

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY



MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

LITERARY & DEBATING SOCIETY

CONSTITUTION

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A. Definitions

“**Annual General Meeting**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 8.1.

“**Associate Member**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 3.5.

“**Auditor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.1.

“**Autumn General Meeting**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 8.1.

“**Capitation Committee**” refers to the Maynooth University Capitation Committee.

“**Chair**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.1.

“**Committee**” has the meaning given to that term in Clauses 4.1 and 4.2.

“**Constitution**” refers to the document herein.

“**External Debates Convenor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.6.

“**Extraordinary General Meeting**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 8.1.

“**First Year Representative**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.12.

“**Governing Executive Committee**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 4.5.

“**Honorary Life Member**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 3.6.

“**Internal Competitions Convenor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.10.

“**Internal Debates Convenor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.7.

“**Literary Convenor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.8.

“**Members**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 2.1.

“**Open Convenor**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.5.

“**Public Relations Officer**” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.9.

“Schools Convenor” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.11.

“Secretary” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.3.

“Society” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 1.

“Treasurer” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.4.

“Vice-Auditor” has the meaning given to that term in Clause 6.2.

B. Body of Constitution

1. Name of Society

The name of the society shall be Maynooth University Literary & Debating Society (the “**Society**”).

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the Society shall be as follows:

2.1. To encourage all students, staff and graduates of Maynooth University to become members of the Society (“**Members**”) and engage with the arts of literary and debating.

2.2. To maintain a welcoming and progressive society that respects all, and to foster a positive and accepting atmosphere within the Society.

2.3. To develop and maintain strong links with the community, in both the local and wider sense of the word, through collaborations with community groups, secondary schools, third-level institutions, literary artists and other such relevant parties.

2.4. To promote the training and development of Members who wish to improve their expertise and talent in the fields of literary and debating.

3. Membership

3.1. Membership of the Society shall be open to all students, staff and graduates of Maynooth University.

3.2. Membership shall be obtained by paying the appropriate fee and signing the Roll of Members for the current academic year.

3.3. Members of the Society shall be entitled to attend the General Meetings of the Society and the Society’s events.

3.4. The Society recognises the importance that graduates, and former students of Maynooth University and its predecessor institutions can play in its development. It shall endeavour to maintain contact with such former members as wish to retain their connection with the Society.

3.5. The Governing Executive Committee of the Society shall be empowered to create a class of Associate Member of the Society. Associate Members may include graduates and other non-students of Maynooth University and shall pay an annual membership fee to the Society. The amount of this fee shall be determined by the Governing Executive Committee but may be altered by a majority vote of a general meeting of the Society. The associate membership fee shall not be less than the ordinary membership fee and shall be no more than 10 times the ordinary membership fee. Associate Members shall not be eligible for election to the Society's Governing Executive Committee. Associate Members shall be entitled to attend all general meetings of the Society. Voting rights and other rights of Associate Members at general meetings shall be determined by the Governing Executive Committee, subject to alteration by a majority vote of a general meeting of the Society. The rights of an Associate Member shall not exceed those of an ordinary member of the Society.

3.6. A class of Honorary Life Members exists within the Society. The Governing Executive Committee of the Society shall be empowered to award an HLM at the final General Meeting of the academic year. Honorary Members may include graduates and other non-students of Maynooth University and shall be exempt from membership fee to the Society. The Honorary Life Membership (HLM) is awarded for continued and outstanding contribution to The Society. Save for instances of exceptional circumstances (i.e. extraordinary internal contribution from a Member or notable contribution from external individual), an HLM will only be awarded to members active in the Society for at least two

years. It is recommended that the Committee award a maximum of two HLMs per annual session.

3.7. All membership is voidable on grounds of misconduct. Misconduct can include harassment of Members, propagation/use of hate speech or miscellaneous activity that can rationally be interpreted as a breach of this Constitution. Claims of misconduct must be submitted to the Committee who must accurately and fairly document the situation. In cases of repeat or gross misconduct, the alleged offender will be made aware of the claim against them and have a hearing scheduled. The accused will be given a chance, either in person or through writing, to defend against the claims. Following the hearing, the Committee shall vote on a motion to void the membership and ban the individual. The Secretary will then conduct the vote by paper. The vote shall be anonymous and require a majority of at least 2/3rds of the Committee in order to succeed. In exceptional circumstances (as defined by the Committee), the right to a hearing may be forfeited provided 2/3rds of the Committee determine that this is warranted.

