

**RESIDENCE HALL ASSOCIATION
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK**

OVERVIEW

This document shall serve the Residence Hall Association, in accordance with Article IV, Section 5, Clause 1 of the Constitution, as the operating procedure for Senate business.

PART I: GENERAL SENATE OPERATIONS

Section 1: Meetings

- (1) Meetings shall be scheduled by the executive board, and tentative schedule for each semester shall be given to RHA members at the beginning of that semester.
- (2) All meetings of the Senate shall be open meetings, with exception to election proceedings or by discretion of the executive team.

Section 2: Special or Emergency Meetings

- (1) Special or emergency meetings of the Senate may be called by the executive board on an as-needed basis.
- (2) Notice to the voting membership of the Senate must be provided within twenty-four hours of the decision to schedule a special or emergency meeting.

Section 3: Agendas

- (1) The vice president has the following responsibilities with respect to agendas:
 - A) Due discretion shall be exercised in the selection or adjustment of agendas in order to:
 - i. Afford adequate time to existing agenda items
 - ii. Modify agendas in order to treat emerging issues of high priority
 - B) Senate members shall be given advance notice of agenda items
- (2) Requests for agenda items shall be submitted to the vice president one week in advance.
- (3) The vice president is ultimately responsible for setting the agenda.
- (4) Agendas for Senate meetings will usually allow time for the following items:
 - A) Approval of prior meeting minutes
 - B) Comments from the gallery
 - C) Presentation and discussion of resolutions

- D) Executive board reports
- E) Committee reports
- F) Resident council reports
- G) Recognition for individuals in RHA

Section 4: Reports

- (1) Executive board member reports shall routinely include:
 - A) The current status of official responsibilities
 - B) Updates on pertinent side projects
 - C) Information on meetings and discussions with outside committees, groups, organizations, or University officials
 - D) A period for answering any Senate inquiries
- (2) Committee reports, to be given by each committee chairperson or representative thereof, shall routinely allow for:
 - A) Explanation of committee discussions
 - B) Supplementary presentations relating to committee findings, recommendations, supporting data, rationale, or resolutions before the Senate
 - C) A period for answering any Senate inquiries and entertaining resident concerns
- (3) Resident Council reports shall routinely provide details on:
 - A) Past and upcoming council events
 - B) Current and recent council initiatives

Section 5: Attendance

- (1) Attendance shall be recorded for each Senate meeting by the marketing and technology officer.
- (2) Quorum in the Senate is defined as half of the voting representatives plus one.

Section 6: Required Procedure

- (1) The chairperson shall call the meeting to order, moderate discussion and debate, and ensure that the agenda is followed.
- (2) Any Senate member may sponsor or introduce legislation in the Senate.
- (3) Prior to its inclusion on the Senate agenda and its presentation to the Senate, a resolution must be discussed with a senator-at-large, the vice president, or the president, and approved by the vice president or president:
 - A) Approval shall be based on the resolution having sufficient and appropriate content in addition to proper format

- B) The vice president, without changing the content, will thoroughly edit the resolution to correct formatting, grammar, and spelling mistakes before presentation to Senate

Section 7: Voting

- (1) Resolutions shall pass the Senate by a simple majority of all voting members, unless specified otherwise according to the Residence Hall Association Constitution.
- (2) All members of the Senate are required to vote, either themselves or via proxy, on all resolutions with exception of the following circumstances:
 - A) A member has a conflict of interest and is therefore required to abstain
 - B) A member has been stripped of voting privileges
 - C) A member is absent and without a proxy

PART II: STANDARDS OF ATTENDANCE AND DEBATE PROTOCOL

Section 1: Minimum Standards of Attendance

- (1) In the interest of the effective conduct of RHA business on behalf of all on-campus students, the following minimum standards of attendance shall be incumbent upon members:
 - A) Executive board members shall be:
 - i. Allowed one excused absence from Senate meetings per semester
 - ii. Absences must be reported and approved by the president and vice president prior to the event
 - B) Voting representatives to the Senate shall be:
 - i. Allowed one excused absence from Senate meetings per semester
 - ii. Allowed one excused absence from their assigned standing committee meetings per semester
 - iii. Additional absences must be reported and approved by the vice president prior to the event
- (2) Senate members who exceed the maximum number of absences may temporarily or permanently lose voting privileges in the Senate at the vice president's discretion.
- (3) Senate absentees shall send proxies in their place. The absentee will select the proxy and notify the vice president prior to Senate. Proxies have full speaking and voting rights.
- (4) The vice president must submit the following for approval by two-thirds of the Senate at the first meeting of the fall semester:
 - A) Proposed amendments to Clause 1, regarding minimum standards of attendance
 - B) The criteria for what constitutes an excused, unexcused, or emergency absence
 - C) The criteria for how decisions will be made on temporary or permanent loss of voting privileges for all Senate members

