Activities Forum

4. Procedure for Motion of No Confidence Hearings

Author(s): Tom Gordon — Deputy President (Activities)

Decision(s): To **discuss**

1. Context

On October 16, 2025, the Activities Forum considered its first Motion of No Confidence, relating to four members of the Russian Speaking Society Committee. From the Chair's perspective, this presented several challenges: making sure that everyone who needed to be informed was kept in the loop; giving all participants a fair opportunity to speak; and ensuring that both the proposers and the respondents felt supported throughout. Moreover, our Byelaws set strict requirements for the Motions of Censure and No Confidence. Above all, it was important that communication remained constructive and respectful, so that the discussion could be as fair and productive as possible.

A member of the Activities Forum reached out to me shortly after the motion, with a proposed structure for managing future hearings. I agreed that such guidance would be valuable and have developed this into a "checklist" covering the full lifecycle of a motion, in line with our byelaws.

2. On Receipt of a Motion

1. Inform the Council Chair and Union President upon receipt of the motion. If either of these wishes, the motion can be taken to Union Council instead.
2. Inform the defendant(s) that they have been named in the motion by e-mail.
    a. Copy in the Council Chair and Union President.
    b. Provide a date, time, and location of the meeting.
    c. Inform them that they can attend in person or provide a written statement in their defence.
    d. Let them know they can bring people to support them. Set a limit (e.g. 3).
    e. Provide a link to Byelaw I: Motions of Censure and No Confidence.
    f. Include an attachment listing the avenues of support at Imperial and the Union.
    g. An example email draft is included in Appendix A.
3. Inform the author of the meeting.
    a. Provide a date, time and location.
    b. Inform them that they may attend in person to present their Motion to the Forum.
    c. Let them know they can bring people to support them. Set a limit (e.g. 3).
    d. Provide a link to Byelaw I: Motions of Censure and No Confidence.
    e. Include an attachment listing the avenues of support at Imperial and the Union.
4. Print out voting slips for every individual named in the motion.
    a. According to our Byelaws, any vote which requires a 2/3 majority requires "pen on paper" voting.

b. The voting slips should explicitly state the "Union Resolves" line that they are voting on, with boxes for **Yes**, **No**, and **Abstain**.

Key considerations:

- Duration of the item:
  - Is the author expected to attend? Allow more time.
  - Is the defendant expected to attend? Allow more time.
  - Do you think the vote will be contentious? Allow more time.
- Invitations
  - Can the Motion author / defendant(s) bring guests? How many?

3. During the Meeting

Key considerations:

- Confidentiality
  - According to our byelaws, all discussions that take place during the motion must be kept confidential. This does not apply to the paper itself.
  - The paper itself generally remains public, but in some cases, it might be worth considering whether it may be worth keeping some parts confidential (e.g. if the content is particularly explicit). This should be raised at the start of the meeting.
- Wellbeing
- Fairness

On Arrival of the Guests

Outline the procedure to the committee and guests, covering:

- Wellbeing:
  - Let them know they can leave if they are uncomfortable, with no questions asked.
  - Give them a single point of contact for them to ask questions, e.g. the Chair. They should be aware of the avenues of support at the Union and University to signpost when necessary.
- Schedule:
  - Author has a set allowance (e.g. 5 mins) to present the Motion; defendant has the same time to present an initial defence.
  - Time for questions.
  - All parties involved in the Motion asked to leave
  - Committee has time to discuss and then cast their votes by secret ballot.
  - All parties will find out the results by email — ideally the same night.
- Rules:
  - The Chair is responsible for timekeeping and keeping the meeting constructive. They may cut people off if necessary or over time.

    - If someone wishes to speak, they should raise their hand. They may only speak when the Chair invites them to.

- Confidentiality:
    - Minutes will be taken, but these will remain confidential and only used in the case of an appeal.
    - Let everyone know where and how the paper will be published.

Opening Statements

1. Remind all parties involved in the Motion that they have a set amount of time (e.g. 5 minutes) to present, and that they will be cut off if they exceed this. Offer to give them a warning, e.g. 1 minute remaining.
2. If the paper author is in attendance, allow them to present their paper and their arguments. Keep track of this using a stopwatch, and, in the interest of fairness, cut them off at the end of their allocated time.
3. If the defendant is in attendance, allow them the same amount of time to present a defence. Keep track of time and cut them off at the end of their allocated time.

