

Guidance on writing a motion for National Conference



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Introduction

Writing a motion for Conference can seem challenging but if you follow this brief list of Do's and Don'ts, it will make it easier for you to create something simple, clear and effective which will make it on to the list of motions to be debated at Conference without being ruled out of order.

Do

- **Make sure the motion contains a clear instruction to the NEC.** 'Conference instructs the NEC to...' Wording such as "Conference calls upon" maybe rejected.
- **Make sure the motion is legal and within the remit of the Union and its rules.** 'Conference instructs the NEC to seek to lobby the government to increase the minimum wage to £15.00 an hour.' **NOT** 'Conference instructs the UK Government to increase the minimum wage to £15.00 an hour.'
- **Make sure if you specify a time period that it is not unreasonable.**
- **Allow a little scope for variation where appropriate so the NEC is not tied to a precise instruction that may prove impossible to deliver.** To this end it is sometimes useful to use wording such as: 'seek to ensure'. 'Conference instructs the NEC to seek to ensure that refreshment breaks are provided three times a day during Prospect Annual Conference 2025 and thereafter'.
- **Where appropriate add an initial brief note** 'Conference notes the lack of refreshments at the most recent Prospect Conference. It therefore instructs the NEC etc.'
- **Keep your motion short and precise.** Standing Orders Committee recommends that motions should not exceed 400 words. Extra information can be provided in your speech. The SOC may reject motions considered verbose.
- **Make sure your motion is appropriate to the whole Prospect Union and does not address matters which are purely sectional or divisional in their content.**
- ***Remember that Conference time is limited, and you may therefore prefer to use your motion to address issues of immediate concern to Prospect members, where action will be beneficial, rather than making statements to which Conference can agree or debate with vigour but where the union realistically has little chance of influencing policy or events.***
- **Ensure your motion has been agreed by a quorate Branch meeting or a quorate Branch Committee meeting and in accordance with Branch rules.** The submission form will ask for details to confirm this has been done.
- **Seek to set out what you want to achieve and not how to do it.** It is often more helpful to set out what you want to achieve rather than set out a specific detailed way of achieving this.

Don't

- **Start your motion with a lengthy preamble more suitable to making a speech.**
- **Instruct the NEC to do anything that may be unlawful or in contravention of Prospect Rules.**
- **Address matters which are purely sectional or divisional.** 'Conference instructs the NEC to seek improvements to the professional insurance schemes available to Bectu members.' These will either be rejected or redirected to the appropriate conference or Divisional meeting.
- **Put forward a motion which is simply 'pious'** i.e., business that, even if passed, would have no effect. This could be rejected by the SOC.

Non- controversial and existing policy motions

If a motion contains something that is already existing union policy, it will not be scheduled for debate, but it will be published in the Agenda as existing policy.

Equally, if a motion is considered non-controversial, the SOC may choose not to schedule it for debate but to publish it in the Agenda as non-controversial. As such, it will be deemed to be adopted.

Conflict between Motions

Prior to Conference, The SOC reviews business to determine whether there is any conflict between content. Where two motions contain instructions that conflict, the SOC will identify 'consequentials' and choose the order in which the motions are taken, so that if the motion listed first is taken and carried, then the motion listed second is deemed to have fallen. For example, the motion 'Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate a 100% pay increase for all members' is not compatible with 'Conference instructs the NEC to negotiate a 150% pay increase for all members. In this case, the SOC would schedule the second motion first, and if this was carried the first motion would be deemed to have fallen.

Similar or identical Motions

Where one or more motions are similar or identical (duplicate in substance) the SOC may choose to adopt one version and add the other submissions as "associated branches". Where motions address a common topic, the SOC may choose to take those motions in common debate or alternatively seek to agree a composite version to put before Conference.

Help and advice

Do not be afraid to ask for help if you feel you need it. The SOC reviews all submissions shortly after the closing date, but if you want help or advice on wording or content, you can submit a draft in advance of submission with a request for advice or comment. Ideally, this should be two or more weeks before the closing date for submitting business to conference. This can be done by emailing the proposed submission to the SOC via NationalConferenceSOC@Prospect.org.uk

Postal submissions

Postal submissions are not recommended. You should always use the electronic forms provided. However, in the rare circumstances where this is not possible, an application can be made to the General Secretary's Office (gsoffice@prospect.org.uk), requesting permission to submit by post and giving the reasons for doing so. Please ensure in these circumstances that you leave yourself plenty of time both to request permission and to allow for postal delays. Proof of posting will not validate a late arrival.

How to draft a Rules revision

Drafting changes to a rule or rules in the Rule Book is different to drafting a motion.

Changes or new rules can only be made or added to the rules laid out in the Prospect Rule Book. All changes must be lawful. To avoid amending a rule that may already have been amended, be sure to work from the most recent version of the [Prospect Rule Book¹](#). Prospect's Rule Book is the overarching rule book for the union and takes precedence over any Sector rules.

Because every word in a rule is important when the rule is interpreted and acted on, it is very important to be clear and specific on exactly what change is required, and to consider carefully the exact meaning of the words that you use.

It is equally important that members at Conference are clear on what they are voting on and its potential implications for other rules.

In the case of rules, Conference is the body which changes the rules, so the introduction is not an instruction to the NEC to do something, but a resolution of Conference.

Step one

Select the Rule number you want to change, or, if you are adding a new rule, decide where you want it to fit in the rule book and what number it should be. 'This Conference agrees to amend (or add) Rule X of the Prospect Rule Book as follows:'

Step two

If it is an amendment, specify the changes.

'This Conference agrees to amend Rule X as follows:

Paragraph (7.1 (3)) Delete sentence beginning y...Replace with new sentence to read x...

Paragraph (8. 2.) Delete the words y...Replace with words x.'

If it is a complete new rule, submit the wording of the new rule.

¹ <https://prospect.org.uk/rules>

Step three

If it is an amendment, make it easier for conference to follow by clarifying how the new rule would read.

After setting out the changes finish with:

‘Amended rule to read as follows:’ (Set out complete rule, or rule paragraph or section, in full so the meaning is clear.)

Step four

Check the whole Rule Book for rules that may be affected by this change. Alter any rule or paragraph numbers as appropriate, not just in the rule you have changed but in any subsequent rules that need changing. (If you are submitting a new rule, renumbering throughout the rule book may be needed)

Rule changes that follow on from your initial rule change or additional rule must also be addressed in your submission. If, for instance, you are deleting the word ‘he’ and replacing it with the word ‘they’ you would need to check whether the same change needs to be made in other rules. Equally, if you are changing a rule to either delete something, weaken or strengthen it, or adding a new rule that may have implications for other rules, you need to check whether you need to make the same or similar changes to other rules affected by your change or addition.

‘Conference agrees to amend the following rules as follows.

Rule 5.2.b delete X insert the words X to read...and renumber as appropriate.

Rule 14.2. delete X Insert the words X to read...and renumber as appropriate.

Rule 17.4 delete X Insert the words X to read...and renumber as appropriate.’

Renumbering should also include any references to rules which may be quoted or referred to within another rule.

This is a painstaking process, but it is important to get it right.

Optional Step Five

Ask for help. If you are not sure about your wording, or which other rules your change may affect, check a draft with the Standing Orders Committee who will be happy to advise you before the Rule Change is finally submitted. Ideally, you should do this up to two weeks before the submission deadline. You can contact the Standing Orders Committee via NationalConferenceSOC@Prospect.org.uk