



# Frequently Asked Questions

#NASUWT23

**NASUWT**  
The Teachers' Union

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# Annual Conference 2023 – Frequently Asked Questions

These FAQ are designed to help if this is your first Annual Conference or if you've been before but didn't understand how everything worked. The list of questions isn't exhaustive, but it should at least help to demystify the basics.

## What is Annual Conference?

Annual Conference is the group of NASUWT members who come together each year to set the policy of the union and to hold the National Executive to account. Annual Conference takes place once a year, usually over the Easter weekend.

The conference is the sovereign decision-making body of the union. As well as setting policy, conference agrees changes to the Union's rules and debates and agrees the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

## Who attends Annual Conference?

Every NASUWT local association is allowed to send at least two 'elected representatives to Annual Conference. These can either be self-nominated or elected at a quorate meeting of their local association or federation. Each local association is allocated a maximum number of elected representatives based on its total membership.

In addition a number of other NASUWT members participate because of positions they hold in the Union's democratic structures, including

- Members of the National Executive Committee and the National Officers
- Two representatives for the Federation of Retired Members Association
- Two representatives of the Executives Councils of each of the devolved nations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales)
- Past Presidents of the Union

## Who sits on the stage?

- The Chair (usually the President)
- The other National Officers
- The General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary
- Members of the National Executive Committee (in rotation)
- The Chair of the Standing Orders Committee

## Who else attends Conference?

- Press
- Politicians
- Guests from other trade unions (domestic and international) and organisations with which the Union works closely
- Observers – local associations can also nominate members to come and observe conference without the option to speak or vote in debates
- Staff, including contractors who help deliver this important event

Most sessions of Conference are 'public'. This means that any member or the public is welcome to register and attend and watch the debate.

## What is the Standing Orders Committee?

The Standing Orders Committee is a group of members who help to run conference and advise the Chair on the conduct of business and interpretation of the standing orders, which govern how the conference is run. Some of its members are elected from the National Executive and others are elected by members of conference following the nomination of candidates by local associations. Members serve for one year but can be re-elected for further terms of office.

You will be invited to vote for members of the Standing Orders Committee to support the Union's 2024 Annual Conference. Please use your vote, their role is very important.

The Standing Orders Committee decide which local associations (or the National Executive) move and second motions and amendments.

If a single local association has submitted a motion and it isn't composited, they will both move and second. Where more than one local association submits a motion, or where the motions of more than one local association are composited, the Standing Orders Committee will usually divide the proposing and seconding across more than one local association.

During Conference, anyone wishing to speak, to submit an amendment to a motion, move a procedural motion or to raise a point of order to submit this to the Standing Orders Committee who will bring this to the attention of the Chair.

## What is a private (or closed) session?

Guests, including the media, are invited to watch conference. This helps to create a buzz around what we do, but there are some things we discuss that we don't want reported in the media, for example, sensitive items such as the union's financial statements and any contentious motions.

These can be held in private (or closed) session. Only members of the Union and staff are allowed to be present. Everyone else is required to leave.

## Who decides what motions are debated?

Each local association and the National Executive are invited to submit motions in the run up to conference.

All motions are checked by the Standing Orders Committee for accuracy, to ensure they are competent and to make sure they wouldn't commit the Union to do something that was impossible to achieve, against its rules or illegal.

Where motions from more than one local association are on the same topic, the Standing Orders Committee will sometimes amalgamate them to form a 'composite' motion.

The Standing Orders Committee additionally sort motions into sections; these are ones used:

- Education
- Equality
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Pay, Pensions and Conditions of Service
- Social, Economic and International
- Training, Recruitment and Union Organising

There are always more motions than Conference will have time to debate, so a full list is sent to all members for them to vote on the 20 they most want to see on the final list (called the conference agenda).

The top six motions are scheduled to place at the start of six of the public sessions of Conference.

In addition, the National Executive can also table one or more urgency (2b) motions and the Executive Council from each of the devolved nation can also submit a motion highlighting policy concerns specific to their nation.

## What are amendments?

The final list of prioritised motions is sent to local associations before the agenda is printed. If they feel they could improve on motions by adding to them, changing the wording etc. they can submit amendments, if agreed at a quorate meeting.

Amendments go through the same process of checking and compositing as motions before being added to the agenda.

## How can I speak in a debate (and what are speakers' cards)?

First to speak is always the member moving the motion. The mover is given up to eight minutes to speak. The seconder, also speaking in favour of the motion, is given five minutes.

After this other members of conference can speak for against or to the motion. To be considered to speak by the Chair, you must complete a speakers' form. You will have the link to the form on the conference app. The members of the Standing Orders Committee, who are seated at a desk in front of the stage, will be able to help with filling in the form if you need it.

