

# STANDING ORDERS

## CONFERENCES

### Annual conference

1. The General Practitioners Committee (GPC) England shall convene annually a conference of representatives of local medical committees in England.

### Special conference

2. A special conference of representatives of local medical committees in England may be convened at any time by the GPC England, and shall be convened if requested by one third, or if that is not a whole number the next higher whole number, of the total number of LMCs entitled to appoint a representative to conference. No business shall be dealt with at the special conference other than that for which it has been specifically convened.

### Membership

3. The members of conference shall be:
  - 3.1 the chair and deputy chair of the conference
  - 3.2 300 representatives of local medical committees
  - 3.3 the members of the GPC England
  - 3.4 the elected members of the conference agenda committee (agenda committee)
  - 3.5 those regionally elected representatives of the GP registrars committee who were elected from regions in England, together with its chair
  - 3.6 those elected members of the sessional GPs committee of the GPC who were elected from regions in England, together with its chair

### Representatives

4. All local medical committees in England are entitled to appoint a representative to the conference.
5. The agenda committee shall each year allocate any remaining seats for representatives amongst LMCs. Allocation of additional seats shall be done in such a manner that ensures fair representation of LMCs according to the number of GPs they represent. Each year the agenda committee shall publish a list showing the number of representatives each LMC is entitled to appoint and the method of allocating the additional seats.
6. Local medical committees may appoint a deputy for each representative, who shall be a registered medical practitioner, who may attend and act at the conference if the representative is absent.
7. Representatives shall be registered medical practitioners appointed at the absolute discretion of the appropriate local medical committee.
8. The representatives appointed to act at the annual conference shall continue to hold office until the following annual conference, unless the GPC is notified by the relevant local medical committee of any change.

### Observers

9. Local medical committees may nominate personnel from their organisations to attend conference as observers, subject to the chair of conference's discretion. In addition, the chair of conference may invite any person who has a relevant interest in conference business to attend as an observer.

### Interpretations

10. A local medical committee is a committee recognised by a Primary Care Organisation (PCO) or equivalent as representative of medical practitioners under the NHS Act 2006.

11. 'Members of the conference' means those persons described in standing order 3.
12. 'Representative' or 'representatives' means those persons appointed under standing orders 4 to 8, and shall include the deputy of any person who is absent.
13. 'The conference', unless otherwise specified, means either an annual or a special conference.
14. 'As a reference' means that any motion so accepted does not constitute conference policy, but is referred to the GPC England to consider how best to procure its sentiments.

### **Motions to amend standing orders**

15. No motion to amend these standing orders shall be considered at any subsequent conference unless due notice is given by the GPC England, the agenda committee, or a local medical committee.

### **Suspension of standing orders**

16. Any decision to suspend one or more of the standing orders shall require a two-thirds majority of those representatives present and voting at the conference.

### **Agenda**

17. The agenda shall include:
  - 17.1 motions, amendments and riders submitted by the GPC England, and any local medical committee. These shall fall within the remit of the GPC England, which is to deal with all matters affecting medical practitioners providing and/or performing primary medical services under the National Health Service Act 1977 and any Acts or Orders amending or consolidating the same
  - 17.2 motions submitted by the agenda committee in respect of organisational issues only.
18. When a special conference has been convened, the GPC England shall determine the time limit for submitting motions.

### **The agenda shall be prepared by the agenda committee as follows:**

19. In two parts; the first part 'Part I' being those motions which the agenda committee believe should be debated within the time available; the second part 'Part II' being those motions covered by 24 and 25 below and those motions submitted for which the agenda committee believe there will be insufficient time for debate or are incompetent by virtue of structure or wording.
20. 'Grouped motions': Motions or amendments which cover substantially the same ground shall be grouped and the motion for debate shall be asterisked. If any local medical committee submitting a motion so grouped objects in writing before the day of conference, the removal of the motion from the group shall be decided by the conference.
21. 'Composite motions': If the agenda committee considers that no motion or amendment adequately covers a subject, it shall draft a composite motion or an amendment, which shall be the motion for debate. The agenda committee shall be allowed to alter the wording in the original motion for such composite motions.
22. 'Motions with subsections':
  - 22.1 motions with subsections shall deal with only one point of principle, the agenda committee being permitted to divide motions covering more than one point of principle
  - 22.2 subsections shall not be mutually contradictory
  - 22.3 such motions shall not have more than five subsections except in subject debates.
23. 'Rescinding motions': Motions which the agenda committee consider to be rescinding existing conference policy shall be prefixed with the letters 'RM'.

