

## What is a “motion” and how do you write one for MU Delegate Conference?

# Introduction

**A 'motion' is a trade union way of asking for something. At MU Delegate Conference, it's the method by which members can ask the Executive Committee, the governing body of the MU, to do something on their behalf.**

One of the most important considerations is whether a motion is realistic and achievable. Is it something that the MU has the power to act on or influence for example, and does your motion 'ask' require resources that the MU might reasonably have? When deciding which motions to select, your Regional Committee will be looking for a call for action that the Region can support, and one that the MU, via the Executive Committee (EC), can implement.

The most important part of the guide below is the motion itself (point 4) which is the essential bit! But it can be helpful for motions to have a consistent format and structure, and to include alongside them some brief context or explanation. That way people reading the motion can better understand what you're asking for and why. This is important for Regional Committees and Conference Delegates who will debate and make decisions on your motion, and for the Executive Committee and MU staff to understand exactly what it is you want them to do if your motion is passed.

This guide also outlines the process for a motion – if you have any questions, please contact your Regional Organiser (contact details can be found further below).

## Part 1: Introducing Your Motion

**Part one of your motion is the introduction. It should set out the problem you want the MU to address. It can be something you want the MU to “welcome” and build on, or it can be something you think the MU should “regret,” “deplore” or “denounce”.**

You can also include statistics and evidence to back it up, but keeping it focused, and short and factually correct will help get your motion selected.

Here’s an example from a motion on [Universal Basic Income](#) from 2021:

*“During the pandemic, freelance musicians have had very little support from the government at a time when a significant portion of their income has been lost. MU stats show 38% of our members have not been able to access any government support during the pandemic and that 19% of our members are considering leaving their music careers due to the financial instability caused by the pandemic. One desperately needed solution is the introduction of a universal basic income.*”

## Part two: explaining why it's a trade union matter

**The second part of your motion should be a statement of the trade union values and principles that make it a trade union issue. It answers the question 'why is this an MU issue?'**

Going back to our UBI example, the second part of the motion looks like this:

*"Universal Basic Income (UBI) is the principle of giving a fixed amount from the government to every citizen. If musicians could access UBI they could have support during their creation process between records, shows or other related engagements. UBI would support musicians through periods of illness where they are unable to undertake work and would work alongside other key welfare support packages to ensure everyone is on a level playing field, so disability benefits, child benefits etc. would still continue."*

It explains the specific difference UBI would make and relates it back to why the union exists – to protect and support musicians.

## Part three: what's already out there

**Next, your motion should run through any existing debates, policies or resources that contribute to a solution. Does the MU, or do any partner organisations already work in the area? It helps to highlight any existing work being done here.**

In the Universal Basic Income example, this was the Intermittent Artist Status in France:

*“Conference notes the ‘Intermittence Du Spectacle’ provided in France whereby if musicians fulfil minimum required hours of work a year, they can be protected in periods without work and recognises that this may be an interim solution.”*

## Part four: The Motion itself - what you want the MU to do

**Finally, your motion should end with your proposal – the change you want to see happen.**

Proposals are usually introduced with a phrase like “Conference calls on the Executive Committee to...”, but you could also use “recommends”, “proposes”, “urges”, “demands”, “insists”, or “resolves”. For example:

*“Conference urges the Executive Committee to express full support for the introduction of UBI and to campaign for its introduction throughout the United Kingdom.”*

If you have more than one ask, you can use bullet points to make them clear.

## Part five: What happens next?

- Once you've written your motion, you need at least five members from the same Region as you to support your motion, including you.
- You then submit it to your Regional Office before it goes to your Regional Committee who review all of the motions submitted from your Region.
- Each region of the MU is entitled to propose one conference motion for every 750 members in the region on 31 December 2024. This is subject to a minimum of three and a maximum of fourteen motions per region.
- When considering your motion the Regional Committee can choose to do one of three things.
- They can accept your motion as you submitted it, and put it forward to Delegate Conference.
- They can reject your motion, either because the Region has put forward more motions than it is able to submit, or because the Regional Committee do not agree with the content of the motion, or they consider there's some other issue with the motion, for example no clear ask of the EC.
- Or they could amend your motion. Once a motion is in front of a committee it becomes the property of that committee, and they can amend it. They might do this for a number of reasons, for example to make it clearer, to add detail or to enhance it in some other way.

