

DISCUSSIONS OF THE REGENT HOUSE

Notes on Procedure

1. Proceedings

Dress A person deputising for the Vice-Chancellor at a Discussion wears black gown (no hood) and cap. The Registry or a Deputy for the Registry wears black gown (no hood) and cap. The Proctors and Pro-Proctors wear dark suits, caps, gowns, bands and the Proctors also wear their hoods. All members of the University are required by Ordinance to wear academical dress at Discussions (the Senate-House Keeper keeps spare gowns for use by those who wish to speak if necessary). Other persons, such as unmatriculated staff of the University or the Colleges, may attend – they do not wear gowns.

Venue and Timing The Deputy Vice-Chancellor should arrive in the Senate-House by 1350 and will be greeted by the Senate-House Keeper. The Deputy waits at the East End of the House until the clock-bells of Great St Mary's start to chime for 1400. The Deputy then walks up the House (the assembly stands), capping the Registry (or his Deputy) on the *left* and the Proctors, who are at their usual chairs on the dais, to the *right*. The Deputy then sits behind the table at the front of the dais (the assembly also sits). If a Discussion has been transferred from the Senate-House to the Pitt Building or Council Room, the procedure is adapted as necessary to suit the different layout of the room, but most details remain the same.

Beginning the Discussion Provided that it is two o'clock, the Discussion can begin at once. The Deputy rises and caps the assembly. He or she may then say a brief word of welcome. It is very helpful if the Deputy asks speakers to announce their name and College or Department before speaking and to remind speakers that the maximum permitted duration of any one speech is 15 minutes.

On the table in front of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will be a marked copy or copies of the *Reporter*, containing the Reports to be discussed and a separate sheet listing the Reports in the order in which they are down to be discussed. The Deputy reads aloud the title of the first Report to be discussed, caps again, and sits.

Calling Speakers Sometimes several speakers will try to come forward at once and in this case it is helpful for the Deputy to point and indicate by saying 'Sir' or 'Madam' which is to speak first. Occasionally a speaker will approach the Deputy before the Discussion and ask to be allowed to speak first to a particular Report. Such requests may be granted at the discretion of the Deputy. Speakers address their remarks to the chair, so 'Mr / Madam Deputy Vice-Chancellor...' and speak standing at a lectern to the right of the Deputy. When no further speakers wish to come forward, the Deputy should rise, cap the assembly and read the title of the next Report to begin the next stage of the Discussion.

Ending the Discussion When all the Reports listed have been discussed, the Deputy rises, caps, declares that the Discussion is finished and walks back down the House, capping the Proctors (*left*) and the Registry (*right*).

If at about 1550 the Discussion has not finished, the Deputy should ask for a show of hands to discover how many of those present still wish to speak to the remaining Report or Reports. If more than two or three wish to speak, the Deputy should consult the Registry or his Deputy about postponing the Discussion and then announce as soon as a speech ends after 1600 that the Discussion is now postponed to the agreed date. The proceedings then end as above.

2. Rules Governing Speeches

Presiding officer's powers (see attached extracts from the Statutes and Ordinances) The presiding officer has power to regulate the conduct of the discussion. If a speech persistently fails to address the subject of the Report or is obviously defamatory, the presiding officer may ask the speaker to return to the subject at once, move on to another section of his or her speech, or desist altogether and sit down. He or she may rule such remarks out of order – they would not then be published in the formal record. The speaker is expected to respect any such request. Speakers are not permitted to read out lists of names of others who support their speeches.

The presiding officer has power to terminate the discussion of a particular topic.

Entitlement to speak In addition to members of the Regent House and of the Senate (all Masters and Doctors), any other member of the University (including any Junior member) has the right to speak. With the permission of the presiding officer, other persons, such as unmatriculated staff of the University or the Colleges, may speak.

Length of speeches Individual speeches may not continue for more than 15 minutes, but longstanding custom allows speakers to read out speeches for others who cannot attend and these are treated as new speeches which may each continue for another 15 minutes.

Right of reply Unless they are reading for others, speakers are not normally allowed to speak more than once on each Report without obtaining permission from the chair. The presiding officer may allow a previous speaker to respond to remarks made by a subsequent speaker, but there is no need for the speaker to whose remarks an oral reply has been given to speak further, although the presiding officer shall decide whether to allow this in a particular case.

REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

(*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 107)

DISCUSSIONS

2. When a Discussion is to be held, either of a Report or of any other matter, the Vice-Chancellor shall invite members of the Regent House to attend by means of a Notice published in the *Reporter*.
3. The following may also attend Discussions and take part:
 - (a) graduates of the University;
 - (b) members of Faculties;
 - (c) persons in statu pupillari;
 - (d) other persons authorized by the Vice-Chancellor to attend a particular Discussion.
4. The Vice-Chancellor or a duly appointed deputy shall preside at a Discussion.
5. The person presiding at a Discussion shall have power to impose a general limit on the length of speeches or to rule out of order particular remarks in a speech on the grounds that they are irrelevant or defamatory or to terminate the discussion of a particular topic.
6. Remarks made at a Discussion shall normally be published in the *Reporter*, provided that the Registry, as editor of the *Reporter*, shall have discretion to omit or, with the agreement of the author, to amend any remarks which in his or her opinion are likely to be held to be defamatory. The Registry shall not include in the formal record any remarks which are ruled out of order or which are otherwise in breach of a procedural ruling by the Vice-Chancellor or other person presiding. If any remarks are so omitted or amended, the Registry shall include a note of the fact with the remarks as published.

NOTICE BY THE COUNCIL

(*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 112)

Discussions

1. The Council are of the view that a Discussion is likely to be more representative of different points of view, and hence more fruitful, if speakers will regard fifteen minutes as the normal maximum duration of a speech.
2. The Council consider it inappropriate for a speaker at a Discussion to include in his or her remarks a list of the names of persons who support the speaker's views. They have requested the Vice-Chancellor or other person presiding at a Discussion to rule out of order any speaker who attempts to read out such a list.
3. The Council wish to remind those attending Discussions that the Vice-Chancellor or other person presiding at a Discussion has authority to make procedural rulings which must be observed by those present.
4. Remarks should be germane to the topic under discussion. Irrelevant remarks may be ruled out of order by the Vice-Chancellor or other person presiding at a Discussion. A person whose remarks are ruled out of order is expected to respect such ruling and to restrict further remarks to the topic under discussion, or to terminate his or her remarks. Remarks which are ruled out of order, or which are otherwise in breach of a procedural ruling by the Vice-Chancellor or other person presiding do not form part of the Discussion and will not be published.
5. The Council believe that members of the Regent House and others qualified or invited to speak in Discussions will wish ordinary standards of courtesy and restraint to be observed in remarks made in Discussions.