Temporary Guidelines for DSU Society Annual General Meetings in Response to COVID-19

1. Limitations of These Guidelines

1.1 These guidelines shall be in effect only for the period during which University and Union operations are disrupted due to COVID-19. For further clarity, these guidelines shall only apply to DSU-ratified Societies’ Annual General Meetings scheduled to be held between March 18, 2020 and June 1, 2020.

1.2 Except where explicitly stated, these guidelines shall not supersede any existing Union policies.

1.3. These guidelines shall not supersede any applicable Union bylaws or municipal, provincial, or federal legislation.

1.4 Prior to putting these guidelines into practice, societies must approve their use by a vote at a board, executive, society, council, or general meeting. Once approved at such a meeting, these guidelines will supersede any contradictory clauses in the society’s constitution, bylaws, policies, or other constating documents while in effect.

2. Rescheduling Annual General Meetings

2.1 Societies may cancel in-person Annual General Meetings scheduled to be held during the 2019-2020 Winter Semester and reschedule for a date in the 2019-2020 Summer Semester or the 2020-2021 Fall Semester.

2.1.a. Societies that choose to reschedule their Annual General Meetings will not, by way of rescheduling, lose any rights, responsibilities, or privileges they hold as societies of the Union. For further clarity, rescheduling the Annual General Meeting will cause no disruption to disbursements.

2.1.b. If rescheduling to the 2020-2021 Fall Semester, societies should make every effort to plan rescheduled Annual General Meetings within the first two (2) months of the Semester.

2.2 Societies that are registered with the Registry of Joint Stocks are still bound by all applicable restrictions on when the Annual General Meeting may be held, according to the relevant act.

2.2.a. As per the Co-operative Associations Act 30 (1), societies registered as Co-operative Associations must hold their Annual General Meeting within four (4)
months of the close of their fiscal year. For societies with a fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, this means the Annual General Meeting must be held by June 30, 2020.

2.2.b. As per the Companies Act 30 (1), societies registered as Companies must hold their Annual General Meeting within fifteen (15) months of the date of the last Annual General Meeting.

2.2.c. Societies registered under the Societies Act are not subject to any such provincial restriction.

2.3 Societies should be clear with members that the rescheduled meeting remains the 2019-2020 Annual General Meeting, regardless of when it is held.

2.4 Rescheduling an Annual General Meeting under these guidelines does not exempt societies from holding their regularly mandated Annual General Meeting for the 2020-2021 Academic Year.

2.5 Societies should increase their efforts around communication, advertising, and outreach in order to inform members of such change.

3. Use of Electronic Annual General Meetings

3.1 Societies may hold Electronic Annual General Meetings through the videoconferencing software Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom.

3.1.a. If a society wishes to use an alternate videoconferencing or teleconferencing software, an officer of the society should reach out to the DSU Vice President, Internal, detail the specific reasons why Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom are not viable options, and suggest an alternative electronic platform through which to conduct the society’s Annual General Meeting.

3.3 An Electronic Annual General Meeting shall be governed by all the relevant provisions in a society’s constitution, bylaws, policies, or other constating documents, with the exception of any clauses that contradict these guidelines. In particular, the regular requirements of the society shall apply with regard to:

3.3.a. Notice of Meeting  
3.3.b. Quorum  
3.3.c. Voting Rights  
3.3.d. Elections Procedure  
3.3.e. Meeting Chair  
3.3.f. Agenda  
3.3.g. Minutes
3.3.h. Rules of Order

3.3 Wherever possible, societies should be proactive and seek to increase communication with members about the process, timing, rules, and structure of the Electronic Annual General Meeting.

3.4 Where possible, the Policy and Governance Coordinator, Member Services Coordinator, Vice President, Internal, and/or other members of the Union’s full-time staff and Executive Committee will be available to assist in setting up and troubleshooting meetings conducted using teleconferencing services.

3.4.a. Additional assistance and troubleshooting is available through the software’s customer service avenues.

3.5 Record should be kept of all members in attendance at an Electronic Annual General Meeting.

4. Electronic Annual General Meeting Agendas and Minutes

4.1 The agenda for the Electronic Annual General Meeting shall be circulated according to the society’s internal regulations. A version of the agenda, hereafter the “Live Agenda,” shall be posted online using Google Docs, Microsoft OneDrive, or another platform where meeting attendees will be able to see edits and changes in real time.

4.1.a. Larger societies, or societies with robust agendas planned for their Electronic Annual General Meeting, are advised to appoint two secretaries for the Electronic Annual General Meeting:

4.1.a.i. A Recording Secretary, who will record meeting minutes according to the regular procedures laid out by the society’s constitution, policies, bylaws, or other constating documents; and

4.1.a.ii. A Live Secretary, who will manage and continually update the Live Agenda in accordance with these guidelines.

4.1.a.iii. For smaller societies, these roles may both be held by one individual, or the role of Live Secretary may be filled by the meeting Chair.

4.1.b. Editing permissions for the Live Agenda shall only be extended to the meeting Secretaries and meeting Chair. Editing permissions may be extended to other individual members of the society by ordinary resolution at the general meeting.
4.1.c. Proposed amendments and new motions will be recorded by the Live Secretary on the Live Agenda using Microsoft Word (OneDrive) “Track Changes” feature, Google Docs “Suggesting Mode” feature, or a clearly distinct font, colour, or format.

