

# CONSTITUTION

## QUEEN'S DEBATING UNION



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EXPERIENTIA DOCET

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## CONSTITUTION

### QUEEN'S DEBATING UNION

Founded in glorious membership and ancient lineage for the purpose of fostering national discourse and cogent debate, in the year eighteen hundred and forty-three, later a melding of the Levanna Debating Society and the Queen's College Debating Club and finally named the Debating Union, we the Executive do hereby proclaim:

#### **ARTICLE I**

##### INCORPORATION

There exists, and shall exist, an organization known as the Queen's Debating Union, hereinafter referred to as the Union. The Union shall provide a forum for the exchange of ideas through the mediums of debate and public speech.

##### ADHERENCE TO THE ALMA MATER SOCIETY

The Union is a funded member of the Alma Mater Society and is thereby responsible to the Alma Mater Society. The Union is ultimately responsible to the students of Queen's University who elect and fund the Alma Mater Society. The Union recognizes the constitution of the Alma Mater Society.

##### POLICY MANUAL

The Union shall keep, alongside this constitution, The Policy Manual of the Queen's Debating Union, which shall record precedents and describe procedures for the normal operation of the Executive, the Tournament Selection Committees, the Equity team, and the House.

#### **ARTICLE II**

##### MEMBERSHIP

The Membership of the Union shall include all those who have been present for a minimum of five weekly meetings and have paid their membership fee by March 1<sup>st</sup> of that year. Only members are allowed to vote and run in Executive elections.

##### SUBSCRIPTION

The subscription shall be decided upon by the Executive of the Union.

##### ELIGIBILITY

Any member of the Alma Mater Society or School of Graduate Studies is eligible to become a member of the Union, subject to the requirements set out in this Constitution and that of the Alma Mater Society.

#### **ARTICLE III**

##### THE HOUSE

The House of the Union shall be comprised of subscribed Members of the Union.

##### CHARGES OF THE HOUSE

The House shall be charged with:

1. The election of Members of the Executive by majority vote of members in attendance at any formation of the House.
2. The consideration or ratification of any matter proposed for discussion at a meeting of the House by any subscribed Member.
3. Considering and voting on any proposal to amend, change, or add to the Union policies or procedures.
4. All such proposals shall depend on final approval of the House for force and effect
5. Considering and voting on any amendments to this Constitution in the manner prescribed herein.
6. General supervision of the actions of the Executive

All other powers herein designated to the house.

#### MEETINGS

The Union shall form the House every Wednesday and Thursday at 7:00 pm, subject to the discretion of the Executive.

#### VOTING

All decisions of the House shall be made by simple majority vote in a manner approved by the Executive save for:

1. The election of the Executive, where votes shall be cast by secret ballot
2. A specific request is made for a vote by secret ballot

Unless specified herein, each subscribed member of the Union is entitled to one vote of equal weight. Voting procedures shall be described in more detail in the Policy Manual of the Queen's Debating Union.

#### PROXY

Vote by proxy shall be allowed with written verification and signature or by email to the President. Votes by proxy must be submitted by midnight the evening prior to the vote. Undirected proxies, where an absent member transfers his or her vote to another member to be used at the latter's discretion, are not permitted.

#### CHAIR OF ELECTIONS

A chair shall be appointed by the Executive to oversee the election of the Executive if and only if the current President has chosen to run for office. The chair shall have full power of the election of the Executive.

#### DATE OF ELECTION

The election of the Executive shall take forth no sooner than the third Wednesday in March.

#### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **THE EXECUTIVE**

Each Member of the Executive shall be instated by a majority vote of the subscribed Membership present at the meeting of the House.

#### VOTING

Candidates shall be removed from the ballot one at a time until only one remains. In the case of a tie, the President may cast the deciding vote.

#### PROXY VOTES

Vote by proxy shall be allowed with written verification and signature or by email to the President. In the case that the current President is not the Chief Electoral Officer, proxies must be provided to the member acting in that position. Proxies for Executive Elections must be received by midnight the evening before elections.

#### ELIGIBILITY

Any subscribed Member of the Alma Mater Society and the Union is eligible for a portfolio in the Union.

