

Conference Bulletin

June 2021

UNISON Retired Members' Conference 2021

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This bulletin contains the timetable for 2021 Virtual Retired Members' Conference
Please note that both motions and delegations can only be submitted online.
 There are **no** paper forms for registration.

Virtual Retired Members Organisation Conference 2021 will be online from 1.30pm to 4.00pm on Tuesday 12th October and 9.30am to 4.30pm Wednesday 13th October 2021.

This is an Organisation Group Conference and will be held online.
Web access will be required to participate.

Day 1	Tuesday 12 th October		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Black members' caucus	1.30pm	2.00pm	
Women members' caucus	2.10pm	2.40pm	
Disabled members' caucus	2.50pm	3.20pm	
Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender members' plus caucus	3.30pm	4.00pm	

Day 2	Wednesday 13 th October		
	Start	End	Break Start – 15 minutes
Session 1	9:30am	12:30pm	11.00am
Session 2	1:30pm	4.30pm	3:00pm

Virtual UNISON Retired Members' Organisational Group Conference may look and feel very different to what we are used to, but the Organisational Group Executive feels that it is important to give our members and activists a platform to discuss the issues the Organisational Group faces and use our democratic processes to shape how we work in the future.

The pandemic continues to place significant pressure on our branches and activists and in these unprecedented circumstances it is understandable that attendance at the conference may be affected.

After the deadline for delegate registration has passed, an assessment will need to be made. If the quorum and/or our rule book obligations on proportionality and fair representation are unlikely to be met, the National Executive Committee (NEC), in consultation with the service group reserves the right to postpone the event until such time we can comply with these obligations.

This is a one-off UNISON Virtual Organisation Conference and sets no precedence for future conferences

Timetable

Deadline for Submission of Motions	12.00 noon	Wednesday 30 June 2021
Deadline for Submission of Amendments to Standing Orders	12.00 noon	Wednesday 30 June 2021
Publication of Preliminary Agenda		Wednesday 21 July 2021
Deadline for Submission of Delegates	5.00pm	Monday 19 July 2021
Deadline for Appeals on Motions ruled out of order	12.00 noon	DATE TO BE CONFIRMED
Deadline for Submission of Amendments	12.00 noon	Wednesday 25 August 2021
Deadline for Appeals on Amendments ruled out of order	12.00 noon	DATE TO BE CONFIRMED
Deadline for Submission of reasonable adjustment requests for access	5.00pm	Tuesday 1 September 2021
Publication of Final Agenda		Wednesday 15 September 2021
Deadline for receiving prioritisation forms	2.00pm	Tuesday 21 September 2021
Deadline for Submitting Change of Delegates online on the OCS	4.00pm	Monday 13 September 2021
Deadline for agreement on Composites	12.00 noon	DATE TO BE CONFIRMED

A copy of this bulletin and all attachments are available for download from the UNISON Conference webpage at <https://www.unison.org.uk/events/2021-virtual-retired-members-conference/>

How to Attend Virtual Retired Members Organisational Group Conference 2021

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the way we do business and UNISON is committed to supporting our democratic processes and give our members the opportunity to shape the future of our Union at Conference.

UNISON's Virtual Retired Members Organisational Group Conference 2021 will be held online and may look and feel very different to what we have been used to.

Attendance will be virtual, and delegates should be submitted on the Online Conferencing System (OCS) in line with the normal rule-book requirements on Branch Representation.

Motions will be debated on a virtual platform. Speakers will need to be identified and nominated in advance – please give some thought to who this may be.

Further information on speakers will be sent to relevant branches when composites have been agreed.

Once registration is closed, and before the event, all attendees will be sent on-line joining instructions. These will include a link to the sessions and a two-step password.

Please keep these details safe and confidential as they will be the only way to access the Virtual Retired Members Organisational Group Conference. If these details are accessed by anyone else, they will invalidate your own access to conference

There are NO paper forms for motion or delegation submission. You must use the Online Conference System (OCS) instead. See next section for full information.

Information on how to submit motions and delegations using UNISON's Online Conference System (OCS)

Which branch officers can use the OCS? Using the OCS, motions can be submitted at branch level by the Branch Secretary, the branch Equal Opps Officer or the Branch Retired Members' Secretary. The others will receive e-mail copies of the motion submission as soon as it is submitted. Branch employed staff are also able to enter motions but do not have authority to submit them on behalf of a branch. Delegates can be submitted at branch level by either the Branch Secretary, the Branch Chair or the Branch Retired Members' Secretary. Delegates must be approved by the Branch Secretary or the Branch Chair.

