

**Senate Assembly Rules for Meetings Held Remotely
DRAFT 1/21/2021**

Rationale:

The purpose of this document is to draft for Senate approval assembly meeting rules and procedures to be followed when meetings are being held remotely.

Since the onset of COVID-19 in early March 2020, Senate assembly meetings have been held remotely via Zoom and using iClicker voting technology. The Senate Administrative Committee and the Senate Office have developed and implemented many of the rules and procedures we have followed during this time, some with implicit acceptance by the Senate and some by unanimous consent. While this has seemed to work so far, there are three reasons for drafting written rules and procedures and having the Senate explicitly approve them. First, it is the responsibility of the Senate itself to set its own meeting rules. Article VII, Section 1 of the Charter for the Governance of Hunter College, says of the Senate, “It shall set its own rules of procedure and operation, being governed until it does so by Robert’s Rules of Order, latest edition.” The last two editions of Robert’s Rules (RONR 11th ed (2011) and RONR 12th (2020)) state that “If electronic meetings are to be authorized, it is advisable to adopt additional rules pertaining to their conduct” (9:32), and RONR, 12th ed., adds an appendix specifying the aspects of a meeting such rules should address. Second, a review of that appendix shows that there are still decisions to be made about how we should proceed during a meeting. The draft below is meant to address these, along with putting in writing our current practices. Third, putting these rules in writing will allow the body to act consistently and deliberately in running its meetings during the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic and through the transition to post-COVID-19 conditions.

The context: the nature of a deliberative assembly, electronic meetings, NY Open Meetings Law, and pre-COVID Senate meeting policy:

1. The nature of a Deliberative Assembly. From RONR, 12th ed, 2020 (also in 11th ed, 2011), Section 1:1, it states that one of the “distinguishing characteristics” of a deliberative assembly is that “The group meets in a single room or area or under equivalent conditions of opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participants.”

In Section 9:31, under the subtitle “Extension of Parliamentary Law to Electronic Meetings,” RONR characterizes electronic meetings as

meetings at which, rather than all participating members being physically present in one room or area as in traditional (or ‘face-to-face’) meetings, some or all of them communicate with others through electronic means such as the Internet or by telephone. A group that holds such alternative meetings does not lose its character as a deliberative assembly (see 1:1) so long as the meetings provide, at a minimum, conditions of opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members equivalent to those of meetings held in one room or area.

In Section 9:30, states that if an organization is to allow electronic meetings, then it must authorize them in its bylaws.

2. From the New York State Open Meetings Law, Section 103.c: “A public body that uses videoconferencing to conduct its meetings shall provide an opportunity for the public to attend, listen and observe at any site at which a member participates.”

3. Pre-COVID-19 Senate policy. On March 6, 2014, the Senate passed the following resolution:
RESOLVED, Senate meetings shall be open to all members of the Hunter community at 68th Street and at designated Hunter College campus satellite locations using two-way video or audio connections. Senators attending meetings at satellite locations, after following the check-in procedures, shall enjoy all of the rights and responsibilities of those physically attending the meeting at the campus at 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, including but not limited to: obtaining the floor, submitting motions, participating in debate and discussion, and voting.

By this resolution, the Senate authorized electronic meetings that satisfy RONR 1:1 and 9:31 and Section 103.c of the NY OML, given that the campus satellite locations are publicly accessible.

4. Suspension of in-person access requirement during COVID-19. NY Executive Order 202.1 was issued March 7 2020, and renewed monthly since then:

Suspension of law allowing the attendance of meetings telephonically or other similar service:

Article 7 of the Public Officers Law, to the extent necessary to permit any public body to meet and take such actions authorized by the law without permitting in public in-person access to meetings and authorizing such meetings to be held remotely by conference call or similar service, provided that the public has the ability to view or listen to such proceeding and that such meetings are recorded and later transcribed.

This allows us to hold meetings where members may participate from locations not accessible in-person by the public.

The rules and procedures drafted below are for Senate meetings in which all are participating remotely and so not allowing for in-person public access, conditions not covered by the March 6, 2014, resolution.

Charter constraints on Senate meetings:

1. Meeting attendees

a. By Article VII, Section 2, of the Charter for the Governance of Hunter College, “The regular meetings of the Senate shall be open to all members of the Hunter College community, and all of such members shall have the right to be recognized under procedures to be established by the Senate.”

b. By Article III, Section 1, “The Hunter College Senate shall have 100 Senators and Alternates sufficient in number to provide two faculty alternates for each department, being composed of 57% faculty members, 38% students and 5% representatives of the administration.” There are also eleven student and three administration Alternates.

Below, Senators and Alternates will be referred to as Senate members.

2. Voting privileges at Senate Assembly meetings

At any meeting of the Senate Assembly, no more than 100 Senate members shall have voting privileges at that meeting. According to Article III, Section 2, of the Charter “Senators shall have

full voting rights in the Senate. Alternates may vote and be counted as part of the quorum only when properly seated according to Senate procedures.”