## **Dos and Don'ts**



## **Your motion is more likely to be selected if it's:**

- Topical
- An important political or industrial issue
- New to the MU, or something that hasn't been debated recently
- Includes a clear action
- Concise and in plain English
- 150 words or less if possible
- Likely to lead to an interesting debate.

The main reasons motions miss out on making it to Conference are to do with structure – for example, just focusing on describing a problem or not including a clear ask or set of possible solutions. Motions can also be rejected if they include inaccurate information or quotes, make personal or critical attacks on someone or something.

### **It is less likely to be selected if:**

- It is a repeat of old policies with no new material.
- It is on a subject that has been debated recently.
- It is 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.

A common reason for motions not being selected is because they contain criticisms and a detailed description of the problem but are unclear or entirely negative in their conclusions.

**Do:**

- Choose issues which are topical, new and not a repeat of existing policy
- Include a proposal for action, as this is far more useful in shaping policy and therefore makes for a better motion
- Use sections if you have several clear calls for action. Ensure that any subsections deal with one point of principle and don't reference other subsections.
- Be concise and clear – write in plain English, explain any abbreviations and try not to go beyond 150 words.
- Check that any factual points are accurate – motions that have inaccuracies are unlikely to be selected.
- Be original – the Union needs exciting, topical debates. Even if your motion does not get voted through it can still offer colleagues a valuable perspective and provide for good debate at Conference.

**Don't**

- Write long, verbose motions or be repetitive, vague or moralistic.
- Include quotations or actual sums of money both of which run the risk of being inaccurate and thus invalidating the motion.
- Put forward motions which are already policy.
- Make personal attacks – the law of defamation may apply.
- Be afraid to submit a motion. They are important for the Union in developing and shaping policy into the future.

## Suggested format for submitting your motion

1. Motion title
2. Introduce your motion
3. The motion: what do you want the MU to do?
4. Why is it a trade union matter?
5. What's already happening?
6. Region member 1 and their membership number
7. Region member 2 and their membership number
8. Region member 3 and their membership number
9. Region member 4 and their membership number
10. Region member 5 and their membership number.

A template for submitting motions is available as a download from the MU website if you would find it helpful.

## How to submit motions to Delegate Conference

Motions to Conference must be submitted (via email or traditional post) to the Regional Organiser of your region, no later than Friday 28 March 2025.

Contact details for each region are:

- Scotland and Northern Ireland Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, Rab Noakes Suite, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, G40 1BP or email [sni@themu.org](mailto:sni@themu.org)
- Wales and South West England Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9SD or email [wswe@themu.org](mailto:wswe@themu.org)
- North of England Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 123-127, 1st Floor, Ducie House, Ducie Street, Manchester, M1 2JW or email [paul.reed@themu.org](mailto:paul.reed@themu.org)
- East & South East England Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 30 Snowfields, London, SE1 3SU or email [paul.burrows@themu.org](mailto:paul.burrows@themu.org)
- Midlands Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, Office 2, The Mint, 95 Icknield Street, Birmingham, B186RU or email [stephen.brown@themu.org](mailto:stephen.brown@themu.org)
- London Region: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 30 Snowfields, London, SE1 3SU or email [jamie.pullman@themu.org](mailto:jamie.pullman@themu.org)

Acknowledgement of receipt will be provided on request. (Members are referred to MU Rule VI with regards to submitting or Motions).

Once received, we will check the membership details of the supporters of the motion to check that they are valid.

### **MU Policy**

Please noted that Motions do not represent current MU policy until carried at Conference and have been debated by the elected Regional Delegates.

## Standing Orders Committee

The Conference Standing Orders Committee (SOC) - examines all published motions along with any subsequent amendments for the purpose of clarification for Conference. If required, the SOC makes recommendations on the motions submitted for the regional delegations to consider prior to Conference. Over the course of the Conference preparations, the SOC produces three reports on the Motions.

The SOC is made up of three elected members from the previous Conference. One Executive Committee appointee and an MU official acting as Secretary.

To note: whilst a motion starts with an individual writing down out an action that they want to take, its path means that it then becomes an 'ask' of a group of members initially, then the Regional Committee, and finally the MU Delegate Conference. This means that the exact wording of the motion can sometimes change along the way: it's important for the person who initially writes a motion to understand that it can be shaped and edited on its path to the Conference Floor.

Any member with queries regarding Conference Motions is welcome to contact their Regional Organiser.



General enquiries  
[theMU.org/contact](https://www.theMU.org/contact)

Press & media enquiries  
[press@theMU.org](mailto:press@theMU.org)

[musiciansunion.org.uk](https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk)