



Manchester Debating Union

COMMITTEE MEETING

26/11/2014

Attendance: Alex, Chloe, Mhairi, Katie Mo, Katie Mc, Becky, Laura, Declan, Rose, Ria, Helen

Apologies: Martin, Conor, Josh, Elle

EXECUTIVE ELECTION SYSTEM

Proposal: Changing the voting system from First Past the Post to the Alternative Vote

Executive positions are currently decided by FPTP.

In FPTP everyone votes for their favourite candidate. The candidate with the most votes wins. However, if the vote is split between several candidates someone may win with less than 50% of the vote, so a candidate could win who over 50% of voters did not want. The MDU executive elections are high stakes, as there are only 5 elected positions which are sometimes very hotly contested. Often, someone will not run for a position as they are worried they will split the vote and an unpopular or less competent person will get in due to this. This stops good competent people running for elections. We want as many good competent people as possible to run, and always make sure that whoever wins an executive position is preferred by over 50% of the electorate of the MDU.

To solve this, I propose we change to another electoral system called the alternative vote (AV). AV is a preferential system where the voter has the chance to rank the candidates in order of preference. The voter puts a '1' by their first choice a '2' by their second choice, and so on, until they no longer wish to express any further preferences or run out of candidates. Candidates are elected outright if they gain more than half of the first preference votes. If not, the candidate who lost (the one with least first preferences) is eliminated and their votes are redistributed according to the second (or next available) preference marked on the ballot paper. This process continues until one candidate has half of the votes and is elected. This means two good candidates can run without the worry of stealing votes from the other, as the second best of those two will then be eliminated and their votes redistributed. You then get the candidate the most people want. This system is used to choose leadership positions in most political parties (basically most things that are several people running for one post).

To have this rather boring concept explained to use with the use of cats, please click here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiHuiDD_oTk

Becky: people can be elected without more than 30% of vote. Like having a run off in one vote. As many good people as possible can run (people will not, not run). This is used to elect the politic people in the UK.

Question Chloe: is this going to overcomplicate stuff. Becky: few people run, will not take long. Alex, we can use programs to figure it out. Katie: the second choice will not get seen, people might not be able to see all of their views.

You don't have to number all the candidates, people can't win on being the least non-liked. The really good person would win. Or the one people agree on most would be elected.

Alex we can use another system: extension of AV to take it for everything. Declan: is the AV system better for people to want to stand for positions. Not to worry about splitting the vote.

People chat about who they are going to vote for. This may avoid this from happening. Laura: people might not run because they may be put as second choice.

You need to get 50% to win, will this be useful when more when more people win.

Vote:

Yes: 6

No: 2

Abstain: 2

Didn't pass, will come back to another meeting

Declan: add it to the agenda of the next meeting.

SENDING TO COMPETITIONS:

Team Selection Policy

Proposal: We feel that we cannot give strict guidelines on how to select teams for tournaments as it depends who applies and what the standard of the tournament in question is. We suggest broad guidelines that can be interpreted in different situations, namely the following:

London-based and other large (i.e. Durham) competitions tend to be of a high standard therefore we believe priority should be given to our most competitive teams and where there are extra spaces development teams

NAMDA competitions do not tend to be of this same standard. Therefore generally priority should be given to development teams and novice teams.

Open competitions are an opportunity to send pro-ams that may not be possible at other tournaments therefore pro-ams should be prioritised for team spots.

The only exception applies to the selected Euros / Worlds teams. These teams should be given priority at competitions directly before these tournaments that advertise themselves as Euros / Worlds prep. This is so that they have the opportunity possible to develop before these large tournaments.

Within these guidelines the decision is at the discretion of the competitions convenor, who must be able to explain their decision with some reference to these guidelines. If individuals are unhappy about this method of selection they can appeal to the equity officer who can review the situation and bring it to the attention of the committee should there be a reason to believe the decision should be overturned.

Reasons:

We need a selection policy given that lots of tournaments are likely to be oversubscribed in future and we need something fairer than first come first served. It is too difficult to set a policy that works in every situation and therefore we need flexible guidelines. The competitions convenor is the person best placed to assess how these guidelines apply to each competition and to see whether these guidelines are helpful. Furthermore this policy means it is easy for people to understand why they may or may not have been selected by objective measures and there is a way in which they can complain if they are unhappy with how decisions are made.

Becky: need to be better worded: eg NAMDA: competitive teams that might break at these competitions.

Katie: why is it important that they get breaks?

Laura: breaking at things should not be a priority.

Chloe: getting breaks for the society is important, not ruling out people, also to stop people going that always go.

