



**ditsu.ie**  
dit students' union

# **Student Council Handbook**

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## **Introduction to Student Council**

Student Council is established under article 9 of the DITSU Constitution – which is a document of all the rules saying how DITSU is governed and how it does its business. The Constitution is voted in by the general student population of DIT. Student Council is the supreme decision-making body for students in DIT. It is where you can make a real difference in how you want your college to run, and what you want your Students' Union to do for you – by debating issues and submitting motions and policies for consideration. It is also where you get to make sure your elected officers are doing what they are supposed to be doing!

### **Who Reports to Student Council?**

Sabbatical Officers  
College Officers  
Postgraduate Officer  
Any Sub-Committees set up by Student Council

### **Who are the members of Student Council?**

President  
3 x Vice Presidents  
6 x College Officers  
1 x Postgraduate Officer  
24 x School Reps  
65 x Ordinary Members (split according to student numbers in the 6 main campuses)

= 100 members

### **When does Student Council meet?**

On average once a month for approximately 2-3 hours. Meetings alternate between Northside and Southside campuses

### **Must I attend every meeting?**

You do not have to attend every meeting, as we understand that students are very busy, but it is required that you send in apologies to the Clerk if you cannot attend. If you do not attend two meetings in a row and do not send in apologies, you will be expelled from Council.

### **Where can I find further Information?**

Our [website](#) has more information on Student Council, including the Motions and Policy Manuals, relevant documents and Meeting Archives.

For further information, please contact the Clerk to Student Council - [claire.healey@ditsu.ie](mailto:claire.healey@ditsu.ie) or 01 402/2940/086 815 1472

### **How is the Meeting run?**

The Council meeting format is regulated according to a timed agenda, as set out in the Standing Orders for the meeting. Student Councillors are encouraged to make an input into the Agenda. Standing Orders are a set of guidelines, as agreed upon by the Council which guides how the meeting proceeds.

## **Motions and Policies**

### **What is a Motion**

A motion can be a request for something, a set of instructions, or a type of statement, which if accepted by Student Council becomes binding for two years. It contains a “mandate” which is a specific task/s that must be completed by a certain date by the Sabbatical Officer under who’s brief it falls. The motion falls (is deemed completed) once the task attached is finished or after two years.

### **What is a Policy?**

A policy is the stance the Students’ Union takes regarding any particular issue. For example, DITSU has a policy in favour of repealing the 8<sup>th</sup> amendment. Policies are active for 5 years, unless removed by a motion from the Student Council.

### **How do I write a Motion or Policy?**

A motion must be written in a clear and concise manner, with a title, name of the proposer and seconder, and a date which the task (if any) must be completed by. DITSU Officers and the Clerk are available if Councillors feel they need help writing a motion or policy. It is wise to check with the Sabbatical Officers or the relevant DITSU staff member, if the issue they would like to bring to Council’s attention is something that is already done – just not publicised, or if there are other issues which may stop the motion/policy being accepted by the Council.

### **When should I submit a Motion or Policy?**

Motions need to be submitted to the Clerk of Student Council (Claire Healey) 5 working days before the Council meeting.

#### **Example of a Motion:**

##### **Title**

Every motion needs a short title to sum up the topic

##### **Student Council Notes**

An introduction to the motion (you can also use words such as recognises, approves etc)

##### **Body of the Motion**

This is where you expand on the opening and give additional information.

##### **Student Council Mandates**

The task of the motion. A specific officer must be recorded, and an end date given to the motion)

##### **Proposed and Seconded by**

Every motion must have a proposer and a seconder who are Student Councillors

## **Debating**

### **How do Debates work?**

The proposer of the motion introduces the topic to the Council. You may speak for or against the motion or seek a clarification on the issue. Procedural motions may be proposed (See section on Procedural Motions). After each side has been heard, a vote is taken by show of hands.

### **How do you speak in a Debate?**

Usually you put your hand up, and the Chairperson will queue you in an order. Once it is your turn to speak, you must stand up (where possible) and state your name and Campus.

### **What is a Point of Information/Point of Order?**

Point of Information – A Councillor would like to offer additional information whilst someone else is speaking. The speaker may accept or decline (politely) this information

Point of Order – A speaker has broken the Standing Orders. The Chair then stops the debate to hear the issue.

