

# CONSTITUTION

## OF THE

### SOMERVILLE COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

## 1 Preamble

The goals of the Middle Common Room are to provide a mutually supportive environment for its members, to represent their academic and social interests, to recognise and welcome the multi-cultural interests of the MCR, and to act as a channel of communication with the College, the University, and the community at large.

Generations of graduate Somervillians have been committed to the creation of a diverse and supportive environment for different cultures. We pride ourselves on our history of high academic standards and generous social spirit. We strive for the inclusion of all members and oppose discrimination on any grounds. The tone of this Middle Common Room has been that of openness and inclusiveness. We embrace an atmosphere of tolerance and the expression of identity.

In this spirit, we, the graduate students of Somerville College, in order to secure and transmit to succeeding generations our academic and social heritage, do establish this Constitution for our Middle Common Room.

## 2 Definitions

The terms that follow hereinafter are defined as follows:

- a) “MCR” refers to the Somerville College Middle Common Room.
- b) “MFH”, “The House”, or “Margery Fry” refers to Margery Fry Elizabeth Nuffield House.
- c) “The Executive” refers to the MCR Executive Committee.
- d) “SCR” refers to the Somerville College Senior Common Room.
- e) “JCR” refers to the Somerville College Junior Common Room.
- f) “GB” refers to the Somerville College Governing Body.
- g) “The College” refers to Somerville College, Oxford.
- h) “Member” refers to a member of the MCR as defined in Section ??.
- i) “Notice” refers to communications distributed on the MCR mailing list.

## 3 Name

- a) There will be a Somerville Middle Common Room.
- b) Any representative use of the MCR banner or name must be authorised by The Executive.

## 4 Membership

There will be Full Members of the MCR.

- a) Full Members will be:
  - i. Any student with a degree from any university who is currently registered in a postgraduate course at The College who is not in suspended status;

- ii. Any student who is registered for a second B.A. or a first-year Graduate entry Medicine degree, or is a mature (over 25) student registered for an undergraduate course at The College who elects to become a Full Member. Electing to become a Full Member in this way precludes a student from becoming a Full Member of the JCR.
- b) Full Members will retain the following rights:
- i. To vote in all MCR elections and meetings;
  - ii. To stand for an office of The Executive or as a representative of the MCR;
  - iii. To be entitled to a key and access card to MFH and other College buildings (including Dining Hall and the Library) at the discretion of College authorities to which all keys and access cards belong;
  - iv. To attend MCR events and those College events directed at the MCR.
- c) Partners to current Full Members, former Full Members, suspended or lapsed Full Members, or those eligible for Full Membership that elect not to take on Full Membership can be Associate Members of the MCR. Others, such as Junior Deans, as proposed by the Tutor for Graduates and approved by a majority of The Executive, are also eligible for Associate Membership. Associate membership will expire at the end of each academic year, with the option for renewal by application and approval.
- d) Associate Membership may be granted upon application to The Executive, subject to the approval of the Principal and Tutor for Graduates of the College.
- e) Approved Associate Members:
- i. Do not have the right to vote in MCR elections or at General or Emergency meetings;
  - ii. Are not entitled to a key to MFH but shall be granted access to MFH and other college buildings via an access card, at the discretion of College authorities to which all access cards belong;
  - iii. Are entitled to attend MCR events.
- f) There will be Honorary Members of the MCR. Honorary Membership will be granted through a Motion put to a General Meeting with proper notice and subsequently approved by a majority of Full Members present. It is customary for such a motion to include the rationale for the granting of Honorary Membership in the preamble to the motion. Honorary Membership is granted for life or until it is revoked. Honorary Membership is a sinecure.
- g) All membership, except Honorary Membership, is granted for the academic year.
- h) The list of Associate and Honorary members will be shared with the Porters' Lodge and the Tutor for Graduates, and a record will be kept by the Secretary of the MCR.

## **5 Removal of Associate and Honorary Membership**

Associate or Honorary Membership can be removed by a majority of the Full Members present at a General or Emergency Meeting of the MCR.

