



GUIDELINES

FOR THE OPERATION

OF ASTI BRANCHES

2024

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INTRODUCTION

The *Branch* is the primary unit of organisation of members of the ASTI. It is through their branch membership that all members participate in and contribute to the business of the ASTI. It is essential, therefore, that Branches are organised in a manner that is both efficient and effective.

If Branches are to reflect accurately the views of members they must organise their affairs in a manner that will encourage the active involvement of as great a number of members as possible. Branches must be responsive to the views of members and in their organisation of meetings and other activities, arrangements for the widest possible consultation must be put in place. Renewed effort should be made to involve those who, though full members of the ASTI, rarely become actively involved and rarely attend branch meetings.

Branches have a responsibility to promote the interests of the ASTI and the implementation of its policies. Branch Officers are collectively responsible for the proper conduct of branch affairs. This set of Guidelines seeks to assist Branches and Branch Officers in the fulfilment of these important responsibilities. It is important that these Guidelines are read in conjunction with the ASTI Rules and Constitution.

I wish to record the thanks of the ASTI for all the excellent work undertaken at local level by Regional Representatives, Branch Officers and School Stewards.

Kieran Christie
GENERAL SECRETARY

1.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS

1.1 TYPES OF MEETINGS

The regularity with which branches meet is a matter for local decision by branch officers in consultation with branch members. Branch freedom in this regard is limited to some extent by the ASTI Rules and Constitution which require the holding of specific meetings to carry out particular functions before designated dates to deal with such matters as election of Branch Officers and Convention Delegates, the submission of motions for Annual Convention and the election of Standing Committee Representatives.

In so far as possible the regularity and frequency of branch meetings should be designed to facilitate branch members and to respond to their needs and circumstances. Where feasible, efforts should be made to ensure that procedural matters required by rule, e.g. elections or the handling of Convention business, do not dictate to too great an extent the setting of dates for meetings. Some of these matters could be combined, e.g. elections of branch officers, CEC representatives and Convention delegates, thereby giving greater flexibility in the arranging of a calendar of meetings.

If possible, care should also be taken to avoid organising meetings on dates which clash with school, local or national activities which may discourage members or groups of members from attending.

Branch officers should examine carefully the possibility of reducing the number of regular formal branch meetings and replacing them with seminars, training courses or consultative sessions which are targeted at specific members and issues, and which deal more directly with matters which specific groups of members deem to be of particular importance or relevance to them.

Meetings could be reorganised under a number of different headings:

(a) REGULAR FORMAL BRANCH MEETINGS:

These are full and formal meetings of all members of the branch. The ASTI Rules and Constitution specifies certain procedural and formal activities which must occur at branch meetings at specific times of the year, e.g. election of Branch Officers, adoption of motions for Annual Convention, etc.

(b) SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS:

Branches may organise Special General Meetings for the purposes of discussion and/or reaching conclusions on a specific issue. A branch could for example organise such a meeting in order to have a general discussion on an aspect of current curriculum redevelopment proposals. The organisation of and procedures applied at such a meeting may differ from the usual branch practices, e.g. a discussion paper could be presented; small working groups could meet and report to a plenary session; external speakers could be invited to attend.

(c) SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

A branch could set up sub-committees to examine aspects of branch business, union activities or matters of relevance to members or education in general. Such sub-committees or working groups provide an ideal way of involving those members with particular knowledge or expertise, or those who are reluctant to contribute at formal meetings of the branch. A branch could, for example, organise or facilitate meetings for specific subject groups. Alternatively such a sub-committee could make submissions to national committees of the union which exist under rule, e.g. the Education Committee or Equality Committee.

(d) Training / Target Group Meetings:

Branches should encourage all new School Stewards to attend the training offered by ASTI.

Branches should identify other groups within the branch for whom specific training or information sessions could be organised, e.g.:

- ▲ New Teachers / Members
- ▲ Part-Time and Temporary Teachers
- ▲ Transition Year Co-Ordinators
- ▲ Teachers of Specific Subject Areas.

It would be important that appropriate presentation methods are used at such meetings. Expert speakers both from within the branch and without should be invited to make presentations. Head Office officials are available to assist in this regard.

(e) Social Activities:

In the context of Rule 4(i) of the Rules and Constitution which encourages the fostering of “esprit de corps” branches should address the issue of the organisation of locally based Social Activities. The provision of refreshments is encouraged after information meetings. A branch social committee should look at the possibility of organising social gathering, cultural visits or sporting occasions which would promote the sense of solidarity which is so important in trade union activities. Such social activities could be co-ordinated between two or more branches.

(f) Multi-Branch Meetings:

The co-ordination of activities between two or more neighbouring branches may be an effective way of using resources and expertise, e.g. one branch could host a meeting of teachers of specific subjects while another could organise a meeting of part-time or temporary teachers. In this regard however, it should be noted that while individual branches are decision making units of the Association, joint branch meetings have no such formal decision making status.

1.2 CHAIRING MEETINGS:

An effective chairperson can be instrumental in ensuring, not alone that the business of branch meetings is conducted in a proper and efficient manner, but also that members attending the meeting participate in this democratic exercise. The chairperson should be fully conversant with the Rules and Constitution of the ASTI, Branch Standing Orders, Branch Bye-Laws and the Rules of Debate such as are applied at ASTI Conventions or as are to be found in a source book such as Norman Citrine's "ABC of Chairmanship".

However, in order to encourage participation, a chairperson should apply a reasonable level of flexibility in the application of the Rules of Debate. Branch Standing Orders may be "suspended" with the consent of the meeting. This can be done, for example, in order to encourage the continuation of a particularly valuable discussion or from time to time with the agreement of the meeting. However, Branch Bye-Laws may only be varied by a formal decision of the branch and following due notification to all members of the branch.

In order to have orderly debate it is however necessary for chairpersons to be strict in adherence to regulation if the attendance is large or if the matter in hand is of such a nature as to require a rigid and formal approach, e.g. in the conduct of votes or ballots.

The chairperson's role is to proceed in accordance with the agenda, to guide the course of the meeting, to ensure that business is transacted in a proper and courteous fashion, and where possible to encourage a healthy and comprehensive exchange of views. The chairperson should assist the meeting to reach a conclusion and decision where that is appropriate.

The chairperson, who should not become directly involved in a debate, must be fair and impartial, giving equal opportunities to all members to express their views. From time to time the chairperson may have to exercise the responsibility to make a fair ruling on the conduct of a particular debate. Quite clearly the chairperson will have views and opinions of their own, which may indeed be relayed to the meeting when appropriate. However, the chairperson should intervene as little as possible in the debate and should never seek to dominate the debate. If a chairperson wishes to make a significant contribution to the debate they should vacate the chair.

As an ASTI Branch Officer, the Chairperson has responsibility to protect and promote the interests of ASTI members and the union in general and in that context will on occasion have to give guidance to the meeting on particular matters.

