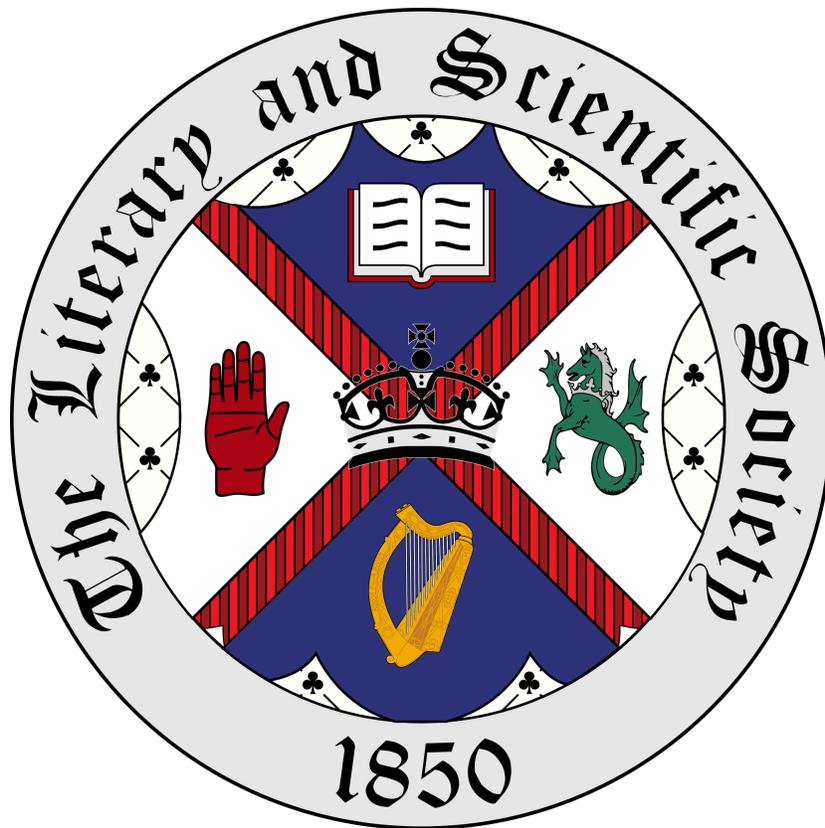


177th Session Laws



THE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY OF BELFAST

THE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
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Foreword - The History of the Literific

The Literary and Scientific Society was founded in 1850 in the first academic term of the then Queen's College Belfast by E. L. Godkin, whose contribution to the Society can be seen immortalised in the black and white hall of Queen's Lanyon Building.

It was the first Society at Queen's College and pre-dates the Students' Union itself by 47 years. By all accounts the Society went from strength to strength for over a century, transforming during that time from a paper-reading society into a more focused debating society, and changing its structure from a paid membership society to one where all students of the University were automatically considered members.

After 1897, when the new Students' Union was built, most debates took place in the McMordie Hall (now part of the School of Music) which was named after Hans McMordie, President of the Literific in 1868-69. The turn of the century saw the Literific hosting inter-varsity debates with societies from all over Great Britain and Ireland. After 117 sessions, with a political climate becoming less conducive to open debate and the Society falling into disarray, the Society adjourned in 1967. Much of the material, including minutes of the Society from 1863 – 1963 (the earlier minutes having been lost before 1900) are held in the University Archives, now in the McClay Library. After the Literific ceased to function, the baton of debating in Queen's was taken up by the Union Debating Society. This Society appeared in several guises throughout the next 40 years, including most recently and successfully as the Debating & Mooting Society. It was the members of the committee of this society that were instrumental in re-founding the Literific in the Autumn of 2011 for its 163rd Session.

Section One - The Society

1) Mission Statement

- a) The primary purpose of the Society is to provide all students of the University with the opportunity to engage in competitive debate, and to encourage students of the University to engage with and enjoy debating.

