

Paper A2

Updating the Rules of Procedure

Clerk

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive updates the Rules of Procedure as set out in paper A2 of Assembly Executive November 2021 with immediate effect.2. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive instructs the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, in consultation with the Officers of Assembly, to make any further minor updates required to the Rules of Procedure to reflect decisions made by the General Assembly.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Updating the Rules of Procedure (section C of The Manual) to reflect decisions that have been taken by the General Assembly.
Main points	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Some references to the Moderator need to reflect one Moderator serving for one year.2. The section on virtual meetings needs to be simplified and updated.
Previous relevant documents	Many and various reports.
Consultation has taken place with...	Business Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (e.g. ecumenical)	N/A

Updating to reflect decisions already made

1. The following rules need updating to reflect a single Moderator serving for one year:
 - 1.2 "either Moderator".
 - 3.9 "to elect the Moderators".
 - 3.13 "either or both of the persons elected to serve as Moderator".
 - 3.17 "During the temporary absence of a Moderator, the other Moderator may serve alone... if neither Moderator is present".
- 5.2 "the Moderators of General Assembly (one of whom ...".

Updating and simplifying

2. Rules 3.14 to 3.16 cover the absence of a Moderator. These need updating, and simplifying. The current text says:
 - 3.14 Where the previous General Assembly at its ordinary meeting has failed to elect, or in the event of either or both of the persons elected to serve as Moderator becoming unable to serve more than 120 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5 for persons available to serve as Moderator for the coming Assembly. On receipt of those names, the General Secretary will inform all those whose names appeared on the roll of the previous Assembly of the nominations and send them a ballot paper. Those ballot papers shall be returned by post within five working days of receipt. Thereafter, the General Secretary shall deliver these ballot papers unopened to the tellers for the election of the Moderator who shall open and count the votes cast and report the result of this election to the General Secretary in the same form as would have been reported to the General Assembly had this election been held during the Assembly.
 - 3.15 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 120 days and more than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the Moderator currently in office shall continue in office until a successor is inducted. The General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5, and an election shall be held at the General Assembly in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.7 and 3.8, and the Moderator so elected shall be inducted during that meeting of Assembly.
 - 3.16 If a Moderator is unable to take office fewer than 60 days before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly, or resigns from office after induction, or is removed from office after induction, then the General Secretary shall forthwith initiate a postal ballot as described in clause 3.14, and the person so elected shall be inducted at the next meeting of the Assembly Executive, save that if this clause comes into effect less than nine months before the planned meeting of General Assembly, then the remaining Moderator shall serve alone until the next meeting of General Assembly.

It is proposed to replace this with:

- 3.14 Where the previous General Assembly at its ordinary meeting has failed to elect, or in the event of the person elected to serve as Moderator becoming unable to serve more than six months before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly at which they were to have been inducted, then the General Secretary shall seek nominations from synods in the manner prescribed in clauses 3.3 to 3.5 for persons available to serve as Moderator for the coming Assembly. On receipt of those names, the General Secretary will inform all those whose names appeared on the roll of the previous Assembly of the nominations and send them a ballot paper. Those ballot papers shall be returned by post within five working days of receipt. Thereafter, the General Secretary shall deliver these ballot papers unopened to the tellers for the election of the Moderator who shall open and count the votes cast and report the result of this election to the General Secretary in the same form as would have been reported to the General Assembly had this election been held during the Assembly. Any electronic form of voting approved by the Business Committee may replace the postal method prescribed in this rule.
- 3.15 If a Moderator is unable to take office less than six months before the first day of the meeting of the General Assembly, or resigns from office after induction, or is removed from office after induction, then the current or most recent former Moderator available and willing to serve shall so serve.
- 3.16 Delete, and re-number subsequent paragraphs.

Virtual meetings rule

3. It is proposed that the existing Rule 10 be re-worded as follows:
10. Provision for virtual and hybrid meetings.
- 10.1 For the avoidance of doubt, all meetings in the United Reformed Church, including councils of the church, may in principle be held face-to-face, virtually, or hybrid.
- 10.2 All meetings must always be held in accordance with the current Standing Orders.
- 10.3 In particular, all virtual or hybrid meetings must meet the standards set out in the Standing Orders.
- 10.4 Providing that a meeting remains quorate, no failure of technology however caused, or decision to remove any person from a meeting, shall invalidate the meeting or any decision taken at the meeting, nor shall any such matter be a ground for appeal against any decision taken at that meeting.
- 10.5 In deciding the method of meeting, the Convener, or Moderator, is required to consult with other Officers of the body in question to consider what proportion of the members of the meeting are able to participate in face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid meetings.