#### NOMINATION

Candidates for office may not nominate themselves but may accept a nomination from another subscribed Member of the House.

#### TERMS OF OFFICE

A subscribed Member may hold the same portfolio in the Executive for a maximum of two (2) concurrent years. Each Executive is elected for a period of one academic year, subject to removal by the House. The new Executive's term will begin after official Closing of the House ceremonies.

#### POWERS

Each Member of the Executive shall be empowered to supervise the activities of the Union specific to the portfolio to which they have been elected by the House. Each Executive shall be empowered to create an executive committee to administrate the affairs of their portfolio.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive Members are responsible for:

1. Attendance at Executive meetings
2. A full account of the current state of activities or affairs in their portfolio
3. The general supervision and wellbeing of the Union
4. Representation of the Union on CUSID

#### CHARGES OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive of the Union shall be charged with:

1. General supervision of the fiscal and political conditions, activities, and affairs of the Union to ensure that all these adhere to the provisions of the Constitution
2. The designation of the Chair for the purpose of the election of the Executive

3. The appointment of replacements for Executive positions vacated either temporarily or permanently during a term of office subject to later ratification by the House
4. The consideration of and decision on any matter deemed to affect the Union and its membership.
5. Decision upon a subscription fee charged to all Members
6. Any other power or duty herein delegated to the Executive

#### MEETING

The Executive shall meet once a week subject to the discretion of the President. Meetings of the Executive shall have a quorum of one half of its total Membership. Any subscribed Member of the Union shall be able to attend meetings of the Executive. The Executive shall be empowered, by majority vote, to restrict any meeting or portion of a meeting to Executive members only by providing explicit notice of this fact to the House prior to or during the meeting.

#### VOTING

The President, the Critic, the Treasurer, the Secretary of the House, and the Tournament Directors shall be empowered to vote at meetings of the Executive. Vote by proxy shall be allowed provided written verification is given to the President before the vote. On any issue where disagreement with the President exists, the President shall take all opinions into consideration and then determine the matter. A simple majority may call motions to the House should disagreements persist.

#### TIE

In the event of a tie, the motion shall be decided in favour of the President.

#### EXECUTIVE

The elected Executive of the Union shall include a President, Critic, Treasurer, Secretary of the House, and at least two Tournament Directors. Each year, the elected Executive as led by the President shall appoint a Sergeant-at-Arms, and may appoint an In-House Director and a Communications Director. A Novice Representative shall be elected no later than the first Wednesday in October by a majority of members in their first year of membership in the Union. In years when the Union is responsible for hosting an additional CUSID tournament, an additional Tournament Director will be elected to manage its execution. The President may at any time propose the addition or deletion of surplus portfolios it considers necessary subject to ratification by the House.

#### PRESIDENT

The President shall form the House with the Mace of the Union. They will be Speaker of the House holding order and decorum at all times. They will be responsible for the integration and direction of the Executive and the Union. The President shall share the right of signature of the Union accounts with the Treasurer.

#### CRITIC

The Critic shall censure the power of the President. They will assist the President in the supervision of the affairs of the Union. In the case of the vacancy in the position of the President, the Critic shall assume the role of the President.

#### TREASURER

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the treasury of the Union. They will be responsible for the collection and recording of the subscription. They will be responsible for the budget and the bookkeeping. They will be responsible for raising funds for the Union. The Treasurer shall share the right of signature of the Union accounts with the President.

#### SECRETARY OF THE HOUSE

The Secretary of the House shall be responsible for the organization and general wellbeing of the Union on a weekly basis. They will keep attendance and prepare the House for meetings. They will stand on the Great Debates Committee as the representative of the Union. The Secretary shall be responsible for recording the Minutes of Debate. The secretary shall also be responsible for the maintenance and updating of the precedent section of the policy manual and online outreach platforms.

#### TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS

The Tournament Directors shall be responsible for the administration and execution of the tournament they hold. There shall be as many tournament directors as there are external tournaments hosted by the union.

#### SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

The Sergeant at Arms is to guard the Mace of the Union. They are responsible for guarding the Speaker and Her Majesty's Government when the House is formed. The Sergeant at Arms is also responsible for the taking of attendance during weekly meetings.

#### IN-HOUSE ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR

The In-House Activities Director shall be responsible for the administration and execution of internal Union tournaments and socials.

#### FUNDRAISING DIRECTOR

The Fundraising Director shall assist the treasurer with raising funds for the Union, as well as for Tournaments hosted by the Union.

#### NOVICE REPRESENTATIVE

The Novice Representative shall be responsible for communicating the perspectives and concerns of new members of the Union to the Executive and representing the interests of these members during all Executive discussions.

#### IMPEACHMENT

Any elected Member of the Executive may be impeached by two thirds count of a non-confidence vote. The vote of non-confidence may be called by any subscribed Member at any formation of the house.

## **DISMISSAL**

Any appointed Member of the Executive may be dismissed from their position by two thirds count of a non-confidence vote by the elected Executive.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **EQUITY**

The Union shall be committed to the fair and just treatment of all of its members. To this end, the executive shall appoint no fewer than two Equity officers who will be tasked with educating members about and enforcing the equity policy and the values contained therein.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **WORLD DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

Selection of candidates to attend the World University Debating Championships shall conform to the criteria established in the Worlds Selection Policy (see attached policy). Any change to this policy requires the approval of the Executive and a two thirds majority of the House. All debaters and judges representing the QDU at the World University Debating Championship must meet a minimum attendance requirement of 50% per week during the Fall semester. This means debating or judging at least once a week. All debaters and judges representing the QDU at the World University Championship must Pro-Am at least once at an external tournament, and should they fail to do so, may be denied receipt of any subsidy granted that year.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **DEBATING BLUE**

There shall be an award known as the Debating Blue which shall be given to members of the Union for "selfless service to the Union in full knowledge of no return." Selection of candidates to receive the Debating Blue will be by committee, elected by the House and chaired by a member of the Executive.

## **ROBERT SUTHERLAND**

Named for the first known Canadian university graduate of African descent and former Treasurer of the Union Robert Sutherland (B.A.H., Classics and Mathematics, 1852), this award recognizes a member of the Union who has achieved significant cumulative competitive success during their time with the club. Selection of candidates to receive the Robert Sutherland Award will be by committee, elected by the House and chaired by a member of the Executive.

## **THOMAS HOLLOWAY**

Thomas Holloway was a former Queen's Commerce student and member of the QDU. He passed away due to injuries suffered during a traffic collision in his final year at Queen's. He is remembered as a bright, articulate, kind, and generous individual. In tribute to his memory, the Thomas Holloway Award is to be given annually to the QDU member found to have made the most significant contribution to the club for that year. Contributions should be assessed holistically, taking competitive success, strength of character, club commitment and all other information deemed relevant by the selection committee into account. This award shall be given to whoever best fits the criteria above, regardless of their academic

year or the number of years they have belonged to the club. Selection of candidates to receive the Thomas Holloway Award will be by committee, elected by the House and chaired by a member of the Executive.

#### **LORNA BRECKON**

Lorna Breckon served two terms as the Union's first female Treasurer in the 1940s. Named in her honour, the Lorna Breckon Novice Award recognizes a novice member of the club who has displayed both dedication and competitive success in addition to demonstrating strength of character. Selection of candidates to receive the Lorna Breckon Award will be by committee, elected by the House and chaired by the most recent recipient of the award. Should that recipient be unable to do so, the committee may instead be chaired by a member of the Executive.

#### **ARTICLE VIII**

##### **AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Any proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be presented to the Executive for discussion and debate. The amendment shall be put to a vote at an Executive meeting; a majority vote of the Executive Members present shall clear it for presentation to the House. No amendment can be introduced and ratified at a single meeting. To be passed, any proposed amendment shall require the support of a two thirds majority of the members present. This shall carry the said amendment into force and effect for the Union.

#### **ARTICLE IX**

##### **JURISDICTION**

The articles and provision of the Constitution shall be deemed to govern the communication and conduct of all Members of the Union.