When a number of members wish to speak on a particular issue, the chairperson should note down an order of speakers. If appropriate the order should rotate between those in favour of a particular position and those who are against it. All speakers should speak directly to the chairperson and the chairperson should not permit "cross-talking" or a direct exchange of views between two members which ignores the office of the chairperson.

It is an important duty of the chairperson to ensure that speeches are relevant and address the matter in hand. "Straying" speakers should be gently, or on occasion not so gently, directed to concentrate on the issue under debate. The chairperson should request clarification if a speaker's contribution lacks clarity. Where possible the chairperson should discourage the use of jargon and if necessary provide explanations for those who may be unfamiliar with meeting terminology.

1.3 ORGANISATION OF MEETINGS:

(1) Notification:

It is essential and required by rule that each branch member is duly notified of the date, time, venue and agenda for each Branch Meeting. Failure to give notice or indeed reasonable notice is not alone unfair to members but could leave the decisions of a meeting open to subsequent challenge. It is also required by rule that the Standing Committee Representative for the region receives due notice of meetings.

The responsibility for issuing notification of meetings is normally that of the Branch Secretary. Reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all members in the Branch receive adequate notice of meetings. Generally members should be in receipt of notification a minimum of seven full days before a meeting.

(2) ASTI Website - MyUnion:

Branch Secretaries can log in to their MyUnion account at www.asti.ie to see relevant information concerning their branch including:

- ▲ A facility to ratify new members online
- ▲ Branch Officer names and email addresses
- ▲ Names of CEC representatives
- ▲ Standing Committee representative's name and contact details
- ▲ Name and contact details of the relevant Industrial Relations personnel in Head Office
- ▲ A list of schools in their branch which includes:
 - School name
 - School address
 - School Steward name and email address
 - List of current members in the school and their membership status

If Branch Secretaries have any queries regarding this information, they should contact ASTI Membership Department at membership@asti.ie at the earliest opportunity.

(3) Agenda and Calendar of meetings:

Individual copies of the meeting agenda should be prepared by the Branch Honorary Secretary for distribution to each member. School Stewards should make the necessary arrangements to ensure that the meeting time and date together with the agenda is brought to the attention of each member in their school.

Branches are also encouraged to seek to ensure that each school has an ASTI notice board.

Difficulties have arisen in the past regarding late notification of meetings. Where late notification arises the branch should investigate the reason for such and seek to resolve any communication difficulties that may exist. Possible causes of late notification may be

- (a) late posting/email by the Branch Secretary
- (b) failure by Stewards to distribute notification on receipt of same, or
- (c) other internal school communication delays.

It would be advantageous if the Branch agreed a calendar of meeting dates to be distributed to schools well in advance of meetings. It is also the practice in some branches for Branch Officers to contact Stewards by telephone in addition to sending the written notice, whether by email or post. Additional telephone contact would be essential in the event of an emergency meeting or in notifying members where communication difficulties have arisen in the past.

(4) Contents of Agenda:

The Agenda for ASTI Branch Meetings is normally prepared by the Honorary Branch Secretary in consultation with the Chairperson and other Branch Officers. The Agenda Notice should carry clear information on the date, time and venue of the meeting. Branches should endeavour to make both the appearance and content of the agenda interesting and attractive in order to encourage greater levels of participation by members in ASTI activities.

Where possible, the agenda for Branch meetings should vary although there are specific items which recur at each meeting, e.g. minutes, matters arising, correspondence, new members, etc. Efforts should be made to ensure that meetings are not dominated by items which, although interesting to a few members, tend to deter the great majority from attending meetings.

Ideas on agenda development should be invited from branch members. They could be surveyed on preferences for agenda items. A branch committee of officers and others could discuss ways in which meeting agendas could become more relevant, interesting and informative.

School Stewards should be encouraged to arrange local school-based discussion on agenda items in advance of branch meetings. This would assist branches in arriving at conclusions that accurately reflect the views of the greatest number of members.

Guest speakers could be invited to address members on topics of interest. A local branch officer or member could prepare a presentation on a matter of concern to members. The Standing Committee Regional Representative should be invited to present an up to date report on union business.

THE FOLLOWING SAMPLE AGENDA MAY BE OF ASSISTANCE:

ASTI " _____ " BRANCH

A meeting of the _____ Branch of the ASTI has been arranged as follows:

VENUE: (Hotel, Town) _____

TIME: (Insert time) _____

DATE: (Insert date) _____

AGENDA

1. Minutes, Matters Arising, Correspondence
2. Discussion of Report of Branch Sub-Committee on ***School Codes of Positive Behaviour*** (copy attached)
3. Report from the Standing Committee Regional Representative
4. Motions for Annual Convention
5. New Members
6. Any other business

BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

Before the above meeting a short briefing session and discussion for New Members will be held from (insert time) _____ .

***Enquiries to: Branch Honorary Secretary
Address, Phone Number, Email Address***

(5) Venue:

Branch meetings should be held in venues that are appropriate and convenient. Consultation with branch members should take place on the choice of venue and the opinions of all branch members including those who rarely or never attend should be sought on this matter. It may be advantageous to change or rotate venues for meetings, e.g. in large rural branches meetings could be held in different towns on a rotating basis. It may be necessary to review this matter from time to time.

Availability of transport and car parking facilities should also be taken into account. Members should be encouraged to discuss car pooling arrangements where long distances are travelled, especially in large rural branches.

The majority of ASTI meetings are held in hotels. Some are held in Education Centres or trade union halls. It is important that the venue is suitable and comfortable so as to encourage members to attend. This may include the availability of catering facilities from time to time. Hotels which have an anti-union staff policy should be avoided.

The meeting room should be sufficiently large and comfortable seating arrangements available, particularly for meetings likely to be attended by large numbers (e.g. pre-ballot meetings). For large gatherings an effective public address system should be booked.

Where meeting attendance is small less formal arrangements are suggested. Instead of seating members in rows, a circular seating arrangement may encourage greater participation.

Since the Covid-19 Pandemic, some branches make arrangements for attendees to join remotely. Suitable facilities should be available in that regard.

(6) Time of Meetings:

There are many views on the ideal time for ASTI meetings and the arrangements vary from branch to branch. Consultation with all branch members on this matter is essential. Various options should be offered and branches should experiment with a number of different starting times and days.

Some branches hold their meetings at 4:30 p.m. while others commence at 7:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m. or even 9:00 p.m. Some opt to hold meetings on a regular night, e.g. the first Monday of every month; others seek to facilitate members by holding the meeting on a different night each time.

It is a matter for each branch, following consultation, to decide on the ideal time and day for meetings and the matter should be reviewed regularly in the light of experience. It is important that each meeting has an agreed and publicised "time of closure". In so far as possible the time of closure should be adhered to, as this will encourage greater attendance at meetings and will discourage members from leaving the meetings before they conclude. Branch meetings should not be too long in duration and a time limit, e.g. 1 to 2 hours, should be set. The chairperson should prepare an estimate of the time required for each agenda item and ensure that it is adhered to as far as possible in order that the meeting may be concluded within the overall time framework.