According to current Senate procedures for in-person meetings, all Senate members are logged in as they enter the meeting room. Up to 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time for the meeting, as Senators are logged into the meeting, they are given the means for voting at that meeting. After that time, for any remaining open seats, Alternates are given the means to vote in the order in which they checked into the meeting. If a quorum is then met, the meeting is called to order.

This process shall be adapted for electronic meetings, as described below.

Resolved that the following Rules be adopted for Remote Senate Meetings

1. Seating of attendees

a. Joining information:

The Senate Office shall send by e-mail with the call of the meeting the Zoom log-information and meeting link and, as an alternative and backup to the audio connection included with Zoom, the phone number and access code(s) for the meeting.

b. Meeting availability time:

The Senate Office shall schedule the Zoom meeting availability to begin at least 45 minutes before the start of each meeting.

c. Joining requirements for all Senate members:

All Senate members must display first and last name when they join the Zoom meeting so that they may be identified and logged in by the Senate Office staff for the purpose of recording attendance.

2. Assigning a Senate member voting privileges at a meeting

a. To be able to vote and count toward a quorum, a Senate member must

- i. join with the ability to be viewed via video at the meeting if requested by the Senate staff or the chair; and
- ii. have an iClicker account and be able to access that account during the meeting via the iClicker app or on iClicker.com.

b. When Senate members join and are logged into the meeting, the Senate Office records the order in which members arrive.

c. Senate members are given voting privileges at a meeting by means of the Senate Office staff activating their iClicker account for that meeting.

d. Senators arriving prior to the scheduled start of the meeting are logged in as having voting privileges at the meeting.

e. If fewer than 100 Senators have joined by the scheduled meeting time, Alternates are logged in as having voting privileges in the order in which they arrived, up to a number of 100 total voting members.

f. Once 100 is reached, Senate members shall still be logged into the meeting as they join for the purpose of recording meeting attendance, but they will not be eligible to vote during the meeting.

g. Senate members assigned voting privileges at a meeting shall maintain voting privileges throughout the meeting, even if they are disconnected for some time during the meeting and have to rejoin, but to participate in a vote, they must be present in the Zoom session while the vote is going on.

3. Announcing a Quorum & Quorum calls

a. At the start of the meeting, the presence of a quorum shall be established by number of iClickers activated.

b. Thereafter, if there is a call for a quorum count, it shall be ascertained by use of iClicker, or if necessary, by a roll call carried out with voting members viewable by video.

4. Technical requirements and malfunctions:

Each Senate member is responsible for his or her audio and Internet connections. No action of the assembly shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of, or poor quality of, a Senate member's individual connection prevented participation in the meeting, assuming a quorum is maintained in the case of the loss of a member's connection.

5. Forced removal or muting:

a. The chair may cause or direct the removal of attendees to the waiting room or the muting of their microphones if they are causing undue interference with the meeting. The chair's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any Senate member, shall be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

b. Without direction from the chair, the Senate staff may mute attendees' microphones or turn off their video if noise or visuals are disruptive to the meeting.

6. Time management

a. When the meeting will be called to order:

The chair shall call the meeting to order no later than 5 minutes after a quorum has been achieved.

b. Limitations on length of reports and presentations:

Reports and presentations shall be limited to 25 minutes not including Q&A or debate on resulting motions. Exceptions may be granted at a meeting by a 2/3 vote of voting members present at the meeting.

c. Extending time past the scheduled meeting end time:

Extensions may only be made for 10 minutes at a time and may only be made if a quorum is present and by a 2/3 vote of voting members present at the meeting.

7. Assignment of the floor

a. To seek recognition by the chair, when not interrupting a person who has the floor, a member shall use the “Raise hand” function on the Participants panel on Zoom.

b. In the usual order of business, the chair will call upon members in the order in which their hands were raised. If a preference is to be given to those speaking to or for or against a point, the chair may recognize the member for the limited purpose of determining whether that member is entitled to preference in recognition.

c. Once recognized by the chair, to speak, the person assigned the floor may unmute him or herself or write in the Chat.

8. Interrupting a member

A member who intends to make a motion or a request that under the rules may interrupt a speaker shall use the Chat for so indicating and shall thereafter wait a reasonable time for the chair’s instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice or by writing further in the Chat.

9. Making motions in writing

The Zoom share screen function shall not be available to Senate members for the making of motions. A member intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions to a committee that cannot be quickly transcribed by the Recording Secretary, should be prepared to post the motion in the Chat box when recognized by the Chair. Alternatively, the member should e-mail the motion to the Recording Secretary at least two days in advance of the meeting.

10. Voting

a. means of voting:

Votes shall occur using iClicker or, if necessary, by audible and viewable roll call. Business may also be conducted by unanimous consent.

b. time limit:

When voting using iClicker, after two minutes, the vote will be closed once a majority or 2/3 decision, as required, is obtained, or if that does not occur, after four minutes, by the direction of the chair.

c. announcing the vote:

The Recording Secretary will display the vote tally using the Zoom screen share function, and the chair shall announce the result.