

General Meetings: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the AGM?

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the supreme decision-making body of the AEP and is held to receive reports from officers and the General Secretary, and to debate and vote on motions from the National Executive Committee and members. Only motions published in the AGM Agenda may be debated.

2. Who is eligible to attend and vote at the AGM?

All members can attend and speak at the AGM but only full, trainee, and assistant members can vote on, or propose amendments to, motions.

3. What constitutes a quorum for the AGM?

At least fifty voting members (full, trainee, and assistant members) must be present within 15 minutes of the meeting start time for business to proceed. If the number drops below the quorum the meeting must be suspended or closed.

4. Who chairs the meetings?

The Chairperson of the meeting is usually the President. If the President is not available, the Vice-President will chair. If neither is available, a member of the National Executive Committee will chair. If none of these are present within 15 minutes of the meeting start time, the members present will choose a chairperson from among themselves.

5. What are standing orders?

The Standing Orders for Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) are the rules by which the meeting is run.

6. How is voting conducted at General Meetings?

Voting can be conducted in person or electronically, depending on the format of the meeting. Voting on motions at the meeting is decided by a simple majority. The Chairperson's declaration of the result is final and recorded in the minutes.

Resolutions are only binding on the Association if at least two-thirds of those voting are in favour and if the motion is later approved by a simple majority in a ballot of all voting members. Any resolutions to change the AEP constitution require a two-thirds majority in the ballot of all members.

7. What happens if votes are tied?

If votes at the AGM are tied, the Chairperson has a casting vote.

8. How do I speak during a debate?

The Chairperson manages the debate. First to speak is always the member proposing the motion (sometimes called the 'mover' of the motion). The proposer is given up to five minutes to speak. The seconder, also speaking in favour of the motion, is given three minutes, as are all other speakers, for or against. Questions of fact can be raised outside these time limits.

After this, other members at the general meeting can speak for or against the motion. At an in-person meeting members can notify the Chairperson that they wish to speak by raising their hand or voting card and keeping it raised until recognised by the Chair.

As the proposer and seconder always speak in favour of the motion, the next two speakers are usually members who oppose it. After this we alternate for, against, for, against etc. Members can speak only once per debate, except the proposer who has a right to reply. This is subject to the discretion of the Chair. Members can speak again in a debate on an amendment.

9. What happens if there is an amendment to a motion?

After the proposer and seconder of a motion have been given the opportunity to speak to their motion, amendments to the motion can be proposed by members at the AGM. An amendment must have a proposer and seconder in the meeting, both of whom must be members entitled to vote (see 2 above). The Chairperson will decide whether or not to take the amendment. For example, an amendment may not be taken if it would substantially negate the intent of, or is largely irrelevant to, the original motion.

It is open to the proposer and seconder of the original motion to either accept or reject a proposed amendment. If they accept the amendment, the amended motion then becomes the substantive motion to be debated and voted upon. If the amendment is not accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion, the amendment will be debated before any further speakers on the original motion are taken.

Amendments are debated and voted on in the same way as motions. If the proposed amendment fails to achieve a majority vote, the debate on the original motion then continues. If the amendment is approved, the amended motion becomes the substantive motion to be debated. The proposer and seconder of the amendment also become the new proposer and seconder of the substantive motion.

If a motion includes multiple sections, any proposed amendments to the sections are discussed in order of the sections, before debating the main motion (i.e. including all the sections with any approved amendments).

An amended motion can be further amended before the debate is concluded and a vote taken, as described above. If there is more than one amendment, this process will continue until all amendments are heard or the Chairperson stops the process.

10. What is the 'right of reply'?

If there are any speakers against a motion, the original proposer has a 'right of reply,' this gives them an additional three minutes to respond

If there are no speakers against, the right of the reply is not given. However, in these circumstances, proposers may be given the option to sum up at the end of the debate. This will be at the discretion of the Chair.

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

11. What are points of order and procedural motions?

Procedural motions help ensure that the general meeting runs smoothly and efficiently, addressing any issues that arise promptly and maintaining order.

A point of order is a tool used during a meeting to draw attention to a breach in rules, an irregularity in procedure, or any other issue that needs immediate attention. These are taken immediately and without debate.

Raising a Point of Order: You can raise a point of order at any time during the meeting, even interrupting a speaker if necessary. You should clearly state "point of order" and wait for the Chairperson to acknowledge it before stating your concern.

Examples include:

"Point of order, the speaker is not speaking to the motion."

"Point of order, the meeting no longer has a quorum."

"Point of order, the speaker's time limit has expired."

12. How long do General Meetings last?

General Meetings will last no longer than three hours. Any unfinished business will be referred to the NEC for consideration.

13. Can members record the meetings?

No member can use video or audio recording devices during a General Meeting without informing the Chair, who will seek the consent of members present at the meeting.