

# THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WILLIAM PETRE SOCIETY

## EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD UNIVERSITY

*The William Petre Society is an association affiliated with Exeter College that aims to facilitate fruitful interaction between its members, promote the academic interests and the welfare and wellbeing of its members, represent the interests of Exeter graduate students to the Governing Body of the College, and adhere to the principles of democracy, transparency and non-discrimination in its functioning.*

## PART I – DEFINITIONS

**Article 1** In this Constitution, unless the context indicates otherwise:

- (a) “AGM” means annual general meeting;
- (b) “College” means Exeter College, Oxford;
- (c) “Executive Committee” means the executive committee of the William Petre Society;
- (d) “Full term” means the eight weeks comprising first to eighth week of any term;
- (e) “Hustings” means a forum at which candidates for election to the Executive Committee may explain their manifestos to members of the Society;
- (f) “Member” includes ordinary, honorary and associate members of the William Petre Society;
- (g) “MCR” means the middle common room of Exeter College;
- (h) “NUS” means National Union of Students;
- (i) “OUSU” means Oxford University Students Union;
- (j) “Part two students” means students in the fourth year of a Bachelors degree who are primarily concerned with research;
- (k) “Returning officer” means the person responsible for overseeing elections to the Executive Committee of the Society;
- (l) “Society” means the William Petre Society;
- (m) “University” means the University of Oxford.

## PART II – MEMBERSHIP

### ORDINARY MEMBERS

**Article 2** The following members of the College are qualified to be Ordinary Members of the Society:

- (a) Persons reading for a higher degree, diploma, certificate or second BM;
- (b) Part two students who are qualified to supplicate for the Bachelor of Arts (BA);
- (c) Graduates of the University reading for a further degree at the University;
- (d) Persons reading for a first degree at the University having Senior Student status as defined in the Examination Decrees and Regulations. This includes students reading for a second BA;
- (e) Visiting students who are graduates of another university or are certified by the Sub-Rector as of equivalent standing.

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

### Article 3

- 3.1** The following persons may be elected to associate membership of the Society:
- (a) Graduate research workers in the University, who are not members of any other college of the University;
  - (b) Recognised students who are not qualified for ordinary membership of any other MCR of the University;
  - (c) Spouses and long-term partners of ordinary members.
  - (d) Fourth-year undergraduate students at Exeter College.
  - (e) Employees of the College not otherwise granted membership of the Society.
  - (f) Former members of the William Petre Society.
- 3.2** Associate members may be elected for a period of up to three years, to be reviewed annually, after which they shall be re-elected.
- 3.3** Associate members shall have all the rights of ordinary members, except as otherwise provided for in this constitution.

## HONORARY MEMBERS

### Article 4

- 4.1** The Rector, Fellows and Lecturers shall be honorary members of the Society;
- 4.2** Other persons may be elected to honorary membership for a period not exceeding three years, after which they shall be re-eligible for election.

## WITHDRAWAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

### Article 5

- 5.1** All persons who qualify for Ordinary Membership of the Society may withdraw from membership by writing to the Sub-Rector. Withdrawal shall take effect from the beginning of Michaelmas term, except if notice of withdrawal is received by the Sub-Rector by Saturday of the second week of Michaelmas term, in which case it shall take effect immediately.
- 5.2** Any person who withdraws from Ordinary Membership of the Society cannot exercise any right that attaches to an ordinary member, including the rights to stand for office, vote at elections or attend meetings.
- 5.3** The Education Act (1994) provides that those persons who exercise the right of withdrawal from membership “should not be unfairly disadvantaged, with regard to the provision of services and otherwise, by reason of their having done so.”

## NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF ASSOCIATE AND HONORARY MEMBERS

### Article 6

- 6.1** Nomination for Associate or Honorary Membership can be made by at least two ordinary members of the Society by requesting the Vice-President, in writing, one week before the general meeting of any term.
- 6.2** The Vice-President shall determine the validity of the nomination and communicate the nomination to the entire Society.
- 6.3** Elections for such membership shall take place at the general meeting of any term, and shall be determined by a simple majority of those present, via a secret ballot.
- 6.4** There shall be an interview between the applicant and members of the Society at the general meeting, prior to the election. Where the applicant is unable to attend, a written statement of motivation from the applicant shall replace the interview, to be read out by the Vice-President at the meeting.

## PART III – FINANCIAL RESOURCES

### Article 7

- 7.1 The College shall allocate from the fee income received from all those qualified for ordinary membership (whether they are members or not) a termly sum, and make an equivalent charge to associate members, which shall be paid into the account of the Society.
- 7.2 Associate members are to pay the equivalent annual amount during the term of election and every year thereafter while their membership remains valid.
- 7.3 The Society shall act as an agent of the Governing Body in the management of the money for the corporate benefit of all junior members of the college who are qualified for ordinary membership (whether they are members or not) and all associate members.
- 7.4 The Society may levy a subscription on its ordinary members, but not on any person who has withdrawn from ordinary membership, for any purpose promoting the welfare, interests and social activities of its members.
- 7.5 The use, maintenance, disposition and replacement of facilities available in the MCR shall be subject to agreement between the Home Bursar and the Society.
- 7.6 The Executive Committee shall propose an annual budget at the beginning of Michaelmas Term to be passed by a two-thirds majority.

## PART IV – OFFICERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### THE OFFICERS

### Article 8

- 8.1 The officers of the Society shall be the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Social Secretaries, Welfare Officer and Exeter House President. These officers shall comprise the Executive Committee of the Society.
- 8.2 All officers shall fulfill their duties, so as to further the aims and interests of the Society and its members.
- 8.3 All officers are responsible for working together so as to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of all members.
- 8.4 All officers are accountable and responsible to the Society in relation to the fulfillment of their duties.
- 8.5 All officers shall regularly attend meetings called by the President and shall have the power to vote on any issues that arise within the Executive Committee.
- 8.6 The President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Social Secretaries shall be listed on the bank account of the Executive Committee. The Treasurer's signature, together with the signature of one of these officers, shall be required for withdrawals and other financial transactions.
- 8.7 The Executive Committee is responsible for liaising with College offices. To this end, the President shall nominate the officers who shall attend relevant meetings in the interest of the Society, including the Domestic Affairs meeting and the Finance and Estates meeting, subject to the provisions made in the College statutes and bylaws.
- 8.8 The Executive Committee shall have the power to propose the creation of additional offices, as may be necessary for the business of the Society. The Executive Committee shall determine whether such additional officers shall be elected in terms of Part V of this Constitution, or nominated by the Executive Committee.

- 8.9 Additional officers shall not be members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may invite any such members to attend any meeting but they shall not have a vote at its meetings. The Executive Committee may also abolish additional offices.

## DUTIES OF OFFICERS

### *THE PRESIDENT*

#### **Article 9**

- 9.1 The President shall take the chair at all meetings of the Society.
- 9.2 He/she shall call meetings as and when necessary or at the written request of six or more ordinary members. In addition the President shall call a general meeting before the end of the Sixth Week of each term, which shall include an AGM before the end of the Sixth Week of each Trinity Term.
- 9.3 The President shall have the power to delegate and reallocate duties in the interest of the Society to other members of the Executive Committee.
- 9.4 The President shall make an annual report listing affiliations and fees paid during the current academic year to external organizations, including OUSU and NUS, and shall submit it to the AGM and the Home Bursar before the end of the Sixth Week of Trinity Term for the approval of the governing body. The President shall arrange for the Society to determine affiliation to external organizations for the following year at the AGM.

