

# KOTESOL Seoul Chapter Election Procedures

## I. Overview for Chapter Election Guidelines and Requirements

The current constitution and by-laws of KOTESOL's National Executive do not give requirements, guidelines or even protocol suggestions for local chapter elections. Consequently, each chapter has developed its own standards, which vary substantially according to chapter membership numbers, chapter history, attendance at meetings, dominant personalities, members' commitment, policy considerations and other criteria.

Given this situation plus the size of the Seoul Chapter, and because we hold our elections at major annual events, not monthly meetings, the Seoul Executive felt we needed a more comprehensive foundation to orient upcoming elections and plan for future ones. To do so, the executive first asked Dr. Peter Nelson, a long time local member, former chapter and national officer, to survey the many questions associated with chapter elections, and to report to us using criteria that we could discuss and vote upon. In this request he examined election procedures of different chapters, elicited opinions from long-term members of the National Executive, and added his own ideas. It was understood at the outset that while he was to identify individual items as suggestions, and provide justification for them, it was our collective responsibility to consider each in light of our assessment of the chapter's current standing and anticipated changes and challenges as it grows.

The initial report was thoroughly discussed and its amended version will be available to chapter members at meetings and via the chapter website after 15<sup>th</sup> December 2006. In essence it considers the election process to consist of nomination information before the election, protocol and procedures during the election, and appeals following it. The items were considered as recommendations (preferences), guidelines (procedural advice), and requirements (standards). The executive is aware that time for chapter elections and other constraints helped shaped our decisions, yet we felt the items below are equitable to all members while ensuring an effective executive council.

Mary-Jane Scott, President  
(On behalf of the Seoul Chapter Executive)  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2006

## II. Pre-Election Procedures

**Item 1: The election procedure will begin at the chapter meeting immediately preceding the election.**

Justification: A suitable time period is necessary to permit members to nominate candidates, and for candidates to advertise their suitability regarding their nominations. As chapter meetings are (generally) held on a monthly basis, this is a suitable period in which to inform and nominate members in person and, for members not in attendance, via the chapter website and/or through *About Seoul KOTESOL* (ASK), the chapter newsletter.

**Item 2: Elective positions will include chapter President, Vice-President(s), Secretary and Treasurer.**

Justification: Individuals in these roles must have sufficient maturity and commitment to fulfill them, while the chapter membership needs to endorse them via an elective process. These are standard elective offices in most voluntary organizations, including local KOTESOL Chapters.

**Item 3: Only current (annual membership dues paid) members of Seoul Chapter are eligible to nominate and vote for candidates.**

Justification: This is standard procedure for national, dues-paying organizations with regional chapters. The assumption is that chapter membership has privileges, including the restricted right to nominate candidates who will run their chapter. Moreover, they are more likely to know candidates' qualities and suitability for office.

**Item 4: Current members of Seoul Chapter may nominate only one different candidate for each elective office, including themselves. This may be done at a chapter meeting that includes a nomination procedure, by a postal mail-in to chapter officers, or by email, using forms pre-submitted or otherwise available from the chapter executive for this purpose.**

Justification: One candidate per office avoids a nominee's overlap with different offices; self-nomination is standard procedure if one chooses to become a candidate, and standardized nomination forms reduce confusion.

**Item 5: Candidates for President and Vice-President(s) must be current members in KOTESOL and have been a member of Seoul Chapter for at least six continuous months prior to nomination.**

Justification: These positions require considerable familiarity with chapter events, challenges, and procedures, and nominees should be known to the chapter membership for voting purposes.

**Item 6: Candidates for President must have held an elective or appointed position within Seoul Chapter for at least six continuous months prior to their nomination.**

Justification: Given the importance, responsibility, and visibility of these positions within the chapter and as representatives to many regional and national KOTESOL events and meetings, candidates must have a proven 'track record' of responsible behavior, commitment and maturity within the chapter.

**Item 7: In the event that no candidate for President comes forward from the pre-election executive when nominations are called, the pre-election executive will appoint a suitable nominee from the chapter membership as acting president for a period of two months following the election, when a new election for the position of President will be held.**

Justification: The two month period will allow sufficient time for eligible candidates to come forward. Should this not occur, the new executive will have to enact necessary procedures regarding this important position.

**Item 8: Candidates for Secretary and Treasurer must have been members of Seoul Chapter for at least three continuous months prior to nomination.**

Justification: The chapter membership must have an opportunity to know the candidates' strengths, abilities and commitment for these important offices.

**Item 9: Candidates for Secretary and Treasurer, where possible, should indicate their suitability for their nominations.**

Justification: Both positions require time, commitment and skill, and nominees should have had some prior experience--within KOTESOL or other organizations--to show their ability and diligence.

