

ROYAL ARCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. The Chapter wishes to re-elect the current First Principal, but he is currently also the First Principal of another Chapter; is a dispensation required to enable him to serve for a second year?

A1. A dispensation is required in order to install a Companion to serve simultaneously as First Principal of a second Chapter. Such a dispensation will usually have been granted previously, in which case no further dispensation will be required.

Q2. What is the quorum for a valid Chapter convocation?

A2. Five (excluding the Janitor), of whom two must be members of the Chapter, and three must be qualified to occupy the respective Principals' chairs, though it is not a requirement that any of the latter be members of the Chapter concerned. In order, however, for the ceremony of Exaltation to be worked the minimum number is seven (excluding the Janitor and any candidate). If on the day of the convocation a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting must be abandoned, and a note entered in the Minute Book. "The regular convocation of the Chapter on [day] [date] [month], [year] was duly called in accordance with the attached summons. Owing to the continued effect of the Coronavirus pandemic the required number of Companions to open the Chapter could not be assembled and the convocation was abandoned" is the wording suggested.

Q3. What is the quorum required to open a conclave of Installed Principals?

A3. Three Installed Principals, but no Conclave of Installed First or Second Principals may be opened unless there are at least two such Principals present (excluding the particular Principal Elect). If necessary the Janitor (if qualified) may act as one of the Installed First or Second Principals (but if so, another Companion must act temporarily as Janitor).

Q4. What if a Chapter wishes to meet but the Masonic Hall named in its by-laws cannot provide Covid-secure accommodation?

A4. The Chapter should make reasonable efforts to find a suitable alternative Masonic Hall for its convocation. If it proves impracticable, the convocation will have to be abandoned because it will obviously be impossible to achieve a quorum. A summons should, however, be issued – for a convocation at the regular Hall – against the possibility that it may be operational by the time of the convocation. If, once that has been done, it becomes clear to the Scribe E that the number of apologies is such that a quorum will be unattainable, the meeting should be abandoned.

Q5. What happens if a Chapter's Charter is inaccessible because its regular place of meeting is closed?

A5. A temporary Charter of Confirmation, in the form of a letter of authority, should **immediately** be sought via the Provincial Grand Scribe E.

Q6. What happens if a Hall could not reopen immediately and so convocations that should have been held had to be abandoned; is there a duty to hold the convocation that could not proceed at some other time?

A6. An abandoned convocation cannot be rescheduled. Some items of business can be transacted at an emergency convocation (provided it is not business that may only be done at a regular convocation), or at the next regular convocation. If it was the Installation convocation that had to be abandoned, see paragraph 5 of the guidance notes.

Q7. The Chapter reaches its Centenary in three months' time, but many of the members are showing a reluctance to attend in the present circumstances; can the celebration be postponed?

A7. There is no regulation that requires a Centenary to be celebrated on or near to the anniversary itself, and therefore the celebration can be postponed until the situation improves.

Q8. If the Chapter is unable to meet for a significant period, how will that affect its entitlement to celebrate its Centenary in due course?

A8. The suspensions between 17 March and 17 July and during the month of November 2020, together with any de facto local suspension(s) resulting from Government restrictions, will be automatically be discounted, as constituting force majeure. Otherwise, a Chapter is only liable to lose its entitlement to a Centenary Warrant if it fails to meet for a whole year. Provided that the Chapter has made all reasonable efforts to hold convocations, a longer period than a year may be disregarded by the Grand Chapter.

Q9. May Chapters revert to the normal ritual for Opening and Closing etc. as soon as the Government approves the removal of the final restrictions associated with the pandemic?

A9. Not only may they; they must, since the modifications were introduced only to cope with social distancing. At this stage, however, it is too soon to say when social distancing will no longer be required.

Q10. During the lockdown, many Chapters held social gatherings and committee meetings using remote conferencing facilities; can committee meetings still be held in this way?

A10. There is no Rule that requires committee meetings to be held face to face, which was why it was permissible during the lockdown to hold such meetings by electronic means. The practice may certainly continue if it is the wish of the Chapter, but Companions may wish to consider how the "dynamics" of a remote meeting may affect the quality of decisions made.