

Hart House Debating Club Charter



Updated as of March 2025

1. This club shall be known as the Hart House Debating Club (the Club).
2. The purpose of the Hart House Debating Club is to:
 - a) Encourage the use of debating skills among interested students from all colleges and faculties across the University of Toronto; and
 - b) To provide a forum in which members interact to improve verbal skills and speaking confidence of Club members through the separate use of informal debates; in-house tournaments, and off-campus tournaments
3. These procedures have priority over all other rules, regulations, traditions or customs of the Club. The contents of this document delineate mandatory procedures of the Club executive and Club operation and some, but not all, of the specific duties of each member of the executive and of the executive as a whole within the framework of the Hart House Club and Committee system.
4. To be a Traveling Member of the Club one must:
 - a) be a member of Hart House
 - b) purchase a Club membership for the current academic year
 - c) have fulfilled the service requirements as stipulated in the Operations Guide
5. Officers of the executive and their election
 - a) The whole executive shall determine the long-term policy authority of the Club with the Club Secretary handling all short-term (inter-meeting) policy
 - b) The executive shall consist of seventeen (17) members: President, Treasurer, External Tournaments Coordinator (Logistics), External Tournaments Coordinator (Club Operations), Internal Tournaments Coordinator, two Meetings Coordinators, Communications Director, Outreach Director, Socials Director, Equity Officer, two Novice Members-at-Large, Fundraising Director (non-voting), two recording secretaries (non-voting), and two novice members-at-large
 - c) The first 11 of these positions shall be filled for the following academic year by-elections at the end of the academic year, the specific date and time to be determined by the incumbent Executive
 - d) The Novice Members-at-Large
 - i. shall be elected no later than the last day in October in the year in which the positions will be held,
 - ii. shall be elected from amongst those members who are in their first year of debating with the club; and
 - iii. in the event that a member has transferred from another club, they will not be allowed to run for election as Novice Member-at- Large

- e) Should insufficient eligible candidates present themselves for the position of Novice Member-at-Large, a returning member of the club may run for election as Member-at-Large

- f) The Program Advisor shall be appointed by Hart House

6. Election Procedures

- a) Only members who have a minimum of 8 meetings in the academic year may cast a ballot for each elected Executive position.
 - i. In a given year, the Executive may vote to lower this eligibility requirement to a minimum of 4 meetings, provided that there has been some hindrance to meeting attendance that justifies a temporary exception. If passed by majority vote, the exception will apply to only the upcoming election season. The Executive must propose and vote on lowering this requirement before election nominations open.
- b) For the March elections, to be considered eligible to vote, one must have held membership in the Club for not less than two weeks.
- c) For the election of the Novice Members-at-Large, only members in their first academic year as members of the Club shall be allowed to vote.
- d) In the event that one or more of the Novice Member-at-Large positions becomes open to returning Club members, the other returning Club members shall be allowed to vote in that election.
- e) In the event that a member has transferred from another club, they shall be treated as a senior member in terms of voting eligibility.
- f) If a vacancy in the Executive occurs after the March election and before the September/October elections that position shall be open for voting during the September/October election and the voter eligibility requirements shall be the same as for the member at large position elected at the same time.
 - i. The executive may circumvent the intermission period for the vacancy election upon a simple majority vote. The voter eligibility requirements in this circumstance shall be the same as the most recent March election. This process can only be undertaken where the executive determines that the absence of an executive member reasonably poses a significant detriment to expected club functions.
- g) Should a position on the Executive become vacant during the academic year, the Executive shall hold a by-election as soon as feasible.
 - i. If a by-election cannot be held for whatever reason, the responsibilities of the vacant executive role may be absorbed by existing members of the Executive
- h) The Executive shall also make all reasonable efforts to notify all Club members of election and by-election dates; at the same time, they must also provide the criteria for candidacy and voting.

- i) In order to qualify for election, a candidate must be an eligible voter.
- j) The winner of the election shall be determined by simple majority (50% +1) under the instant runoff voting system and in compliance with the applicable Hart House Club and Committee election procedure.
- k) Except as otherwise stated in this procedure manual, the rules governing elections shall be the same for all other Hart House Committees. These rules can be acquired from the Club and Committees Guidelines document, available from the Program Advisor.

7. Impeachment of a Member of the Executive

- a) A member of the Executive may be impeached if:
 - i. They have failed to attend three consecutive Executive meetings without sending regrets or;
 - ii. They have failed to attend at least 4 regular meetings in a given academic semester, barring exceptional circumstances (with an explanation to the Executive), such as a coaching obligation or an unavoidable class conflict;
 - iii. They have failed to perform their assigned duties or otherwise grossly interfered with the operating of the Executive
- b) Any Member of Executive may motion for impeachment of another Member.
- c) A motion for impeachment may only be carried by a two-thirds supermajority. Reasonable attempts must be made to contact the Executive Member to inform him or her of the motion, at least one week in advance, before it may be brought to a vote

8. Executive Meetings

- a) Executive meetings shall be held every two weeks during the regular academic year (September to December and January to May)
- b) Each elected Executive member has one vote at Executive meetings; non-elected members do not have votes at executive meetings.
- c) Quorum for meetings shall be fifty percent (50%) of all filled elected positions. Except as otherwise stated in this Charter, or in the Operations Guide, the rules governing Executive meetings shall be in the same as for all other Hart House Committees

9. Regular Meetings

- a) The Club shall hold twice-weekly informal meetings during the regular academic year.
- b) At the end of each term, the Executive shall release a General Feedback Form which shall serve as a forum for the club membership to voice their concerns to the outgoing and incoming executive.
- c) The incumbent Executive shall give club members notice of the date for the Annual General Meeting at least two weeks in advance.

10. Club Archives and Files

- a) Once a semester, the Treasurer will present a review of the budget to the Club
- b) The President will regularly update the Club on important voting issues (i.e. when there has been a change to the Operations Guide or Charter, approval of new events, etc)

11. Amendment to the Hart House Debating Club Charter

- a) All Executive members must be advised of any proposed amendment or change to this document, and be advised of the proposed amendments or changes at least 2 weeks before the scheduled date to vote on them
- b) Any amendment to this document must be approved by at least two-thirds of the executive
- c) All rules regarding the normal procedure of executive meetings apply to meetings dealing with amendments or changes to the Procedures Manual

12. Amendments to the Hart House Debating Club Operations Guide

The Executive may amend or adopt clauses in the Operations Guide not inconsistent with this charter. Such changes shall require a simple majority of 50% + 1 of the Executive members.