#### **ARTICLE X**

##### **THE SHIELD OF THE UNION**



## **MOTTO**

The motto of the Union shall be “Experientia Docet”

## **TRADITION OF THE HOUSE**

The tradition of the Union shall be respected by all its members at all times.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

1. Debate shall take place with participants assembled as a body styled the House
2. There shall be a moderator, styled the Speaker of the House, and referred to by other members as “Mister Speaker” or “Madame Speaker” as the case may be. The Speaker shall call the House to order, preside over the debate, rule on all points raised for consideration, call upon the Judges for their comments, name those members who shall disrupt the House, dissolve the House upon termination of all business, and otherwise assure that the affairs of the House are speedily and courteously conducted.
3. There shall be a timekeeper, styled the Clerk of the House, who, through an agreed upon system of cards or signals, shall silently communicate to each debater in turn the amount of time remaining in their speech.
4. In the event of a Formal House, there shall be a scribe styled the Clerk of the House whose duties shall be to record the minutes of the debate and keep the Rolls of Membership. There shall also be a timekeeper, also styled Clerk of the House, who shall perform their duties as stated above.
5. In the event that the Mace of the Union is present, it will be carried into the House by a keeper styled the Sergeant-at-Arms. They shall be the porter and guardian of the Mace, which shall be placed at the foot of the Clerk’s table facing the Government

benches. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall also be responsible for the enforcement of discipline and order in the House, and shall escort from the House such members as the Speaker shall name.

6. There shall be two teams of debaters of two persons each, styled Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The Government shall be styled the Right Honourable, the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Crown. The Opposition shall be styled the Member of the Opposition and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.
7. The Government shall sit to the right of the Speaker, styled the Government Bench, and shall plead the resolution's adoption. The Opposition shall sit to the left of the Speaker, styled the Opposition Bench, and plead the resolution's rejection.
8. The distance between the Government Bench and Opposition Bench shall be no less than two cutlasses and scabbard lengths. The House shall at all times utilize a cutlass culled from the Royal Canadian Highlanders.
9. There are two forms of the Parliamentary debate acceptable in the House: prepared and impromptu. In the event of an impromptu debate, the Speaker shall permit one or both of the teams to withdraw for a period not exceeding fifteen minutes to prepare their remarks. In the event of a prepared round, the debate shall begin immediately.
10. In the event that either or both teams do not appear promptly at the formation of the House by the Speaker, the team(s) forfeit their right to speak in that round of debate.
11. The order and timing of speeches is as follows: Prime Minister, seven (7) minutes; Member of the Opposition, seven (7) minutes; Minister of the Crown seven (7) minutes; Leader of the Opposition, ten (10) minutes; Prime Minister's Rebuttal three (3) minutes.
12. In a Formal House, speeches from the floor may be permitted at the discretion of the Speaker. They shall not exceed three (3) minutes in duration.
13. The Government has an onus to prove the resolution on the balance of probabilities, not beyond a reasonable doubt. If the resolution is shown to be as likely true as false, it should be affirmed.
14. The Government shall define the terms of the resolution during the Prime Minister's first speech. Implicit definitions, if clear, are permitted. Definitions shall not be truisms, tautologies, or unreasonable. The test of reasonableness shall be that the definitions are based on legitimate meanings of the words of the resolution and produce a debatable resolution. The resolution may be taken in either a literal or metaphorical sense. Words may be ended at the beginning and end of the resolution, but not the middle. Only nouns or words that can be reasonably taken as nouns may be used as acronyms. Intentional misspellings are not permitted. Ironic definitions are not permitted.
15. The Government must produce a resolution it supports and support the resolution it produces.
16. If the Opposition wishes to challenge the Government's definitions, the Member of the Opposition must rise on a Point of Order during the Prime Minister's first speech, stating briefly their objection. The Speaker shall rise and rule immediately

and independently on the issue. If it is decided against the Government, they will be given an additional five (5) minutes with which to prepare a new case.