## **6 The MCR Executive Committee**

- a) There will be a democratically-elected Executive consisting of:
- i. The President;
  - ii. The Vice President;
  - iii. The Secretary;

- iv. The Treasurer;
  - v. The Social Secretary or Secretaries;
  - vi. The House Chair;
  - vii. The Welfare Officer or Officers.
- b) The collective responsibilities of The Executive are to:
- i. Convene Executive meetings at least twice per term, at which quorum will be 50% of The Executive;
  - ii. Ensure the effective coordination and efficient operation of the MCR and its activities;
  - iii. Facilitate the smooth transition of responsibilities from one Executive to the next;
  - iv. Attend all Executive Meetings, General Meetings, and Emergency Meetings, unless absence is unavoidable. Apologies for absences should be sent to the MCR Secretary at the earliest opportunity;
  - v. Request and judge applications for the Barbara Craig Fund and distribute the award(s) according to Schedule 3 of this Constitution.
- c) The functions of the MCR President are to:
- i. Ensure the smooth running and development of the MCR, through liaison with The Executive, non-Executive Representatives, and other Members;
  - ii. Represent and promote the interests of the MCR at both the College and University level, including attendance at all relevant committee meetings;
  - iii. Meet with the Principal, Treasurer, Deans, Tutor for Graduates, and other College staff when necessary;
  - iv. Chair Executive Meetings and arrange for a substitute in their absence;
  - v. Ensure MCR activities are reported at General Meetings;
  - vi. Maintain and build relationships with other MCRs, and also with The College SCR and JCR.
- d) The functions of the MCR Vice President are to:
- i. Support the President in all their functions;
  - ii. Act as a substitute for the President whenever empowered to do so by the President;
  - iii. Oversee online ballots, as per Schedule 4 of this Constitution.
- e) The functions of the MCR Secretary are to:
- i. Give Notice of General and Emergency Meetings;
  - ii. Receive motions for General and Emergency Meetings;
  - iii. Give Notice of agenda and motions for General and Emergency Meetings;
  - iv. Take minutes at General, Executive, and Emergency Meetings or appoint a substitute to take minutes if unable to attend;
  - v. Publish and file the minutes of General, Executive, and Emergency Meetings within ten days of the meeting;
  - vi. Maintain the official record of the Constitution and Schedules.
- f) The functions of the MCR Treasurer are to:
- i. Keep the financial records and be responsible for the MCR accounts;
  - ii. Present a brief financial statement to The Executive at the beginning of every term, and give a complete report at the end of their term of office;

- iii. Prepare a projected annual budget for the MCR, to be presented to the membership at the first General Meeting of their tenure, and prepare a balance sheet of revenue and expenses, representing a true and accurate account of the financial position of the MCR, to be distributed at each General Meeting;
  - iv. Ensure that the accounts are audited at the end of their term of office by at least two non-Executive members of the MCR;
  - v. Meet with the College Treasurer and Accountant when necessary to discuss the financial affairs of the MCR;
  - vi. Represent the MCR, together with the MCR President, at meetings of the Finance Committee of The College;
  - vii. Report on the status of the Barbara Craig Fund once per year at a General Meeting.
- g) The functions of the MCR Social Secretary or Secretaries are to:
- i. Coordinate social events for the MCR;
  - ii. Give Notice to members of upcoming events;
  - iii. Organise exchange dinners with other Colleges;
  - iv. Produce a term card by Sunday of Week One each term;
  - v. Produce a programme of events for Freshers' Week and early arrivals in Michaelmas term.
- h) The functions of the MCR House Chair are to:
- i. Welcome all new members to The House and ensure that throughout their period of residence they are provided with all relevant information concerning living in The House;
  - ii. Be in regular contact with relevant College staff and non-Executive Representatives in relation to the smooth running and maintenance of The House;
  - iii. Report on House matters and the status of the MFH fund at all General Meetings. At that time they shall speak to issues raised concerning The House, in writing if absent;
  - iv. Administer the MFH fund, using the money to purchase items required for the kitchens and for other purposes in consultation with the residents;
  - v. Ensure that all kitchens are regularly checked and stocked with necessary provisions (for instance, washing-up liquid and clean tea towels);
  - vi. Be responsible for the provisions and upkeep of the common areas of The House.
- i) The functions of the Welfare Officer or Officers are to:
- i. Attend to the welfare needs of Members and, where appropriate, refer them to suitable resources including Junior Deans, College Nurse, and University Counselling Service;
  - ii. Attend welfare training events;
  - iii. Organise and give Notice of regular welfare events;
  - iv. Liaise with non-Executive welfare or equalities officers, such as representatives for LGBTQ, Disabilities and Ethnic Minorities, as well as with other volunteers to ensure all welfare needs of Members are met.
- j) There will be non-Executive Representative positions as determined from time to time by The Executive or by the MCR through a General Meeting. Descriptions of previous representative positions will be held by the MCR Secretary. Elections for non-Executive positions, if necessary, will be overseen by The Executive with Notice given for nominations and voting. Individuals can be appointed to uncontested, non-Executive positions.

## **7 Meetings**

### **a) General Meetings:**

- i. There will be General Meetings of the MCR at least twice per term, at a time arranged by The Executive.
- ii. Notice of each meeting will be given at least one week in advance.
- iii. An agenda will be circulated by email at least 24 hours before the meeting.
- iv. Motions should be emailed to the MCR Secretary up to 48 hours before the meeting.
- v. Quorum, for each vote, is 15 Full Members of the MCR, including at least 50% of The Executive.
- vi. Meetings will be held in the Common Room of The House unless The Executive notifies, at the time of Notice of the meeting, otherwise.
- vii. Meetings will be governed as per Schedule 2.

### **b) Emergency Meetings:**

- i. An Emergency Meeting may be called in the event of:
  1. The majority decision of The Executive; or
  2. A petition by 15 of the Full Members.
- ii. Notice of an Emergency Meeting will be given at least 3 days in advance, with the motions proposed.
- iii. Motions to be considered at an Emergency Meeting will be:
  1. Those approved by a majority decision of The Executive;
  2. Those included in the petition for an Emergency Meeting as signed by 15 of the Full Members.
- iv. Quorum, for each vote, is 15 Full Members of the MCR.
- v. Emergency Meetings will be held in the Common Room of The House.
- vi. Emergency Meetings will be governed as per Schedule 2.

## **8 Elections**

- a) All Executive posts will be put for election in the second half of Hilary Term.
- b) The Executive takes office on Sunday of Week 9 in Hilary Term.
- c) The rules governing elections can be found in Schedule 1.

## **9 Removal of an Executive Member or non-Executive Representative**

A member of The Executive or a non-Executive Representative immediately ceases to hold office if they:

- a) Resign; or
- b) Cease to be a student of The College; or
- c) Are removed by a motion passed, by at least two-thirds of Full Members present, at a General Meeting or Emergency Meeting.

## **10 Finance**

- a) The MCR will have a bank account operated by the Treasurer or such person or persons as The Executive empower.
- b) The Treasurer will present a statement of accounts at each General Meeting.
- c) All expenditure of £200 or more from the MCR account will be approved either by a General Meeting or by an Online Ballot as detailed in Schedule 4.

## **11 Amendments to the Constitution and Schedules**

- a) Resolutions to amend the Constitution or Schedules must be submitted to The Executive, who will give Notice to Members of the exact wording at least one week prior the General Meeting at which they are to be first considered.
- b) Amendments to the Constitution or Schedules must be proposed and seconded by Full Members.
- c) Amendments to the Constitution or Schedules must have the support of a two-thirds majority of a General Meeting.
- d) Successful amendments to the Constitution or Schedules take effect upon their approval by a meeting of the GB.

## **12 Authority**

- a) Any question about the interpretation of this Constitution may be submitted to The Executive to make a decision by majority. If The Executive fails to reach a majority decision, the question of interpretation will be put to the Tutor for Graduates for a final ruling.
- b) This Constitution is subject to the approval of the GB and a copy of the Constitution should be submitted to the GB in the Hilary Term of each academic year for review.