At regional level, the regional secretary is authorised to submit the motion/delegation, with the regional convenors receiving an instant e-mail copy. This process is replicated at national level for national bodies and their relevant chairs and secretaries.

Which members can use the OCS? When a member is registered as a delegate to a conference, they will receive an e-mail informing them of this as long as their e-mail address is listed on the RMS. They can then also access the OCS to upload their photograph, to make online requests for services such as reasonable adjustments and facilitators, which should be made by the deadline stated.

How will these people access the OCS? Users access the OCS via the UNISON website at www.unison.org.uk and clicking on 'My UNISON' - which is located at the top of the front page. Using your UNISON membership number and surname, register once and you will be issued with a password. For subsequent access, simply click on 'My UNISON' and then 'Sign-in now' and you will need your membership number and the password you were issued. Branch employed staff should call their regional contact.

What if the correct branch people have accessed 'My UNISON' but then cannot access the OCS? Key to accessing the OCS is ensuring that the data held on UNISON's membership system, the RMS, is correct. It records which members hold the key positions of Branch Secretary and Branch Chair. If this information is incorrect, or if it changes, the branch needs to ensure that the RMS records are updated immediately. Then the individual should call their regional contact.

What else needs to happen? It will help the system to function if these key branch people also have an e-mail address stored on their RMS records. Please contact your branch or regional RMS team urgently, to make this happen. Each delegate within a delegation should also have their date of birth stored on the RMS.

Delegates to Conference: It is important that we collect e-mail addresses for those retired members wishing to participate in any way in the conference. The e-mail address can be any one that you have easy access to e.g. your personal e-mail, branch e-mail or that of a friend or relative.

- If you already have an e-mail address and access to the UNISON website, the quickest way to update your details is to go to the UNISON website and click on 'My UNISON'– you will need your UNISON membership number.
- If you don't have an e-mail address or don't have access to the UNISON webpage, you can contact UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857 and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON Membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.
- Or, you can contact your local UNISON branch and provide them with the details of your preferred e-mail address to update your UNISON membership records – you will need your UNISON membership number.

Key contacts:

If you have a 'My UNISON' registration issue: UNISONdirect on 0800 0857 857

If you have an OCS issue, please contact your relevant regional contact. Listed below are the Conference contacts for each region, who can also assist with online conference registration:

Region	Contact	Tel	E-mail
Eastern	Amanda Tickner	01245 608909	a.tickner@unison.co.uk
East Midlands	Colleen Forrest (Tues & Fri only)	0115 847 5468	c.forrest@unison.co.uk
	Katrina Grace (Mon & Tues only)	0115 847 5417	k.grace@unison.co.uk
Greater London	Shelley Davey Lorraine Tant Cally Thompson	0207 535 6648	glrconference@unison.co.uk
Northern	Linda Smith	0191 245 0852	l.smith@unison.co.uk
	Allison Jackson	0191 245 0805	a.jackson2@unison.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Elizabeth Robinson	02890 270190	e.robinson@unison.co.uk
North West	Kim Scott	0161 661 6777	k.scott@unison.co.uk
	Gillian Gorman	0161 661 6743	g.gorman@unison.co.uk
Scotland	Rosaleen Rodgers	0141 342 2816	r.rodgers@unison.co.uk
	Jean Fraser	0141 342 2880	j.fraser@unison.co.uk
South East	Louise Barter	01483 406547	l.barter@unison.co.uk
	Kieran Pearson	01483 406510	k.pearson@unison.co.uk
South West	Jenn Gollings (Mon – Thurs only)	01823 285336	j.gollings@unison.co.uk
Cymru/Wales	Beverley Powell	02920 729475	b.powell@unison.co.uk
West Midlands	Claire Kenny	0121 685 3174	c.kenny@unison.co.uk
Yorkshire & Humberside	Laraine Senior	0113 218 2333	l.senior@unison.co.uk

Branch Representation

To be able to attend this conference as a delegate you must be a current retired member of UNISON. Branch representation will be based on the following allocation:

Up to 2 delegates for branches with a retired membership of 250 or less, and then 1 additional delegate per 500 or part thereof, to a maximum of 4 delegates.

