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Electronic Meeting Bylaws and Rules

Bylaw: Electronic meetings of Academic Governance bodies shall be conducted through use of MSU supported services (Zoom or Teams). These electronic meetings shall be subject to all bylaws and parliamentary procedures adopted for the bodies when meeting in person, but are amended and superseded by the following:

1) **Rules for Electronic meeting**: The chair of the body or secretary for academic governance must supply a copy of, and link to, these following rules.
2) **Login information**: The chair or secretary shall send by e-mail to every member of the body, at least 1 day prior each meeting, the time of the meeting, the URL, and passcodes necessary to connect to the electronic meeting, and, as an alternative and backup to the audio connection included within the services, the phone number and access code(s) the member needs to participate aurally by telephone.   The information should also be provided within the Teams or D2L space for each body.
3) **Login time**: The chair or secretary should schedule the meeting service availability to begin at least 15 minutes before the start of each meeting.
4) **Signing in and out**: Members must sign into the meeting service using their MSU credentials and must maintain video and audio access throughout the meeting whenever present and must sign out upon any departure before adjournment. Participants may mute their audio input but are encouraged to maintain video presence.
5) **Quorum calls**: The presence of a quorum shall be established by audible and/or visual roll call at the beginning of the meeting. Thereafter, the continued presence of a quorum shall be determined by the online list of participating members, unless any member demands a quorum count by audible roll call. Such a demand may be made following any vote for which the announced totals add to less than a quorum.
6) **Technical requirements and malfunctions:** Each member is responsible for their audio and Internet connections; no action will be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting.
7) **Forced disconnections:** The chair may cause or direct the disconnection or muting of a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting. The chair's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any member, will be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

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8) **Assignment of the floor**: To seek recognition by the chair, a member must use the "Raised Hand" feature. The floor will be assigned to members in the order that they used the "Raised Hand" feature.

9) **Interrupting a Participant**: A participant who intends to make a motion or request that under the rules interrupts a speaker, must use the "Chat" feature (prefaced with the term "Interruption:") and should thereafter wait a reasonable time for the chair's instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice.

10) **Motions submitted in writing**: A participant intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions, must, before or after being recognized, post the motion in writing to the "Chat" prefaced with the term "Motion:"

11) **Display of motions**: If seconded, the secretary should attach a number to the motion. The secretary will then post the Motion for vote in the Chat space and preface it with "Motion, number:" If an electronic form is being used for voting, this designation will correspond to the ballot on the form.

12) **Voting**: Voting should as well as possible follow parliamentary procedure and can be done online in the following manners:
   a. Conducted by unanimous consent.
   b. Conducted by voice vote.
   c. Conducted by show of "Raised Hand."
   d. Conducted by roll call.
   e. For larger groups and public groups, the Zoom poll function can be used or an application supplied by the Office of Academic Governance. However, if any member calls for division, and it is not a ballot vote, a show of hands or roll call must be completed.
   f. For ballot votes, the Zoom poll function can be used or an application supplied by the Office of Academic Governance office.

13) **Video display and audio connection**: For the purposes of quorum, members should always try to maintain a video connection. Audio should be muted when not speaking.

14) **Hybrid Meetings**: The above rules apply to hybrid meetings.

*Note on motions and voting. Keep in mind that the function of parliamentary procedure is used in formal meetings and decision-making processes for several important reasons:
   1. It helps us achieve our purpose by focusing business on the stated objectives.
   2. It provides equal treatment for all members, giving each the right to speak and participate.

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3. It expedites business and saves time by preventing dilatory issues and keeping meetings moving efficiently.
4. It maintains order through established rules that guide the presiding officer and members.
5. It protects the rights of the majority to make decisions, typically through majority or two-thirds votes.
6. It protects the rights of the minority to be heard by allowing for equal debate time on issues.
7. It protects the rights of individual members to make motions, debate, and vote.
8. It protects the rights of absent members through proper record-keeping and notice requirements.
9. It helps members understand universal rules that are useful across different organizations.
10. It makes meetings more productive and appealing for members to attend by maintaining order and accomplishing business efficiently.
11. Additionally, parliamentary procedure supports and balances the sometimes conflicting rights of the organization, members present, members absent, and both the majority and minority. It provides a structured framework for decision-making that is based on common sense and logic, designed to protect the rights of board members in the majority to make decisions, while also ensuring the rights of the minority to be heard.

By following parliamentary procedures, we can conduct business more effectively, reduce the chances of procedural challenges, and ensure that actions taken are ethically sound. Overall, it promotes fairness, efficiency, and democratic principles in group decision-making processes.

Parliamentary procedure can be particularly important for online and hybrid meetings both where normal face to face interactions are rendered more difficult and where the presiding officers do not have complete control over the technologies nor control over how individuals connect to the meeting.

Similarly, to ensure the focus remains both on the business of the body and the motion on the floor, it is important for the body to be deliberate about each motion, and sub-motion.   While in normal order it is important for the chair (or secretary) to repeat the motion being discussed and when put to vote (this should be done), the online environment can be distracting and fragmented, thus using the chat feature to write motions, not only provides and improved means of focus, but improved means of record keeping.

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It should also be remembered that in parliamentary procedures, voting is rarely an exact count and is a public and performative act. Using a ballot (and thus an anonymous vote) is rare and agreed upon in advance. When in person, most often, it is a matter of calling for a voice vote, but this is not practical in online environments. Thus often for smaller bodies, a show of hands can work well. However, remember that for more inconsequential motions, consent can be your friend. Likewise, the roll call can be useful for close votes and more difficult issues.

Often people do like to use Zoom polling for online voting, but this should be done with careful consideration. Polling does take away from the public nature of parliamentary voting. If possible, consent, show of hands, or roll call is preferable, but for larger bodies (whose members cannot all fit on one Zoom screen) these methods can be difficult and/or time consuming.

If you do use Zoom polling, you can mitigate the problems by doing the following:
1) Be sure to have in writing the motion being put to vote.
2) Be sure to ask all members to vote and have on the poll the ability to select "yes," "no," or "abstain." Be sure to remind non-members not to vote. By doing so, you can see if the number of votes closely matches the number of members (does not need to be exact), and that there was a significant result in terms of a positive or negative vote. Again, voting does not need to be exact or attached to names but must demonstrate the body's will.
3) If there are problems with the polling or the vote is close, one should go to a show of hands or roll call.
4) Be sure to remind all members that any member can call for division at any time when unsure about voting results. A show of hands or a roll call vote would then be needed.
5) Be sure that if you are using a poll for a ballot vote that you move all non-members to a Zoom waiting room. In these cases, Zoom does allow anonymous results setting as well.

In the end, voting is not about speed but about deliberate procedures and hearing the will of the body.