(7) Quorum:

Each Branch must by rule arrange a "Quorum" or minimum attendance for its branch meetings. It is a matter for each branch to decide however, in no case may the quorum be less than five members. The Chairperson must ascertain that a quorum exists before a meeting can commence and if the quorum ceases to exist during the course of a meeting then the meeting must be abandoned. The agreed quorum should be included in the Standing Orders for the branch.

In arranging a quorum, note should be taken of the rule (minimum of five), the size of the branch and the numbers who are likely to attend. The quorum should be sufficiently large to ensure that the meeting is reasonably representative. A quorum of twelve may be appropriate for an ASTI branch of average size, e.g. 200 members.

(8) Documentation:

The branch officers should ensure that sufficient copies of relevant documentation are made available to enable all those attending to become fully involved in branch discussion. It is also suggested that copies of ASTI publications and briefing documents are either placed on display or otherwise made available at branch meetings. The availability of Wi-Fi facilities would assist in that regard.

1.4 MINUTES:

(1) Content:

Minutes should be a brief but accurate record of the business transacted at the meeting to which they refer. They are normally compiled by the Honorary Branch Secretary from their notes taken while the meeting is in progress. As soon as possible after the meeting the Branch Secretary should more formally insert the record of the meeting in an official Branch Minute Book purchased by the Branch for that purpose.

The recording of minutes is a particular skill and requires reasonable discretion on the part of the Secretary. It is not necessary to record in detail all that has transpired at a meeting or to quote the contributions of each speaker. Minutes are a record of the date, time and venue of the meeting and of the decisions taken.

Where a decision is taken by the meeting this should be recorded. A formal motion or amendments to a motion adopted by the meeting and the names of the proposer and seconder should be recorded in their exact form. It is also standard practice to record the numbers of those voting for and against a particular motion where a count takes place.

Minutes should state the date and venue of the meeting. The numbers attending the meeting and the name of the member chairing should also be recorded. An attendance list should be circulated for signing and a copy of the list should be subsequently appended to the minute book.

(2) Adopting Minutes:

"Minutes of the previous meeting" should appear as the first item on the agenda of any ordinary branch meeting. The minutes should be read by the Branch Secretary and the Chairperson should then ask if the meeting agrees that the minutes are an accurate record of the previous meeting. If agreed then the Chairperson should sign and date the minutes. From that point, the minutes are a formal record of the previous branch meeting and cannot be changed.

The minutes are a factual record of the essential contents of a meeting. This record should include a record of the time, date, venue and attendance at the meeting. It should also record decisions made at the meeting and show whether such decisions were arrived at formally or by consensus.

When the Chairperson asks if the minutes are accurate, members may only discuss the accuracy of the minutes and may not engage in discussion on the decisions taken or issues involved. It would be logical to suggest that only those who were present at the previous meeting should have a view as to the accuracy of any particular set of minutes.

The minutes should be an accurate version of what occurred at the previous meeting. If the Honorary Secretary has erroneously recorded some aspect of the previous meeting this should be pointed out when the Secretary has completed the reading of the minutes. If the Branch accepts the correction, an appropriate insertion can be made there and then. Alternatively an amendment to the minutes may be proposed and seconded, and if agreed by the meeting, the amendment must be inserted in the margin and initialled by the Chairperson.

(3) Matters Arising:

Once the minutes have been approved by the meeting, the Chairperson invites comments under the heading of "matters arising". A general discussion on the issue should not be permitted at this point but rather the meeting should be confined to "points of information" relating to matters in the minutes. If the issue arising is to be discussed as a further item on the agenda then the Chairperson should defer discussion to the point on the agenda. Any reports given under the heading of "matters arising" should be very brief.

(4) Availability of Minutes:

The minutes of Branch Meetings are an important record of the affairs of a Branch. As the property of the union, the minutes should be retained safely by the Honorary Secretary of the Branch. The minutes should be made available for perusal by any member of the Branch or National Officer of the Association. An outgoing Branch Honorary Secretary should ensure that the Minute Book is given to the incoming Branch Honorary Secretary.

(5) Report of Meeting:

In accordance with ASTI Rules, a report of each meeting must be sent to the General Secretary. This report may consist of a copy of the minutes or a synopsis of same.

1.5 STANDING ORDERS

Standing Orders lay down in detail the manner in which meetings should be conducted. Each branch of the ASTI should draft and adopt for itself a particular set of Standing Orders. These Standing Orders may be amended following due notice to the branch members and by a two-thirds majority of those attending a duly convened meeting. Provision should be made in the Standing Orders for the suspension of "Standing Orders" if agreed by a two-thirds majority of those present. Copies of the Branch Standing Orders must be made available to all members of the branch.

The following is a model set of Standing Orders which can be adapted as each branch sees fit:

MODEL	ASTI BRANCH
	STANDING ORDERS
	ADOPTED BY THE _____ BRANCH ON (<i>INSERT DATE</i>) _____

(1) Suspension of Standing Orders:

In the event of a matter of urgency arising the chairperson may accept a motion for the Suspension of Standing Orders. The member moving such suspension must state clearly the nature and urgency of the business, the numbers of the Standing Orders affected and the length of time such suspension will last. No suspensions shall take place except by a two thirds majority vote of the members present.

(2) Time of Commencement / Closure:

Unless otherwise decided by the officers of the Branch, all ordinary meetings of the branch shall commence at (00) p.m. and close at (00) p.m. The chairperson may accept a motion for the postponement of the time of closure. The member moving such a postponement must state the reason for the postponement and the proposed period of the postponement. Such postponement shall require the agreement of a two thirds majority of the members present.

(3) Quorum:

(00) members shall form a quorum. If within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the meeting to commence a quorum is not present, the meeting shall be dissolved. A quorum must be present at all times during a meeting.

(4) Agenda:

An Agenda shall be prepared by the Branch Honorary Secretary in consultation with the Branch Chairperson. Copies of the Agenda shall be circulated to members to arrive no later than 7 days in advance of each ordinary meeting of the branch. All items on the Agenda shall take precedence over all other business. Any member wishing to introduce business for the consideration of the meeting may do so after the business on the Agenda has been completed and with the agreement of the Chairperson.

(5) Minutes:

The minutes of the previous meeting shall be read at the commencement of each ordinary meeting. No discussion shall be allowed on the minutes except in regard to their accuracy. After the confirmation of the minutes they shall be signed by the Chairperson, and the members shall then be at liberty to ask questions in regard to matters arising out of them. Such questions shall be allowed for purposes of information only, and no debate on the policy outlined in the minutes shall take place.

(6) Speakers:

A member wishing to speak shall so indicate to the Chairperson by raising her/his hand. The speaker shall always address the Chairperson. When more than one member wishes to speak the first person to indicate will be given precedence. The order of further speakers shall be at the discretion of the Chairperson.