3.8. All Members shall be bound by this Constitution.

4. The Committee

4.1. The Society shall have a Governing Executive Committee, which will itself be a subset of a wider general committee (the '**Committee**').

4.2. The Committee shall run the Society on behalf of the Members and in accordance with The Society's aims and objectives.

4.3. Although decisions should be arrived at by the consensus of the Committee where possible, committee decisions shall be decided by majority vote.

4.4. A quorum shall be five members of the Committee.

4.5. The Governing Executive Committee shall consist of: The Auditor, The Secretary/ Vice-Auditor, The Treasurer, The Open Convenor, The External Debates Convenor, The Internal Debates Convenor and The Literary Convenor.

4.5.1. This constitution affords protection to the following positions: The Public Relations Officer, The Schools Convenor, The Internal Competitions Convenor, and The First Year Representative. These positions do not occupy a place on the Governing Executive Committee but do occupy a place on the Committee.

4.5.2. The Governing Executive Committee shall have the power to determine other committee positions as required; these positions are not afforded constitutional protection and are designed to adapt to the constantly changing needs of the Society.

4.6. The term of office of Members of the Committee shall be one academic year.

4.7. A person shall not hold the same office for more than three successive years.

5. Elections of the Committee

5.1. Members of the Committee shall be democratically elected at the Annual General Meeting and, where a vacancy occurs or where a position is unfilled, at the Autumn General Meeting or at an Extraordinary General Meeting.

5.2. To seek election to the Committee, a candidate must have two nominations by current members of the Society.

6. Duties of the Committee

6.1. The Auditor shall be the chief officer of the Society whose functions include acting as the chair of all meetings (the “**Chair**”) of the Committee and officiating at meetings of the Society.

6.1.1. The Chair shall have an ordinary vote at Committee meetings and meetings of the Society. In the event of a tied vote on any matter they shall have the casting vote.

6.2. The Vice-Auditor shall assist the Auditor in all of their duties.

6.2.1. The Vice-Auditor shall assume the duties of the Auditor, unless otherwise directed by a general meeting of the Society, in the event that the Auditor is temporarily absent or is temporarily unable to perform their duties.

6.3. The Secretary's function shall be to deal with all correspondence and records of the Society, as well as to organise all meetings in accordance with the decisions of the Committee and with this Constitution.

6.3.1. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all Society meetings, including Committee meetings, general meetings, and any other meetings relating to the business of the Society when requested by the Committee.

6.3.2. The Secretary may keep a record of authorisation of expenditure.

6.3.3. The Secretary shall give notice of the Society's meetings, events and functions to all members.

6.3.4. The Secretary shall be responsible for the keeping and administration of all records of the Society, other than those falling under the responsibility of the Treasurer.

6.4. The Treasurer's function shall be to administer the funds of the Society and to maintain accounts and budgets.

6.4.1. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the maintenance of accounts subject to the decisions of the Committee and in compliance with the regulations set down by the Capitation Committee.

6.4.2. The Treasurer shall keep full records of income and expenditure of the Society. The Treasurer shall also keep a record of who authorised expenditures and shall issue receipts.

6.4.3. The Treasurer shall sign all cheques and for all withdrawals from the Society's bank account.

6.4.4. Where the Treasurer is decreed as unavailable, another designated person may sign cheques and for withdrawals for the Society on consultation with the Capitation Committee.

6.5. The Open Convenor shall be primarily responsible for organising and convening the Society's flagship Maynooth Open Debating Competition, in consultation with the Committee.

6.6. The External Debates Convenor shall be responsible for organising the Society's participation in intervarsity debating competitions, and shall carry out this role in consultation with the Committee.

6.6.1. They shall endeavour to ensure that the Society attends as many competitions as is practically possible, given the funds of the Society and the interest of Members in relation to attending such events.

6.7. The Internal Debates Convenor shall be responsible for organising the Society's internal House debates.

6.7.1. They shall decide upon a motion to be submitted to the Committee for approval and shall source speakers (and judges, if required) for the debate. Such debates are to be a weekly event unless otherwise decided by the Internal Debates Convenor in consultation with the Committee.

6.8. The Literary Convenor shall be responsible for organising the Society's participation in literary events, in consultation with the Committee.

6.8.1. They shall be tasked with organising the Society's flagship literary event, the Slam Poetry event. They may organise a Literary-centred Open Mic in lieu of, or in addition to, this event.