17. The Government may choose to set the debate in a particular time and place. Such settings must not be obscure. The Government may adopt fictional identities and assign one to the Speaker, but it may not force identities of their own choosing on the Opposition. The debaters may use no evidence or theoretical concepts that would be unknown to the characters they are portraying. If no setting is explicitly declared by the end of the Prime Minister's first speech, the debate is assumed to be taking place in the present at no particular location.
18. The Opposition may challenge the Government's setting in a point of order during the Prime Minister's first speech. The procedure shall be the same as that for a contested definition of terms.
19. If any member deems that a fellow member has broken the rules of the House as listed herein, he or she may rise on a point of order. The member shall cover their head and present their right hand to the Speaker, at which time the grounds for the point shall be stated as briefly and directly as possible. When the member rises on a point, the member speaking at the same time shall take his or her assigned seat. The Speaker shall rise and rule independently and immediately that the point is "well taken" or "not well taken." If not well taken, the time used in adjudicating the point shall not be deducted from the speaking member's speech.
20. If any member believes they have been directly misquoted, maliciously misrepresented, referred to improperly or unreasonably insulted, they may rise on a point of personal privilege, which shall be adjudicated in the same manner as a point of order.
21. In the Prime Minister's final rebuttal, no new lines of argumentation may be introduced, unless it is in direct support of a point previously made, or in direct refutation.
22. When a Member's time has concluded, he or she may finish the current sentence or statement without penalty. Excessive overtime is grounds for a point of order.
23. Debaters must speak from their places or may use a podium if one is available. Pacing is acceptable, but debaters must not cross the floor. If, of their own free will, a debater chooses to cross the floor, the debate shall be called forfeit in favour of the supported bench.
24. Judges comments excepted, he or she who speaks in the House shall stand, and he or she who remains seated shall hold their tongue.
25. Heckling of the speaking Member is permitted, provided it is witty, concise, and to the point.
26. Debaters may confer, but they must not disturb a speaking Member or render them inaudible to the Speaker.
27. A speaking Member may not pause to confer with either his or her partner, nor may they accept passed notes.
28. Debaters may not receive help from coaches, or any other similar member, while debate is in progress.
29. Debaters may not use any form of physical props in the debate.
30. Debaters must not read their speeches verbatim from a prepared text, although they may use notes.

31. Debaters may only use language and gestures as are worthy of the dignity of the House. They may not use remarks which are blasphemous, seditious, libelous, slanderous or unreasonably insulting to any Member of the House. There shall be no derogatory remarks made toward Her Majesty the Queen of England on pain of being Named.
32. Debaters must address other members by either their appropriate title or other term of respect. Christian names are not an acceptable form of reference.
33. Debaters may not use fabricated evidence, except in a clearly farcical manner.
34. Debaters must address all their remarks to the Speaker.
35. No Member may rise on a point of defense of another Member, the Speaker, the Clerks of the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms, or the judges.
36. The House does not recognize points of information or points of parliamentary inquiry except where expressly permitted by the Speaker.
37. There shall be a panel of Judges for all competitive debates. In the event that the number of Judges is even, or there is only one Judge, the Speaker shall have the rights of the Judge.
38. The position of Judge may be combined with the position of Clerk, but not Sergeant-at-Arms.
39. Judges may not confer with one another in marking their ballots, nor shall they change their ballots after they have been once marked.
40. Under no circumstances shall the Judge divulge the results of the debate they have adjudicated, either directly or indirectly on pain of being barred from debate.
41. The Speaker shall produce the wording of the resolution for the debate in writing, if so requested.
42. The Speaker's rulings may not be appealed once the House has been declared closed.
43. The Speaker may not be impeached or removed from office for any reason whatsoever.
44. A Member who openly or covertly refuses to abide by the Speaker's ruling will be Named and escorted from the House.
45. Members' dress and conduct must reflect the dignity and solemnity of the House at all times. The Speaker may Name any Member whom they feel to be conducting themselves in a manner which is inappropriate to the dignity of the House.
46. It is the prerogative of the Speaker to dispense with Judge's comments if necessary.
47. The Speaker shall oversee the collection of all ballots for the room they are speaking in, and shall be held personally responsible for their being forwarded to the tabulation room.
48. At the location of the House and debate, any and all smoking of cigars and pipes shall be heavily discouraged.