



Young Liberals

Policy Guide

**For any further questions, or to submit an amendment email:
policy@youngliberals.uk**

Introduction

As a democratic and member driven party, the Liberal Democrats allows all members to write, submit and vote on the policy which the party stands on; the same is true in the Young Liberals (YL). YL tends to hold two conferences a year, one in the Winter and one in the Summer, where any member can submit a policy that is debated and voted on by the members of YL.

Types of Motion

The Standing Orders sets out several different types of motions and amendments, each with its own purpose in setting policy and direction within YL.

Policy Motion – This is the most common type of motion; a Policy Motion sets out policy on a specific policy area and may be submitted either by any individual member of YL or by Policy Committee.

Emergency Motion – This is a policy motion on a topic which has arisen after the deadline for other motions and must have a matter of substance in the motion that arose after the non-emergency submission deadline. These may be submitted by any individual member.

Business Motion – This is a proposal about how YL or the wider Party works internally; usually to express an official position on how things should be run, suggest the Executive acts in a certain way, and deals with anything else outside the scope of a policy motion. These may be submitted by any individual member, a State Executive or the Federal Executive or a Committee

Constitutional Amendments – These are amendments to the Young Liberals Constitution to change the rules on which YL functions. May be submitted by any individual member, a State Executive or the Federal Executive or a Committee

Policy Papers – Policy Papers are exceptionally rare within YL due to us not usually needing such detailed policy. They are a detailed longer form type of policy submission on a broad policy area. These may only be submitted by Policy Committee.

Submission Deadlines

The Standing Orders set out a timetable for the deadlines by which motions, and amendments must be submitted by to be valid. Policy Committee can accept late submissions, but this is rare and requires a valid reasoning. Below is the timetable set out in the Standing Orders.

Policy and business motions	30 days prior to the opening of Conference
Constitutional Amendments	30 days prior to the opening of Conference
Policy and business motions amendments	14 days prior to the opening of Conference
Amendments to constitutional amendments	14 days prior to the opening of Conference
Conference Emergency motions	72hrs prior to the opening of Conference
Emergency motion amendments	At Conference, as agreed by Policy Committee

Submit all motions and amendments to policy@youngliberals.uk

Drafting Advice

Policy Committee will offer drafting advice for motions in the run up to the deadlines. The Standing Orders require that submissions for drafting advice is opened at least 21 days before the main submission deadline, with Policy Committee being able to set a deadline by which submissions need to be received.

The Policy Officer and Policy Committee can help you with what to write your motion on, how to structure it, what to include etc. Policy Committee is there to help you and getting advice is one of the best ways to write a high quality motion, with a higher chance of passing.

Getting your motion selected

Once you have submitted your motion, the following are the only reasons that Policy Committee can outright reject it:

- Late submission;
- Conflict with the Constitution;
- Being incomprehensible, frivolous or ambiguous;
- In the case of an emergency motion, the lack of any matter of substance in the motion that arose after the non-emergency submission deadline

This means that, except with emergency motions, as long as you submit on time and your motion does not conflict with the constitution, there are no restrictions on its content. For example, we do not have rules like the Federal Party that rejected motions cannot be brought back to Conference for several years.

However, if there are more motions submitted than can reasonably fit into the Agenda, then Policy Committee will only select a limited number of the submissions. So, it is better to submit a policy on a topic that hasn't been debated too recently, deals with new policy in an area we don't already and makes for a good debate.

In general a motion is more likely to be selected if it:

- Contains genuinely new and interesting proposals
- Is on a subject where we don't have much policy and which hasn't been debated at conference recently
- Is on a subject of high political salience
- Is likely to lead to an interesting debate, with amendments and speakers both for and against

It is less likely to be selected by the Conference Committee if it is:

- A repeat of old policies with nothing really new
- On a subject which has been debated recently
- On a subject which is extensively covered by Liberal Democrat policy, without any clear differentiation from that policy.
- Unlikely to lead to a good debate, for example if it is so uncontroversial that no one will want to disagree with anything in the motion

Motions

Length

There are no official word limits on motions, but it is important to make sure your motion is not overly long. Making your motions **concise and clear** will make it significantly easier for people to consider and understand, especially when they are faced with a large batch to consider over one weekend. Avoiding having the notes section too long and not having too much of an info-dump is a key task when writing the motion. Consider what can be put in the motion itself, and what you can instead mention in your speech.