(7) Chairperson's Ruling:

If the chairperson rises to call a member to order, or for any other purpose connected with the proceedings, any member speaking shall immediately cease speaking and no other member shall speak until the Chair be resumed. The ruling of the chairperson on any question under the Standing Orders, or on points of order or explanation, shall be final, unless challenged by not less than four members, and unless two thirds of the members present vote to the contrary.

(8) Interruption:

If any member interrupts another while addressing the meeting, or uses abusive language, or causes disturbance at any of the meetings and refuses to obey the chairperson when called to order such member shall be named by the chairperson. Such member shall thereupon be expelled from the meeting and shall not be allowed to enter again until an apology satisfactory to the meeting be given.

(9) Speeches:

Except where the chairperson so permits, no member, other than the mover of the original motion, shall be allowed to speak more than once on any subject before the meeting unless on a point of order, or explanation.

On an amendment being moved, any member, even though he/she has spoken on the original motion, may speak again on the amendment.

(10) Points of Order / Information:

Members wishing to raise Points of Order or Information must first obtain the permission of the chairperson and must indicate their wish to speak immediately the alleged breach has occurred.

(11) Motions and Amendments:

The first proposition on any particular subject shall be known as the Original Motion and all succeeding propositions on the subject shall be called Amendments. Every motion or amendment must be proposed and seconded by members actually present at the meeting. Motions or amendments should be submitted in writing to the chairperson. When an amendment is moved no further amendment shall be discussed until the first amendment is disposed of.

(12) Substantive Motions:

If an amendment is carried, it displaces the Original Motion and it becomes the substantive motion. Further amendments may then be taken. The surviving proposition shall then be put to the vote as the main question and if carried shall then become a resolution of the meeting.

(13) Right of Reply:

The mover of the Original Motion shall, if no amendment be moved, have the right to reply at the close of the debate upon such motion. When an amendment is moved she/he shall be entitled to speak thereon and at the close of the debate on such amendment shall reply to the discussion but shall introduce no new matter. The mover of an amendment shall not be entitled to reply.

(14) Withdrawals or Additions:

No motion or amendment which has been accepted by the chairperson shall be withdrawn without the unanimous consent of the meeting. Neither shall any addendum be added to a motion which has been accepted by the chairperson without such full consent. Should any member dissent, the addendum must be proposed and seconded, and treated as an ordinary amendment.

(15) Closing Debate:

A motion to proceed to the next business or to close a particular debate may be proposed and seconded only by members who have not previously spoken at any time during the debate. No speeches shall be allowed on such motions. In the event of the closure being carried the proposer of the original motion shall have the right to reply before the question is put.

(16) Voting:

Voting shall be by show of hands, except in the case of an election or where a secret or ballot paper vote is specifically required:

- (a) by the Rules and Constitution of the ASTI, or
- (b) by direction of the General Secretary of the ASTI.

Where required by rule, or where directed by the General Secretary or where deemed necessary by the chairperson an appropriate number of tellers shall be appointed.

The chairperson may vote on any issue as an ordinary member. If, having done so and if the vote is by show of hands and if the voting is level, the chairperson if he/she so decides, may exercise an additional casting vote to decide the issue.

(17) Motions for Agenda:

Notices of motions shall be sent to the Branch Honorary Secretary in writing to arrive not less than four days before the meeting at which they are to be discussed.

(18) Rescinding a Resolution:

No resolution shall be rescinded or amended at the same meeting at which it is passed.

(19) Amending Standing Orders:

These Standing Orders may be amended only at a formal meeting of the Branch and by the consent of two thirds of the members present and voting. Written notice of any such proposed amendment must be sent to each member of the Branch.

1.6 BRANCH BYE-LAWS:

Copies of Branch Bye-Laws must be made available to all members of the branch. Whereas Standing Orders lay down in detail the manner in which *meetings* should be conducted, some branches adopt Bye-Laws which govern branch procedures other than the conduct of branch meetings. Bye-Laws must be designed to facilitate good order in the running of branch affairs and should not impede the full participation of members in branch activities. A branch Bye-Law must not be in conflict with the Rules of the Association, e.g. a branch could introduce a bye-law which requires that a branch equality committee must be elected each October, however, the Branch would be required to continue to elect an Equality Officer each October as required by the Rules and Constitution. Whereas branch bye-laws may be more restrictive than existing ASTI Rules, such bye-laws may not be less restrictive than the Rules.

EXAMPLES OF BYE-LAWS:

- (i) The Rules set out the procedures governing the submission of motions to Convention. A branch could introduce a bye-law restricting procedure and stating that “motions for Annual Convention must be submitted in writing to the branch secretary two weeks before the relevant meeting”.
- (ii) A branch bye-law could require that motions for Annual Convention are first examined by a sub-committee of the branch before being presented for branch discussion. This would assist in ensuring that motions are in order before submission to Steering Committee.
- (iii) Rule 58 sets out the eligibility of members to become delegates to Convention. A branch bye-law could be more restrictive and could require that branch delegates must e.g. have attended at least a minimum number of branch meetings prior to election.

2.

COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 CORRESPONDENCE TO HEAD OFFICE:

In normal circumstances reports, letters/emails or other correspondence from branches to ASTI Head Office shall be written by the Branch Honorary Secretary and addressed to the General Secretary. Such correspondence should, where relevant, carry an appropriate reference heading so that it can be referred to the appropriate official e.g. "accounts, "membership", "benevolent fund", etc.

In writing to Head Office, Branch Secretaries or other branch officers should make clear, where appropriate, if the letter/email is being written on behalf of or on the direction of the branch or the branch officers. If a letter/email is being written on behalf of an individual member then the context of the letter/email should be explained. If the letter/email is being written pursuant to a meeting then the nature and date of the meeting should be referred to in the letter.

All letters received in ASTI Head Office are recorded, date stamped and every effort is made to provide an acknowledgement. Should the Branch Secretary receive neither an acknowledgement nor a reply within a reasonable period then telephone contact should be made with Head Office.

2.2 CORRESPONDENCE TO MEMBERS:

In general branch correspondence to members or school stewards should be written by the Branch Honorary Secretary. In order to avoid any confusion it should be clear to the recipient/s that any such communication is emanating officially from their local ASTI branch.

2.3 CORRESPONDENCE TO EXTERNAL BODIES OR INDIVIDUALS:

A branch is a unit of organisation within the Association. It would not normally correspond with external bodies or persons except in respect of matters local to the branch area, e.g. in relation to the local trades council. In general such correspondence should be written by the Branch Honorary Secretary.

It is also important that views expressed to local external bodies be consistent with those formally held by the ASTI where the subject matter of the correspondence pertains to policy issues.

2.4 HEAD OFFICE COMMUNICATIONS TO BRANCHES:

Normally communications from Head Office are directed to the Branch Honorary Secretary. On occasion specific letters or circulars may be sent to individual branch office holders as appropriate, e.g. the Honorary Equality Officer or Branch Honorary Treasurer.

