

ECA Council 101

Your How To on Everything Council... Hopefully

The following Agenda template will be used to make all Agendas for Council; there will be minimal changes in format when there are exceptional points that need to be brought up that do not fit the categories outlined below. The Agenda and documents for a meeting are sent out *at least* 24 hours before the start of the meeting.

Call To Order

Someone will announce that it is time to begin the meeting. By this point you should have signed in (see Roll Call), collected any paper documents being distributed, and reviewed the agenda and documents for the meeting.

Roll Call

To allow for a more simplified method of roll call, a sign-in sheet will be passed around for every representative to sign. Only those who have signed the sheet will be recorded in the minutes as having attended the meeting.

Q: What happens if I didn't sign the sheet?

A: It means you were **not** there. For representatives, multiple absences can result in your removal from office. For societies it could mean loss of funding as well as a review of the societies standing in the ECA.

Q: What should I do if I show up late?

A: Within 15 minutes of the meeting being called to order, the sign-in sheet will be passed back to the secretary. If you know in advance that you will be more than 15 minutes late, email me (chair@ecaconcordia.ca). This way we can mark you as in attendance upon arrival and collect your signature at the end of the meeting.

Q: I can't show up to represent my society, what should I do?

A: If you know far enough in advance, and someone else on your executive is available to attend, you can send them in your stead! They will have full voting rights; in other words, they can talk and vote as the official society representative. Send an email to me (chair@ecaconcordia.ca) and the ECA

president (president@ecaconcordia.ca) to let us know of any changes before council. Even if you can't find anyone to take your place, we still prefer to know that no one from your society will be at council.

Q: I'm a department rep and I can't show up, what should I do?

A: If you know far enough in advance, please send an email to me (chair@ecaconcordia.ca) and the ECA president (president@ecaconcordia.ca) to let us know. Unfortunately, you cannot send someone in your place, so if you have a class that conflicts with Council, please let us know *immediately*. It is part of your duties to attend these meetings.

Appointment of Secretary/Chair

At this point Council appoints someone to ensure the meeting runs smoothly and enforces procedure (the chair), and someone to take minutes (the secretary). A person can be appointed for the duration of a particular meeting, or appointed to the position within the ECA -- in which case they retain the position until they resign. Usually "until they resign" is "for a year," cuz that's the most anyone can handle.

There is a slight difference between the motion for each:
For a meeting:

BIRT *insert name* is appointed as (Chair/Secretary) for the meeting

To the position:

BIRT *insert name* is appointed as (Chair/Secretary) of the ECA

The benefit of appointing someone to the position is that they then have a series of duties to fulfil outside of Council itself.

Approval of Agenda

This is one of the most important points in the Agenda. Make sure you're paying attention, because at this point you can:

- Add Agenda Points to New/Old Business
- Move a Point from the Consent Agenda to New/Old Business
- Remove a Point from the Agenda that has been rendered irrelevant
- Re-arrange agenda points

Q: What does “approving the agenda” do?

A: It sets the points on the agenda; nothing can be added, moved, or deleted afterwards. Approving the agenda also approves all the points on the Consent Agenda by consent, and thus any items or motions listed under Consent Agenda are considered adopted and will not be discussed during the meeting.

Q: What goes into the Consent Agenda?

A: Any non-controversial or routine topic; basically anything that we think would not require a discussion.

Q: Why would I want to move something from the Consent Agenda, and how would I do it?

A: Anything in the consent agenda will have documentation, and perhaps a motion, that will be sent to you before council; it’s up to you to determine if further discussion on the issue is necessary. If that is the case, you simply request the item is moved from Consent Agenda, and it will be placed into Returning Business or New Business by myself, as appropriate. Of course, this request must be made before the agenda is approved; as stated above, approving the agenda makes it read-only.

Q: Why would I want to re-arrange the points?

A: Sometimes the Agenda doesn’t cover the points from most to least important. We will always try to arrange it in that way (in case we have to cut the meeting a bit short and table the rest of the points), but if you see that we have failed to do so bring it up before we Approve the Agenda!

Consent Agenda

Items found in the Consent Agenda will **NOT** be discussed during council. All the relevant information will have already been sent to you, and you will have your opportunity before approving the agenda to move any points you feel will require more discussion from the consent agenda to the regular agenda.

a) Approval of Previous Minutes

- i. Any amendments to the minutes can only be made if this is moved from the consent agenda to Old Business. As previously mentioned, this is automatically approved by consent once the

entire Agenda is approved.

b) Reports

- i. There are not always reports at our council meetings, but they are important when written. It will be assumed there is nothing to be said about them if they are left in the consent agenda.

c) Announcements

- i. All announcements are to be sent to me by noon on the Friday before Council. They will be aggregated into a single announcements document and sent to all councillors by e-mail at least 24 hours before council.

d) Other Non-Controversial Items

- i. Items for information for Council, or any other matter which requires Council's approval but not discussion.

Q: Why are we now using a consent agenda?

A: This will not only help everyone stay more organized, but meetings will become a lot more streamlined and efficient when it comes to routine or lower priority issues.

Q: Why bring something to Council if it won't be discussed?

A: It might seem counter-intuitive, but there are a couple reasons. The first is information sharing; there is nothing more frustrating -- or stupid -- than having insufficient information to make an informed decision. Not only that, but everyone is happiest when everyone is on the same page.

The second is about time, and more broadly, efficiency. If reports are written instead of oral, the same amount of information can be handled in less time. It also allows for "asynchronous" processing -- perusing information at the time that is most convenient for you. Not everyone in Council has the luxury of living right beside school or having a ride home.