2) Definitions

- a) "The Society" refers to the Literary and Scientific Society of Queen's University Belfast.
- b) "The University" or "QUB" refers to the Queen's University of Belfast.
- c) "The Union" or "The SU" refers to the QUB Students' Union.
- d) "The Executive" refers to the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Society.
- e) "The Council" refers to the members of the Society elected to the Council positions outlined in Section 2.
- f) "The House" refers to all members of the Society present at a given meeting.

3) The Constitution

- a) This Constitution includes all articles of the Students' Union constitution.
- b) Amendments can be made to this constitution by any member through the following process:
 - i) The amendment must be submitted in writing to the Council.
 - ii) The amendment will be considered by the Council no later than one month after submission, ordinarily at the next Council meeting.
 - iii) For the amendment to be put before the House, it must be seconded by at least one member of Council and a simple majority of Council must vote to accept it.

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- iv) The House must be supplied with the amendment, and informed of the date on which a vote for the amendment will occur. The House must be informed of this at least one week prior to the vote taking place.
 - v) A vote for an amendment can only occur at an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting.
 - vi) Before the vote occurs, time must be allocated for members of the House to ask questions of the proposed amendment and for changes to be made to the amendment. This length of time will be decided by the President or Acting President, but should be sufficient to allow all concerns to be raised.
 - vii) If a member of the House wishes to propose a change to the amendment before the House, they must follow the steps laid out in part 3c.
 - viii) Once the questions are concluded and the amendment finalised, a vote will be carried out. A two thirds supermajority of present members is required to carry an amendment.
- c) If a member of the House wishes to propose a change to the original amendment before the House they must follow the steps below:
- i) Any change to an amendment must be relevant to the amendment in question.
 - ii) The member must formally request this of the President or Acting President.
 - iii) Their request must then be seconded by any other member of the House.
 - iv) A simple majority of the House is sufficient to make a change to the amendment being considered.
- d) All Annual General Meetings of the Society must allocate time for the discussion of amendments to this Constitution.
- e) If the Constitution is found to be in conflict with the Students' Union Constitution, an amendment must be put to the House to rectify this as soon as possible. If the House rejects the amendment, the Council must check with the SU to see if they are content with the Constitution to remain unamended.
- f) If the Students' Union demands that the Society implement the amendment or face disbandment, an emergency amendment must be made at the next Council meeting.

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- i) An emergency amendment does not require the assent of the House.
- ii) If an emergency amendment is made, this must be announced at the next meeting of the Society.

- g) This Constitution must be made available to all members and to the general public, ideally through the Society's official website.

Section Two - Governance

4) Council Positions

- a) The Council consists of the following positions:
- i) President
 - ii) Vice-President
 - iii) Secretary
 - iv) Treasurer
 - v) Internal Convenor
 - vi) External Convenor
 - vii) Schools Convenor
 - viii) Events Officer
 - ix) Social Officer
 - x) Technology Officer
- b) The **President** is responsible for:
- i) Overseeing the general running of the Society and answering to the Council.
 - ii) Ensuring that this Constitution and the Standing Orders are upheld.
 - iii) Chairing all meetings of the House where a Guest Chair has not been invited to perform this task.
- c) The **Vice-President** is responsible for:
- i) Deputising for the President in their absence at all Society events, meetings and engagements.
 - ii) Supporting the wider Council in the delivery of the strategic vision, events, meetings, and other activities.

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- iii) Leading on projects as appropriate at the direction of the President.
- d) The **Secretary** is responsible for:
 - i) Maintenance of Society membership lists.
 - ii) Booking of rooms for meetings, including weekly debates.
 - iii) Taking minutes of all meetings of the Society, including meetings of the House and meetings of the Council.
 - iv) Publishing the minutes so that they can be read by all members.
 - v) Being the Society's primary point of communication through email, social media and other necessary channels.
 - vi) Promoting the Society throughout the year to the student body of the University and to the general public.
 - vii) Providing the Student Officer of Activities with an annual report, produced in conjunction with the rest of the Council, no later than 30th June for the previous academic year's activities.
 - viii) Submitting copies of the minutes of debates and other society events, as well as any other document, leaflet, pamphlet or media that the Council deems necessary to the university archives before the end of each Session.
- e) The **Treasurer** is responsible for:
 - i) Collecting membership fees from members and event fees for events held by the Society.
 - ii) Ensuring the payment of any of the Society's debts from the Society's treasury.
 - iii) Communicating with the Student Officer of Activities on financial matters including the provision of estimates for expenditure.
 - iv) Working with the Council to submit a Recurrent Grant Application alongside the Annual Report.
- f) The **Internal Convenor** is responsible for:
 - i) Organising all debates and debating competitions within the Society.