## **Procedural Motions**

Procedural motions allow Councillors to call on Council to move the debate along in a certain direction.

- 9a) The question now be put (We want to vote now!)
- 9b) The question not be put (We don't want to vote on this)
- 9c) The question be taken in parts (We want to remove some words/lines)
- 9d) The motion be referred back (This needs to go to someone, sometime or somewhere else for further work)
- 9e)\* Challenge the Chairperson's Ruling (We don't like what the Chairperson decided)
- 9f)\* No Confidence in the Chairperson (We want to get rid of them!)

*\* Please read the Standing Orders for further details on these two procedural motions*

They can be proposed at any time during a debate, except during voting, or "Points of Order/Information". A vote must be taken to accept or reject the Procedural Motions

### **Voting**

When a vote is called, the person introducing the motion, or their nominee, may sum up the topic. They may choose not to by declaring a "formal" summation. A show of hand using the voting cards (green for, red against) is then taken and the majority wins. You can vote for, against or abstain from the vote.

## **Elections**

Councillors are required at certain times of the year to elect students to various committees or positions within DITSU. The following are a list of positions which will come to Student Council, but there may be other positions from time to time.

### **Chairperson to Student Council**

The Chairperson role is an independent position, which means that the person chairing the meeting does not take part in debates and is there to make sure the meeting runs in order. They must not have been a member of the Union for at least two academic years. Elections take place by the end of April every two years, and their terms of office runs from 1<sup>st</sup> July that year until the 30<sup>th</sup> June two years later. The Chairperson has a casting vote if a vote is tied. They are also the only person who can interpret the Constitution, and any questions regarding their interpretation may be forwarded to the Constitutional Tribunal for appeal.

### **Deputy Chairperson to Student Council**

The Deputy Chair will act if the Chairperson is unable to chair a meeting. i.e. if the Chairperson is unable to chair at the last minute, or if he needs to take an unscheduled break from the meeting. The Deputy Chair has a second, or casting vote, which means that you will have a vote as a member of Student Council, but if the vote is a tie you will have a second vote. Whilst acting as the Deputy Chairperson, you will need to conduct yourself in an independent capacity

### **Electoral Commission Student Representatives**

The Electoral Commission is an independent body who supervises all the elections, from local Class Rep Elections to our annual elections where the Executive Council are elected. A very useful body to get involved with if you are interested in the behind the scenes working of the elections, or if you have ideas for the elections. The Electoral Commission also looks at ways to increase candidate interest and voter turn-out. There are 5 positions available.

### **Student Members of DITSU CLG**

Each year the Company (DITSU CLG) must hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to present a report to the members outlining DITSU's financial statements for the previous accounting year. Each member shall have one vote at the AGM. If an Emergency General Meeting (EGM) is called, all members of the Company are invited to attend. Student Council is entitled to elect 2 more students as members of the Company (not a Director) to attend the Annual General Meeting. This is a great opportunity for any interested students to take part in representing the members of the company and to see how a company conducts its affairs.

### **Student Directors of DITSU CLG**

The primary function of the Directors is to manage the company on behalf of its members – who are the students of DIT. Directors must act responsibly and honestly in relation to the company and in line with the company's constitution and laws of Ireland. Directors are obliged to carry out their function with due care and diligence. Student Council elects two students to be directors on the Board of DITSU CLG for a period of 1 year. These students have the same responsibilities and duties as all other directors on the Board. This is a great opportunity for

students to gain first-hand knowledge of how a company functions and the importance of the role of Director in the decision-making process of the Board of Directors.

## **Removal of an Officer**

If an Elected Officer is not carrying out their duties as per their role description or carrying out tasks assigned to them by the Student Council, the Council may wish to request that they go through a disciplinary process. This procedure must go through an investigation which gives them statutory rights under Irish law. Procedures can be found in the Constitution under Articles 13, 16, 18 and 20.

### **Under what Grounds can an Officer be removed?**

From a Constitutional point of view, if they have acted outside of their role as prescribed by the Constitution, or if their level of productivity is called into question.

### **How can I bring a Complaint?**

A motion in writing must be signed by not less than half of the total membership of Student Council (i.e. 51 Councillors)

### **Who will investigate the Complaint?**

DITSU CLG shall investigate the charge or cause the charge to be investigated – in accordance with the law.