Becky: bad to stop people going to tournaments, they might not be able to get better. Breaks are important, as they gain more experience that can then be fed back into the society.

Mhairi: novices should be prioritized at NAMDA, training you always speak against the same people; you need to go to competitions in order to get better. Need to change wording (London to competitive, etc,...)

Ria: we need to breaking teams but at team that could break should be given one team priority. Katie, use the word occasionally

Katie Mc: can't always see every situation. Can't formulate a policy for every single context.

Becky: even if people are very good, they might not be able to go to competitions, NAMDA can be expensive.

Alex: I don't really think I should really be voting on that. Chloe; just sets out that what Katie wants to do.

Becky: people should be able to buy teams. Should be able to go to committee

Vote (with three amendments)

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstain: 1

Policy past

Katie Mc: policy for buying teams

Becky: send Helen new wording: amendments: wording and going to equity officer, considering breaking teams.

HOUSE COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

Proposal:

- The House Committee, as a body is limited to 10 people (including Externals and Chair, who both chair and lead the committee).
- Members of the House Committee are chosen by the Externals Officer and the Chair after Committee Positions are chosen by the exec.
- Members of the House Committee have specific roles, such as (but not limited to) - Finding speakers for debates, finding speakers for addresses, organising the filming of events, sorting out the rooms (getting tables, chairs etc), ushering people in.
 - I see this as having dual roles, everyone either finds speakers for debates/addresses, then has another role on top of that.

Why this is necessary:

- This provides a firm and stable structure to the House Committee, giving distinct roles to the body and it be a decision making body.
 - Makes it more likely that people will want to get involved in the House Committee.
- As the MDU grows, and our events become more popular, the expectation is also greater, which increases our need to be able to fill that, which can happen with a larger, more legitimate and serious House Committee.
 - Different roles may be necessary in the future if we do continue to grow, ticketing etc, if we have this structure in place already then we'll be well ahead.
- More likely to get more, and hopefully better, speakers.
 - More people focused on doing this job, seen as a much more important role.
 - Similar structure to other debating unions such as Durham, who are very successful at getting a broad range of speakers and celebrity addresses.
- Free's up Chairs time
 - Not having to spend most of their time contacting speakers
 - Able to focus on overseeing inner working of committee and providing support there.

Amendments after discussions

- Committee Members can sit on House Committee - Treasurer be part of the House Committee to ensure insight in regards to Budget.
- House Committee Responsible for putting forward list of Public Debate motions by specified date for each Semester - which is then ratified by the committee.

Positions on House Committee

Chair - Interchangeable between the MDU Chair and Externals Officer.

Secretary x 1 - Minutes the meetings.

Speakers x 10 - All members of the house committee will be responsible for finding the speakers for one or more of the years public debates.

Addresses x 2 - Two roles organise and look for speakers for public addresses.

Filming x 1 - One role, who organises the filming of the debates. They work under the Publicity and Comms team to arrange editing and uploading.

Becky: can other members of the public come to the meetings? Yes, won't be given anything to do.

VOTE

Yes: 10

No: 0

Abstain: 0

LIFETIME OR RENEWED MEMBERSHIP

Proposal:

Membership should be changed from lifetime membership to annual membership, starting at the beginning of next semester.

This would mean that people would pay between £30-£60 over their time at university (av. 3 year degree) to be part of the MDU.

Existing lifetime members would not be affected by this- they would still be lifetime members.

Reasons why it is a good thing to do:

Money is a good thing to have- this would open up a new revenue stream and would enable us to !do more things as a debating society- send more to IVs, have better externals etc.

Most people who become members in their first year and who are significantly committed to the MDU will probably pay £10 to buy membership again.

Still competitive compared to other societies- most societies which offer equivalent things are significantly more expensive to join (eg sports societies). Societies which offer considerably fewer membership benefits than ours can also be more expensive to join.

VOTE:

Yes 9

No 0

Abstain 1

Passed

ADVANCED TRAINING ATTENDANCE

Advanced Training Attendance

Regular attendance to advanced training is permitted to those who also regularly attend Tuesday Training sessions. If someone is refusing to attend tuesday training sessions where they are able to they will be unable to participate in advanced training until they begin attending Tuesday trainings regularly.

If an individual has a legitimate reason for not being able to attend Tuesday trainings (included but not limited to: Lecture, Job etc.), they must submit a request to the training officer to be able to continue to attend Advanced training.

The Training Officer should keep a list of those attending Advanced Training.

Decision lies with training officer, but can seek help with equity officer.

Becky: people should prioritize Tuesday, maybe alternate each week.