24. 'A' motions: Motions which the agenda committee consider to be a reaffirmation of existing conference policy, or which are regarded by the chair of the GPC England as being non-controversial, self-evident or already under action or consideration, shall be prefixed with a letter 'A'.
25. 'AR' motions: Motions which the chair of the GPC England is prepared to accept without debate as a reference to the GPC England shall be prefixed with the letters 'AR'.
26. A ballot of representatives shall be conducted to enable them to choose motions, ('C' motions), amendments or riders for debate. Using only the prescribed form, which must be received by the GPC England secretariat by a time to be agreed and advertised by the agenda committee, each representative may choose up to three motions, amendments or riders to be given priority in debate. The motions, amendments or riders receiving the most votes shall be given priority. A maximum of three motions, amendments or riders shall be given priority.
27. Major issue debate: The agenda committee may schedule a major issue debate. If the committee considers that a number of motions in Part I should be considered part of a major issue debate, it shall indicate which motions shall be covered by such a debate. If such a debate is held the provision of standing orders 42, 43, 44, and 45 shall not apply and the debate shall be held in accordance with standing order 50.

**Other duties of the agenda committee include:**

28. Recommending to the conference the order of the agenda; allocating motions to blocks; allocating time to blocks; setting aside reserved periods, as provided for in standing order 55, and overseeing the conduct of the conference.

**Procedures**

29. An amendment shall seek to change a motion but not significantly alter its purpose and/or meaning. It shall remove and/or add words to the original motion and shall be considered before a motion is debated.
30. A rider shall add words as an extra to a seemingly complete statement, provided that the rider is relevant and appropriate to the motion on which it is moved.
31. An amendment or rider must be submitted in writing to the Agenda Committee, preferably for inclusion in the supplementary agenda by the published deadline, or before the end of the session preceding that in which the motion is due to be moved (for the first session, amendments or riders must be submitted before the session begins.)
32. An amendment or rider may be submitted by an LMC, GPC England, the Conference Agenda Committee, or any two members of Conference. If submitted by two members of conference, the names of the proposer and seconder, and their constituencies, shall be included on the written notice.
33. No amendments or riders will be permitted to motions debated under standing order 27.

**Rules of debate**

34. Members of the conference have an overriding duty to those they represent. If a speaker has a pecuniary or personal interest, beyond his capacity as a member of the conference, in any question which the conference is to debate, this interest shall be declared at the start of any contribution to the debate.
35. Every member of the conference shall conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner both during and outside the debate.
36. A member of conference shall address conference through the chair.
37. A member of the conference shall not address the conference more than once on any motion or amendment, but the mover of the motion or amendment may reply, and when replying, shall strictly confine themselves to answering previous speakers. They shall not introduce any new matter into the debate.

38. Members of the GPC England, who also attend the conference as representatives, should identify in which capacity they are speaking to motions.
39. The chair shall endeavour to ensure that those called to address the conference are predominantly representatives of LMCs.
40. Lay executives of LMCs may request to speak to all business of the conference at the request of their LMC.
41. The chair shall take any necessary steps to prevent tedious repetition.
42. Whenever an amendment or a rider to an original motion has been moved and seconded, no subsequent amendment or rider shall be moved until the first amendment or rider has been disposed of.
43. Amendments shall be debated and voted upon before returning to the original motion.
44. Riders shall be debated and voted upon after the original motion has been carried.
45. If any amendment or rider is rejected, other amendments or riders may, subject to the provisions of standing order 42, be moved to the original motion. If an amendment or rider is carried, the motion as amended or extended, shall replace the original motion, and shall be the question upon which any further amendment or rider may be moved.
46. If it is proposed and seconded or proposed by the chair that the conference adjourns, or that the debate be adjourned, or 'that the question be put now', such motion shall be put to the vote immediately, and without discussion, except as to the time of adjournment. The chair can decline to put the motion, 'that the question be put now'. If a motion, 'that the question be put now', is carried by a two thirds majority, the chair of the GPC England or their representative and the mover of the original motion shall have the right to reply to the debate before the question is put. The chair of GPC England or their representative shall limit their reply to the content of the debate, relevant policy work and the feasibility of enacting the motion under debate. They shall not express any personal opinions.
47. If there be a call by acclamation to move to next business it shall be the chair's discretion whether the call is heard. If it is heard then the proposer of the original motion can choose to:
  - (i) accept the call to move to next business for the whole motion
  - (ii) accept the call to move to next business for one or more subsections of the motion
  - (iii) have one minute to oppose the call to move to next business.