- Up to 250 retired members - maximum of 2 delegates
- Up to 750 retired members - maximum of 3 delegates
- Over 750 retired members - maximum of 4 delegates

Regional Representation

Regions can send one delegate each.

Proportionality and Fair Representation

The principles of proportionality and fair representation contained in the NEC's Scheme of Branch Representation must be strictly maintained. Specifically for Retired Members' Conference:

Transgender Members

UNISON applies strict rules on proportionality in branch conference delegations, to ensure proper representation of women. Members who are in the process of transitioning gender may not yet have changed their UNISON membership details. Members will be registered for the Virtual Retired Members Organisational Group Conference as the gender in which they will attend the Conference, irrespective of their gender recorded on the RMS.

To ensure that branch delegations including transgender members are not rejected on grounds of proportionality, please contact the Conference Office on 020 7121 5123 with information on any online delegate submissions which include members attending conference in a different gender to that recorded on the RMS. Their confidentiality will be respected at conference.

Monitoring for Fair Representation and Proportionality

All delegates will be asked to complete an online form which enables the Conference to be monitored in order that UNISON can check on progress towards its objectives of fair representation and proportionality at all levels of the union. This exercise is conducted at all UNISON conferences and at regional level.

Please assist us by completing the online form before the end of conference.

Branches

- The gender make up of the delegation is based on the gender make up of the Retired Members in the branch.
- If the delegation comprises one full delegate, then this delegate may be male or female

Regions:

- 1 Delegate per region. Delegate can be a female or a male.

Please help us to help the environment

We're doing our best to reduce the environmental impact of our conferences. This year, we are providing all delegates with electronic documents **only**. All these documents will be available online on the UNISON website. You can then download them onto your laptop or tablet to view online while you are at conference.

Language

The language we use is important and reflects deep-rooted and long-standing power structures and beliefs. Racist, disablist, sexist, transphobic, ageist, biphobic or homophobic language will not be tolerated. Generalisations are seldom helpful and seldom true: please avoid making them. Jokes or comments based on sexist, racist, disablist, ageist, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic ideas should not be made. Remember that some of us do not identify on the gender binary, so expressions such as 'sisters and brother' do not include us all.

Conduct of delegates

All delegates, visitors, staff and facilitators are expected to behave in a courteous manner. Aggressive, offensive, intimidatory, disrespectful or unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. This applies to all aspects of communication, at or in connection with the conference, including postings on social media. Complaints will be treated seriously.

Reasonable Adjustments *****IMPORTANT INFORMATION*****

Speech-to Text and BSL Interpreters will be available for all main online conference sessions. Please request these in the normal way even though they will be already provided.

UNISON aims to provide a fully accessible event to disabled members in accordance with our duties under the Equality Act. Requests for reasonable adjustments must be submitted **by Tuesday 1st September 2021 at 4.00pm.**

For any reasonable adjustments required, please complete the request online by the stated deadline. This can only be done by the registered delegate themselves. Authorisation for personal assistance/facilitation is required from your Branch Secretary that this expenditure will be approved.

While we work within the context of the social model of disability this does not mean that UNISON can automatically provide all resources that are requested as adjustments. We have to consider the finite resources available both in terms of space and finances in order that we can balance our commitment to the social model with the resources available, and channel them to where they are needed most.

While not requesting detailed personal information, UNISON will require sufficient information in order to understand the barriers faced to get the right resources to the right people for this Conference. This will assist us in making adjustments that are meaningful and appropriate to the individual.

Appeals

Regions monitor the delegations submitted by branches to ensure compliance with the scheme and proportionality and fair representation. Branches have a right of appeal against a decision by their region that their proposed branch delegation is not in line with this scheme – your regional admin contact (see page 3) can help you arrange a regional lay appeal.

Motions/Amendments to Standing Orders

Motions for the Conference agenda will be accepted from retired members' groups/sections registered with regions and from regional retired members' committees, as well as from the National Retired Members' Committee. There is no limit to the number of motions which can be submitted by any of these groups. Please refer to the advice from the Standing Orders Committee about submission of motions, enclosed with this Conference Bulletin.

The **Preliminary Agenda** will be published online on **Wednesday 21 July 2021**. The **Final Agenda** will be published online on **Wednesday 15 September 2021**.

Amendments to Motions

Submission rights for amendments to motions are the same as those for motions and amendments to standing orders.