Communications from Head Office may be in the form of a letter/email, circular or notice. Depending on the nature of the communication it may or may not be necessary to read to a branch meeting all or part of such correspondence. If correspondence is directed to branch officers only, then copies should be given to the relevant officers. It may be necessary on occasion to read to a branch meeting all or the key parts of correspondence received from Head Office.

It will be necessary from time to time to read to a branch meeting in full the contents of particular correspondence from Head Office where the branch secretary is requested to bring the information therein to the attention of members in the branch.

2.5 COMMUNICATION FROM MEMBERS TO BRANCHES:

It is necessary to distinguish between communications from members or school stewards to a branch

- (i) which simply require a direct response from the Branch Secretary
- (ii) which should be referred on to ASTI Head Office for attention, and
- (iii) which are for the attention of all branch members and should be read publicly at a branch meeting.

In making judgement on the nature of the correspondence and on the appropriate procedure for dealing with it, the Branch Secretary should take careful note of the contents of the correspondence and of the best manner of dealing with the contents therein.

In this regard it is important that the Branch Secretary would, in consultation with the other Branch Officers if necessary, identify matters of a sensitive nature which may not be properly the business of a branch meeting. Matters pertaining to internal school business or to industrial relations difficulties may well be more appropriately dealt with in a formal industrial relations context by officials from ASTI Head Office or in consultation with the regional Standing Committee representative. Alternatively sensitive matters may be dealt with through the good offices of local Branch Officers or CEC members outside the context of a branch meeting. It would therefore be reasonable and quite in order for a Branch Secretary to refer a sensitive matter or industrial relations difficulty to an appropriate official or officer rather than introduce it for debate in public at a branch meeting. At all times branch officers, and particularly the Branch Honorary Secretary and the presiding Chairperson, should be wary of any correspondence which may be potentially libellous or defamatory. The ASTI solicitors have advised that statements made at branch or other general meetings by members of the Association are not privileged and if they are defamatory they are subject to legal challenge. If the branch officer is uncertain about procedure in a particular case then advice from an official in Head Office should be sought.

Where the authority to deal with a particular matter is assigned under the ASTI Rules and Constitution to another structure of the union then the matter should be referred to that structure through the appropriate channel. In this context it should also be noted that a formal procedure exists under Rule 103 of the ASTI Rules and Constitution whereby allegations of misconduct or complaints against a member or members of the ASTI must be formally submitted to a meeting of Standing Committee. It would therefore be inappropriate to deal with a formal or written complaint against a member or members at a branch meeting and any such complaint should be referred directly for the attention of the General Secretary.

2.6 COMMUNICATION FROM EXTERNAL BODIES TO BRANCHES:

The same principles apply to handling communications from external bodies or individuals as apply to the handling of communications from branch members. Matters which should be dealt with through the formal structures of the union should be referred to the General Secretary for attention. It is important to ensure that in responding to external bodies, views expressed are consistent with ASTI policies. It is also important that matters raised by external bodies in communications to branches are matters that are appropriate and relevant to the affairs of the ASTI as defined in the ASTI Rules and Constitution.

2.7 MEDIA:

Media interest in education - teachers, pupils, schools, exams etc - is unbounded and continuous. It is in the best interest of all teachers to maintain a positive public profile as a profession.

The ASTI has a full-time executive officer responsible for press, public relations, and publications. The officer's role includes assisting ASTI representatives in dealing with the media.

If branch officers have information which they feel is relevant to the ASTI's work in promoting a positive profile of the union in the media, they should contact their Standing Committee representative or ASTI Head Office. If branch officers are contacted by a journalist on any matter which may have wider / significant implications for the ASTI they should contact Head Office.

A selection of ASTI media coverage is available here: <https://www.asti.ie/news-campaigns/media-centre/media-coverage/>

3.

ASTI CONVENTIONS

The Convention of the Association which is the supreme governing body of the ASTI meets annually during Easter Week. From time to time, Special Conventions of the ASTI are convened. The procedures for the election of delegates are the same for both Annual and Special Conventions. The Agenda for a Special Convention is drawn up by the President.

3.1 DELEGATES:

Delegates from branches are appointed on the following basis:

- one delegate for 20 to 60 members;
- delegates for 61 to 120 members;
- delegates for 121 to 180 members;
- four delegates for 181 to 240 members; and so on.

Election of delegates is computed on the numerical strength of each branch on **December 1st** each year. Branch delegates must be members of the branch they represent and must have been members of the Association for at least one year prior to election.

The names and addresses of Branch Delegates must be forwarded by each Branch Honorary Secretary to the General Secretary so as to reach the General Secretary not later than **January 31st** each year.

3.2 ELECTIONS:

Branches may nominate candidates to contest elections for the following offices / committees of the ASTI:

<i>Office</i>	<i>Nomination Date</i>	<i>Election Date</i>
President	by 31st January	Annually at Convention
Vice-President	by 31st January	Annually at Convention
Honorary Treasurer	by 31st January	Annually at Convention
Education Committee	by 31st January	Biennially at Convention
Equality Committee	by 31st January	Biennially at Convention
Standing Committee		
Regional Representative	by 7th January	Biennially at Branch Meetings.

3.3 REPORTING:

In addition to representing the views of members and their branches at Convention, delegates should report back to members following each Convention. Such a report could be given at the branch meeting immediately following Convention.

3.4 MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS:

(1) Motions:

All Branch Motions for Annual Convention must be notified to the General Secretary to arrive at ASTI Head Office not later than *November 30th*. The Convention Steering Committee strictly adheres to this deadline as is required by Rule 72 and Branch Honorary Secretaries would be well advised to ensure that motions are submitted in good time before that date. It is the usual practice for branches to decide on Motions for Convention at branch meetings during the month of November. However, it should be noted that Branches may decide on motions at meetings prior to the November one.

All Branch Motions for Annual Convention must be notified to the General Secretary by *November 30th*.

If they are being sent by post it is important to give at least three days for post delivery.

A dedicated e-mail address motions@asti.ie has also been set up for this purpose.

Motions for Annual Convention must arrive by 30th November.

Amendments to Motions must arrive by 31st January.

(2) Steering Committee Guidelines:

Steering Committee has developed the following guidelines to assist branches in ensuring that motions and amendments are in order. These guidelines should be brought to the attention of branch members and should guide the Branch Chairperson in the acceptance of motions and amendments.

Guidelines for Motions and Amendments for Annual Convention

Members are advised to read the following guidelines carefully as they will be applied by Steering Committee when it meets to rule motions 'in' or 'out of order' for the Convention Preliminary Agenda.

Steering Committee recommends that motions for Annual Convention being proposed at Branch Meetings should be put in writing either at the relevant Branch Meeting or prior to the Branch Meeting.

(a) Motions:

To ensure that motions are not ruled “out of order”

- (i) all motions must arrive in ASTI Head Office by November 30 in accordance with Rule 72;
- (ii) all motions must ask Convention to declare an opinion or call for a course of action, or both;
- (iii) all motions must be properly worded and factually correct;
- (iv) all motions must conform to the objects of the ASTI as set out in the ASTI Rules and Constitution
- (v) all motions must be capable of implementation.

