

Policy and Procedures for YUFA's Executive: Email Motions

Recommendation: That the YUFA Executive Committee considers adopting the proposed policy and procedures for Executive email motions.

Principle: As far as reasonably possible, the policy and procedures for email voting should parallel those in place for voting in face-to-face Executive meetings.

Proposed policy and procedures for discussion:

Email motions are only suitable for straightforward motions. Email is not well-suited for the conduct of a deliberative process. Email does not provide the opportunity for discussion or amendment of motions that one would have in a face-to-face meeting.

Circulating an email motion:

1. All motions must receive prior approval from the President that they are in order before they can be sent out over email.
2. The mover and seconder must be named in the motion and it must be indicated that both mover and seconder actually vote in favour of the motion.
3. The Subject line of all email motions shall begin with: "Motion: Action Required".
4. The first line of the body of the email shall include the words "I move that ...".

Responding to an email motion:

5. Members shall retain the thread of the original email motion in their response.
6. Members shall cc other members on their votes.
7. Members shall include the sentence, "I vote No." or "I vote Yes." in the first line of their response.
8. The Recording Secretary or designate (usually a staff person) shall be responsible for attempting to solicit the vote of members who do not use or have access to email (provided such members have previously alerted the Recording Secretary that this process is to be followed) and for informing the rest of Executive about those votes.

Information about email motions and results:

9. Email motions can only be voted up or down (simple 'Yes' or 'No' response); they cannot be amended.
10. Once a vote is cast, it cannot be changed.
11. A minimum of 6 voting members must vote to attain quorum; mover and seconder count as 2 voting members.
12. Motions expire in three (3) business days from the time of posting (e.g., if posted at 1pm on Monday, then expires 1pm on Thursday) or at the start of the next Executive meeting, whichever comes first.
13. Motions also expire if quorum is not met by the deadline.
14. Motions may be withdrawn at any time prior to the expiration time, provided that both the mover and the seconder agree.



15. When quorum is attained, the result of the vote (support motion or not) is determined by a majority vote of those members who vote by the deadline.
16. In the event of a tie, the President breaks the tie with an additional vote. If the President is not available, the next Ranking Officer (ranking as detailed in Article 6.4b of the Constitution) breaks the tie. The tie-breaking vote shall be cast as soon as possible after a tie is determined.
17. The Recording Secretary or designate (usually a staff person) is responsible for tallying the votes and informing the Executive of the outcome.
18. Motions are actionable effective immediately following tallying of the votes, e.g., if the final outcome is in support of a motion to send a letter to an organization, then the letter can be sent immediately that day even if all Executive members are not yet aware of the outcome of the vote (e.g., results' information email not yet sent by Recording Secretary or designate (usually a staff person)).
19. The Executive shall affirm email motions at the subsequent Executive meeting and the Recording Secretary shall include that affirmation in the minutes of the meeting. Only members who voted on an email motion can affirm it.
20. Motions that expire or are withdrawn are not affirmed; however, they are noted in the minutes of the subsequent meeting.
21. Normally, Bargaining-related email motions shall be subject to this policy and procedures document. Exemptions for such email motions during the Bargaining process may be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, a clear *ad hoc* process and rationale for exemption must be laid out in the email motion.

Rationale

Decisions typically require careful deliberation and discussion among Executive members. Email is not well-suited to the conduct of a deliberative process. Nor does it provide the opportunity for discussion or amendment of motions that one would have in a face-to-face meeting. Yet, there are times when a motion needs to be brought forward outside the context of an Executive meeting, e.g., action needs to be taken imminently on an issue and the next scheduled Executive meeting is not for a while. The proposition of an email motion should be seen, however, as unusual rather than normal practice. Email motions should be restricted to truly urgent, timely, and/or straightforward issues.

Email motions should be framed as simply and as specifically as possible to ensure clarity about what is being voted on. For example "I move that YUFA donates \$1,000 to the striking Bishop's University within 5 business days of approval of this motion. Moved by xx xx and seconded by xx xx. Both the mover and the seconder vote in favour of the motion. Please vote by the 3 business day deadline, i.e., by 10am on Wednesday."

In addition, voting responses to email motions should be simple as well to ensure clarity in results. Votes should be cast in terms of either "Yes" or "No". Voters should not make editorializing comments after their clear "Yes" or "No." Voters should be especially careful *not* to vote in a "yes, if ..." or "no, but ..." way, because it is difficult to know

whether to count such votes as either in favour or against the motion. Think of those "yes, if ...", etc. votes as similar to **spoiled ballots** in an election. For Executive email motions, they would count in quorum but would not be counted in the vote results. Therefore, not only would they contribute to confusion, but they would be wasted votes.

Email motions which involve money or have financial implications should be treated especially carefully as the auditor may raise concerns if votes are not clearly cast one way or another.

It is recognized that email motions in general can be problematic, especially where the issues are complex or where there's dissent among the voters. Email motions are unlike face-to-face meeting motions where discussion takes place and *then* the question is read aloud and called; they can be much trickier in terms of counting who voted which way. This issue is especially true when amendments are proposed after some votes have been cast. Amendments are problematic for a number of reasons:

1. Is the amendment(s) friendly?
2. Will the mover and seconder agree that the amendment(s) is friendly?
3. Must the people who have already voted on the original motion vote again on the amended motion?

Therefore, it is recommended that no amendments are possible on email motions. If a member disagrees with the email motion as it stands, then s/he can vote against it but cannot propose an amendment.

However, to reduce the likelihood of a motion needing amendment and to allow for some discussion and possible revision to potential motions prior to them being circulated, it also is recommended that a member who wishes to make an email motion first send the proposed motion to the Executive, making clear that such an email is not a motion per se but a precursor to one and that comments are requested but not votes. Feedback can be obtained and the result should be a final email motion that is clear and ready to be voted on.

As with all motions, an email motion requires approval of the President that it is in order before it can be circulated. All motions also require a mover and seconder. The mover should obtain the support of a seconder for the motion (off-listserv or via phone) before the motion is moved over the listserv. The President may be the mover or seconder on any motion, but there is no requirement to be either one.

Potentially, there are 13 voting members of Executive (10 elected by the full YUFA membership; 2 elected by Stewards' Council; 1 Past President). Quorum for YUFA's Executive is 6 members and in face-to-face meetings a vote is decided based on the majority of those who vote, e.g., if 7 members at the meeting and 4 vote in support then a motion carries. For consistency, the same quorum should be maintained for email voting.

Executive members who do not use email or who will not have access to email during a particular period should assume some responsibility for participation in email voting. It is recommended that, as needed, those members let the Recording Secretary know that if an email motion is initiated, then they will need to be contacted in another way so they can vote. If no notice is given to the Recording Secretary and a member does not learn about an email vote until after the deadline, then the integrity of the vote will not be compromised in any way. If notice has been given of an alternate procedure and the Recording Secretary makes reasonable attempts to contact a member who is not on email but fails to connect with the member, again the integrity of the vote is not compromised.

Normally, Bargaining-related email motions shall be subject to this policy and procedures document. However, sometimes Bargaining issues can be quite complex and/or need an expiry timeline less than three (3) business days. It is suggested that exemptions from this policy and procedures document may be needed during the Bargaining process – in most cases, exemption should be determined on a case-by-case basis. It also may be possible to lay out a process for email decision-making before Bargaining begins.