Style and Content

Motions should be written **as concisely as possible**. Facts and figures are important but should be kept to a minimum. If quotations are included then they should be kept short. References to reports, White Papers, draft bills etc. should be written on the assumption the audience haven't read them and some basic explanation is needed.

The policy recommendations are the most important part of the motion and what you should give most thought to. When writing your policy recommendations it is better to stick to **a few substantial points which make for a coherent plan**, rather than a long list of small changes.

Structure

Most policy motions follow a basic similar structure which if you follow will ensure that all the key elements are included and is in a format that is easy and familiar for Conference to consider. The best motions are structured so they include:

1. Description of the issue or problem which the motion seeks to address
2. The Young Liberals/Liberal Democrat principle(s) which underlie the solution
3. Highlighting existing Young Liberals or Liberal Democrat policies which will contribute to the solution
4. The further policy proposals which normally conclude the motion and are its most important element

*Note that under the federal party constitution elected representatives (such as MPs) **cannot be mandated**, and similarly you should avoid mandating YL Officers and the Exec to do things. You should therefore avoid language like "Conference requires Liberal Democrat MPs/the Young Liberals Executive to...". Something like "Conference calls on Liberal Democrat MPs/the Young Liberals Executive to..." would be better drafting.*

It is normal to break down each section of the motion into a series points. This makes it clearer, and also easier to deal with amendments later.

The first section should describe the issue being addressed by the motion, usually using words such as Conference "notes", "is concerned by" or "regrets".

The motion can then "believe", "reaffirm", "recognise", "declare" or just list the principles that apply.

Policy recommendations are usually introduced by “calls for”, “calls on the Government to” or even “calls on Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians to press for”, but could also follow from “recommends”, “proposes”, “urges”, “demands”, “insists”, or “resolves”.

Example Structure

The final set of proposals should be listed 1.,2.,3. etc. Previous sections should alternate between different styles of letters and numbers. For example:

Creating the Liberal Pizza

Conference notes:

- A. That pizza is a wonderful and wholesome food to be enjoyed by all
- B. That pizza can come in many varieties and people for many years have been experimenting with pizza, deviating from the original formula, including the use of bases made out of cauliflower and other non-bread materials, sauces which do not contain any tomato, and the development of “dessert pizza”
- C. That due to this burst of unnecessary creativity, the selection of bases, sauces and toppings can be very overwhelming for people looking to buy or make their pizzas

Conference believes:

- i. That whilst it's good for people to express their creativity and use their imagination, pizza is not the best outlet for these energies which could be of more benefit if applied to activities such as painting, or knitting
- ii. That in order to make the process of building a pizza easier and more accessible to everyone, a set formula should be established with an approved list of bases, sauces, and toppings to choose from
- iii. That the basis for this formula should be a bread base, a tomato based sauce, and a mozzarella cheese topping
- iv. That it is of course acceptable to have a variety of toppings, sauces and bases, but that they must be taken from a pre-approved list
- v. That extreme deviations from the original concept of pizza, such as the aforementioned dessert pizzas or other abominations such as fruit pizza, breakfast pizza, or cauliflower and other vegetable based pizzas, can cause extreme distress to people upon discovering their existence and this must be prevented

Conference calls for:

- 1. The creation of a standard basic formula for creating a pizza, consisting of bread base ,tomato based sauce, and cheese topping
- 2. That a list of acceptable alternative bases, toppings, and sauces be created and approved by the Greater Pizza Authorities
- 3. Any pizza found to deviate from the basic formula or approved alternatives shall be destroyed and the creator of the deviant pizza shall be sent to a mandatory cooking class to learn the correct pizza method.