(b) Amendments and Addenda:

To ensure that amendments and addenda are not ruled “out of order”:

- (i) they must be received in ASTI Head Office by January 31 in accordance with Rule 72 (d):
- (ii) they must conform with the objects of the ASTI as set out in the ASTI Rules and Constitution
- (iii) they must be capable of implementation
- (iv) they must be properly worded and factually correct
- (v) they must not change the whole sense of a motion and must in some way involve the same question that is raised in the motion
- (vi) they must not be a direct negative of the motion.

Please Note:

Steering Committee has decided that branches may not amend the motions which they have submitted.

(c) Changes of Rule:

- (i) Motions, amendments and addenda involving a change of rule should specify clearly what is to be deleted and what is to be substituted.

e.g. The correct formula would read:

Rule 59: delete””

or

Rule 59: delete”” and substitute “.....”

- (ii) All motions proposing a change of rule, which, if passed, will require as a consequence, material change(s) in other rule(s), should identify those rules in which such material change(s) will be required and specify the changes required.
- (iii) Motions, amendments and addenda, other than those specifically changing a rule or rules, must not conflict with existing rule(s).

- (d) **Advice Regarding Drafting Motions:**
- (i) Each motion should be clear and concise.
 - (ii) A motion should not contain an argument.
 - (iii) Each motion should deal with one topic only.
- (e) matters affecting the terms and conditions of staff, except as provided for in the Rules, are not appropriate for Convention motions. These should continue to be dealt with by Standing Committee and/or CEC as appropriate.

Additional Explanatory Guidelines for Motions:

- (f)
- (i) the meaning of a motion must be clear to an independent reader.
 - (ii) a motion must not be open to more than one interpretation.
 - (iii) where a motion sets out a particular time scale for implementation, this time scale must be reasonably achievable in the opinion of Steering Committee, *e.g. a motion to be passed in April calling for a salary increase to be negotiated and paid by May would probably be ruled 'out of order'.*
 - (iv) a motion must not contain errors of fact, *e.g. a motion proposing the reduction of the 'thirty five' point salary scale would be ruled 'out of order' on the basis that there is not a 'thirty five' point salary scale.*
 - (v) a motion must be in conformity with the Objects of the ASTI as set out in Rule 4 of the Rules and Constitution of the ASTI. Eighteen specific objects of the Association are listed in Rule 4.
 - (vi) motions proposing change of rule must be very carefully worded; they must identify clearly the specific changes being proposed; the amended rule must not be in conflict with any other ASTI rule. Proposers should read all rules associated with or affected by the rule change that is being proposed.
 - (vii) a motion may not be in conflict with any existing rule of the ASTI, *e.g. Rule 5 prohibits discussion of political or sectarian topics so a motion requiring such a discussion would be ruled 'out of order'.*

As amended September 2007

(3) Amendments:

The list of motions for Conventions is circulated to all branches not later than January 7th. At this point branches may propose amendments to motions. The same level of care must apply in the wording of amendments as is applied in the wording of motions. Notification of amendments must arrive in ASTI Head office by January 31st. A branch may not amend a motion which it has submitted.

All Branch Amendments to Motions for Annual Convention must be notified to the General Secretary by *January 31st*.

If they are being sent by post it is important to give at least three days for post delivery. A dedicated e-mail address motions@asti.ie has also been set up for this purpose.

Motions for Annual Convention must arrive by 30th November.

Amendments to Motions must arrive by 31st January.

(4) Prioritisation:

Branches may also indicate to Steering Committee which motions they favour for inclusion in the final agenda. Members should be encouraged to read the preliminary agenda prior to attendance at the relevant branch meeting.

3.5 CONVENTION TELLERS:

(1) Nomination of Tellers:

- (a) Each year, branches are asked to nominate one of their chosen Convention delegates or one of their CEC members to act as a Teller at Annual Convention.
- (b) The names and addresses of the nominated Tellers should be forwarded by the Branch Honorary Secretary to the General Secretary so as to reach the General Secretary not later than January 31st.
- (c) A member who intends contesting an election at Annual Convention shall not be nominated as a Teller.

(2) Duties of Tellers:

The tellers are divided into teams and assigned responsibilities for security of ballot boxes, the counting of votes and the distribution of documentation.

4. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 BRANCH OFFICERS:

Under the rules of the ASTI, the Officers of each branch are collectively responsible for the proper conduct of the affairs of the branch. This collective responsibility applies to the Financial Affairs of the branch although the Branch Honorary Treasurer has a key role in these matters.

4.2 BRANCH ACCOUNTS AND FUNDS:

ASTI Rules 49 to 54 govern the maintenance of accounts by branches. All branch accounts must be opened in the name of the branch and all monies must be lodged in the name of the branch. It should be noted that the funds of every branch are the property of the CEC.

4.3 BRANCH CENTRAL FUND:

In the normal course of events a branch should not retain surplus funds beyond those needed to provide for their estimated expenditure within any one school year. Branches should not, as a rule, retain more than €5,000 at any one time in a branch current or deposit account. Any surplus funds should be returned to the Branch Central Fund.

The Branch Central Fund retains monies returned by branches during each year and branches which require additional money for special projects or to cover unanticipated expenditure may apply for supplementary grants from this fund during the course of the year. All requests for subventions from this fund are referred to Standing Committee for approval.

There is no provision for branches investing funds. Investment of branch funds in building societies or other investment accounts is outside the legal provisions for investment by the Association.

4.4 BRANCH FUNDING:

Branches are aware that they can apply to Standing Committee for monies supplementary to the branch funding to help cover the costs where there are insufficient funds in the branch. The request for funds must be made in advance of incurring expenditure.

Depending on the capacity of the Branch Central Fund, grants for retirement functions should be calculated on the basis of €10 per branch member subject to a minimum of €1,000 and a maximum of €2,500 for any one branch. If a branch has not received a grant for a retirement function from the Branch Central Fund in the previous calendar year, these amounts may be increased by 25%. Branches of less than 200 may receive a further €500, Branches of less than 150 may receive a further €750.

The following are guidelines for use by branches:

- Branches, in organising functions should make every effort to operate to a reasonable budget and the gift to retiring members should be the designated (specially designed) ASTI silver bookmark (available from the accounts department).
- Branches should plan the event well in advance and should allow at least two calendar months for Standing Committee to consider the application.
- All such applications need to:
 - (a) be accompanied by a copy of the last branch audited accounts and a copy of the current bank statement;
 - (b) include full details of the proposed expenditure;
 - (c) indicate the supplementary funds being sought.

These guidelines are intended to aid branches in planning their celebratory events and to enable branches to apply for funding in advance of incurring expenditure.

4.5 USE OF BRANCH FUNDS:

All money subscribed by members is the property of the union and must be expended in the promotion of the aims and objects of the union as prescribed in Rule 4.

