall include (but not be limited to):

- i. attending committee meetings;
- ii. helping in the organisation of the Society's events;
- iii. promoting the Society;
- iv. having a high level of attendance and participation in the Society activities; and
- v. promoting the growth of the Society, particularly through the involvement of new members.

(2) All Committee positions must be open for election at the AGM each year.

(3) A person who is a member of the Committee by virtue of more than one provision of sub-section(1) may nevertheless exercise only one vote.

- (4) The Committee may fill casual vacancies of the General Committee, and for any such vacancies co-opt members as it sees fit, subject to Part 4(1).
- (5) Any vacancies of the Executive of the Committee must be filled by a Special General Meeting which shall be called for that purpose.
- (6) If any Committee member fails to attend two consecutive Committee meetings without due cause or previous apology, the Committee may declare that member's position vacant.

5. COMMITTEE – MEETINGS AND POWERS

- (1) The Committee shall have the following powers:
 - (a) Control of the Society's finances, which shall be vested in the Treasurer;
 - (b) Control of the Society's activities.
- (2) A quorum of the Committee shall be the next integer greater than half of the number of voting committee members at the time of the meeting. This number must include at least two (2) members of the Executive, as per Part 4(1)(a).
- (3) The Committee shall meet at such times as the Secretary shall decide, and the Secretary shall convene a meeting at the request of any Committee member.
- (4) The Secretary shall ensure that all members of the Committee receive at least four days' notice of any meeting and the agenda of such meeting.
- (5) The Secretary shall ensure that the minutes of each Committee meeting, General Meeting and Annual General Meeting are taken and kept, and ratified at the following meeting. The Secretary shall make the minutes available for inspection by any member on reasonable notice.
- (6) The Secretary shall maintain a register of members, which shall be made available by him or her for inspection by any member on reasonable notice.
- (7) The Secretary shall receive and keep any correspondence directed to the Society, and table it at the next Committee meeting.
- (8) The Treasurer shall maintain on the Society's behalf, a Bank or Building Society account approved by the Committee in which the Society's funds shall be deposited until needed.
- (9) The Treasurer shall keep the accounts and any Securities of the Society. He or she shall present a current financial report at each Committee meeting. The accounts and any Securities shall be made available by the Treasurer for inspection by any member on reasonable notice.
- (10) The Society's money shall only be drawn or expended, and cheques shall only be signed on the Society's behalf, by the Treasurer, President or other members specifically so authorised by the Committee, and only for purposes authorised by the Committee.
- (11) The Committee shall have the power to make regulations governing any aspect of the Society's activities.
- (12) Funds will be derived from membership fees, Clubs and Societies funding, schools training revenue, donations and any other sources approved by the Committee.
- (13) The Committee may also pass motions with a circular resolution via email. For a resolution to pass, the Secretary must notify all committee members of the resolution and a simple majority of all committee members (ie. 7) must vote for the resolution for it to pass. If a simple majority is not reached within 7 days, the resolution automatically fails.

6. REMOVAL OF MEMBERS

- (1) If it is deemed that a committee member should be stood down, by a motion of the Committee, or presentation to the President or Secretary of a petition bearing the names and signatures of at least fifteen members, impeachment proceedings will take place against the nominated Committee member. At the next General Meeting or Annual General Meeting, a motion shall be put to impeach the Committee member, provided that at least twenty-one (21) days notice has been given via email to all members, including the member concerned. If this is passed by a majority of at least two-thirds, that Committee position will become vacant and a new election held immediately. The Committee member to be impeached will be given five minutes to speak before the vote is taken.
- (2) By a motion of the Committee, or presentation to the President or Secretary of a petition bearing the names and signatures of at least fifteen members, impeachment proceedings will take place against the nominated member. At the next General Meeting or Annual General Meeting, a motion shall be put to impeach the member, provided that at least twenty-one (21) days notice has been given in writing to all members, including the member concerned. If this is passed by a majority of at least two-thirds, that person will cease to be a member, and will not be eligible for re-admission without the approval of the Committee.

7. VOTING

- (1) Voting at all meetings shall be democratic, with a simple majority sufficing for passage of the motion. All tied motions are considered lost. Limited proxy voting shall be permitted. Each member present at the meeting shall be entitled to carry one proxy vote provided that proxy authorisations are made in writing and handed to the chair of the meeting prior to its commencement.
- (2) Voting rights for the election of Committee members will be restricted to those who were members at least seven days prior to the relevant General Meeting.

