

Council support – *How to write a motion*

A motion is a way to add to the “policies” of an organisation – it can be anything from a **statement of belief** (an important part of campaigning), to a **call for action** (such as agreeing to do something).

A motion gets presented to Council, is debated and voted on, according to standard procedures. These involve speeches for and against, and sometimes a question and answer session with the proposer.

Most motions set out the reasons why they are being brought up, and then set out what is to be done about those reasons. They often do this by being broken into these sections:

The Union notes:

1. That cats get hungry.

The Union believes:

1. That hungry cats should be fed.

The Union resolves:

1. To start buying cat food, and mandate its Officers to give it to local cats.
2. To encourage and support students to also give food to local cats.

They should avoid ambiguity, so that they only achieve what was originally intended!

A motion must also be brought to the organisation’s Council in the proper way, again according to the Constitution and by-laws. In the case of UBU, this means a motion needs:

1. **A proposer** (who will be invited to speak in favour of the motion.)
2. **A seconder** (who may also be invited to speak, if the Chair decides the motion needs more speeches.)
3. **Fifteen assenters** – these are students who support the motion being discussed. They don’t have to agree with it. They’re not voting or signing a petition. They just support it being discussed.

Timing is important. UBU rules state that a motion must be submitted in writing to the *Council Advisory Committee* no later than 12 noon, five clear working days preceding the UBU Council meeting at which it will be discussed. The committee will meet that afternoon.

The motion has to follow the rules of UBU, called the Constitution and by-laws. So the Council Democracy & Advisory Committee will decide whether a motion meets the rules. It is extremely useful to discuss it with the committee in advance of the deadline mentioned above, so that they can support you to improve it or make corrections. They are there to make sure the motion is legal, affordable, etc. and also to discuss with you if there is already another work-stream going on about the same topic, so we can avoid duplication.

A motion may lead to expenditure or other practical issues, so your best chance for success will come through discussing it with the committee. They can put you in touch with relevant Sabbaticals or Exec Officers first – their informed support when the motion is debated may be very influential. And they can also help you consult properly with students, e.g. through surveys, workshops, etc.