6.9. The Public Relations Officer (along with the Secretary) shall be responsible for the advertising of all functions of the Society through all means possible. They shall perform this role in consultation with the Committee.

6.10. The Internal Competitions Convenor shall be responsible for organising debating competitions where the participants are exclusively Members of the Society. They shall organise the Society's Maidens novice debate competition, and the Internal Mace Competition.

6.11. The Schools Convenor shall be responsible for organising the Society's secondary school debating competition (the Aoife Begley Memorial Debate Competition) and any other secondary school debating events in which the Society is involved, in consultation with the Committee.

6.12. The First Year Representative shall be responsible for broadcasting the Society's events to first years and encouraging first years to become a Member of the Society. They shall perform this role in consultation with the Committee.

7. Dismissal and Resignation of Committee Members

7.1. Written notice of any resolution to seek the dismissal from office of a Member of Committee that has constitutional protection must be signed by 10% of the membership of the Society or two thirds of the Committee and submitted to the Secretary. Upon receipt of

such notice, the Secretary shall notify the member of the Committee concerned as soon as possible and shall notify the membership of the Society at least four working days prior to a general meeting at which such a resolution shall be debated.

7.2. A member of the Committee may be dismissed from office only when a resolution has been put before the membership of the Society pursuant to Clause 7.1 and approved by a simple majority of the general meeting concerned.

7.2.1. The Governing Executive Committee retains the power to dismiss a Member of the Committee who is not afforded constitutional protection; this decision shall be taken by majority vote of the Governing Executive Committee.

7.3. A Committee member wishing to resign must submit a letter in writing declaring that intention to resign to the Secretary, who shall immediately inform the Committee as a whole.

7.3.1. The responsibilities of a Committee member who resigns shall be shared among the other Committee members until a by-election can be held to elect a new person to the position.

7.3.2. Any Member of the Committee that is absent from more than three consecutive meetings of the Committee without valid reason (as determined by the Governing Executive Committee by majority vote) shall be deemed to have resigned their post with immediate effect.

8. Meetings

8.1. There shall be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) held each year, at which elections for the offices of the Committee shall take place. There shall also be an Autumn General

Meeting held in October of each year at which class representatives for the Society shall be elected.

8.2. The AGM shall be held no later than in the final month of the Academic year.

8.3. A quorum of a general meeting shall be three Committee members and 10% of the Members.

8.4. The business of the AGM shall include elections of Committee members for the next academic year as well as annual reports from the outgoing Committee, which shall include a Treasurer's report on the finances of the Society.

8.5. An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) shall be convened if: 10% of the Members of the Society request such a meeting in writing, or; two thirds of the members of the Committee requests such a meeting in writing, or; a vacancy on the current Committee occurs.

8.6. Notice of all general meetings shall be given to the membership at least five working days prior to the date of the meeting.

8.7. Any member may propose a resolution relating to the business of the Society at a general meeting, except where such resolution proposes to alter this Constitution; the resolution shall be voted on by a show of hands. A declaration by the Auditor that the resolution has been carried or has failed, unless a secret ballot is demanded by any five Members, shall be conclusive evidence that the resolution has passed or failed.

8.8. In the event that a declaration of the Auditor under Article 8.7 is challenged, a recount of the votes will be administered in which a number of appropriate people shall be appointed by the Committee as tellers to count the votes. The result will be announced by

the Auditor or, where requested by a majority of attendees at the general meeting, the Vice-Auditor.

8.9. No resolution may contravene policy of Maynooth University or that of the Capitation Committee.

9. General

9.1. There shall be an Honorary President of the Society who shall be a staff member, in compliance with the regulations set down by the Capitation Committee.

9.2. The membership fee for the Society shall be in compliance with the conditions set down by the Capitation Committee.

9.3. Each member of the Society shall be entitled to receive a copy of this Constitution, on demand, free of charge.

9.4. In the event of a clash with Capitation Committee rules and regulations, the Capitation Committee rules and regulations shall take precedence over this Constitution.

9.5. The Society shall remain apolitical on all issues.

10. Amendments to this Constitution

10.1. Notice of a proposal to seek an amendment to this Constitution shall be given to the membership at least five working days prior to the meeting at which such a proposal shall be considered.

10.2. A proposal to amend this Constitution must receive the approval of two thirds of the members present and entitled to vote.