8. GENERAL MEETINGS

(l) Annual General Meeting

- (a) The Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Society shall be held in the first week of September or at the soonest practicable date thereafter, but no later than the end of September.
- (b) Upon decision of the date of the AGM, the Committee shall appoint a returning officer who will be ineligible to stand for election for any Committee position at that AGM
 - i. The returning officer shall be responsible for accepting nominations for positions,
 - ii. The returning officer shall conduct elections during the AGM, including the organisation of ballots and the counting of votes.
- (c) At the AGM, there shall be reports heard from:
 - i. the President; and
 - ii. the Treasurer, who shall present a financial statement covering the period from the previous AGM.
- (d) At the AGM, a new Committee shall be elected.
 - i. All Committee positions shall commence on the 1st of December following the AGM. The outgoing committee shall ensure that outstanding duties are completed before this handover unless otherwise arranged with the incoming Committee.
 - ii. Nominations for all committee positions shall open with notice of the AGM.
 1. Nominations can be communicated to the Returning Officer via email in the lead up to the AGM.

2. At the AGM, the Returning Officer shall read out the list of received nominations and call for further nominations from the floor.
 3. All nominations (including those received prior to the commencement of the meeting) must be seconded by a member of the Society.
 4. Individuals may accept or reject their nomination by another member.
 5. If a member is not present at the AGM, a nomination can be accepted by proxy if the other requirements of 8(1)(d) are met.
- (e) Moved motions shall be discussed and voted upon, with preference going to those motions of which notice was given before the meeting
 - (f) An AGM can exercise all the powers of a General Meeting.
 - (g) At the AGM, the Constitution shall be ratified.
 - (h) The Society shall submit all the AGM documents to the C&S Administrator within two weeks of the AGM.
- (2) Ordinary General Meetings of the Society shall be convened:
 - (a) Where the Committee so authorises, or within 30 days after the receipt by the Secretary of a written request to do so signed by at least 15 members or one third of the membership, whichever is less.
 - (3) The Secretary shall ensure that each member of the Society receives notice of any General Meeting at least 14 days before such a meeting by email. Such notice must also be emailed to the Clubs and Societies Administrator.
 - (4) Only members of the Society (excluding associate members) may vote at General Meetings.
 - (5) Quorum of a General Meeting shall be twenty members, all of whom must be non-committee members.
 - (6) A General Meeting may by a majority vote of members present:
 - (a) rescind, overrule or vary any decision of the Committee or a previous General Meeting;
 - (b) exercise all powers of the Committee under this Constitution; and
 - (c) fill any vacancy arising by the exercise of Part 6 above.

9. AMENDMENT

This Constitution shall not be amended except by a three quarter majority of members present at a General Meeting and shall take effect at the end of the Meeting. The text of any proposed amendment of this Constitution must be notified in writing to all members by the Secretary at least 14 days prior to the relevant General Meeting.

Constitutional changes shall be approved by the UMSU Clubs and Societies Office Bearer(s) before they are presented to a general meeting.

10. INTERPRETATION

- (1) Any dispute as to the meaning of any part of this Constitution shall be decided by the Committee, subject to Part 8 (6)(a) above.
- (2) A copy of this Constitution shall be published on the Society's website.

11. DISPOSITION OF SURPLUS ASSETS ON DISSOLUTION

- (1) Should the Society be wound up or dissolved, the winding up of the Society shall be held in accordance with the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*(Vic) ('the Act').
- (2) Subject to the Act, a motion to wind up the Society must be written and notice of the motion is to be given in the agenda for the General Meeting at which the winding up motion is to be decided. A winding up motion must be carried by an absolute majority.
- (3) Subject to the Act, in the event that the Society is wound up, or ceases to be affiliated to UMSU, the control of assets which have been 50% or more funded by UMSU Clubs and Societies Committee grants and which are less than 3 years old will revert to UMSU and be held in trust by UMSU Clubs & Societies Committee until such time that a club with the same aims is affiliated or a period of 18 months lapses.
- (4) Subject to the Act, in the event that the Society has not been able to organise a quorate meeting within a 12 month period, the UMSU Clubs & Societies Committee may wind up the Society by passing a motion to do so under the rules of UMSU. Any member of the Society who wishes to oppose the winding up of the Society should make submissions to the committee. The decision of the committee is final subject only to appeal under UMSU rules.