### *THE VICE-PRESIDENT*

#### **Article 10**

- 10.1 The Vice-President shall assume the President's responsibilities if the President is indisposed or absent.
- 10.2 The incumbent Vice-President shall be the returning officer for the elections to the Executive Committee. In the event of his/her absence or his/her standing for election, he/she shall appoint a deputy.
- 10.3 The Vice-President shall keep appropriate records of the Society, including the minutes of Executive Committee meetings and general meetings, and shall pass them to his/her successor.
- 10.4 The Vice-President is responsible for maintaining communication between the Executive Committee and the Society via e-mail, pigeon post and the Society website.
- 10.5 The Vice-President is responsible for maintaining and updating electronic and paper lists for all members of the Society including the associate and honorary members. Each term the Vice-President shall report to the Home Bursar the names and addresses of all those who have become or remain associate members of the Society during that term.
- 10.6 The Vice-President shall acquaint him or herself with the Constitution and shall ensure that it is adhered to in the running of the Society and the Executive Committee.

### *THE TREASURER*

#### **Article 11**

- 11.1 The Treasurer shall be responsible for the apportionment of funds at the disposal of the Society.
- 11.2 The Treasurer requires the approval of the Society for the Executive Committee to spend more than £100 on any one item or more than £300 on any event unless such expenditure has been approved by a meeting of the Society.

- 11.3 The Treasurer shall give a written financial statement, including a list of donations made and the external organisations benefiting from those donations, in November to both the members of the Society and the Home Bursar.
- 11.4 The Treasurer shall give a provisional yearly account of the Society's income and expenditure at the AGM. He/She shall place a typed copy of this account on the MCR notice board, and shall submit a copy of it to the Home Bursar before the end of the Sixth Week of Trinity Term, for the approval of the Finance and Estates Committee.
- 11.5 The Treasurer, along with the Treasurer-Elect, shall present a draft budget for the forthcoming financial year, which shall run from the 1st August to 31st July, to the Finance and Estates Committee in June of each year.
- 11.6 The Treasurer's term shall run according to the college financial year, 1<sup>st</sup> August to 31<sup>st</sup> July. The Treasurer-Elect shall take over responsibility for the funds of the Society on 1<sup>st</sup> August. The incumbent Treasurer shall relinquish this responsibility, and conclude his/her term by reconciling the Account for the previous college financial year, no later than 30<sup>th</sup> September. During the interim period between the election and the change of power, the incumbent Treasurer and the Treasurer-Elect will work congruently to facilitate a fluid handover.

## ***THE SOCIAL SECRETARIES***

### **Article 12**

- 12.1 There shall be three Social Secretaries.
- 12.2 The Social Secretaries shall organise social events and activities for members of the Society throughout the year.
- 12.3 The Social Secretaries shall produce and distribute a term card at the beginning of each term to notify members of the Society's events.
- 12.4 The Social Secretaries shall have the assistance of other members of the Executive Committee, as well as other members of the Society, in carrying out events.
- 12.5 The Social Secretaries shall liaise with the Welfare Officer to ensure that appropriate events are organised to further the aims of the Society.

## ***THE WELFARE OFFICER***

### **Article 13**

- 13.1 The Welfare Officer shall represent the general concerns of all members of the Society, particularly in the areas of accommodation, academic needs, welfare and personal security.
- 13.2 If appropriate training is available, the Welfare Officer shall complete such training, so as to ensure that he/she is able to carry out his/her duties effectively.
- 13.3 The Welfare Officer shall work to ensure an environment free of all forms of discrimination and harassment, on grounds such as race, age, religion, gender and sexual orientation, and shall represent the Society on any College committees that seek to address these issues.
- 13.4 The Welfare Officer shall raise any concerns of members of the Society at Executive Committee meetings and where necessary liaise with the Home Bursar or relevant responsible authority to resolve these concerns. He/she shall represent the Society's concerns and interests at Welfare meetings.
- 13.5 The Welfare Officer shall work with the Social Secretaries to organise events to ensure the well-being of members of the Society and to ensure that all new members become involved and feel welcome in the Society.
- 13.6 The Welfare Officer shall be responsible for the provision, from funds available to the Society, of utensils such as forks, knives, plates and mugs, and refreshments such as tea and coffee in the MCR. The Welfare Officer is also responsible for overseeing the

maintenance of equipment and furniture in the MCR and shall ensure that the MCR is kept in good condition.