## **13 Complaints**

- a) Complaints about any matter pertaining to the MCR should be submitted, in the first instance, to The Executive, if deemed acceptable to the complainant. The Executive will investigate. If The Executive cannot come to resolution acceptable both to the complainant and to the individuals complained about, all parties involved should consult with the Tutor for Graduates, who will be empowered to make a final decision, and must explain said decision to all parties involved.
- b) If the complainant is dissatisfied with the ruling of the Tutor for Graduates, they may appeal in writing to the GB.

## **14 Effect**

All previous Constitutions of the MCR and rights derived from them are revoked and this constitution has effect as of Trinity Term 2015.

# SCHEDULE 1: ELECTION PROCEDURES

## TO ACCOMPANY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOMERVILLE COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

### **1 Election of a Chief Returning Officer**

- a) There will be a Chief Returning Officer (CRO).
- b) At the first General Meeting of Hilary Term, the MCR will elect a CRO to supervise the election of The Executive.
- c) The CRO shall be a Member, either Full or Associate.
- d) Notice will be given of the election of a CRO by the Secretary at least one week prior to the General Meeting.
- e) Nominations for the position of CRO will close at 09:00 on the morning of the General Meeting.
- f) Members will elect the CRO by secret ballot at the General Meeting.
- g) In the event that there is no candidate for the position of CRO at the close of nominations, a candidate will be selected at the General Meeting.
- h) In the event that there is a single candidate for CRO, they will be deemed appointed by the MCR.
- i) In the event of a tie between candidates for CRO, a candidate will be chosen by a method consented to by all candidates.

### **2 Duties of the Chief Returning Officer**

- a) Duties of the CRO will be:
  - i. The overall supervision of The Executive elections;
  - ii. Giving Notice of The Executive election as laid out in this Schedule;
  - iii. Opening and closing nominations for The Executive elections as laid out in this Schedule;
  - iv. Organising hustings for all declared candidates, which will take place the day prior to elections;
  - v. Organising voting;
  - vi. Announcing Executive election results;
  - vii. Organising secondary elections, where necessary, for Executive positions.
- b) The CRO cannot be a candidate for The Executive in the elections they are to supervise.
- c) At no point during the campaign shall the CRO endorse or denounce candidates for The Executive.
- d) In the event of the resignation of a CRO, if time permits, a new CRO will be selected according to the procedure above. If this is not possible, the election will be supervised by the Tutor for Graduates or their representative who may take such actions as delaying or cancelling the election if they view the resignation of the CRO as having an impact on the election's outcome.

### **3 Nominations**

- a) Nominations must be open for at least one week.
- b) Nominations will be opened by the CRO by Notice.
- c) Candidates who have been nominated and seconded will be contacted by the CRO and will send their acceptance of their nomination by email to the CRO.
- d) Nominations will close at midnight on the Saturday eight days before the chosen election date.
- e) Nominees for Social Secretary and Welfare Officer may run in teams of up to two people.
- f) If no nominations are received for the position of Vice President, the candidate for President with the second most votes in the elections will become Vice President.

### **4 Voting**

- a) Voting will take place by confidential and anonymous internet ballot, from 08:00 to 20:00 on the Sunday chosen for elections.
- b) The CRO will distribute voting instructions by email at least 12 hours before voting begins.
- c) The CRO will be provided with a list of all eligible voters by The Executive before the start of voting. The CRO will consult this list to ensure only eligible voters are given voting access.
- d) The CRO will post the results of the election before 23:59 on the day of voting.

### **5 Secondary Elections**

- a) In the event that there are no candidates for a given Executive position at the close of nominations, or in the event that the winner of a given election is RON (re-open nominations), or in the event that there is a tie between two candidates (including between a candidate and RON), a second election will be held.
- b) This secondary election will be supervised by the CRO, and be run in the same format as the initial election.
- c) In the event of a tie between candidates in a Secondary Election, a candidate will be chosen by a method consented to by all candidates.

### **6 By-Elections**

- a) In the event that a member of The Executive resigns or is removed from office during their term of office, the CRO will hold a by-election.
- b) The CRO will prepare an election similar to that of an Executive Election.

### **7 Continued Vacancies**

If there remains no candidate for a position on The Executive following a Secondary Election, then the duties of that positions are to be distributed by the members of The Executive.

### **8 Appeals**

Complaints about the operation of the elections (primary or secondary) should be put to the Tutor for Graduates in writing.