Motion Amendments

Amendments are what allow us to make changes to policy motions after they have already been selected for debate at conference. If you have a specific issue with a part of a motion and think that changing a line or two will make it better, then amendments are the tool for that. Once the motions have been chosen and the preliminary agenda published, submissions for amendments are opened with a deadline 14 days before the start of conference.

Structure

Amendments are relatively straight forward when it comes to structure. The first thing you need to do, is **be clear what section of the motion you are amending**. You will need to declare the specific line or clause which your amendment will affect: will it be inserted into a specific section? Or after one?

Next you will need to explain what change you want to make. **The most common changes are insertions and deletions**: adding text and removing it, respectively. If you want to reword a part of the text, you can combine the two actions: you can delete the original wording and then insert the text you desire.

Examples

Using the above motion on Creating the Liberal Pizza below are some examples of amendments that could have applied to it.

After Conference notes C. (line 13) add: D. Pizza, can bring happiness and joy to people, and the continuing increased variety of pizza has allowed people with certain dietary restrictions to partake in it's consumption

In Conference believes I. (lines 16-18) delete: "not the best outlet for these energies which could be of more benefit if applied to activities such as painting, or knitting" and insert "a wonderful outlet for these energies and people should be encouraged to engage in the creation of new pizza types"

In Conference believes II. (line 20) delete "easier and"

Delete Conference believes III. (lines 23-24) and renumber accordingly

Delete IV. (lines 25-27) and insert: "IV. A variety toppings, sauces, and bases should be made readily available to all"

Delete Conference Calls for (lines 44) and insert:

Conference resolves to:

- 1. Foster the further development of pizza experimentation and consumption by the production of literature explaining the benefits of eating and creating pizza*
- 2. Provide literature for creating pizza so that people who find the process overwhelming can have guidance when making selections*
- 3. Ensure that a wide variety of toppings, sauces and bases continue to be readily available to all by voting against any motions or legislation which threaten to limit consumer choices*

Constitutional Amendments

Constitutional Amendments can often seem like a tedious and boring part of conference but are essential to the ensuring that the organisation is well run and to change the rules and structure under which we are governed. Due to their importance Constitutional Amendments require two thirds majority to pass at conference.

There are no restrictions on constitutional amendments, except that they have to be submitted in time. However, the Young Liberals constitution is subject to the Liberal Democrat Federal Constitution and the law, so that should be bared in mind while writing them.

Constitutional amendments follow the same structure as amendments to policy motions, usually either inserting, deleting, or replacing something. It is essential to get the structure and wording correct as these are the fundamental rules that the organisation runs on, scope for interpretation is narrow.

Example 1:

If you wanted to amend the constitution to make it easier to call a Special Conference, you would find the area of the constitution which governs that, reference is and cite the change, for example:

In Section 10 (2) (b) replace "200 full members" with "20 full members"

In this case, a special conference is in "Section 10: Conference",

Example 2:

If you wanted to abolish the position of Policy Officer and instead have the Non-Portfolio Officer chair Policy Committee, you would need to find the mentions of Policy Officer and either remove them or change them with something else.

In Section 6 (1) delete "g. Policy Officer" and renumber accordingly

In Section 7 (3)(a) replace "The Policy Officer" with "The Non-Portfolio Officer"

In Standing Orders 7.2.1 replace "Policy Officer" with "Non-Portfolio Officer"

Example 3:

If you wanted to change the role of Communications Committee, so that they need to produce a style guide with Aqua as the official YL colour, as well as responsibility for memes.

In Section 7 (15) (c) replace "media" with "meme"

After Section 7 (15) (c) add "d. To produce and maintain a Young Liberals style guide, including with Aqua as the official primary colour"

Amendments to Constitutional Amendments

If someone submits a constitutional amendment which you have an issue with, but don't want to oppose outright then you can submit an amendment to their amendment, this will be voted on before the full amendment and only requires a majority to pass, after which the amended amendment would then be voted on.

For example, if in **Example 1** instead of decreasing the number of members required to call a special conference you instead think it should be even harder than 200, you could do the following.