12. INTERVARSITY DEBATING

- (1) A Selection Sub-Committee ('Selectors') shall be appointed by the Committee to select debating teams to represent the Society at the Australasian Intersociety Debating Championships and the World Universities Debating Championships, and other tournaments at the Committee's discretion.
- (2) No Selector shall be eligible for selection as a debater.
- (3) The Committee shall advise the Selectors of the method of selection (numerical ranking or specific team composition), the debating style (Single, Australasian, British Parliamentary, American Parliamentary or any other style) of the trials, and the date on which these trials are to be held. Subject to these guidelines, and those imposed by the tournament itself, the Selectors are free to select debaters for the Intersociety Tournament as it sees fit.
 - (a) For the purposes of the Australasian Intersociety Debating Championships and the World Universities Debating Championships, not more than 2 weeks and not less than 1 week after trials, and not less than 6 weeks before the start of the tournament the President shall convene a meeting of all members who trialed. At the meeting ranked speakers will be asked to confirm if they can attend the tournament on behalf of the Society and to decide team composition. It is the express responsibility of the Committee to inform all members of the expected costs and subsidies of any tournament as early as possible.
 - (b) Where Selectors are advised by the Committee under section 12(3) to rank speakers numerically, teams shall be formed amongst consecutive speakers commencing with the first ranked speaker, unless:
 - (i) movement within a bracket is approved unanimously by all people within that bracket;
or
 - (ii) movement between brackets is approved by the entire assembled debating contingent.
 - (c) For the purposes of 12(3)(b), the term "bracket" shall refer to groups of consecutive speakers equivalent to two (2) teams' worth, commencing from the first ranked speaker. Where the last bracket is incomplete (ie, less than two full teams' worth), the speakers in that bracket will be included in the previous bracket.

- (d) If the tournament organisers advise the Society at any later stage of the possibility of contributing additional teams to those decided under section 12(3)(a), those teams shall form new brackets according to section 12(3)(b), subject to the operation of 12(3)(c).
 - (e) Further to this section, where a speaker informs the assembly of ranked speakers convened under section 12(3)(a) of their intention to decline their place then the numerical rankings of the speakers below the declining speaker shall be adjusted such that the brackets outlined in 12(3)(c) contain the same number of speakers. Speakers who are then in new brackets shall be treated as if they had originally been placed in these brackets by the selection sub-committee.
 - (f) All the above sections are subject to affirmative action requirements being met. At every intervarsity tournament (excluding the Womens' Intersvarsity Debating Championships), a minimum of one third of the contingent and one third of the total members of the top three teams must be female, and a minimum of one third of the contingent and one third of the total members of the top three teams must be male. Where one third of speakers does not constitute an integer, the number shall be rounded down.
- (4) The method for selecting adjudicators to participate at Intersvarsity Debating Tournaments shall be at the discretion of the Committee.
- (5) All members of the Society must be given fourteen (14) days' notice by email of the closing date to apply to participate in the selection procedures for all Intersvarsity Debating Tournaments as either debaters or adjudicators.
- (6) Eligibility for Selection for Intersvarsity Debating Tournaments
- (a) Only members of the Society shall be eligible to participate as debaters or adjudicators at Intersvarsity Debating Tournaments.
- (b) Subject to the selection procedures contained in 12(1) above, all members of the Society shall be eligible to apply for selection to participate in any Intersvarsity Debating Tournament.
- (7) Funding for Intersvarsity Debating Tournaments
- (a) The Australian Intersvarsity Debating Championships ('Easters'), Australasian Intersvarsity Debating Championships and World Universities Debating Championships shall be subsidised tournaments at levels decided by the Committee.
 - (b) The amount of subsidy allocated to each of the tournaments contained in 12(9)(a) shall be disclosed at the AGM each year in the Treasurer's Report. This disclosure shall be itemised so as to show the separate amounts allocated to each debater and each adjudicator at each of the aforementioned tournaments.
 - (c) In order to be eligible for sponsorship, a member of the Society must contribute actively to the Society's activities. This subsection does not apply to Easters sponsorship.