### **What happens whilst the Complaint is being Investigated?**

The officer concerned will carry out their duties as normal unless the Board of DITSU CLG deems it necessary to suspend them. In this case the Chairperson of the Student Council shall be informed if this procedure is being instigated or taken.

### **What happens next?**

DITSU CLG (in conjunction with the Student Council under protocols adopted by the Board of DITSU CLG and Student Council) may determine penalties as per DITSU's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy, namely:

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Suspension
4. Transfer of an employee found to have harassed or bullied another employee, particularly in case where a mutually acceptable resolution cannot be found
5. Duties or responsibilities may be reassigned as appropriate as part of disciplinary action
6. Dismissal
7. Any other penalty, which may be appropriate in relation to the nature of the offence.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Agenda (list of items to be considered at the meeting)**

The Agenda sets out the running order of the meeting. The Agenda for the Student Council meeting is timed. If an extension is needed for an item, "Standing Orders" are raised, and voted on. If a majority agree to extend the time, the Chairperson decides how much extra time should be given to this item.

### **Board of DITSU CLG**

This is the legal entity that runs DITSU's business affairs. The Board is comprised of an Independent Chairperson, the Company Secretary, two student reps elected through Student Council, the four sabbatical officers and two other independent people. DITSU CLG mainly deals with finance, company and HR issues.

### **Class Rep Meeting (CRM)**

The local College Officer chairs the Class Representative Meeting (CRM). Each class in the DIT is entitled to one Class Rep. CRM's are held locally and usually during the day. The meetings give reps the chance to elect their Student Councillors, receive information from DITSU, and address any issues they may have. The local Student Advisor (SA) is responsible for the administration of this meeting. It is the SA and College Officers responsibility to see that issues raised at these meetings are addressed.

### **Clerk to Student Council**

The Clerk provides all administrative support to the Student Council and to the Chairperson of Student Council as well as taking minutes and keep records of all meetings.

### **Collective Responsibility**

As laid out in the DITSU Constitution, collective responsibility is when Executive Council members must publicly support Executive Council's decisions, even if they do not privately agree with them. This includes voting on any issues in Student Council.

### **College Fora**

College Fora are an informal meeting of students to bring their concerns to the College Officer of their site. College Fora can be held at any time which suits students. The local Student Advisors administer these meetings. Class Reps are expected to attend as per CRM's

### **College Officers**

The College Officers chair the CRM's and College Fora on each main DIT Site. They address local issues and liaise with the 4 Sabbatical Officers and Staff in DITSU. They ensure Class Reps are updated regularly, and ensure an effective representative system is maintained. College Officers are full time students working part time for DITSU. The College Officer is accountable to both Student Council and their CRM.

### **Constitution**



The Constitution is the rulebook for the officers and staff of the organisation. It outlines everything from the structure of the organisation, to the duties and responsibilities of each officer position. DITSU is legally obliged to conform to all parts of the Constitution.

### **Electoral Commission**

As DITSU is a democratic organisation, elections are one of the most fundamental aspects of its functions and are taken very seriously. To ensure DITSU always conforms with its obligations and responsibilities, the Electoral Commission was created under the Constitution. The Commission is chaired by an independent person and has only student members. The Commission establishes the rules of elections and oversees all procedures during elections.

### **Ex-Officio**

This means automatically being a member of a body (a board, committee, council, etc.) by holding another office i.e. they do not need to be elected to the body. Sabbatical Officers, College Officers, Postgrad Officer and School Reps are ex-officio members of Student Council.

### **Executive Council**

This is an overall committee comprised of the four sabbatical officers, six College Officers and the Postgraduate Officer. The Executive Council deals with issues that filter up from specific Class Reps Meetings or College Fora, or can deal with issues that filter down from Student Council or the Board of DITSU CLG. Meetings are held once a month and are chaired by the President

### **Governing Body**

This is the highest forum within DIT. It consists of the President of DIT, the Faculty Directors, appointed external specialists (Such as TD's) and 2 students from DITSU (1 Male and 1 female).

### **Guillotine**

Guillotine is a term used to decide the time when the meeting shall conclude. If an extension is needed for any item on the Agenda, "Standing Orders" are raised, and voted on. If a majority agree to extend the time, the Chairperson decides how much extra time should be given to the item, thus extending the guillotine.