Replace "20 full members" with "2000 full members"

If this amendment passed, then the constitutional amendment people would then be voting on would be:

In Section 10 (2) (b) replace "200 full members" with "2000 full members"

If in **Example 2** you thought that there should still be a role that does that job, but instead just want to rename it to "Policy Book Editor" you would do the following:

Replace "delete 'g. Policy Officer' and renumber accordingly" with "replace 'Policy Officer' with 'Policy Book Editor'"

Replace all instances of "Non-Portfolio Officer" with "Policy Book Editor"

The second line is a short hand for listing out every instance of replacing or deleting something from the constitution, but be careful using this if there are instances of it being used that you don't want to change

If in **Example 3** you liked having a style guide, but hated the colour Aqua and wanted Orange instead, then you would do the following:

Replace "Aqua" with "Orange"

Miscellaneous

The Policy Book

Motions that are passed by conference are collated into the Policy Book, which is kept updated by the Policy Officer. The Constitution sets that **after five years policies lapse** and are removed from the Policy Book. In addition, the Policy Officer will remove policies from the book that are redundant, for example if the policies have been implemented or it is referring to an issue/topic that has passed. This ensures that the Policy Book is an active collection of our relevant policies, and not just a list of all the policies that have been passed.

Federal Conference

One of the purposes of YL passing its own Policy, is we can then submit it as an organisation to FCC for consideration at Federal Conferences in order to get it passed as Party Policy, recent examples of this are “No to Unpaid Internships, Yes to Real Opportunities” and “Young Carers” which both started off as motions at Conference , successfully selected and passed at Federal Conference.

In the run up to Federal Conferences, Policy Committee and the Policy Officer will select one or more motions to submit to conference from among those in the Policy Book, often ones recently passed and on topics particular importance and that affect young people.

More details about Federal Conference and the Federal policy process is in its own guide.

The States and Devolution

Due to the Federal nature of the party and devolution, policy areas which are either devolved or the policy of the party thinks should be devolved are the responsibility of the State Parties to determine their own policy on separate to the Federal Party, and YL takes the same approach.

Each motion at Conference should come with an “applicability” alongside it, showing if the Policy applies Federally, so is a policy area that would be set at Westminster, or applies just to England or to England and Wales, if the Policy area is devolved to Scotland or Wales. You aren’t required to include the applicability when you submit your motion, but

The Scottish Young Liberals and Welsh Young Liberals both have their own Policy Officers, and in areas where the Policy is devolved, they are responsible for setting their own policy. State Organisations can request that Federal YL is responsible for policy making on their behalf, and English Young Liberals makes a permanent request to that affect, meaning that Policy making for English specific areas are set by Conference.

Glossary of terms

Conference

Young Liberals Conference; The biannual conference of the Young Liberals. Either Summer Conference/Activate or Winter Conference/Hibernate.

Federal Conference

Federal Conference; The biannual conference of the Federal Party. Either Autumn Conference or Spring Conference.

Standing Orders

The part of the Constitution that governs how Conference is run, setting out the rules and procedures for the agenda, submission of motions and amendments, and how debates are run.

Policy Motion

A proposal to adopt a new policy or reaffirm an existing one.

Policy amendment

A proposal to change a policy motion.

Business Motion

A proposal to conduct the affairs of the Party in a particular way or to express an opinion on the way affairs have been conducted.

Emergency Motion

A proposal which relates to a specific recent development which occurred after the deadline for submission of motions.

Constitutional Amendment

A proposal to change the constitution of the Young Liberals.

Policy Committee

The Young Liberals Policy Committee, chaired by the Policy Officer. Responsible for providing drafting advice for motions and amendments to Conference, selecting motions for debate at conference, chairing debates and submitting policy to Federal Conference.

Conference Committee

The Young Liberals Conference Committee, chaired by the Events Officer. Responsible for the organisation and running of Conference and other Young Liberals Events.

FCC

Federal Conference Committee; Responsible for the running and organisation of Federal Conferences, including the selection of motions.

The Policy Book

The Document collating all of the current Young Liberals policies, updated by the Policy Officer.