Q: I had something I wanted to say that I think is really important but I didn't read anything you sent me because I thought we'd discuss it, even though you told me we wouldn't.

A: Well, it *was* sent to you beforehand for a reason -- so that you could judge whether or not you felt discussion was necessary. By the time you take your seat at Council, you should know which points under Consent Agenda are worthy of discussion.

That being said, rules can be bent under special circumstances, but if it seems like you're abusing the privilege, it likely won't be honoured when you really need it.

External Presentations and Guest Speakers

On occasion, the ECA will have people come and speak at their Council meetings (for example, someone from the Dean of Students office). It's kind of dickish to make them wait around for hours while we discuss the intricacies of, say, kilts, so this point is included as the first substantive item on the agenda. They can give their presentation and be on their merry way. If there are no guest speakers, then we simply pass over this item in Council.

Q: Can I bring in an external presentation/Guest Speaker?

A: While it is uncommon, it can be done. Most speakers that come to council are invited by the ECA or directly ask the ECA if they can present. But, if you know someone who has an important message for councillors, e-mail the president and myself and we will determine if it would be appropriate for council.

Appointments

Those seeking appointments by the ECA are in the second tier of waiting importance. Some of the positions to which the ECA appoints are not relevant to Council, but instead relevant to representation of ENCS students in general. A good example would be the ECA's appointments to the [Sustainable Action Fund](#) or [Concordia Volunteer Abroad Program](#). Such positions do not have a direct bearing on Council, and thus it's kind of cruel to make applicants wait around. As with guest speakers, if there are no appointments to be made, this item is simply passed over in Council.

Q: Am I an appointment?

A: I dunno, Lafi, are you trying to be appointed for something? Cuz if you are, then yes.

Returning Business

This is the first real meat of the agenda. It consists of items that came up at a previous meeting, and are now back at Council. Most of the time, this happens because a topic was tabled at a previous meeting. In general, though, *anything* that Council tasks for a future meeting -- including, for instance, if a committee or an exec is told to do something and then bring it to Council -- ends up in this section of the agenda. If you have seen it before on an agenda, it will wind up in here. If you have never seen it before in your life, I have made a horrible, unforgivable error.

The relevant information for agenda items is below, since everything has to be under New Business at some point before it ends up here.

If there is no returning business we just skip over this point.

New Business

This is where the “deliberative magic” happens. All decisions that must be made end up here, as well as anything that requires the discussion or feedback of Council.

Q: I want to ask Council for some feedback on something. Do I need an agenda point?

A: Yes. People will likely want to speak on it.

Q: I want to ask an open question. Would this be appropriate to bring up at Council?

A: Probably not. Although, it sort of depends what kind of information you’re looking to collect. Council works best as a forum of targeted discussion. Council is **not** a good forum for shooting the shit; grabbing a post-Council beverage with fellow Councillors is a good place for that¹. Nor is it a good place for conducting a straw poll; an email to council is sufficient for that.

Q: Is this where I can talk about the things I’ve done / my society has done / my department has done since the last Council meeting?

¹ Thankfully, now possible because Consent Agenda has made our meetings shorter! Yay! Beer!

A: No. What you're describing is a report; write that stuff down, and send it to me by the agenda deadline (usually 72 hours before Council). The report is put under Consent Agenda, and everyone reads it before the meeting. If people have questions, then they yank it out of Consent.

Q: Bro, I'm an engineer! I do math, not read or write, what is this bullshit?

A: This bullshit is precisely the kind of bullshit you will have to deal with in real life as an engineer. Think of it like a progress report you'd have to send your boss -- it's essentially the same concept.

Q: So I would just say "I'm almost done," like I'd tell my boss?

A: Yes! Only you would include the question, so that we know what you're talking about.

Q: What if I am not sure if it's appropriate to bring up at council?

A: If you're not sure, just ask me! That's why I'm here, after all. I make sure everyone understand the procedures for council. I can even contact the councillors on your behalf if it is so needed.

Q: Where is the item from Consent Agenda that I wanted to discuss?

A: Here. Like, *right here*. These words would be it.

Q: Hurray, I can just pull everything from Consent Agenda! I win!

A: Well, I mean, I guess, but the likelihood of post-Council beers is inversely proportional to the items removed from Consent Agenda. Also, if you do not have a good reason for wanting to move the point from Consent Agenda, I can trump you and keep it there. Lastly, that wasn't a question and put down your placard!

Adjournment

This is where we go have beer (or other beverage), made possible by you all respecting the above!

General Points

- Please, do not wave your placard around.
If I put you on the speaker's list I prefer you actually have something to say.
- If we make eye contact and I nod at you, you're on the speakers list.
- If you raise your placard again before I have gotten to your name, I won't be moving you up the speakers list. Jot some quick notes if you feel like you are going to forget.
- If you've had a chance to speak; I need to give those who have not a chance to speak before you so don't get too antsy, I'm not skipping you.
- There is no such thing as a direct response, and technically everything said should be directed at the chair. There is no insulting each other and really you aren't supposed to be speaking "to" each other but we like to make the space a little less formal so keep your cool else I'll have to make stricter rules.
- We cannot wait on something due to a failure on your part to prepare. Everyone is busy, everyone is a student and has homework etc. So either come prepared or accept that you won't be able to have input on everything so prioritize!
- Everyone fucks up sometimes, thankfully we are all there to help out, just don't be an asshole about it please.
- The Chair exists to help YOU, not just to run meetings well. I can also do things like help you form motions, and a whole slew of other things. If you're not sure, just ask.
- It's more sustainable if we don't print a copy for everyone, take advantage of the fact that you receive the documents beforehand.