# SCHEDULE 2: CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

## TO ACCOMPANY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOMERVILLE COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

### 1 Chair

- a) There will be a Chair of each General or Emergency meeting of the MCR.
- b) The President will be the Chair of General or Emergency meetings. In their absence, their nominated representative will serve as Chair.
- c) The Chair of a General or Emergency Meeting will:
  - i. Follow the agenda as posted;
  - ii. Decide the priority of speaking;
  - iii. Keep good order within the meeting;
  - iv. Tally the votes on each question put and announce the result to the membership present.

### 2 Agenda

- a) Notice of the agenda for each meeting will be given by the MCR Secretary at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- b) The Agenda will include opportunity for any other business to be discussed.

### 3 Motions

- a) Motions must be submitted to the MCR Secretary no later than 48 hours before the meeting.
- b) Motions must be proposed by one Full Member and seconded by another Full Member. The proponent and the seconder will be denoted on the motion.
- c) The proponent of a Motion has first right to speak in relation to the Motion they proposed.

### 4 Voting

- a) Voting on Motions will normally be by show of hands.
- b) Any Full Member may request a roll-call vote.
- c) At the time of voting, any Full Member can move a motion for the vote to take place by secret ballot. Such a motion requires a majority of Full Members.
- d) A majority or a vote of two-thirds does not include abstentions, but only those votes cast for or against the motion.
- e) If amendments to the Constitution are passed, notice of the changes must be given to Members within ten days.

# SCHEDULE 3: BARBARA CRAIG FUND

## TO ACCOMPANY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOMERVILLE COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

### 1 The Barbara Craig Fund

Barbara Craig, a former Principal of Somerville, established a fund for the MCR from which the MCR can make small grants to graduate students to assist with expenses relating to their studies or personal development.

### 2 Timeline

- a) The Treasurer will inquire about the amount the Barbara Craig Fund has provided by Week 3 in Hilary Term.
- b) The Executive will distribute the funds in any way they see fit, subject to the guidelines as provided by The College.
- c) Applications for awards will be advertised by Notice, and will be open for at least two weeks.
- d) Applications will be due before the end of Hilary Term.
- e) Awards will be announced prior to the start of Trinity Term.

### 3 Applications to the Barbara Craig Fund

- a) Only Full Members may apply for Barbara Craig Awards.
- b) MCR Executive members may apply, with the exception of the President.
- c) Full Members may apply for grants from the Barbara Craig Fund for any purpose they feel contributes to their academic development, to the life of the MCR, or to Somerville College in general.
- d) Applications may be for, but are not limited to:
  - i. Travel expenses;
  - ii. Books;
  - iii. Software;
  - iv. Organising theatre productions;
  - v. Participating in sporting events.
- e) Applicants must demonstrate that they have applied to other sources for financial support, if applicable, especially in the case of travel and book grants for which Somerville College has other sources of funding.
- f) Applications will be submitted via email to the President, who will anonymise them prior to assessment.
- g) Committee members must declare any conflicts of interest when returning their judgements and should recuse themselves at the request of President.

# SCHEDULE 4: ONLINE BALLOTS AND REFERENDA

TO ACCOMPANY THE CONSTITUTION OF THE  
SOMERVILLE COLLEGE MIDDLE COMMON ROOM

## 1 Online Voting

- a) A decision requiring approval of a General Meeting may instead be decided by means of online ballot, following the same regulations as meeting decisions including:
  - i. Notice period;
  - ii. Quorum.
- b) Online ballots are intended to allow for decisions to be made during times that make the calling of General Meetings difficult or impossible; for instance, during vacations.
- c) The Vice President will oversee online ballots.

## 2 Referenda

- a) A motion will be put to a referendum following:
  - i. A two-thirds majority vote at a General Meeting; or
  - ii. Presentation of a petition to The Executive signed by 15 Full Members.
- b) Action on the motion contested in a referendum should be halted until referendum procedures are completed.
- c) Debate on referenda will occur at the next General Meeting or Emergency Meeting, whichever comes first.
- d) Voting will follow via online ballot, after circulation of minutes of the meeting at which debate occurred.