



23-24 BEC 1
September 12, 2023

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

TO: The Academic Senate
FROM: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate
SUBJECT: 23-24 BEC 1: 2023-2024 Standing Rules of the Academic Senate
PURPOSE: Action by the Academic Senate

ACTION REQUESTED: That the Academic Senate adopt the linked 2023-2024 Standing Rules of the Academic Senate for use during the 2023-24 academic year.

BACKGROUND

The Standing Rules of the Academic Senate are approved each year to guide our processes in the Executive Committee (ExCom) and in the Academic Senate.

Senate meetings, including standing committee and subcommittee meetings, have been held over Zoom since March 2020. In order to expedite business, a practice evolved of asking first whether there are any objections, prior to moving forward. In most cases, there are not any objections, but it is possible that it may be more difficult for Senators to take the initiative to vote against something under these conditions.

In the Senate officers' summer retreat and at the ExCom meeting on September 5, 2023, we discussed the possibility of trying to align our online voting methods to be more similar to the voting methods used when we used to meet in person, which involve first asking for people to say "aye," then asking for them to say "nay." We tested out using the "YES" (green circle with checkbox) and "NO" (red circle with X) options in Zoom as a voting method.

In the Senate meeting on September 12, 2023, we began discussing whether or not to count abstentions even though according to Robert's Rules, abstentions do not determine the outcome of a vote. It is important to verify quorum for each vote, which can be done by adding the abstentions to the yes and no votes.

In a meeting of present and past Senate officers and other experienced Senators on September 26, 2023 (see [ExCom Chair's Report 10.2.23](#)), we decided against using the method of voting by

Zoom poll with guests in a breakout room, because putting guests in a breakout room would have the effect of making the vote secret. We agreed with the suggestion from the prior Senate meeting that the coffee cup-away reaction could be used in Zoom to represent an active abstention. We also thought that Senators unable to access the Zoom reactions to vote could alternatively vote through chat to the Senate Coordinator.

At this meeting, we also decided against using a Google Form for a roll call vote - although it would be faster than calling each Senator's name individually, it would create a permanent record linking each person's name to their vote, which is not the intention of a roll call. The purpose of a roll call is to ensure an accurate voting process.

One more suggestion that emerged from this meeting about voting methods was that the default could be changed from two readings for each item to one reading. Standing committees or ExCom could recommend two readings for more complex policies, or Senate always has the option to postpone voting until the following meeting. While the incorporation of two readings for each Senate item was well-intended many years ago, in recent years the Senate usually accumulates a backlog of business items by the end of the year, and suspends the requirement for two readings during the last meeting or two of the academic year.

At the Senate meeting on September 26, 2023, we had the opportunity to try out the new voting method outlined above, of using the Zoom reactions of YES, NO, and AWAY (representing active abstention). It was pointed out that the Zoom reactions are voting in public, whereas sending a vote by chat to the Senate Coordinator would be private. In order to eliminate this discrepancy between voting methods, we suggest that the alternative method of voting by chat should be done in public to everyone.

Note that in this revised version of the standing rules, an emergency procedure has been added in order to provide an alternative Zoom meeting link if needed.

POLICY

[2023-2024 Standing Rules of the Academic Senate](#)