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- ii) Ensuring, where possible, that motions relating to a particular group have at least one speaker from that group.
 - iii) Organising Internal Meetings to select motions for coming semesters.
 - iv) Having the final say on the motions which will be debated during each semester and for placing these motions on a term card to be distributed.
 - v) Liaising with other societies of the University for the purposes of organising joint debates.
 - vi) Ensuring that the annual Dufferin internal competition is held at least once per session.
 - vii) Ensuring that the annual Godkin Maiden Speaker's internal competition is held at least once per session.
 - viii) Leading on the training of members for internal engagements such as weekly debates through running at least three debating workshops each session.
 - ix) Recruiting experienced debaters or other relevant individuals to help in running these debating workshops and training sessions as required.
- g) The **External Convenor** is responsible for:
- i) Organising teams for debates not held solely within the Society, including:
 - (1) Inter-Varsity competitions held by other debating societies
 - (2) National debating competitions (UK/RoI/IONA)
 - (3) International debating competitions
 - ii) Organising any debates, competitive or non-competitive, to be held with other debating societies.
 - iii) Ensuring that the Society is represented at external competitions where feasible and providing ample notice and opportunity for interested members to attend these competitions wherever possible.
 - iv) Lead on the training of members for external engagements such as Inter Varsity Debating Competitions and others through running at least three debating workshops each session.

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- v) Recruiting experienced debaters or other relevant individuals to help in running these debating workshops and training sessions as required.

- h) The **Schools Convenor** is responsible for:
 - i) Running the Society's annual Schools' Debating Competition.
 - ii) Organising at least six school debating workshops in each Session.
 - iii) Engaging with external organisations and the public in general to build the Society's list of contacts.

- i) The **Events Officer** is responsible for:
 - i) Liaising with potential guests to the Society and organising at least two LitTalks and one Great Debate per semester.
 - ii) Reporting to the Council on the invitation and confirmation of guests.
 - iii) Ensuring there is a host for each LitTalk.
 - iv) Working with the members of the Council and other stakeholders, including the University, on event logistics, such as room bookings and funding for LitTalks and Great Debates.

- j) The **Social Officer** is responsible for:
 - i) Organising social events for the Society, including events which are part of Society-held competitions. At least two events should be organised per year.
 - ii) Organising any Society events which involve raising funds for charitable causes.
 - iii) Liaising with pubs, nightclubs, function rooms and other establishments where the Society needs to make use of those services.

- k) The **Technology Officer** is responsible for:
 - i) The safekeeping of electronic devices owned by the Society.
 - ii) Creating an audio or video recording of each ordinary meeting of the Society, LitTalks and Great Debates.

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- iii) Releasing recordings to the membership and to the public within a timely manner (less than a week when feasible).
- iv) Maintaining and updating any websites and non-social media accounts under the Society's control, including:
 - (1) The Society's website (www.literific.org)
 - (2) The Society's YouTube Channel (QUB Literary and Scientific Society)
 - (3) The Society's Spotify (The Queen's University of Belfast Literary and Scientific Society Recordings)
- v) Ensuring that all fees are paid for these web domains in a timely manner to ensure that they remain available.
- vi) Where feasible, livestreaming each ordinary meeting.

5) The Duties of the Council

- a) The Council is the highest decision-making body of the Society when they sit in Council meetings. They are elected by the membership to direct ongoing activities and foster the aims of the Society.
- b) The Council must hold at least 12 Council meetings per year.
 - i) All Council members should attend these meetings wherever feasibly possible.
 - ii) Ordinary members may attend these meetings at the discretion of the President.
 - iii) These meetings will have a quorum of four Council members.
- c) All invitations to the Society and all awards given by the Society are made at the discretion of the Council.
- d) At the Annual General Meeting of the Society, each Council member must give a detailed report of the work they have done throughout the year. This should occur at the beginning of the meeting.
- e) Each Council member must read the parts of the Constitution relating to their position.