Conference will then vote on the motion to move to next business and a 2/3 majority is required for it to succeed.
48. All motions expressed in several parts and designated by the numbers (i), (ii), (iii), etc shall automatically be voted on separately. But, in order to expedite business, the chair may ask conference (by a simple majority) to waive this requirement.
49. If by the time for a motion to be presented to conference no proposer has been notified to the agenda committee, the chair shall have the discretion to rule, without putting it to the vote, that conference move to the next item of business.
50. In a major issue debate the following procedures shall apply:
  - 50.1 the agenda committee shall indicate in the agenda the topic for a major debate
  - 50.2 the debate shall be conducted in the manner clearly set out in the published agenda
  - 50.3 the debate may be introduced by one or more speakers appointed by the agenda committee who may not necessarily be members of conference
  - 50.4 introductory speakers may produce a briefing paper of no more than one side A4 paper

- 50.5 subsequent speakers will be selected by the chair from those who have indicated a wish to speak. Subsequent speeches shall last no longer than one minute.
- 50.6 the Chair of GPC England or his/her representative shall be invited to contribute to the debate prior to the reply from the introductory speaker(s)
- 50.7 at the conclusion of the debate the introductory speakers may speak for no longer than two minutes in reply to matters raised in the debate. No new matters may be introduced at this time.
- 50.8 the response of members of conference to any major debate shall be measured in a manner determined by the agenda committee and published in the agenda.

### **Allocation of conference time**

- 51. The agenda committee shall, as far as possible, divide the agenda into blocks according to the general subject of the motions, and allocate a specific period of time to each block.
- 52. 'Soapbox session':
  - 52.1 A period may be reserved for a 'soapbox' session in which representatives shall be given up to one minute to present to conference an issue which is not covered in Part I of the agenda.
  - 52.2 Other representatives shall be able to respond to the issues raised during the soapbox session, or afterwards via means to be determined by the agenda committee.
  - 52.3 Representatives wishing to present an issue in the soapbox should complete the form provided and hand to a member of the agenda committee at the time of the debate.
  - 52.4 GPC England members shall not be permitted to speak in the soapbox session.
- 53. Motions which cannot be debated in the time allocated to that block shall, if possible, be debated in any unused time allocated to another block. The chair shall, at the start of each session, announce which previously unfinished block will be returned to in the event of time being available.
- 54. Motions prefixed with a letter 'A', (defined in standing orders 24 and 25) shall be formally moved by the chair of conference as a block to be accepted without debate during the debate on the report of the agenda committee in the first session of the conference.
- 55. Other periods of time may be allocated by the Agenda Committee for other purposes as indicated in the Agenda.

### **Motions not published in the agenda**

- 56. Motions not included in the agenda shall not be considered by the conference except those:
  - 56.1 covered by standing orders relating to time limit of speeches, motions for adjournment or "that the question be put now" motions that conference "move to the next business" or the suspension of standing orders
  - 56.2 relating to votes of thanks, messages of congratulations or of condolence
  - 56.3 relating to the withdrawal of strangers, namely those who are not members of the conference or the staff of the British Medical Association
  - 56.4 which replace two or more motions already on the agenda (composite motions) and agreed by representatives of the local medical committees concerned
  - 56.5 prepared by the agenda committee to correct drafting errors or ambiguities.
  - 56.6 that are considered by the agenda committee to cover new business which has arisen since the last day for the receipt of motions
  - 56.7 that may arise from a major issue debate; such motions must be received by the agenda committee by the time laid down in the major issue debate timetable published under standing order 50.