Agenda Prioritisation Process

Due to the significant increase in the numbers of motions and amendments received in the last few years, the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) have decided to review the success of the current prioritisation process. For 2020 we will be reverting to the original 2017 process of hearing motions in a strict prioritisation points order. Any recommended changes to the process will be trialled for conference 2022.

The National Retired Members' Committee and Regional Retired Members' Committees will be asked to prioritise 6 motions from the preliminary agenda. Regional Retired Members' Committees should consult with those branches in their region with active retired members' sections, as well as those that are represented on the Regional Retired members' Committee, on which motions they prioritise.

Emergency Motions

There is no provision for submission of emergency motions on the virtual platform.

Standing Orders for the Conduct of Retired Members Conference (Page 10-13)

Standing Orders are attached in full at the back of this bulletin.

Advice on Writing Motions and Amendments (Page 14-17)

Due to the high number of motions ruled out of order last year, the SOC have agreed to attach guidance and advice on motion writing which you can find attached to this bulletin.

It is a copy of the advice given in the February U magazine for members and aims to be a useful guide to help you write successful motions for any UNISON conference.

It's a combination of general advice for beginners, plus clarity and guidance on common issues that arise and pointers on what to avoid.

It is neither an exhaustive list of all the questions you may have or issues that may come up, nor a step-by-step instruction guide on how to submit your motion to your committee structures or through UNISON's online conference system.

If you want further advice on motions you are planning to submit, then this is available in your region from regional council officers and your region's standing orders committee representative.

Change of Delegate

Branches may change delegates before the start of Conference. A member registering as a substitute branch delegate must have been eligible to represent the branch at the closing date for registration of delegates **Monday 13th September at 4.00pm**. Any changes must be in accordance with the Scheme of Branch Representation.

Caucus Meetings

Caucus meetings will be held on **Tuesday 12th October between 1.30pm and 4.00pm**. The caucus meetings are informal meetings open to retired members who identify themselves as belonging to the following groups: women members, Black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus members. There is a specific meeting for each group.

Due to the informal nature of these meetings there will be no staff involvement and members attending are free to identify the issues of mutual interest they wish to discuss in a confidential environment. However it is advisable for each meeting to agree a person to facilitate debate by ensuring that everyone, who wishes to, has a chance to participate in discussions. Members wishing to attend caucus meetings will be provided with details of how to join the meetings at a later date.

Due to the informal nature of these meetings there will be no staff involvement and members attending are free to identify the issues of mutual interest they wish to discuss in a confidential environment. However it is advisable for each meeting to agree a person to facilitate debate by ensuring that everyone, who wishes to, has a chance to participate in discussions. Members wishing to attend caucus meetings will find details of their location in the venue in the Conference Guide.

Data Protection

The information you provide via the OCS, in addition to your information held on UNISON's membership database, will be used for the organisation and administration of Conference. It may also be used for statistical purposes as this helps us plan future conferences. We will process your personal data in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). You can find out more about how UNISON processes your personal data by going to unison.org.uk/privacy-policy or emailing dataprotection@unison.co.uk.

STANDING ORDERS FOR THE CONDUCT OF UNISON RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCES (as amended at 2019 Conference)

1. COMPOSITION OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

- 1.1 The Standing Orders Committee shall consist of one retired member from each UNISON region.

2. FUNCTIONS OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

- 2.1 The members of the Standing Orders Committee shall hold office from the time of their election onto the Standing Orders Committee until the end of the next Retired Members' Conference.
- 2.2 At its first meeting after it takes office, the Committee shall elect a Chairperson and a Deputy Chairperson from amongst its members.
- 2.3 The functions of the Committee shall, subject to these Standing Orders, be to:
 - 2.3.1 Ensure that the Union's Rules and Standing Orders relating to the business of Conferences are observed, and notify the Chairperson of Conference of any violation that may be brought to the Committee's notice
 - 2.3.2 Draw up the preliminary agenda and final agenda of Conference business, and the proposed hours of business, to be circulated in accordance with the timetable stated in Rule D.1.9 of the National Rules
 - 2.3.3 Determine the order in which the business of Conference shall be conducted, subject to the approval of Conference
 - 2.3.4 Consider all motions and amendments submitted for consideration by Conference and, for the purpose of enabling Conference to transact its business effectively the Committee shall:
 - 1) Decide whether such motions and amendments have been submitted in accordance with the Rules
 - 2) Group together motions and amendments relating to the same subject, decide the order in which they should be considered and whether they should be debated and voted on separately or debated together and voted on sequentially
 - 3) Prepare and revise, in consultation with the movers of motions and amendments, composite motions in terms which in the opinion of the Committee best express the subject of such motions and amendments
 - 4) Refer to the body within the Union a motion or amendment which in the opinion of the Committee should properly be considered there; the mover shall be informed of the reason for so doing
 - 5) Have power to do all such other things as may be necessary to give effect to these Standing Orders.
 - 6) Issue guidelines from time to time in order to assist with the smooth running of Conference. Such guidelines shall be consistent with these Standing Orders
- 2.4 Any decisions of the Committee which are to be reported to Conference shall be announced by the Chairperson of the Committee and shall be subject to ratification by Conference.

