

**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) There shall be at least two meetings of the Senate per academic month with the exception of the first and last months of each semester, in which only one meeting shall be required.
- (2) Meetings shall be scheduled by the executive board, and prior notice shall be given to all RHA members.
- (3) All meetings of the Senate shall be open meetings.
- (4) Per the stipulations set in Resolution SCOMM001 (2011), all non-reusable bottles are prohibited during all Senate meetings.

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 executive board has the following responsibilities with respect to agendas:
 - A) Determination of agenda items shall occur on an on-going basis
 - B) 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
 - C) Senate members shall be given effective notice of agenda items
- (2) Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the vice president to set the Senate agenda.

- (3) Requests for agenda items shall be submitted to the vice president.
 - A) Requests received less than one week prior to the Senate meeting may not receive adequate consideration due to time constraints.
- (4) Agendas for Senate meetings will routinely allow time for the following items:
 - A) Approval of prior meeting minutes
 - B) Comments from the gallery
 - C) Committee reports
 - D) Discussion and debate
 - E) Executive board reports
 - F) Recognition for outstanding achievements of individuals in the Senate
 - G) Resident Council reports

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, shall routinely allow for:
 - A) Elaboration on committee workings
 - B) Reports on all topics submitted to the committee, even if not approved or recommended by the committee
 - C) Inquiries concerning committee deliberations and progress
 - D) Supplementary presentations relating to committee findings, recommendations, supporting data, rationale, or resolutions before the Senate
- (3) Resident Council reports shall routinely provide details on:
 - A) Past and upcoming council events
 - B) Current and recent council initiatives
 - C) Membership changes

Section 5: Attendance

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

Section 6: Required Procedure

- (1) As chairperson, the vice president shall call the meeting to order, moderate discussion and debate, and ensure that the agenda is completed.

- (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 approved by a member of the executive board.
 - A) Approval shall be based simply on the resolution having proper format and sufficient content
- (4) The executive board may enact a veto over any resolution passed by the Senate, which shall adhere to the following process:
 - A) A veto shall be enacted by a three-fourths majority vote of executive board members in favor of the veto within one week of the resolution's passing
 - i. In the case of an executive board veto, the board must inform the general body as soon as possible, but with a maximum time period of 7 days after that Senate
 - B) A veto may only be overturned by a three-fourths majority vote of non-executive Senate members during the following Senate
- (5) The relationship between the Senate and its committees is as follows:
 - A) Topics originating in the Senate shall be assigned to the appropriate committee(s) for analysis and action
 - B) No resolution originating in a standing committee, having been altered by the Senate, shall pass without support from the authoring committee
 - i. If in the opinion of three-fourths of the members of the authoring committee the spirit of the resolution has been altered, that resolution may be pulled
 - ii. The executive board may enact a veto to overrule the authoring committee from pulling any resolution

Section 7: Voting

- (1) Resolutions shall pass the Senate by a simple majority of all voting members, unless specified otherwise.
- (2) All members of the Senate are required to vote, either in person or via proxy, on all resolutions excepting in 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

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 absence from executive board meetings per semester
 - ii. Allowed one excused absence from Senate meetings per semester
 - iii. Expected to attend and take part in the fall and spring Resident Life Leadership Training Days
 - iv. Additional absences must be reported and approved by the president and vice president prior to the event
 - B) Committee chairpersons and vice chairpersons shall be:
 - i. Allowed one absence from committee meetings per semester
 - ii. Additional absences must be reported and approved by the vice president prior to the event
 - C) Voting representatives to the Senate shall be:
 - i. Expected to observe a maximum number of absences from Resident Council meetings to be determined by the officers of the Resident Council
 - ii. Allowed one excused absence from Senate meetings per semester
 - iii. Allowed one excused absence from their respective standing committee meetings per semester
 - iv. 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.
- A) In these cases, the vice president may contact the respective RHA RD advisers to understand the context of the absences to determine potential voting restrictions
- (3) The executive board 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
 - i. If no criteria pass the Senate, the vice president, in consult with the rest of the executive board, may operate under their own criteria so long as that criteria is consistent
 - C) The criteria for how decisions will be made on temporary or permanent loss of voting privileges for all Senate members
 - i. If no criteria pass the Senate, the vice president, in consult with the rest of the executive board, may operate under their own criteria so long as that criteria is consistent
- (4) 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 executive board 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 points and 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 author 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)
 - ii. The chairperson shall ask, "Is the body ready for the question?"
 - a. If there are any no's, the body moves to debate
 - b. If there are no objections, the body moves into voting procedure
 - C) For debate on resolutions:
 - i. Debate shall consist of 20 minutes of free debate and 10 minutes of alternating pros and cons
 - a. If needed, debate may be extended once
 - b. Pros and cons may not be extended
 - ii. The chairperson may ask, "Is there a motion to call the question?"
 - a. The body is ready for the question if all of the following happen:
 - 1) One senate member says yes
 - 2) One senate member seconds the motion
 - 3) Two-thirds of the Senate vote in favor of the motion
 - b. The body is not ready for the question if:
 - 1) There is no motion
 - 2) The motion does not receive a two-thirds vote in favor
 - iii. When time expires, the body may move into voting procedure or the chairperson may ask, "Is there a motion to extend time?" or "Is there a motion to exhaust the speaker's list?"
 - a. Time shall be extended if all of the following happen:
 - 1) One senate member says yes
 - 2) One senate member seconds the motion
 - 3) Two-thirds of the Senate vote in favor of the motion
 - b. Time shall not be extended if:

- 1) There is no motion
 - 2) The motion does not receive a two-thirds vote in favor
- D) Prior to debate on non-friendly amendments:
- i. Amendments shall be written in full language, initialed by the author, and passed to the chairperson
 - ii. The amendment is then read aloud by the chairperson
 - iii. The chairperson then asks, "Is the body ready for the question?"
 - 1) If yes, the body will enter voting procedure on the amendment
 - 2) If no, the body will debate the amendment
- E) For debate on amendments
- i. Debate shall consist of 10 minutes of alternating pros and cons
 - ii. When time expires, the chairperson shall ask, "Is the body ready for the question?"
 - 1) If yes, the body will enter voting procedure on the amendment
 - 2) If no, debate will continue for an additional 5 minutes
- F) For voting procedure:
- i. A simple majority vote will pass any resolution or amendment thereto, those amending the RHA Constitution, Bylaws, or Standard Operating Procedure
 - ii. The administrative officer will read the name of a voting member/proxy and the member shall then orally cast their vote as yes or no, or shall abstain when appropriate
- G) The following are permissible points:
- i. A Point of Order informs the chairperson that procedure has been carried out incorrectly
 - ii. A Point of Personal Privilege may respectfully interrupt a speaker, and is raised by a member who is in need of some assistance
 - iii. A Point of Information raises a pertinent question that is then directed to any member of the body who is able to answer
 - iv. A Point of Clarification corrects information previously stated incorrectly by a previous speaker
 - v. A Point of Parliamentary Inquiry asks the chairperson for information on a matter of parliamentary procedure
- H) The following are permissible motions:
- i. A Motion to Amend asks for a change to be made to the legislation being debated
 - ii. A Motion to Call the Previous Question is a non-debatable motion that seeks to move the body into voting procedure and requires a two-thirds majority to pass
 - iii. A Motion to Table is a non-debatable motion requiring a two-thirds majority to pass raised at such a time where debate cannot possibly continue on legislation
 - iv. A Motion to Commit/Recommit is a non-debatable motion requiring a two-thirds majority to pass that seeks to send a piece of legislation to, or back to, a committee when it is determined the legislation has not been given enough thought in committee

- v. A Motion to Approve by Unanimous Consent is a non-debatable motion made before entering voting procedure, where if there are no objections, the legislation passes without going through voting procedure
 - vi. A Motion to Extend Time is a non-debatable motion made to provide 6 additional minutes of time during a debate period
 - vii. A Motion to Exhaust the Speaker's List: a non-debatable motion made to extend time only to the extent of completing the now-closed list of speakers
- I) The chairperson has the ability to rule any points or motions out of order for any of the following reasons:
- i. A point or motion, excepting points of personal privilege, interrupts a speaker
 - ii. A point or motion is used for debate purposes or as a stall tactic
 - iii. Entertaining a point or motion would inappropriately interrupt the fluidity of debate or destroy the debate at hand
 - iv. A point or motion is used incorrectly or made during the incorrect agenda item
 - v. Others are wishing to speak, and a motion is made that would prevent them from doing so
- J) The chairperson has the ability to temporarily suspend parliamentary procedure only in cases where it increases the efficiency and effectiveness of debate and the voting on a resolution
- K) Regarding laptops:
- i. The use of laptops during Senate meetings is strictly prohibited, except for the positions of administrative officer and CIO
 - ii. Any appeals to this rule must be brought to the vice president, and the decision will be made on a case-by-case basis
- (4) The following process governs proposed amendments to Clause 3:
- A) Any proposed changes to the Standard Debate Protocol by the executive board 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
 - C) Procedure for debate on any proposed changes shall occur under the proposed format