### ***THE EXETER HOUSE PRESIDENT***

#### **Article 14**

- 14.1 The Exeter House President shall represent the interests of graduates resident at Exeter House to the College and MCR.
- 14.2 He/she shall liaise with the Home Bursar, Steward, Warden and other college staff in pursuit of the same.
- 14.3 He/she shall call and chair a termly house meeting of residents, and prepare a report for the College authorities and the Executive Committee on the issues raised therein.
- 14.4 He/she shall assist the Warden with the arrival of fresher graduate students and assignment of study bedrooms in late September and early October.
- 14.5 He/she shall assist the Warden with health and safety and fire issues at Exeter House.
- 14.6 His/her term of office shall run from September to September and as such the election for this position shall take place by the end of Trinity Term of any academic year.

### ***THE FRESHERS' WEEK REPRESENTATIVE***

#### **Article 15**

- 15.1 The Freshers' Week Representative will be elected in Trinity Term of each academic year for a term enduring until the end of Freshers' Week in the following Michaelmas Term.
- 15.2 The Freshers' Week Representative shall liaise with the faculty of the college, the MCR membership, and the rest of the MCR Executive Committee, in particular the Social Secretaries, to plan and carry out social events for incoming students during Freshers' Week.

## **PART V – ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

#### **Article 16**

- 16.1 Subject to section 8(8), appointment of all officers shall be by free and fair election in a secret ballot in which only ordinary members shall be eligible to stand for ordinary office or vote and ordinary and associated members shall be eligible to stand for additional offices.
- 16.2 Subject to section 10(2), the Vice-President shall be the Returning Officer for elections, a position that he/she shall hold until all positions available for election have been validly filled.

### **TIMING OF ELECTIONS**

#### **Article 17**

- 17.1 Election of all officers, excluding the Exeter House President (see section 14(6) above) shall take place each year by the end of Second Week of Hilary Term, on a day to be determined by the Returning Officer.
- 17.2 Elections to fill casual vacancies shall take place in full term not more than fourteen days after the Executive Committee has declared an office vacant by way of notice in the MCR, counting only days of full term.

## PRE-ELECTION PROCEDURES

### Article 18

- 18.1 The Returning Officer shall give at least seven days' notice of forthcoming elections, by e-mail or pigeon post, and on the notice board of the MCR. The Sub-Rector shall be notified by letter.
- 18.2 The Returning Officer shall satisfy the Sub-Rector that the ballot shall be conducted at a place that has been reasonably publicised and is reasonably accessible to all those eligible to vote, and that the count shall be conducted in a fair and efficient manner.
- 18.3 Any person wishing to stand as a candidate shall so inform the Returning Officer or his/her deputy in writing no later than three days prior to the election date.
- 18.4 Having verified the status of a candidate as an ordinary member for ordinary offices and status as ordinary or associated member for additional offices, the Returning Officer shall place the candidate's name and the office for which he/she is standing on the notice board in the MCR.
- 18.5 All candidates' names, juxtaposed with the offices for which they are standing, must be placed on the notice board in the MCR at least two days prior to the opening of the poll until the end of the day of election.
- 18.6 The Returning Officer shall communicate the candidates' names and the offices for which they are standing to all ordinary members via pigeon post or e-mail at least two days prior to the opening of the poll.
- 18.7 Hustings shall be held on the afternoon prior to the election in the MCR at a time and date notified by the Returning Officer at least two days prior to the opening of the poll.