Ria: depends on circumstances, Laura: discretion of the training coordinator.

Becky; submit policy about funding people for competition relative to their attendance to training.

Declan: post this policy to the case files groups

Vote

Yes 10

No 0

Abstain: 0

Passed

PRO-AM PAYEMENT POLICY

Pro-am Payment Policy 1

Proposal: That we should pay for half of a composite pro-am when the MDU member is the 'am', when it is a clear pro-am. Whether or not the team is a pro-am team is to be decided by the Competitions Convenor and the Training Coordinator.

Reason: There is no absolutely no expectation on the circuit to pay for pros from other societies, and we are already financially stretched paying for all MDU members who want to go to competitions- the competitions budget is finite and it would be unfair to send less MDU teams to a given competition because we had spent the money on people who had never actually paid to join.

Pro-am Payment Policy 2

Proposal: We should pay for a full composite pro-am team when the MDU member is the 'am', when it is a pro-am. The Training Co-ordinator and the Competitions Co-ordinator decide whether is it a pro-am or not.

Reason: It's fairer, when a good debater is doing us a favour and helping out one of our novices, to cover the competitions cost for them. They are taking their time to help teach/develop one of our speakers and should not have to pay to go to a competition at which they would have a higher chance of not doing as well. I think it's generally expected that you would cover the costs, and not doing so would probably annoy the person pro-amming, and make them less likely to do so in the future.

Declan: this would be a Manchester team, not extra teams on top to pay for.

Becky: if we don't pay, people will stop giving pro-ams.

Laura: we utilize people on the circuit, who want to debate anyway, people will pay in a large amount of cases.

Alex: is this experience better than having a novice team speak together, does that person get that much more benefit.

Ria: we don't have the money, is this absolutely necessary?

Becky; if the training/competitions coordinator sees that this is relevant, we can also appeal to committee.

Mhairi: people will go even if they have to pay, the quality of a proams, people will be willing to proam.

Chloe: we need to look at how proams get chosen first before voting/amending.

PRO-AM FORMATION

Proposal:

There must be a formal pro-am list within the MDU. On this list will be the names of any individuals who have not received a pro-am since starting to debate for Manchester.

When organising pro-ams within, or outside, the MDU pro-ams should be allocated down the list. The list will be organised on the basis of how long a person has been waiting for a pro-am and no other factor. The individual at the top of the list is automatically allocated the next pro-am that is offered.

There would be few exceptions to this rule. For example, if a very superior pro signed up that an individual further down the pro-am list would benefit from more than someone higher up. This would be at the discretion of the training officer and competitions convenor (with the ability to appeal to the equity officer and the committee). In addition equity concerns may be an exception, for example if an individual feels uncomfortable speaking with someone of the opposite gender. This information (ability and preferences) could be collated on the list.

An individual will be moved off / down the list when they receive a pro-am. Individuals will also be moved down the list where they arrange their own pro-am or do something bad related to their pro-am standing, i.e. cancel.

This proposal does not seek to stop individuals arranging / seeking their own pro-ams, it seeks to prevent MDU members arranging pro-ams in a way that may be perceived as unfair.

Reasons:

This proposal would prevent any member of the MDU from being able to prioritise pro-ams purely on the basis of any attribute. This means that the MDU remains as inclusive as possible. We would be better able to monitor those who were given opportunities and those that were being missed out. It also means we are better able to share out the resources that we do have fairly.

Pro-ams policy: we should have a centralized list, starts with people on this list, they should be prioritized

Becky: need to show a commitment to the MDU, look at weighting between participants

Chloe: just have that it is not ok to prioritize some people. Laura: it is wrong to go and prioritize people in a certain category.

Becky: we would not ask people who discriminate, but we may take away a large number of people who want can be pro-ames (some will only pro-am women...). Friends: can create a problem of favoritism, but its hard to legislate for that.

Alex: great that we have connections, need to enter as a separate pro-am team, so that there is no favoritism on this side of the society.

Declan: we should push for the top of the list, but we should not lose a pro-am., if someone asks to speak with a specific fresher.

Ria: the case of Conor with a list, but here we have becky that have arragned it, Conor should pay for this.

Chloe: follow what Declan says, but we should combat that attitude!

Laura: if we decide in payment policy, we can say that if you want a pro-am, then we can say that we don't have to pay

Becky: is this list published and who can see it? Going to stuff might change your place on the list.

Alex: the list should not be published; people can then get mad if others get proams.

Mhairi: we should vote on it now, than add amendments

VOTE on amendment on waiting on list:

Vote

Yes: 9

No 1

Abstain 0

Passed

People need to send in amendments