The first time you speak in a debate you're going to be nervous! Many first timers break the ice by telling Conference they've not spoken before. That always guarantees a warm reception.

### **What happens if there is an amendment to a motion?**

If an amendment appears under a motion in the agenda, it will be debated after the motion has been moved and seconded, but before any further speakers are taken. If it is voted on and approved, the now amended motion will then be debated. If there is more than one amendment, this process will continue until all amendments are heard or conference stops the process (see the section below on procedural motions).

Amendments are debated in the same way as motions; the proposer has up to four minutes to speak.

### **What is the 'right of reply'?**

At the end of the debate the original mover has a 'right of reply', this gives them an additional four minutes to respond.

The right of reply is always the last speech before the vote.

### **When does the debate stop?**

If conference runs out of time or out of speakers (or if there are lots of speakers for the motion, but no more against (or vice-versa)), the Chair will usually call for a vote.

There are other ways conference can request debates be finished; these are covered in the procedural motions section later.

### **How does Conference vote on motions?**

Voting is done by a show of hands. Members of conference can vote for the motion (or amendment) or they can vote against it. There is no provision for abstentions.

Usually, a show of hands is clear and the Chair declares the result. Conference can also demand a card vote by a show of hands this involves representatives of not less than 40 Local Associations, whose combined membership is 8,000 or more, rising from their places and claim a card vote.

## How is a Card Vote different from a show of hands?

A show of hands vote gives each member who votes one vote, but this doesn't represent the actual number of votes everyone holds.

Members of conference who attend as a member of National Executive or as a result of another office they hold have one vote each.

But members who are representing their local association carry a share of the total vote of their local association. For example, if a local association has 3000 members that local association will have 3000 votes. When a card vote is called, this larger number is counted and the vote is more accurate.

Your local association representative will be given a book of card votes and asked to use it when a card vote is called. It's very simple to use

## What are procedural motions?

Procedural motions allow conference to exert its control on debate.

They need to be moved, seconded and debated, but the process is much quicker than normal motions.

The following procedural motions may be moved and only at the discretion of the Chair:

- that the speaker be further heard;
- that the speaker be not further heard;
- that the question be now put;
- that the question be not put;
- that the Motion be referred to the National Executive for further consideration;
- that the time for speakers provided by Standing Order 15 be reduced to a specified time for the remainder of the session or for the remainder of Conference;
- that a Motion allocated to Private Session be debated in public;
- that a Motion allocated to Public Session be debated in private;
- that an Urgency Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 8 be called for debate;
- that a Standing Order be suspended for a specified purpose.

## And what are standing orders?

As previously mentioned, standing orders are the rules by which Conference is run. Many of them are covered above, but a full document is available, and is supplied as a conference publication on the app.

## Where/how do I book my accommodation?

Elected representatives at Annual Conference are entitled to claim up to five nights' accommodation between the Thursday and Monday of the conference.

Accommodation bookings for all Conference Representatives must be made using the Reservation Highway central booking system.

The Reservation Highway system is intended to save local associations time and money without restricting your independence. The benefits include:

- all payment administration is processed by Reservation Highway on behalf of the NASUWT;
- discounted rates, only available by booking through Reservation Highway;
- no need to pay upfront;
- no need to supply credit cards or raise invoices;
- simply book your rooms and let Reservation Highway do the rest;
- a wide choice of hotel options situated close to the Conference venue with all hotel listings available in one place to save time and effort searching;
- flexibility of options to assist Local Associations;
- easy-to-use online booking system and telephone/email enquiries handled by Reservation Highway office.

This service can be accessed via [www.reservation-highway.co.uk/nasuwt23](http://www.reservation-highway.co.uk/nasuwt23) and further support can be accessed via [01423 525577](tel:01423525577) or [admin@reservation-highway.co.uk](mailto:admin@reservation-highway.co.uk)

If you have any questions or need any clarification on this partnership or on the benefits to your local association, please email [annconf@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:annconf@mail.nasuwt.org.uk).

Any elected representatives requiring a sixth night of accommodation due to exceptional circumstances must seek prior approval from the Honorary Treasurer and contact the Conference and Events Team to support the booking.

A decision for family members to accompany elected representatives to Annual Conference and the reimbursement and tariff rates for family accommodation, travel and subsistence must be considered and approved at a quorate local meeting.

## How do I book a Crèche place?

A crèche facility will be provided for those elected representatives who require childcare provision over the course of the Conference. Due to high demand, crèche places are allocated to elected representatives who are:

- attending the event alone with their child(ren); or
- with a partner who is also registered to attend the event.

Those who require crèche provision and meet the above criteria should email [annconf@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:annconf@mail.nasuwt.org.uk) with their requirements before 1 March 2023.