**Item 10: Nominated candidates are to be given the opportunity to briefly describe (no more than one A4 page) their suitability in a personal statement. These statements should be forwarded to the Elections Officer one week before the election day, and will be made available to members at the election table on the election day.**

Justification: This gives members an opportunity to read about the candidates before voting.

**Item 11: Candidates can be nominated at the chapter meeting prior to elections, by email, or in writing, and all nominations must be submitted to the Elections Officer one week prior to the election.**

Justification: Candidates should make every effort to attend the meeting at which nominations are held. However, this is not always possible, so it is necessary to include those members who cannot attend but wish to be a candidate or nominate one/them, provided time and other procedures/requirements are followed.

**Item 12: Appointed positions will be decided in all respects by the chapter president after consultation with the chapter executive.**

Justification: These positions are so diverse (e.g. webmaster, events coordinator), ad hoc and specific, that no generalized standards can fit all situations. Consultation with the chapter executive is an important way for the chapter president to decide someone's suitability, but the final decision should remain with the president.

**Item 13: The chapter president appoints an Elections Officer to supervise chapter elections.**

Justification: This gives legitimacy to the entire elections process and reduces confusion.

**Item 14: The chapter president appoints qualified volunteers to assist the Elections Officer.**

Justification: The Elections Officer will need assistance regarding the nominations process, voting and counting procedures on the day of the election, and for post-election disputes or appeals. The chapter president may appoint qualified volunteers independently of or upon the recommendations of the Elections Officer.

**Item 15: Ballots will contain not only nominated candidates' names for each position, but also a provision for write- in candidates.**

Justification: This procedure is standard in voluntary organizations and is practiced by the National Executive at its annual elections. It also allows a "last-minute" candidate for a position, provided he/she meets all eligibility requirements stated previously.

**Item 16: No eligible member may be nominated for more than one elective position on the ballot.**

Justification: One person may possibly win two or more offices, which creates complications and possible conflicts of interest if he/she concurrently assumes more than one. If by chance a write-in candidate is nominated for more than one elective position, the Elections Officer and/or Executive Council must consult with him/her regarding his/her preference for one office only, before votes are counted and results announced.

**Item 17: The Elections Officer will be given the opportunity to explain the elections procedures to the chapter membership at the meeting preceding the election, on the chapter website, and/or ASK or another suitable forum/medium/venue.**

Justification: All chapter members, whether present at monthly meetings or not, need to know about the elections process in order to make the best informed decisions regarding candidates' eligibility and suitability.

### III. Election Day Procedures (at the conference)

**Item 18: Pre-printed ballots will be given to eligible chapter members when they register at the conference, or at the election table. Absentee ballots, proxies and Internet-based voting are disallowed.**

Justification: The Elections Officer and/or appointed assistants can quickly determine an attendee's current membership status from chapter membership rolls. This is also fast, reliable and efficient. Absentee ballots and Internet-based voting blur transparency and complicate on-site vote counting and announcement of winners.

**Item 19: An election table will be provided within sight of the registration site, and will be attended at all times by the Elections Officer or his/her nominee. Candidates may not sit at the election table.**

Justification: Election boxes need to be 'visible' to the electorate, in part to prevent false accusations of ballot box tampering. Furthermore, eligible conference attendees can quickly learn of its location and vote accordingly.

**Item 20: No previously nominated or 'write-in' applicants may use individual rooms at the conference site to describe their suitability. Furthermore, none may verbally describe their suitability to others within a cordoned area of 10 meters surrounding the registration site, election site or ballot box, or within restricted areas outside the building where the conference is held.**

Justification: The Elections Officer must ensure that registration flow is not impeded, and that candidates not have physical and/or verbal access near the registration site and/or ballot box. This is not an attempt to quash freedom of speech, but to recognize that attendees at the conference are there mainly to attend presentations, with elections being only part of the conference itself. This is standard practice at elections.

**Item 21: Candidates may NOT hand out any leaflets or place posters inside or outside the building. 'Write-in' applicants may bring copies of a personal statement and hand these to the Elections Officer, to be made available to voters along with previously submitted personal statements.**

Justification: This is a conference site, not a platform for electioneering. Last-minute write-in candidates will have the same, albeit limited, opportunity to describe their eligibility and suitability in writing, providing they follow the same procedures as those earlier nominees whose names are pre-printed on the ballots. No nominees whatsoever, whether listed on pre-printed ballots or as write-in candidates, may independently distribute leaflets or any other written materials describing their suitability for any position.

**Item 22: The Elections Officer, upon seeing or hearing of violations of the restrictions above, has the authority to speak to the suspected violator(s), to provide one warning to cease and desist, or to decide that a nominee's activity has resulted in immediate disqualification for the position that he/she is seeking. His/her decision is final and cannot be appealed at a later time.**

Justification: Election rules must be enforced, vigorously yet fairly, to ensure overall equity in the voting process. Every effort will be made to ensure that candidates follow all rules completely, but obvious and determined violation of them will result in immediate disqualification.