3. SPEAKING

- 3.1 Those empowered to speak shall be delegates appointed by branches or representatives appointed by regions, members of the National Committee and those members of UNISON staff so appointed by the National Committee, plus the Chairperson of the Standing Orders Committee. Any member of a regional Retired Members' Committee attending the conference as a regional or branch delegate may be appointed by their regional Retired Members' Committee to move a motion or amendment submitted by that regional Retired Members' Committee. A regional delegate may move a motion or amendment submitted by a Branch within that Region if the Branch concerned is unable to be present at the Conference.
- 3.2 Members of the National Committee may speak from the platform to Committee policy on any motion or amendment on the Conference agenda, at any time during debate, as agreed by the Chairperson of Conference and the National Committee.
- 3.3 Apart from the elected delegates and those persons who have the right to speak at the Conference under Standing Order 3.1, no other person shall speak except by permission of the Standing Orders Committee.

4. LIMIT OF SPEECHES

- 4.1 The mover of a motion or an amendment shall speak for not more than five minutes and each succeeding speaker for not more than three minutes, except where the Standing Orders Committee have decided otherwise.
- 4.2 No person shall speak more than once on a question, except that the mover of the original motion may exercise a right of reply for not more than three minutes, introducing no new material.

5. VOTING

- 5.1 The method of voting shall be by show of hands of the delegates appointed by branches and present at Conference. A card vote may be called by the President or, immediately after the result of the show of hands has been declared, by at least ten per cent of the delegates registered at the Conference.
- 5.2 In the event of a card vote being called or demanded, the vote shall be taken immediately after it has been demanded, but no business shall be suspended, pending the declaration of the result of the vote except that which in the President's opinion may be directly affected by the result.

6. TELLERS

Conference shall appoint delegates to act as tellers for the duration of the Conference.

7. PROCEDURE

- 7.1 Any questions of procedure or order raised during the Conference shall be decided by the Chairperson of Conference whose ruling shall be final and binding.

- 7.2 Upon the Chairperson of Conference rising during a Conference session, any person then addressing Conference shall resume her/his seat and no other person shall rise to speak until the Chairperson of Conference authorises proceedings to continue.
- 7.3 The Chairperson of Conference may call attention to continued irrelevance, tedious repetition, unbecoming language, or any breach of order on the part of a member and may direct such a member to discontinue her or his speech.
- 7.4 The Chairperson of Conference shall have power to call any person to order who is causing a disturbance in any session of Conference and if that person refuses to obey the Chairperson of Conference, she/he shall be named by the Chairperson of Conference, shall forthwith leave the Conference Hall, and shall take no further part in the proceedings of the Conference.
- 7.5 The following procedural motions may be moved at any time without previous notice on the agenda:
- (i) that the question now be put, provided that:
 - (a) the Chairperson of Conference may advise Conference not to accept this motion if in her/his opinion the matter has not been sufficiently discussed;
 - (b) if this motion is carried, it shall take effect at once, subject only to any right of reply under these Standing Orders.
 - (ii) that the Conference proceed to the next business;
 - (iii) that the debate be adjourned;
- No motion under (i), (ii) or (iii) above shall be moved by a person who has spoken on the motion or amendment in question.
- 7.6 Any person empowered to speak as in Standing Order 3.1 above may at any stage in the Conference raise a point of order if she/he considers that the business is not being conducted in accordance with the Union's Rules and the Standing Orders of this Conference.
- 7.7 Such a point of order must be raised as soon as the alleged breach occurs or at the earliest practicable moment thereafter.
- 7.8 The Chairperson of Conference's ruling on a point of order is final.

8. MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 8.1 Motions and amendments will normally be considered in the order in which they appear on the final agenda.
- 8.2 Other than items appearing on the Final Agenda, and those relating to procedure, the only motions allowed for debate shall be those submitted under the emergency procedure previously agreed by the Retired Members Conference Standing Orders Committee and which have been approved for debate by that Committee. Any such motions will be circulated at the commencement of Conference proceedings.

- 8.3 The Retired Members Conference Standing Orders Committee will decide before the Conference the place on the Final Agenda at which any emergency motions should be heard.
- 8.4 When an amendment to a motion is moved, no further amendment may be moved until the first one is disposed of.
- 8.5 When an amendment is defeated, a further amendment may be moved to the original motion.
- 8.6 When an amendment to a motion is carried, the motion, as so amended, shall become the substantive motion, to which a further amendment may be moved.
- 8.7 Any person empowered to speak as in Standing Order 3.1 above shall not move more than one amendment to any one motion, nor shall the mover of a motion move any amendment to such motion.

9. WITHDRAWALS OF MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS

- 9.1 A motion or amendment which appears on the Final Agenda may not be withdrawn without the consent of the Standing Orders Committee, whose decision shall be reported to Conference.
- 9.2 If a motion be withdrawn with the consent of the Standing Orders Committee, any amendment to that motion will fall.

10. REFERENCE OF OUTSTANDING ITEMS

- 10.1 If, at the end of the Conference, the Final Agenda has not been concluded, outstanding motions and amendments shall be referred to the National Retired Members Committee which shall report to the relevant Branch or submitting body its decisions on those matters. All such motions and amendments shall be responded to at least one month before the deadline for submission of motions and amendments to Standing Orders to the following year's Conference.

11. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

- 11.1 Any one or more of these Standing Orders may be suspended by a resolution of Conference in relation to a specific item of business properly before the Conference and to the proceedings thereon at the Conference, provided that at least two-thirds of the delegates present and voting shall vote for the resolution.

Rough Guide to writing motions for UNISON conferences

Motions are your way to influence UNISON, to shape and change policy, sometimes a grassroots motion from a branch, drafted by a single member, can lead to historic changes to our campaigning and policy agenda.

What follows hopes to be a useful guide to help you write successful motions for your conference. It's a combination of general advice for beginners, plus clarity and guidance on common issues that arise and pointers on what to avoid.

It is neither an exhaustive list of all the questions you may have or issues that may come up, nor a step-by-step instruction guide on how to submit your motion to your committee structures or through UNISON's online conference system.

If you want further advice on motions you are planning to submit, then this is available in your region from regional council officers and your region's standing orders committee representative.

So, first things first ...

Motion titles

Have a clear title for your motion – titles cannot be amended. A clear title helps everybody involved. For instance: "A carers policy fit for purpose", not "This inequity must stop". A title is used as shorthand at all subsequent meetings, so it helps if everyone is clear from the start.

Write in the name of 'conference'

If your motion is accepted onto the conference agenda and passed by conference, then it will belong to conference; it will be the collective voice and request of the entire conference – so it must be written as if the whole body of conference has written it. Phrases such as "conference notes that ..." and "therefore, conference calls on ..." are correct, rather than, for example, "the Bolton branch notes that".

A motion will be ruled out of order if does not speak in the voice of the conference.

Motion structure

At a basic level, a motion must have a title and a formal instruction for the conference to carry out. However, it's also important to have explanatory text covering what the issue is and why it is important to the conference.

Ideally, this would break down to having separate sections for:

- an introduction;
- some detail on why action is necessary;
- action sought.

Subject matter and ‘citizenship’ issues

All motions and amendments must be relevant to the conference being attended. For national delegate conference, or NDC, they must be relevant to the union as a whole. These are referred to as “citizenship” issues, rather than being issues for a service group or other smaller group.

For example, motions submitted to the retired members’ conference should be on issues that predominantly affect retired members only.

Accuracy

It’s a good idea to fact check your motion – try not to assume the state of current law, negotiations or agreed policy, etc – find out. Motions can fall if the facts are challenged.

Actions sought

Ask for clear objectives that are possible to achieve – for instance, a “review of our peace strategy” not “we demand world peace”.