4.1.c.i. Once voted on, amendments should be “accepted” using the “Track Changes” or “Suggesting Mode” features, or otherwise edited to match the formatting of the rest of the Live Agenda.

4.1.d. After each motion or amendment is voted on, the Live Secretary should clearly indicate the decision in the Live Agenda.

5. Voting at Electronic Annual General Meetings

5.1 Voting rights and restrictions laid out in a society’s constitution, bylaws, policies, or other constating documents still apply, including definitions of ordinary and special resolutions.

5.2 Voting that would normally be conducted by show of hands, or by saying “aye” or “nay,” will be carried out using the videoconferencing software’s “chat” function.

5.2.a. When the meeting Chair calls for a vote, the Live Secretary will send a message in the chat clearly indicating the motion or amendment being voted on.

5.2.b. Meeting attendees will vote by sending either “Yes” or “No” in the chat.

5.2.c. Voting under this provision will remain open for one (1) minute. After such time, the meeting Chair will announce that voting has closed and the Live Secretary will clearly indicate in the chat that voting has ended. Any attendee that does not cast their vote within the allotted time will be considered to have abstained from the vote. This period of time may be amended by ordinary resolution at the Annual General Meeting.

5.3 Voting that would normally be conducted by secret ballot will be carried out using Google Forms.

5.3.a. All voting forms should be solely created and administered by the Chief Returning Officer.

5.3.b. As much as possible, voting forms should be prepared in advance. Where the nature of the vote does not allow for the form to be prepared in advance of the meeting, such as in the case of an election vote where nominations will be sought during the course of the meeting, the meeting should recess briefly to allow the Chief Returning Officer to prepare the voting form.
5.3.c. In the case of elections, in order to streamline the voting process, societies may proceed with nominations, speeches, and questions for all candidates and then create a single voting form for all available positions. Where this clause is a significant departure from the Society’s standard voting process or otherwise operationally difficult, it may be disregarded.

5.3.d. In the case of yes/no votes, or elections which do not use ranked balloting, the “multiple choice poll” option should be used.

5.2.e. In the case of a vote requiring a ranked ballot, the “multiple choice grid” option should be used. The columns should be labelled “first choice,” “second choice,” and so on, while the rows should be labelled with the candidates or options. The settings of the grid should be adjusted to “limit one choice per column” for all such votes.

5.2.f. The voting forms should be created and administered in such a way as to protect the privacy of voters and maintain the secrecy of the ballot.

5.2.g. When the meeting proceeds to a vote under this provision, the Chief Returning Officer will share the link to the voting form in the chat and the meeting Chair will announce that voting is open.

5.2.h. Voting under this provision will remain open for five (5) minutes. After such time, the meeting Chair will announce that voting has closed and the Chief Returning Officer will turn off “accepting responses” on the voting form. Any attendee that does not cast their vote within the allotted time will be considered to have abstained from the vote. This period of time may be amended by ordinary resolution at the Annual General Meeting.

5.2.i. During an Electronic Annual General Meeting, a motion to destroy the ballots shall be understood as a motion to permanently delete all Google Forms used for voting and all of their data.

5.3 Where a society’s constitution, bylaws, policies, or other constating documents require nominations for elected positions to include a list of nominating signatures from society members, this requirement may be fulfilled by other means.

5.3.a. The executive committee, board of directors, council or other governing body shall have the authority to establish an alternative to physical signatures, including submission of scanned or digital signatures, replacing signatures with e-mail submissions, use of Google Forms or other online tools, and/or reducing or eliminating the requirement for signatures.
5.3.b. Alternative requirements shall be well-communicated to society members through all available channels.

5.3.c. No individual society member shall be prevented from running in an election for reason of inability to submit physical signatures.

5.3.d. Any temporary measures approved under 5.3.a. shall be in effect only so long as these guidelines are in effect.

6. General Guidelines for Electronic Annual General Meetings

6.1 Attendees should keep audio and video turned off except when speaking, with the exception of the meeting Chair.

6.2 Attendees who wish to speak should indicate this by sending a message in the chat requesting to be added to the speakers list.

6.3 Privileged points, such as points of order, points of personal privilege, and requests for information, should be proposed by sending a message in the chat specifying which kind of point is being raised.

6.4 The chat may not be used to debate motions, move motions or amendments, or to conduct any of the business of the meeting aside from what is specifically laid out in these guidelines.

6.4.a. If an attendee does not have a functioning microphone or is otherwise unable to speak out loud in the Electronic Annual General Meeting, they should indicate this to the Chair in advance or at the outset of the meeting. Such attendees may contribute to debate by sending their comments in the chat. The comments will be read aloud by the meeting Chair in accordance with the speakers list procedure.

6.5 To facilitate the flow of the meeting, the meeting Chair may use unanimous consent to pass non-controversial motions, such as the adoption of the agenda or minutes.

6.6. The meeting Chair, Secretaries, Chief Returning Officer, and all executives or officers of the society should familiarize themselves with these guidelines and the technology being used for the Electronic Annual General Meeting well in advance of it being held.

6.6 Where necessary, the society may modify these guidelines by an ordinary resolution at a board, executive, council, society, or general meeting.