Questioning

1. Before opening the floor to questions, lay out some ground rules:
    a. If somebody wants to ask a question, they must raise their hand and may not speak until the Chair requests them to.
    b. Follow-up questions are okay, but the Chair may choose to stop these if they become unproductive.
    c. When asking a question, it should be explicitly stated who the question is for.
    d. The author may ask a question to a defendant and vice versa at the discretion of the Chair, but this should be stopped if it becomes disruptive.
    e. Any defendant or author may choose not to answer a question.
2. Allow questions
    a. Keep a track of time. The Chair may choose to impose a time limit on responses if this becomes an issue.
    b. If the conversation is useful but time is running low, the Chair may raise a procedural Motion to extend the meeting. The Committee should reach a consensus on whether or not to accept this.
    c. The Chair may use their discretion when choosing which questions to accept to allow for a variety of views to be shared.

Closing Statements

1. The author, followed by the defendant(s), may be granted a set amount of time each to present a closing statement.
2. Following the closing statements, the Chair should ask the parties involved in the Motion if they have any procedural questions.
3. The parties involved in the Motion should be asked to leave to allow the Committee to discuss and vote in private.

Discussion and Voting

1. The Committee should be granted sufficient time to discuss the case in private, whether as a larger Committee or within their respective Management Groups.
2. While discussions are underway, distribute **one** identical voting slip per Management Group / Constituent Union, as well as a pen. All pens distributed should have the same colour ink to preserve anonymity, in line with our byelaws.
3. The vote for each group is held by their President / Chair, but it is up to them whether they want to feed in the views of their group.
    a. The Chair shall not vote.
4. Once all voting slips are received, count the votes and take a photo of the slips for the record. A 2/3 majority is required to remove someone from their role.
    a. In the case of a tie-breaker, the Chair may cast the deciding vote.

4. After a Motion

1. Inform the author and defendant(s) of the results by email as soon as practically possible. Copy in the Council Chair and Union President.
2. If the Motion passes:
    a. Inform the defendant(s) of their right to appeal. This must be received within 5 full College days. An example email is provided in Appendix B.
    b. Do **not** immediately remove the defendant(s) from their role.
    c. If an appeal has not been received within five working days, remove the defendant(s) from their role(s).

Appendix A: Email Informing Defendant of Motion

Dear Name,

I hope you're well.

I'm sorry to inform you that, as the Chair of the Activities Forum, I have received a **Motion of No Confidence** against you in your role as **Role** of **Society**. The motion will be heard at the **Activities Forum** on **Date** in **Location**. If you wish to continue in your role, **you are invited to attend from Time**, where you may provide a defence against the motion. If you are unable to attend, or would feel uncomfortable doing so, I would also be happy to receive a written response which I will circulate with the board members on the day. The agenda for the evening, as well as the motion itself, are attached.

If you no longer wish to continue in the role as Society Role, please email myself as soon as possible to inform us of your intent to resign.

I would recommend that you familiarise yourself with the bye-laws on this topic, so you are aware of how the process works and what your rights are with regards to appeals. To summarise the key points:

- The vote will be held by secret ballot of the board's membership, made up of Management Group Chairs and Constituent Union Presidents (or their proxies).
- The Motion requires a two-thirds majority of present voting members to pass.
- The discussion and outcome will be minuted. These will not be made public but may be referred to in the case of an appeal.
- If the motion does pass, you may appeal it within 5 College days from the passing of the Motion. The Union President will assess the grounds of appeal against subsection 15. If it is determined to align with the allowed grounds for appeal, the appeal would be heard at Union Council.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the matter. While Motions of No Confidence are an important part of our governance, I equally understand this may be distressing for you. The Union, as well as Imperial, have numerous avenues for support, which I would encourage you to reach out to if this would help. I have attached a document outlying these.

Kind regards,

Name

Appendix B: Email Informing Defendant of Successful Motion

Dear Name,

I hope you're well.

I regret to inform you that the Motion of No Confidence against you in your role as Society Role passed in our meeting on October 16.

According to bye-law I, you may appeal the decision on the grounds of:

- 16.1: Procedural irregularity in the conduct of the hearing of the Motion;
- 16.2: The availability of new evidence which could not reasonably have been expected to be presented prior to the consideration of the Motion; or
- 16.3: The disproportionate nature of the penalty.

If you wish to appeal, this must be done by time on date. The appeal must be expressed in writing to the Union President, Name (union.president@imperial.ac.uk), and the Council Chair, Name (chairman@imperial.ac.uk). If the Union President deems the appeal to be valid, your appeal may be heard by Union Council. Please read bye-law I in full if you do choose to submit an appeal.

If you choose not to declare an intent to appeal, you will be formally dismissed from your role on date.

I realise this may be distressing. If you need support at any time, please feel free to consult the "Avenues of Support" document which was attached to my previous email to you.

Kind regards,

Name