

Briefing Paper: Types of Motions

At Conferences across the Liberal Democrats, including the Young Liberals, you will see and hear a number of different types of ‘motions’ being ‘moved’ for Conference to decide on.

Different motions have different rules governing them and different outputs, and so it is useful to know the difference between different motions to completely understand their importance. This briefing paper will cover the different motions that you are likely to see during your time in the Liberal Democrats.

1. Policy motions

Summary: The most common type of motions, and those that are easiest to follow, these motions deal with public policy (education policy, economic policy, equalities policy etc...)

Key Output: These motions will ask Conference to come on a position on a policy, which will have the effect of making the policy Young Liberals/Federal

Unique qualities: Policy motions tend not to have many unique qualities. In the Federal Liberal Democrats, there are special rights given to the Federal Policy Committee to engage with policy motions.

2. Business Motions

Summary: Business motions relate to the internal governance of the Party/AO/other organisation. They could include calls to work cross-party or calls to start projects (like a working group on a specific policy).

Key Output: These motions will ask Conference to come to an agreement on how the organisation should operate.

Unique qualities: In difference to other motions, the changes proposed by this motion will be harder to measure. Some motions might highlight support or opposition to a specific policy, others might lead to a specific wording change, but business motions are more difficult to quantify. For instance: how does one measure ‘cross-party cooperation’ – would having the same policy as another party count as cross-party cooperation?

3. Constitutional Amendments

Summary: Constitutional amendments make reference to the existing Constitutions (of various organisation in the Lib Dems), and editing elements of it

Key Output: These motions will either lead to new elements of constitutions, will remove elements of constitutions, or will replace elements of the constitution.

Unique qualities: To ensure that constitutions offer a level of longevity, and therefore offer the possibility of long-term thinking and operations, constitutional amendments will tend to require 2/3rds supermajorities of voters to pass. Constitutional Amendments will tend to also count 'amendments to Conference Standing Orders', with Conference Standing Orders often de facto being considered part of the Constitution and contained in the same documents.

4. Emergency motions

Summary: Emergency motions are almost-always policy motions, which refer to events that have happened since the standard submission deadlines.

Key Output: These motions will ask Conference to come on a position on an emergency policy, which will have the effect of making the policy an official Young Liberals/Federal Liberal Democrat policy.

Unique qualities: In difference to other policy motions, emergency motions have different submission deadlines, have a far more limited scope of content within them (ie they must be based on events that have taken place since submission deadlines), and in some cases, have different rules governing how long they continue as official/valid/approved policies.