The portion of the subscription which is allocated to branches remains the property of the union and under the authority of CEC. It may be recalled if unused. The money may be applied for the promotion of the objects of the Association and used for purposes expressed or as directed in the Rules.

The element of subscription which is allocated to the branches should be used to promote the active participation of as many members as possible in the work of the union. Branch funds are used to cover the normal administrative costs of running branches. The principal administrative costs consist of issuing notices and hiring venues for the holding of meetings and the provision of mailing and other communication facilities. All officers should have their out of pocket expenses recouped. Necessary expenses of School Stewards should be reimbursed by the branch of which the Steward is a member.

The following are proposals for increasing branch activities, all of which involve increased expenditure on the part of branches:

Branch Activities:

- An initial Training Meeting should be organised for School Stewards in each branch on an annual basis;
- Branches are encouraged to organise special meetings of interest groups within their membership and to organise meetings for new members, in addition to the normal statutory branch meetings;
- Branches should look at the quality of the notices which they issue to members, especially notices of meetings and to expend money on improving the design and presentation of branch documentation generally;

- The social aspect of branches should not be neglected and money expended on light refreshments to encourage greater participation in branch activities would be an acceptable use of branch funds within the context of the objectives of the Association as set out in the Rules;
- Branches should affiliate to the local Trades Councils which play a more significant role in the organisation and co-ordination of trade union activities at local level;
- Branches should become more actively involved in the promotion of ASTI policies locally, for example, in the running of activities on a joint basis with the other teachers' unions, in organising seminars or mini conferences for parents and other local groups on aspects of education. ASTI officials would assist in the organisation of such activities.
- Branches should investigate other means of increasing attendance at branch meetings such as inviting guest speakers on relevant topics;
- Branches might also consider organising presentations for retired members or competitions for local schools which might help to promote ASTI policies.

4.6 BRANCH RECORDS:

Branch office-holders, including the Branch Honorary Treasurer, must hand over to their successors in office all books, papers and monies appertaining to or connected with the business of the branch. Branch records of over five years may be submitted to Head Office. A facility has been arranged with the Irish Labour History Museum for the preservation of such ASTI documentation.

The Books of Account of each branch must be open for inspection at all reasonable times by every member of the branch and by every person having an interest in the funds of the branch. They must also be open for the inspection of the General Secretary or of any person authorised by CEC or by the Standing Committee to inspect them.

4.7 BRANCH AUDIT:

Not later than November 1st in each year, each branch must hold an audit of the accounts of the branch and a duly authenticated copy of the Balance Sheet must be sent to the General Secretary, and shall be available for examination by members of the branch, within one month from the date of the Audit. **The Audit must be carried out by an Auditor to be appointed at a meeting of the branch. No branch officer is eligible to act as an Auditor of the branch accounts.**

4.8 STATEMENT OF BRANCH ACCOUNTS:

In order to fulfil the legal requirements of the Registrar of Friendly Societies the ASTI must include the Income and Expenditure Funds, and Effects of all 56 individual branches in its annual returns. Each Branch Treasurer must therefore send to the Honorary Treasurer a copy of the branch bank account end of year statement and a copy of the end of year branch bank deposit account. The Registrar of Friendly Societies may suspend or withdraw the ASTI trade union licence if the union does not comply with this requirement. Each year the accounts of eleven branches, chosen at random, are examined by the official ASTI Auditors who are appointed by Convention.

5.

BRANCH EQUALITY GUIDELINES

5.1 BRANCH EQUALITY ACTIVITY:

Branch Officers generally and the Branch Equality Officer in particular, have a responsibility to promote ASTI Equality Policies at branch and school level. Issues such as Promotion, Job Sharing, School Policies (in particular Dignity at Work policies), and Health and Safety often have Equality dimensions. Branches should monitor the levels of male / female participation in ASTI activities and structures. Both women and men should be encouraged to serve as School Stewards, Branch Officers, CEC Representatives and as members of National Committees of the ASTI. Branch Equality Officers should actively promote ASTI Equality policies and should encourage participation by members in Equality initiatives undertaken by the ASTI, such as the ASTI LGBTQI+ Group. The ASTI provides occasional training for Branch Equality Officers.

6.

EDUCATION POLICY ISSUES

6.1 POLICY DEVELOPMENT:

Teachers' voice is a foundational dimension of inclusive education policy development. ASTI members engage in policy development at a number of levels, including participating in ASTI education conferences/seminars; membership of ASTI committees; representing ASTI on NCCA Subject Development Groups; contribution to Convention and CEC decision-making. ASTI branches also provide an important space for members to engage in discussion on education issues.

Opportunities should be created at branch level for regular agenda items on curriculum and wider education policy, and for subject practitioners to analyse and discuss developments in their particular subject areas.

In preparing motions for Annual Convention, the branch should pay particular attention to education policy development. As the major professional representative body in second level education the ASTI must play an influential role in this area. The branch structure is of pivotal importance if this influence is to be vibrant and responsive to the wishes of all ASTI members.

6.2 SUBJECT AND PROGRAMME REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURE

The ASTI Subject and Programme Representative structure comprises subject/programme teachers who are elected at the annual January CEC meeting. This structure is a vital resource for the ASTI in terms of its contribution to national policy on curriculum and assessment, including providing professional commentary on the state examinations. Through their work on NCCA structures, they ensure that teachers' voice is central to the process of development of specifications and assessment components. Branches are invited to nominate members for election at CEC to this structure. ASTI Head Office organises an annual seminar for Representatives to update on national developments in curriculum and other education policy and to provide advice on working in NCCA structures.

ASTI Subject Representatives communicate with the Assistant General Secretary, Education and Research.

7.

THE STANDING COMMITTEE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

7.1 STANDING COMMITTEE REGIONS:

For the purposes of electing representatives to Standing Committee on a regional basis, the branches of the Association are divided into eighteen regional divisions with each division returning one representative to serve as a member of Standing Committee for a two year period. The regions are as follows:

<i>REGION</i>	<i>BRANCHES</i>
Region 1	Sligo, Donegal, Iar Thuaisceart Thir Chonail
Region 2	West Mayo, East Mayo, Carrick-on-Shannon
Region 3	Galway, Tuam, East Galway
Region 4	Clare, Limerick North, Limerick South, Nenagh
Region 5	West Limerick, Kerry, Desmond
Region 6	Cork South Paddy Mulcahy, Carbery
Region 7	Fermoy, Cork North, East Cork, West Waterford, Dungarvan
Region 8	Waterford, New Ross, Enniscorthy, Wexford Tony Boland
Region 9	Tipperary, Roscrea, Kilkenny
Region 10	Kildare, Laois, Carlow
Region 11	Athlone, Mullingar, Longford, Navan, Tullamore
Region 12	Cavan, Monaghan, Dundalk, Drogheda Sean Higgins
Region 13	Dublin South County, Dublin South 2
Region 14	Stillorgan, Dun Laoghaire, Bray, Wicklow
Region 15	Dublin North West, Dublin South West
Region 16	Dublin North 1, Dublin North Central
Region 17	Dublin North East, Fingal
Region 18	Dublin South 1, Dublin South Central

Elections are held on a biennial basis in half of the regions.