- (5) If at any meeting following the first of the fall semester of any given year, a Senate member should feel the criteria established through Clause 3 are inadequate, that member may motion to amend the criteria:
- A) Any motion to amend the criteria requires a three-fourths majority to pass

Section 2: Standard Debate Protocol

- (1) The vice president shall formulate updates to the Standard Debate Protocol, as listed in Clause 3 and subject to the requirements of Clause 4, on a yearly basis as part of transition activities.
- (2) The Standard Debate Protocol shall have the following authority:
- A) It shall govern debate on all Senate resolutions, amendments, and motions
 - B) It shall govern processes for all points and motions
 - C) It shall govern meeting decorum
- (3) The Standard Debate Protocol reads as follows:
- A) The chairperson of the Senate shall:
 - i. Recognize speakers and owners of agenda topics
 - ii. Recognize motions
 - iii. Adhere to the agenda and ensure its completion
 - iv. Call meetings to order and adjourn meetings
 - B) Prior to debate on resolutions:
 - i. The presenter of the resolution shall have 10 minutes to read and explain the resolution
 - a. Technical, non-debatable questions will be entertained here (for example: questions about statistics or history)
 - b. Friendly amendments will be entertained here (for example: changes to grammar, punctuation, or spelling)
 - c. During this period, the presenter of the resolution shall recognize speakers
 - ii. The body will move into debate immediately following this 10 minute period
 - C) For debate on resolutions:
 - i. Debate shall consist of 20 minutes of free debate, extendable by 10 minutes
 - a. After 20 minutes of free debate, the chairperson asks, "Is the body ready to vote?"
 - 1) If there are no objections, the body moves into voting procedure on the resolution
 - 2) If there are any no's, the body will vote on whether to move into voting procedure
 - 3) The body moves into voting procedure if there is a three-fourths vote in favor, otherwise it extends free debate by 10 minutes

- ii. If debate time has been exhausted and the body is not ready to vote per the parameters in part 3) above, the resolution will be automatically returned to its committee of origin or postponed until the following Senate if it did not originate in a committee
- D) To be called upon to speak:
- i. In an in-person environment:
 - a. A Senate member may raise their hand to be added to the end of the speakers list, a list moderated by the chairperson that lists the order of remaining speakers
 - b. The speakers list will consist of a primary and secondary list, prioritizing new speakers over those who have already spoken:
 - 1) Any Senate member who has not yet spoken on the resolution or amendment at hand will be added to the primary speakers list
 - 2) If a Senate member has already spoken about the current resolution or amendment, they will be added to the secondary speakers list
 - c. A Senate member may raise their placard to be added to the top of the primary speakers list:
 - 1) This should only be used to respond directly to a question posed by a member of senate, correct a misleading statement, or for a matter of personal privilege
 - 2) The chairperson has the right to deny a speaker from being placed at the top of the speaker's list if a Senate member is abusing this right
 - ii. In a virtual environment:
 - a. A Senate member may send the letter "x" in the virtual meeting room chat to be added to the end of the speakers list, a list moderated by the chairperson that lists the order of remaining speakers
 - b. The speakers list will consist of a primary and secondary list, prioritizing new speakers over those who have already spoken:
 - 1) Any Senate member who has not yet spoken on the resolution or amendment at hand will be added to the primary speakers list
 - 2) If a Senate member has already spoken about the current resolution or amendment, they will be added to the secondary speakers list
 - c. A Senate member may send the letters "poi" or send the phrase "point of information" in the virtual meeting room chat to be added to the top of the primary speakers list:
 - 1) This should only be used to respond directly to a question posed by a member of senate, correct a misleading statement, or for a matter of personal privilege

- 2) The chairperson has the right to deny a speaker from being placed at the top of the speaker's list if a Senate member is abusing this right
- E) Yielding powers:
- i. Yield to redundancy:
 - a. A speaker may yield to redundancy if they believe their point has already been properly asserted by a previous speaker. Their time is returned to the chairperson of the Senate meeting and the speaker retains rights to same speakers list as before.
 - ii. Yield to present persons:
 - a. A speaker may yield their time to an individual, member or otherwise, and the new speaker must abide by all applicable debate protocol. This time cannot be yielded any further, and the yielding member loses speaker's list priority.
- F) The following are permissible motions by all Senate members:
- i. A Motion to Amend recommends a change to the legislation being debated
 - ii. A Motion to Vote is a non-debatable motion that seeks to move the body into voting procedure and requires a two-thirds majority to pass
 - a. A Motion to Vote must follow the process determined in Subclause L of Clause 3
- G) Regarding use of the virtual meeting room chat:
- i. Senate members should use the chat feature to get added to the speakers list according to Subclause D of Clause 3
 - ii. Senate members may use the chat feature for a Motion to Amend or Motion to Vote only if the speakers list is empty
 - iii. Senate members should not offer points of debate through the chat feature
 - iv. Senate members may second motions in the chat
 - v. Senate members may send objections to questions posed by the chairperson in the chat when applicable
 - vi. Senate members may send points of personal privilege in the chat
 - vii. Further chat etiquette policy and enforcement procedures is at the discretion of the chairperson
- H) The following are permissible motions by the chairperson:
- i. A Motion to Table temporarily delays discussion on the current article of debate in order to discuss more urgent matters at hand. This motion must be seconded and requires a majority vote
 - ii. A Motion to Postpone delays the discussion on the current article for an appropriate amount of time as determined by the chairperson. This motion must be seconded and requires a majority vote
 - a. This motion should only be used to delay the discussion on articles if they will extend the meeting time beyond what is deemed appropriate by the chairperson
 - b. This motion shall not be used to delay discussion on an article for more than 2 meetings