## ELECTION DAY PROCEDURES

### Article 19

- 19.1 The ballot box shall be kept open for a minimum of ten hours on the day of the election. These hours shall be determined and advertised by the Returning Officer.
- 19.2 On the day of the election, the Returning Officer, as well as members of the incumbent executive committee and additional officers who are not themselves standing as candidates, shall facilitate the free and fair conduct of the election by:
  - (a) verifying that all persons who proceed to vote are ordinary members;
  - (b) keeping a tally of all voters;
  - (c) ensuring that counting is conducted a fair and efficient manner;
  - (d) ensuring that the results of the election are made known as soon as possible by notice in the MCR.
- 19.3 Ordinary members wishing to assist in the electoral process may do so provided that they are not standing in the election and have received permission from the Returning Officer.
- 19.4 The Returning Officer, and at least two other persons participating in the electoral process, shall conduct the counting of votes.
- 19.5 The Returning Officer shall declare invalid any vote that is blank, illegible or spoilt.

## THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

### Article 20

- 20.1** The ballot shall be conducted in terms of the Single Transferable Vote electoral system.
- 20.2** Each voter shall rank the candidates in preferential order, denoting with “1” their first choice, “2” their second choice, “3” their third choice, and so on. If a candidate scores more than 50% with a first-choice vote, he/she immediately wins the election.
- 20.3** In the event of no candidate winning more than 50% of first choice votes, the votes shall be redistributed as follows:
- (a) The candidate with the least number of first choice votes shall be eliminated;
  - (b) The elimination of candidates and distribution of their preferences will continue until either one candidate wins 50% of the vote plus one, or until all but two candidates have been eliminated, in which case the candidate with a plurality of the vote shall be deemed elected.
- 20.4** The election of multi-seat constituencies (i.e. The Social Secretaries) shall be conducted as follows:
- (a) The total number of votes cast for the multi-seat constituency will be used to determine the quota of votes required for election. The formula used to determine the quota will be  $(t/n+1)+1$ , where n is the number of open seats, and t is the total number of votes cast.
  - (b) On the first count of votes, if any candidate receives more than the quota required for election, he/she will be declared elected, and his/her surplus votes will be distributed to the other candidates through the second preference.
  - (c) This process will continue until either all open seats are filled. If not enough candidates reach quota after the distribution of preferences, those with a plurality of the vote shall be declared elected.
- 20.5** The ballot paper shall include an option to “re-open nominations” (RON). In the event of RON winning 50% of the vote, the Returning Officer shall, within seven days of the election, re-open nominations for that position, and a new election shall be convened in accordance with the provisions of Part V of this Constitution (excluding section 16(1)).

## VALIDITY OF ELECTIONS

### Article 21

- 21.1** For an election to be valid at least 10% of ordinary members must vote.
- 21.2** Where fewer than 10% of members vote the Returning Officer shall immediately, and by reasonable notice to the Society, declare the election invalid and proclaim that a new election shall be held within seven days, subject to the provisions of Part V of this Constitution (excluding section 16(1)).
- 21.3** Where no more than one person submits a candidacy for a given office that person shall win that office as soon as the deadline for that submission is reached.
- 21.4** Where no person submits a candidacy for a given office the Returning Officer shall declare that election to that office is postponed, until no fewer than seven days after the election, at which point a new election for that office shall be held, subject to the provisions of Part V of this Constitution (excluding section 16(1)).
- 21.5** Run-off elections conducted under sections 18(2) and 18(4) above shall be exempt from sections 18(1) and 18(2) above.



## ELECTION APPEALS

### Article 22

- 22.1 Appeals against any aspect of the elections shall be lodged with the Sub-Rector in person no more than 24 hours after the official closing of the poll.
- 22.2 All appeals shall be jointly investigated by the Sub-Rector and the Returning Officer.
- 22.3 If the Sub-Rector finds that any appeal lodged concerns the returning officer's performance of his/her duties, the Sub-Rector shall have the power to bar the Returning Officer from participating in the investigation process. In such event, the Sub-Rector acting on his/her own shall investigate those appeals that have been lodged.
- 22.4 The findings of the investigation shall be publicised by notice in the MCR.