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- f) Each Council member, at the end of their term, must ensure that all candidates for their position are briefed on the duties and expectations of that position.
- g) If a member of Council is absent from three consecutive Council meetings, it will be assumed that they have resigned. In this case, a vote must be held by the Council to accept or deny this resignation.
 - i) This vote should be made the first order of business at the next Council meeting.
 - ii) This vote must be conducted through a secret ballot.
 - iii) A two thirds supermajority is sufficient to accept this resignation.
- h) If a Council member has not upheld the duties for their position laid out in Article 4, any Council member may propose a vote of no confidence.
 - i) This vote should be made the first order of business at the next Council meeting.
 - ii) This vote must be conducted through a secret ballot.
 - iii) A two thirds supermajority is sufficient to remove the Council member from their positions.
- i) If a Council member is removed from Council either by automatic resignation or a vote of no confidence, then the relevant parts of the constitution (see 5g and 5h) must be re-ratified at the next Annual General Meeting.
- j) If a Council position becomes vacant by any means, the Council must hold an election for that position following the rules laid out in Article 6.

6) Council Elections

- a) The members of the Council, excluding the Technology Officer, will be elected at the Annual General Meeting.
- b) The date of this Annual General Meeting must be announced at least three weeks before the meeting occurs, and no new members can be accepted from this point.
- c) A member shall only be eligible to vote in this Annual General Meeting if:
 - i) They have paid their membership fee for the year.

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- ii) They are a student of the University.
- d) Any member can run for a Council position, provided they meet the following criteria:
 - i) They must have paid their membership fee for the year.
 - ii) They must notify the current Secretary of their intention to run at least one week before the Annual General Meeting.
 - iii) They have been seconded by an ordinary member of the Society.
 - iv) Additionally, members wishing to run for a position on the Executive must be students of the University and not have served in the same position for more than two years.
- e) A candidate can run for up to two positions in the same election. If they win the first position they are disqualified from the second. The first position must be higher in the election order than the second (i.e. the election for the first position will always happen first).
- f) Elections for each Council position will take place in the same order as those positions are listed in Article 4a.
- g) RON (Re-Open Nominations) will be included as an option for all ballots. If RON attains more than 50% of the votes for a position, the position will be considered vacant and a by-election must be scheduled as soon as possible.
- h) There will be one Returning Officer for an Annual General Meeting.
 - i) This will usually be the most senior Council member present not seeking election to the Council.
 - ii) The Returning Officer will not be allowed to vote during the meeting.
 - iii) The Returning Officer must be ratified by a two thirds supermajority of the House at the AGM.
- i) The Returning Officer has the following responsibilities:
 - i) The Returning Officer is responsible for counting the votes.
 - ii) Once the votes are counted, the Returning Officer is responsible for sealing the ballots in an envelope which must be retained following the AGM.

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- iii) This must be marked with the position under election and the result.
- j) The outgoing Council and the candidates will have the right to watch the Returning Officer count the votes and must agree on the result before it is announced.
- k) Elections will be held for each position by secret ballot, using the following process:
 - i) All candidates for the position will be subject to a round of questions lasting no more than 10 minutes, with an equal number of questions being directed towards each candidate. Any member present may offer a question.
 - ii) All eligible members may fill out a ballot with a single candidate's name, and place this into a ballot box. The ballot must be a standard size and format.
 - iii) The ballots are counted in secret by the Returning Officer, observed by the outgoing Council and the candidates.
 - iv) The candidate with the most votes will be announced as the winner by the Returning Officer. The exact vote count will not be announced publicly, but must be made available to the candidates on request.
- l) Ties in elections are resolved through the following process:
 - i) An additional round of questions is held, followed by another vote.
 - ii) If there is still a tie, then at the agreement of all candidates remaining, a coin may be tossed to decide the winner. If there are more than two candidates remaining, then any similarly random method may be employed.
 - iii) The Returning Officer will oversee the agreed random selection method and the outcome will be final.
 - iv) If any candidate does not agree to random selection, then steps i) and ii) will be repeated until the tie breaks or all candidates agree to random selection.
- m) A by-election will follow the same procedures as a normal election, but will take place at an Extraordinary General Meeting instead of at the Annual General Meeting.
- n) If an existing Council member wishes to run for a position during a by-election, they must first resign their current position on Council and both positions will be elected.