### **Quorum**

- 57. No business shall be transacted at any conference unless at least one-third of the number of representatives appointed to attend are present.

## **Time limit of speeches**

- 58. A member of the conference, including the chair of the GPC England, moving a motion, shall be allowed to speak for three minutes; no other speech shall exceed two minutes. However, the chair may extend these limits.
- 59. The conference may, at any period, reduce the time to be allowed to speakers, whether in moving resolutions or otherwise, and that such a reduction shall be effective if it is agreed by the chair.

## **Voting**

- 60. Only representatives of local medical committees may vote on conference business and in elections.

## **Majorities**

- 61. Except as provided for in standing order 46 and 47 (procedural motions), decisions of the conference shall be determined by simple majorities of those present and voting, except that the following will also require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting:
  - 61.1 any change of conference policy relating to the constitution and/or organisation of the LMC/conference/GPC England structure, or
  - 61.2 a decision which could materially affect the GPDP Ltd funds.
- 62. Voting shall be, at the discretion of the chair, by a show of voting cards or electronically. If the chair requires a count this will be by electronic voting.

## **Elections**

- 63. Chair
  - 63.1 At each conference, a chair shall be elected by the members of the conference to hold office from the termination of the conference. All members of the conference shall be eligible for nomination.
  - 63.2 Nominations must be handed in on the prescribed form before 10am on the opening day of the conference. Nominees may enter on the form an election statement of no more than 100 words, excluding numbers and dates in numerical format; to be reproduced on the voting papers. Recognised abbreviations count as one word.
- 64. Deputy chair
  - 64.1 At each annual conference, a deputy chair shall be elected by the members of the conference to hold office from the termination of the conference. All members of the conference shall be eligible for nomination.
  - 64.2 Nominations must be handed in on the prescribed form before 12 noon on the day of the conference. Nominees may enter on the form an election statement of no more than 100 words, excluding number and dates in numerical format; to be reproduced on the voting papers. Recognised abbreviations count as one word.
- 65. Five members of the conference agenda committee
  - 65.1 The agenda committee shall consist of the chair and deputy chair of the conference, the chair of GPC England and five members of the conference, not more than one of whom may be a sitting member of GPC England at the time of their election. In the event of there being an insufficient number of candidates to fill the five seats on the agenda committee, the chair shall be empowered to fill any vacancy by co-option from the appropriate section of the conference. Members of the conference agenda committee for the following conference shall take office at the end of the conference at which they are elected and shall continue in office until the end of the following annual conference.
  - 65.2 The chair of conference, or if necessary the deputy chair, shall be chair of the agenda committee.
  - 65.3 Nominations for the agenda committee for the next succeeding year must be handed in on the prescribed form by 1.00pm on the day of the conference. Any member of the conference may be nominated for the agenda committee.. Nominees may enter on the form an election statement of no

more than 100 words, excluding numbers and dates in numerical format; to be reproduced on the voting papers. Recognised abbreviations count as one word.

### **Returning officer**

66. The chief executive/secretary of the BMA, or a deputy nominated by the chief executive/ secretary, shall act as returning officer in connection with all elections.

### **Motions not debated**

67. Local medical committees shall be informed of those motions which have not been debated, and the proposers of such motions shall be invited to submit to the GPC England memoranda of evidence in support of their motions. Memoranda must be received by the GPC England by the end of the third calendar month following the conference.

### **Distribution of papers and announcements**

68. In the conference hall, or in the precincts thereof, no papers or literature shall be distributed, or announcements made, or notices displayed, unless approved by the chair.
69. Mobile phones may only be used for conversation in the precincts of, but not in, the conference hall.

### **The press**

70. Representatives of the press may be admitted to the conference but they shall not report on any matters which the conference regards as private.

### **Chair's discretion**

71. Any question arising in relation to the conduct of the conference, which is not dealt with in these standing orders, shall be determined at the chair's absolute discretion.

### **Minutes**

72. Minutes shall be taken of the conference proceedings and the chair shall be empowered to approve and confirm them.