## TERMS OF OFFICE

### Article 23

- 23.1 Each officer's term of office shall run from the day following his/her election, or his/her nomination in terms of section 8(8), until the day of the next election.
- 23.2 No person shall hold the president's office for more than one year.
- 23.3 Any member of the Executive who misses two consecutive scheduled meetings of the MCR, be they general or extraordinary, without good cause will have been deemed to have resigned his or her post. This includes meetings that have failed to reach quorum, or have been unable to convene for any other reason.

## PART VI – MEETINGS

### NOTICE OF MEETINGS

#### Article 24

24.1 The President shall give notice of meetings by:

- (a) posting a notice on the MCR notice board;
- (b) placing a notice in each member's pigeon hole, or communicating it to them
- (c) via e-mail.

24.2 The notice shall include the date, time and place of the meeting and the matters to be discussed. Any resolution relating to a matter not included in the notice shall be void unless all members present unanimously approve such resolution.

24.3 Notice of any meeting shall be given at least one week prior to the meeting. Notice of any meeting at which a proposed amendment of the Constitution is among the matters to be discussed shall be given at least ten days prior to the meeting and shall set out the proposed amendment.

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

#### Article 25

25.1 The order of business at general meetings shall be:

- (a) Minutes of the previous meeting;
- (b) Officers' reports;
- (c) Matters arising;
- (d) Constitutional motions;
- (e) Financial motions;
- (f) Ordinary motions;
- (g) Any other business.

25.2 Constitutional motions may not be discussed under (g).

### QUORUM AND VOTING REQUIREMENTS

#### Article 26

26.1 Subject to the provisions of section 26, a quorum at any meeting of the Society shall require the presence of at least 10% of the Society's members. If a quorum is not obtained, the meeting shall be adjourned. The President shall set a date on which the adjourned meeting shall be held, which shall be in full term, and not more than fourteen days later, counting only days of full term.

26.2 Subject to the requirements of section 26, the affirmative vote of a simple majority of those present and voting shall be required to approve a motion.

26.3 The Chairperson shall, subject to section 9(1), be a member of the Executive Committee, and shall remain impartial in debate and not vote except in the case of a tie. He/she shall then have the casting vote.

26.4 Honorary members and associate members shall vote only on matters concerning the day-to-day running of the Society.

### CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

#### Article 27

Any meeting at which a proposed amendment to the Constitution is to be discussed shall require a quorum of at least 15% of the Society's members. The affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of those present and voting shall be required to approve a proposed amendment.

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Article 28

- 28.1** Any members dissatisfied with the administration of the Society may propose a motion at any meeting of the Society.
- 28.2** If the complaint concerns alleges that any officer of the Executive Committee misused his/her authority, power or funds, or acted in a manner that was negligent, then the procedure for raising such a complaint, and for the adoption of any motion concerning the same, including removal of such officers, shall be the procedure required for a constitutional amendment.
- 28.3** If the complaint concerns allegations as to the conduct of any member, which is sufficiently serious to involve withdrawal or suspension or restrictions to membership, the procedure for raising the complaint, and the adoption of any motion concerning the same, shall be the procedure required for a constitutional amendment.
- 28.4** Any member whose complaint is not upheld, or is upheld but not effectively remedied, may appeal to the Sub-Rector, who may require the Society to provide a remedy.

## REGULATIONS

### Article 29

The Executive Committee shall be competent to propose regulations for running the Society. Such regulations shall be placed as a motion before a meeting of the Society.

## GENERAL

### Article 30

- 30.1** A copy of this Constitution shall be made available to each ordinary and associate member at the time of their joining the Society and shall also be posted on the notice board in the MCR. A copy shall be held by the Vice-President, and shall be open to inspection by any member, and by anyone qualified for ordinary membership. Another copy shall be deposited with the Sub-Rector.
- 30.2** Under the provisions of the Education Act (1994), the Governing Body shall review this Constitution not later than 2005, and at intervals of not more than five years thereafter.
- 30.3** Amendments made to the Constitution shall be subject to the consent of the Governing Body.