Make sure the asks are being requested of the correct body for the conference you are submitting to. For instance, for NDC, the body that is being called on to act on the motion is the national executive council, where for women’s conference it will be the national women’s committee.

Calls v Instructs

UNISON’s standing orders committees see a distinction between motions that call on another body or part of the union to do something and one that instructs them.

When using “instruct”, submitters of motions should be clear that the conference does indeed have the power to instruct this body and, in addition, that the body being instructed has the power to undertake or ensure the action.

Even when using “call” or “seek to ensure”, submitters should still check that the conference has the power to call on this body and the body has the power to undertake or ensure the action.

For example, if you ask that the NEC ensures a letter is received by every member, this would not be possible, as the NEC doesn’t have full control over the accurate delivery of mail. Alternative wording is usually better, such as “seek to send every member a letter”.

Devolution

Be aware that due to devolution, proposals in some motions may not apply across the UK because of devolved governmental structures. This should be reflected in the motion and particularly when asking for relevant actions.

The government

Motions can be submitted on the policy or actions of the government and/or previous governments. However, when using the word “Labour”, motions must be clear whether they are referring to past or future Labour governments or the Labour Party (see below).

Affiliated political fund

Matters affecting the Labour Party, both in relation to internal issues and matters to be pursued at Labour Party conference, are dealt with by the affiliated political fund (Labour Link), not NDC or any other conference.

Staffing matters

Any motion seeking to influence or direct matters relating to UNISON’s staffing arrangements will be ruled out of order. Staffing matters are the sole responsibility of the NEC and the general secretary.

Legal Jeopardy

A motion can be ruled out of order if UNISON’s legal advisors determine that there is a risk that the wording of the motion could jeopardise either a current legal case, the reputation of the union or any future case brought against the union.

For instance, motions or amendments must not describe previous or current disputes as being “against privatisation” or similar such words, as this could leave the union open to legal challenge.

Calling for industrial action/unlawful action

Try to make sure you aren’t accidentally asking for the union to enter into unlawful industrial action. This can be a very tricky area. The NEC has exclusive power to authorise industrial action.

To be lawful, industrial action must relate to a trade dispute as defined by s.218 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. For instance, motions calling for industrial action over privatisation or over “the cuts” do not fall in the legal definition of a trade dispute and so must not be debated, as this would put the union in legal jeopardy.

Who should submit and move the motion

There can sometimes be options of whether a branch, region or other body formally submits your motion. This will, in turn, determine who can officially “move” it at conference.

The “mover” of a motion is the person who will stand up at conference and officially start the motion debate.

Being a registered delegate does not mean you will automatically be entitled to move a motion from your region/branch/committee.

Only delegates attending in the role of the submitting body can move a motion. Delegates cannot change their delegated role to cover absent colleagues. So it is important to be very clear about the role in which you are attending conference.

For example, if the motion was submitted by your branch you can only move it if you are attending the conference explicitly in the role of “branch delegate”. If you are attending in any other role you would not be able to move the motion.

If there is no appropriate delegate present at the conference when the motion is reached on the agenda, the motion cannot be moved and will fall.

Amendments

Amendments can be difficult to get right – everyone reading an amendment will need to be able to work out what it changes about the original motion, so clarity is really important.

Identify precisely where an amendment is sought, before stating what it is. For example: “In paragraph 3. Insert after ‘faced with disciplinary action’ the words ‘including obtaining legal advice as necessary’.”

It can be helpful to then write out in full the proposed amendment. “The paragraph as amended now reads: ‘We will fully support our members faced with disciplinary action, including obtaining legal advice as necessary’.”

Amendments are not competent if they fundamentally alter or go against the spirit of the motion or don’t make sense. So where an original motion reads, “To declare Arsenal as the best team in North London” and the proposed amendment is to “delete Arsenal and replace with Spurs”, that would change the intention of the motion and would be ruled out of order.

And finally ...

Rule changes

This is a big one and has led to a great deal of confusion for many submitters.

The national standing orders committee guidance states that the UNISON rule book can only be amended at NDC.

If a rule change or a new rule is required to fulfil the aims of your motion, the motion is likely to be ruled out of order.

Therefore remember to check whether your motion impacts on existing rules.

Note that recent clarification has been given that only certain bodies can submit rule changes under the online conference system and these bodies cannot be **mandated** or otherwise **instructed** to submit particular rule changes by any other body.