**Item 23: The period of election shall be from the opening of registration to one hour before official closure of the conference. (e.g. 11 AM to 5 PM if the conference officially opens at 11 AM and closes at 6 PM.)**

Justification: The closure time ensures there is a sufficient period to count votes accurately.

**Item 24: The Elections Officer plus two appointed volunteers will count the ballots in a separate room where available, or in a quiet area, after the closure period.**

Justification: To ensure accuracy, counters must not be distracted by noise, etc.

**Item 25: One 'representative' for any candidate may witness the counting of ballots, provided they do not verbally or physically interfere with the counting process.**

Justification: This is standard procedure at democratic elections and ensures transparency. In general, it is not expected there will be many, or possibly even one, 'representative' present at the counting of ballots.

**Item 26: A 'write-in' candidate for an office must receive a minimum of 20 votes in order to be elected.**

Justification: A required minimum number of votes ensures that the candidate is known to members, and is an endorsement by some of the candidate's strengths and abilities.

**Item 27: When there are more than two candidates for an elective office, the 'winner' is determined by a plurality vote, not a majority vote.**

Justification: There is no meaningful opportunity to hold a run-off election at the conference itself. Plurality votes are used quite frequently in elections of this type.

**Item 28: When two or more winning candidates for an elective office are tied in ballot votes, the final determination will be made at a run-off election held at the next chapter meeting.**

Justification: There is insufficient time at the conference to hold an immediate run-off election. By deferring to the next chapter meeting, all members present (and only those) get to vote again in the run-off election.

**Item 29: After the ballots are counted, they will be placed in a sealed box or envelope, with the affixed signature of the Elections Officer or an appointed deputy. If possible and suitable / appropriate, a verbal announcement of results will be made at the close of the conference by the Elections Officer or a member of the chapter executive. They also will be posted on the chapter website soon after, including notification of tied votes and the subsequent need for a run-off election between top contenders for an elective position. The ballots will be destroyed two months after the election.**

Justification: This procedure ensures speed, transparency and fairness where appropriate. It also permits sufficient time for both appeals and closure regarding election results.

#### **IV. Post Election Procedures and Issues**

**Item 30: In elective office positions with tied votes at the conference election, no new nominations may be submitted. Written ballots will be used.**

Justification: Provided two or more candidates in a tied vote remain eligible, the run-off election should be solely between those who were nominated or listed as write-in candidates at the election, not new entrants.

**Item 31: If no winner has been determined for an office (i.e. no names were entered on the pre-printed ballot or as a write-in candidate on the day of the election), or if a winning candidate is later found to be ineligible, a new election for the position will be held. The new winner will be determined only by a majority vote of the membership present at the monthly meeting following the conference. Written ballots will be used.**

Justification: Eligibility mistakes can and do occur (e.g. a winning candidate may be found not to have current KOTESOL membership at the time of the election). When these occur, they must be addressed. In addition, if no candidate is chosen at the election, or if a write-in candidate does not meet all qualifications (such as a minimum of 20 votes), procedures need to be included that allow new elections to occur.

**Item 32: Appeals may be lodged to the Elections Officer up to a week before the first chapter meeting immediately following the conference. They must be in writing, and indicate who has lodged the complaint as well as its nature (e.g. a miscount at the conference).**

Justification: Most democratic elections have appeal procedures.

**Item 33: Upon receiving a complaint in the appropriate manner from a chapter member, the Elections Officer will discuss the complaint with the Chapter President, making recommendations where appropriate. However, the final decision will be made by the Chapter President, in consultation with the chapter executive.**

Justification: The Elections Officer serves at the pleasure of the chapter president, and holds an appointed position. In contested cases, a decision must be made, which ultimately is the responsibility of the chapter president.

**Item 34: In the event of an elected officer's resignation or departure from the chapter before the next scheduled election cycle, the chapter president--after consultation with the chapter executive--may choose to appoint a qualified person to fulfill the remaining period of elective office, or may choose to hold an election at a monthly meeting. If the latter is selected, all members must be notified beforehand via the chapter website and/or ASK. Furthermore, the chapter president must inform members who is eligible to vote and under what conditions (e.g. by current members attending the chapter meeting, whether to include Internet-based or proxy voting and so on.)**

Justification: Vacancies occur for a variety of reasons, and the chapter president may need to act quickly when one occurs and the next scheduled election is several months away. This option permits the president to respond regarding what s/he feels is appropriate to the vacancy created and the situation facing the chapter.

**Item 35: After final decisions have been reached regarding these election procedures, an electronic and/or print copy should be made available to other KOTESOL chapters and the National Executive.**

Justification: The decisions made by Seoul Chapter may be useful to the above entities.