- c. After the motion is seconded, the chairperson asks, "Is the body ready to vote?"
 - 1) If there are no objections, the body moves into voting procedure on the motion
 - 2) If there are any no's, the body will move into 5 minutes of pros and cons debate regarding the motion to table. This debate is not extendable, and the vote on the motion will occur after the 5 minutes has expired, or after 3 unanswered pros or cons are heard
- I) The chairperson has the ability to rule any speakers or motions out of order for any of the following reasons:
 - i. A speaker interrupts another speaker
 - ii. A motion is used to stifle debate or as a stall tactic
 - iii. A statement or motion is used incorrectly or made during the incorrect agenda item
- J) Non-friendly amendments follow this procedure:
 - i. A member of Senate motions to amend and then explains the language to the marketing & technology officer
 - ii. The amending member then has 5 minutes to explain the intent of the amendment and answer friendly questions
 - a. During this period, the presenter of the amendment shall recognize speakers
 - b. During this period, the presenter of the amendment can rescind their motion to amend. If this occurs, the chairperson of the Senate shall ask "Does anyone wish to sponsor this amendment?"
 - 1) Any member of the Senate may accept and continue the amendment process as the new presenter, with the timer continuing from the previous presenter. No changes may be made to the language of the amendment.
 - 2) If no one accepts, the amendment is successfully rescinded
 - iii. The chairperson then asks, "Is the body ready to vote?"
 - a. If there are no objections, the body moves into voting procedure
 - b. If there are any no's, the body moves to debate
- K) For debate on amendments:
 - i. Debate shall consist of 10 minutes of free debate
 - ii. When time expires, the chairperson shall ask, "Is the body ready to vote?"
 - a. If there are no objections, the body moves into voting procedure
 - b. If there are any no's, the body will vote on whether to move into voting procedure
 - c. The body moves into voting procedure if there is a two-thirds vote in favor, otherwise it extends free debate by 5 minutes
 - iii. The body moves into voting procedure on the amendment automatically at the conclusion of the extended free debate period
- L) A Senate member may motion to vote when debate has reached a natural conclusion:
 - i. The body enters voting procedure if the following happen:

- a. One Senate member motions to vote
 - b. One Senate member seconds the motion
 - c. There are no objections, or if there are objections, a two-thirds vote in favor of the motion carries
- M) For voting procedure:
- i. A simple majority vote will pass any resolution or amendment unless specified otherwise according to the Residence Hall Association Constitution
 - ii. The vice president and marketing & technology officer will collaborate to select and employ an effective voting method
 - iii. Senators may vote in favor, vote not in favor, or abstain from any vote
- N) Regarding Laptops:
- i. The use of laptops is prohibited in Senate, except for Executive Board positions for which their use is necessary
 - ii. Appeals to this rule may be brought to the president, vice president, and advisor and will be handled on a case-by-case basis
 - iii. Laptops may be permitted under special circumstance at the discretion of the chairperson, such as in a virtual Senate
- (4) The following process governs proposed amendments to Clause 3:
- A) Any proposed changes to the Standard Debate Protocol by the vice president must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Senate during the first meeting of the fall semester
 - B) If, at any meeting following the first of the fall semester of any given year, the vice president should feel the protocol in Clause 3 is inadequate, they may propose new criteria which then require a three-fourths majority to pass
- (5) The chairperson may temporarily suspend rules in this section in order to streamline, clarify, or improve Senate procedures:
- A) This suspension may be disallowed at the discretion of the president, vice president, and advisor and standard procedure will resume. If this happens, the chairperson loses the ability to suspend the rules for the remainder of that Senate meeting
 - i. If either the president or vice president actively serves as chairperson and temporarily suspends these rules, the discretion for disallowing suspensions defined in Clause 5 shall not be given to that individual