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- o) The position of Technology Officer is appointed by a two-thirds supermajority of the Council and must be ratified by a simple majority of the House at the next Ordinary Meeting.

7) Events Subcommittee

- a) The Subcommittee consists of the following:
 - i) The President
 - ii) The Events Officer
 - iii) Up to three members of the Society
- b) The Subcommittee is responsible for:
 - i) Supporting the Events Officer in the delivery of LitTalks and Great Debates.
 - ii) Canvassing members' views on speakers and motions, both informally and through a suggestion spreadsheet posted in June of each year.
 - iii) Feeding into the creative direction of events and advising the Events Officer on logistical considerations.
- c) The Subcommittee should:
 - i) Hold their first meeting no later than the end of July each year.
 - ii) Produce a detailed events plan, including funding and sponsorship options, no later than the start of each academic year.
 - iii) Report their decisions to the Council for approval.

8) Training Subcommittee

- a) The Subcommittee consists of the following:
 - i) The Internal Convenor
 - ii) The External Convenor

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- iii) Up to three members of the Society
- b) The Subcommittee is responsible for:
 - i) Supporting the Internal Convenor in securing speakers for weekly debates.
 - ii) Helping the External Convenor to organise teams for external competitions.
 - iii) Training members in debating and public speaking to improve their abilities in weekly debates, Inter-Varsity competitions, and the annual Godkin and Dufferin internal competitions.

9) Campbell Subcommittee

- a) The Chair of the Subcommittee will usually be the highest-ranking female member of Council.
- b) Membership of the Subcommittee shall be open to all women who are paid-up members of the Society.
 - i) Certain meetings may be opened to associate members by invitation, including male members of Council or anyone with relevant expertise, vested interest or influence.
- c) The Subcommittee shall:
 - i) Serve as a women-only support network and advisory group.
 - ii) Assist the Council in maintaining inclusive practices and advise on matters related to the welfare of women in the Society.
 - iii) Work with the relevant council members to organise events centred on women's interests and representation, including but not limited to:
 - (1) Debates
 - (2) Outreach initiatives to girls' schools
 - (3) Socials and training workshops
 - (4) LitTalks with prominent female public figures

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iv) Advise on speaker selection, motion choices, and policy proposals relevant to the welfare of women in the Society.

d) The Subcommittee should:

i) Meet at least twice per Session.

ii) Submit their recommendations to the Council for approval.

iii) Deliver a report on their activities at the Annual General Meeting.

10) Appointment and Dismissal

a) Ordinary Members of a Subcommittee are confirmed by a two thirds supermajority of the Council and ratified by a simple majority of the House at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Society.

b) If an Ordinary Member of a Subcommittee has not upheld their duties or is acting against the direction of the Council, any Council member may propose a vote of no confidence.

c) These votes should be made the first order of business at the next meeting and must be conducted through a secret ballot. A two-thirds supermajority of the Council and a simple majority of the House is required to remove them from their positions.

11) The Trust

a) The Literific Trust is a group who advise on the running of the Society.

b) In the extraordinary circumstance that five positions of the Council are unfilled, the Trust shall have the power to call an Emergency General Meeting of the Society.

c) The Council has the power to appoint trustees to the Trust. When a nomination is received by the Council, a two-thirds supermajority is sufficient to appoint a trustee. This appointment must be ratified by a simple majority of the House at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Society.

d) The President must meet with the Trust at least once a year. During this meeting, their advice will be recorded and shared with all Council members for consideration.

