GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

WHAT THEY ARE, WHY THEY'RE IMPORTANT AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE.
What is a General Assembly (GA)?

A GA is a general meeting between members of an association planned and promoted by the executive team in order to make any bylaw changes, review the budget and discuss issues important to the association's membership.

Student unions have a legal responsibility to hold at least one general assembly per academic year. Additional GA's can be called any time, either by the association's executive team or through a petition by the members of an association.

In order for the GA to be legitimate, it needs to reach a 'quorum' of members. Quorum is a minimum number of members who must be present in order to make decisions on behalf of an entire association.

For example, ASFA GAs must have at least 30 members present– every MA is different.

Why are GAs important?

GAs create a community space which allows students to learn about their association's activities and practice direct democracy by voting on collective positions on issues, endorse actions, make demands or go on strike.
Before a GA can start, Executives and Volunteers need to sign in members, taking their full name and student ID to that a sufficient quorum of members are present. Consider tracking this in Google Sheets.

Any student enrolled in a major or minor in your department is a member of the association. This doesn't include exchange students—they're registered at their home university.

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- Only one item is dealt with at a time.
- Debate is limited to the merits of the item being discussed.
- Ensure many voices are heard, not just the loudest voices.
- Mediate between opposing points of view.

**HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE**

- Decisions are made through motions, debates and amendments to those motions.
- Example:

**MOTION**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT everyone on this videoconference will show us their dog.

**AMMENDMENT**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT everyone on this videoconference will show us their pet or plant if they don’t have one.

**DEBATE**

- Members raise their hand to be added to a speakers list kept by chair
- Every new motion requires a new speakers list
- Mover speaks first to “motivate”
- 1st-time speakers are to be prioritized
- Speakers should start by identifying if they’re for or against the motion
- All comments are directed at the chair, not one another
- Speakers can share comments for or against a motion, ask points of clarification, questions or propose amendments;
At the GA

Roberts Rules of Order

TYPES OF MOTIONS

- **Point of Order**– Used to request that the chair enforce the rules of order to get the meeting back on track;
- **Request for Information**– Used to request specific information, like asking for "receipts";
- **Point of Inquiry**– Used to clarify the rules;
- **Appeal the chair’s ruling**– Used when a member disagrees with a ruling by the chair or the facilitation style;
- **Point of Privilege**– Used to speak on something off topic—often used to call attention to a problem about the meeting, such as accessibility.
- **Nomination**– Used to appoint a Member at Large to serve in an Executive role;
- **Recess**– Used to call for a break in the meeting, generally before or after an agenda item that will take a long time
- **Adjourn**– Used to call the meeting to an end.

TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK:

- Don’t repeat points others have already made, even if you’re already on the speakers list. You can indicate visual support for a speaker by putting an ++ in the chat, snapping or waving your hands;
- Ask questions using Point of Inquiry if you don’t understand what’s going on;
- Stay on topic, share relevant information;
- Decide what you want to say before getting on the speakers list;
- Write out your motions in advance when possible;
- PARTICIPATE
- Be respectful & mindful of the space you take up. Who’s voice hasn’t been heard?