### **Independent Chairperson of Student Council**

The Independent Chairperson of Student Council is elected by Student Council, and he/she may not have been a member of DITSU for at least 2 academic years. The Chairperson calls the Student Council meeting, and determines the Agenda, along with the Clerk to Student Council. The Chairperson then presides over the meeting, and in the case where a vote is tied, the Chairperson has the casting vote.

### **Mandate (official command or instruction)**

This is a command given by Student Council to a person or body to act in a particular way. i.e. "Student Council mandates the President of the Students' Union to conduct a survey of student's opinions". It is the action point deriving from a motion.

### **Minutes**

Minutes are a record of a meeting and give an overview of what occurred during the meeting. Minutes need to be approved at the following meeting, by a member who was present at the previous meeting. Any changes to the minutes need to be done before they are approved.

### **Motion (formal proposal)**

Any student councillor can bring a motion to Student Council. A motion is usually presented to deal with one single issue. A motion can mandate sabbaticals, College Officer's, the Postgraduate Officer or the Union as a whole. Once a motion is passed any mandate contained within it must be completed within 2 years.

### **Officer Report**

This is a detailed report submitted to Student Council by the Sabbatical officers and the College Officers detailing their activities undertaken since the last meeting as well as outlining what they are currently working on and any gifts they have received.

### **Point of Information**

A member of the meeting offers additional information on a subject. The speaker has the option to accept or decline to hear the information offered.

### **Point of Order**

A Point of Order may be raised at any point during the meeting, if a member feels that the speaker has broken the rules of the meeting. The speaker must accept the Point of Order, and it is up to the Chairperson to rule on this or refer it to the audience.

### **Policy**

A policy is passed through the Student Council. It is a document outlining where DITSU should stand on an issue that has been voted on and becomes the official 'party line' of DITSU for the following five years. A policy cannot be passed that conflicts with DITSU's own Constitution or that could be seen to contravene any of our members' rights.

### **Post Graduate Officer**

Acts as a representative of all post graduate students within DIT. They are an ex officio member of the Executive Council and Student Council. They are students who work part time for DITSU

### **Procedural Motion**

Procedural motions are used in formal debate to assist the chair in moving debate along, and they empower members to take control of the debate and ensure it is moving in an appropriate direction. When a Procedural Motion is called, it is seconded by another member of the meeting. Speakers are then taken for and against, after which a vote is taken on the procedural motion, before returning to the main issue.

### **Programme of Work**

The programme of work is a document that sets forth the priorities for DITSU in the forthcoming year. It must be presented to the Student Council at its first meeting.

### **Quorum**

This is the minimum amount of people present at the meeting, for the meeting to proceed. If there are fewer than the stated numbers, quorum may be called, and the meeting may not go ahead. Quorum may be called at any point during the meeting, and if called during the meeting, all decisions and votes taken before this fall. Student Council quorum is 20% plus 1 of registered Student Councillors.

### **Sabbatical Officer**

This refers to the four elected full-time officers of DITSU, the President, VP Education, VP Events and VP Welfare. Sabbatical officers are treated as registered students of DIT and are taking a 'sabbatical' year from their studies in order to represent their peers. However, they may also run for election at the end of their final year. Sabbaticals can only run for election for a maximum of two years as per the DITSU Constitution.

### **School Reps**

These are students who are elected to be the link between the Class Reps in their school, and the Head of School. School Reps are ex-officio members of Student Council

### **Standing Orders (Meeting guidelines)**

These are a set of guidelines that Student Council establishes and adopts. They set out how the meeting should be run and how the Student Council makes decisions. Standing Orders can be amended by way of a motion to Student Council.

### **Student Advisor**

Student Advisors are more commonly known as SA's. They look after local democracy ensuring minutes are kept, local databases are up to date and people are notified of meetings etc. Secondly, they are the first point of contact for any student seeking assistance on a variety of issues. Thirdly they are responsible for some of the local casework.

### **USI**

Union of Students in Ireland. U.S.I. is the National representative Union of Students in Ireland. Its 'members' are not individual students but Member Organisations - this merely means individual Students' Unions. Individual Students' Unions decide themselves whether they wish to be members or not. USI are responsible for student representation at a national level and hold many National seats, as well as being involved on a European level. USI also spear head several annual National Campaigns, (education grants, SHAG etc) as mandated through their regular National Councils and particularly at the annual convention known as USI Congress.