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- e) Trustees can only be removed with a two-thirds majority in Council and ratification by a simple majority of the House at the next Ordinary Meeting of the Society.

Section Three - Meetings of the Society

12) Ordinary Meetings

- a) Ordinary meetings will be held regularly at a time and place specified by the Council. Usually, these meetings should occur on a Thursday evening during term time.
- b) Each ordinary meeting will have a Chair. This will usually be the President or Acting President (unless a Guest Chair has been invited) as outlined in Article 4b and 4c.
- c) Ordinary meetings must be announced to the membership and to the public at least two days before the meeting takes place.
- d) An Ordinary meeting will only proceed if there are at least 10 members present.
- e) Ordinary meetings will follow the rules and procedures laid out in the Standing Orders Annex.

13) Special Meetings

- a) Special meetings may be called by the Council whenever it is appropriate to hold a meeting outside of the usual time. For example:
 - i) To hold an Inter-Varsity debate with another institution.
 - ii) To debate at a special event, such as Q-Con or the Conversations Festival.
- b) Special meetings will follow the same rules and procedures as an ordinary meeting wherever possible and appropriate.

14) Private Meetings

- a) Private meetings may be called by the Council for any meeting where non-members should not attend. This includes:
 - i) Annual General Meetings.
 - ii) Extraordinary General Meetings.

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- iii) Internal Meetings for deciding the next semester's term card.

- b) Private meetings should only be called for meetings of great importance to the Society where it would be inappropriate for non-members to attend. The Annual General Meeting will be held in the second term of each year.

Section Four - Membership

15) Ordinary Membership

- a) Ordinary membership is available to any student of the University.
- b) The fee for ordinary membership will be set by the Council at the beginning of each academic year.
- c) Ordinary membership will last until the beginning of the next Session of the Society.
- d) All Ordinary members will have the right to vote in Council elections and on Constitutional Amendments, as outlined in Articles 3 and 6.

16) Associate Membership

- a) Associate membership is available to anybody who is not a student of the University.
- b) The fee for Associate membership will be set by the Council at the beginning of each academic year.
- c) Associate membership will last until the beginning of the next Session of the Society.

17) Honorary Life Membership

- a) An Honorary Life Membership is a ceremonial title, and grants none of the benefits of membership outlined in Article 15. An Honorary Life Member must purchase an Ordinary or Associate membership to obtain these benefits.
- b) The Society's Council may grant Honorary Life Membership to any member who has made a significant contribution to the Society. This grant must be ratified by a simple majority of the House.

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18) Membership Benefits

- a) All members will have unrestricted access to Ordinary, Special and Private meetings of the Society.
- b) All members will have the right to vote on motions of the House.
- c) All members will have the first opportunity to purchase tickets for events held by the Society.

19) Resignation

- a) Any member may resign from the Society by giving written notice to the Secretary. In this case, the member will be removed from the Society's membership lists.

20) Member Relations

- a) As a Society of the University, the Literific is bound by [QUB Inclusion Policy](#) and will endeavour to ensure its procedures are in line with this policy.
- b) Members can make a complaint to any trusted Council member in relation to bullying, harassment and other member relation issues.
 - i) The Council member shall record the details of the complaint and provide the member who complained with a copy.
 - ii) The member complained about shall be advised that a complaint has been received about them.
 - iii) If appropriate, the Council member should inform the rest of the Council that a complaint has been made.
- c) When the alleged misconduct is minor, and with the consent of the complainant and the member accused of misconduct, the matter may be resolved informally. A member of the Council should:
 - i) Seek to resolve the matter within five days of the complaint being made.

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- ii) Speak with the complainant and the member who has been complained about, as well as any relevant witnesses.
 - iii) Write to the complainant and the member accused of misconduct informing them of the outcome.
- d) When the alleged misconduct is more serious or cannot be resolved informally, the Council shall contact the SU Clubs and Societies staff team for guidance.
- i) If appropriate, the Students' Union will provide the Council with the relevant regulations and procedures which must then be followed.
 - ii) These procedures may result in members receiving a verbal warning, a written warning, a suspension, dismissal from the Society, or another appropriate action.