7.2 ELECTION OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

THE FULL TEXT OF THE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF REGIONAL ELECTIONS TO STANDING COMMITTEE IS MADE AVAILABLE FROM HEAD OFFICE PRIOR TO THEIR COMMENCEMENT.

GENERAL OUTLINE:

Candidates for election must be full members and must have held full membership for at least two years. They may be nominated in one of two ways:

- (a) by a branch in the relevant region, or
- (b) by 50 members in a branch or branches in the relevant region.

Nomination forms are sent to each Branch Secretary before the 31st October and further forms are available from the General Secretary. Candidates must be nominated in the period between 1st November and 6th January following (inclusive) and nomination forms must reach Head Office by 5:00 p.m. on the 7th January.

Each branch may nominate *one* candidate. Members of the branch must be notified that the question of selecting a branch nominee will be on the agenda for the meeting at which it is proposed to select the branch nominee. Where there is more than one candidate for the branch nomination, the selection of the branch nominee must be by secret ballot. All procedures normally used by the branch for the election of CEC Representatives should be applied. It is the responsibility of the Branch Secretary to return the nomination form by the due date.

7.3 ROLE OF STANDING COMMITTEE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES:

When CEC is not in session, Standing Committee is the governing body of the Association and manages the business and ongoing activities of the ASTI. The regional structure for Standing Committee is an organisational model that represents effectively and is sensitive to the views of all members in all branches and regions in the country. It is a democratic system that provides opportunities for members both to directly elect the union leadership and to participate in the union's decision making processes.

There must therefore be clear and easily accessible lines of communication between the Members and Standing Committee. Members should be familiar with and identify with their representative in the decision-making process. This is best achieved where there is an effective interaction between the Branch Structure and the Standing Committee Structure.

Standing Committee members are regional representatives on an executive body. They reflect their knowledge and experience of the views and attitudes of the members in the decision-making process. However, it should be noted that members of Standing Committee take decisions in that committee on behalf of *all* of the members of the Association. Through their attendance at branch meetings, Standing Committee members have opportunities to consult the membership at branch level and also to explain policy or tactical decisions which a union governing body must take from time to time.

Branch Honorary Secretaries are required by Rule to notify the local Standing Committee Regional Representative of the times, dates and venues of all branch meetings. The attendance of Standing Committee representatives at branch meetings provides opportunities for those in decision making positions to consult with members and for members to have an impact on decisions made.

Regular branch meetings should include a report from the Standing Committee Regional Representative as an agenda item. This would be an important mechanism for keeping members fully informed of policy and other developments. The attendance at branch meetings of the Standing Committee Regional Representative should be brought to the attention of members in meeting notifications so that this consultative opportunity can be fully exploited.

Generally, members of Standing Committee do not play a representative role on behalf of individual members involved in grievances or disputes. These matters are functions of other representatives and officials of the union. However, members of Standing Committee are actively involved in more general matters affecting members, e.g. school rationalisation developments. A list of Standing Committee members can be accessed at www.asti.ie

8.

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATION

The Rules of the ASTI require that School Stewards endeavour to ensure that all eligible teachers become and remain members of the Association. Rule 41 states that the Branch Honorary Organiser shall endeavour to ensure that the numerical strength of the branch is maintained and where possible increased. Recruitment therefore is an essential aspect of ASTI activities and should receive due attention and support from all branch officers and School Stewards.

8.1 RECRUITMENT PLAN:

At the commencement of each school year recruitment literature, posters and brochures are sent to each School Steward. These materials are also made available to branch officers and regional organisers.

Stewards should be given encouragement and back-up support by branch officers in their recruitment work. Although the Branch Organiser has a specific role in this regard, it is normally necessary for all branch officers to share in the responsibility for contacting stewards and providing them with advice.

Where possible branch officers should make themselves available to visit schools where the stewards require assistance in recruitment. It is essential that schools where union organisation is weak or where recruitment activity has been ineffective, should be visited by branch officers.

The Regional Organiser and Standing Committee Regional Representative should assist the branch officers in providing this support for stewards. Branch officers, in consultation with the Regional Organiser, should identify schools that require particular attention. This would be the case where:

- a new school is opening
- a school amalgamation or rationalisation is taking place
- a school is growing and new staff members are being appointed
- a school has a large number of part-time or temporary staff
- ASTI membership is in decline in a school
- difficulties exist regarding the election of a School Steward.

8.2 RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUES:

Branch officers should offer advice to School Stewards on the best recruitment techniques. This can be done either by direct contact with the stewards or at the beginning of year branch training meeting for stewards.

A School Steward, as the elected representative of the staff, should welcome new colleagues to the staff and be available to offer support and information. At an appropriate opportunity the benefits of union membership should be explained to eligible non-members. The protection of trade union membership is particularly relevant to newly appointed teachers both with regard to their contracts of employment and their working conditions. It is important that the benefits of ASTI membership are offered to all eligible teachers and to all categories of teacher including:

- permanent teachers
- temporary teachers
- part-time teachers
- teachers going on leave
- student teachers
- Emeritus

At branch meetings and at meetings of stewards the importance of recruitment and the value of ASTI membership should be emphasised. In this regard use should be made of the literature available from Head Office which sets out the services and benefits of ASTI membership.

8.3 PART-TIME AND TEMPORARY TEACHERS:

The ASTI has identified as a priority the need to safeguard the interests and employment conditions of those who are employed as Part-Time and Temporary Teachers. Part-time and temporary teachers play an important role in the provision of education in Ireland and it is the view of the ASTI that such teachers should be rewarded with professionally acceptable remuneration and conditions of service.

Branches have a key role to play in safeguarding these conditions of employment. This role may be fulfilled in the following way:

- Through the recruitment of all teachers eligible to join the ASTI and thereby offering them trade union protection.
- By providing such teachers with information and documentation made available from Head Office from time to time.
- By including issues on branch meeting agendas that reflect the concerns of part-time and temporary teachers.
- By arranging a branch information seminar for newly appointed teachers.

8.4 RETIRED SECONDARY TEACHERS:

ASTI Emblem

It is appropriate that on retirement from teaching the years of service of ASTI members should be recognised in a formal manner. To this end the ASTI has produced a silver bookmark which carries the ASTI logo as an emblem of membership for presentation to retired members.

All members of the ASTI with at least ten years of membership may be presented with this specially designed emblem on retirement. The presentation of this award should take place at branch level.

Branch funds may be used for the purchase of these emblems from ASTI Head Office.

9.

BRANCH PLANNING

BRANCH YEAR PLAN:

Following consultation with School Stewards and members, Branch Officers should draft a Year Plan for the Branch. This Year Plan should in so far as possible list all Branch Meetings Dates, Election and other deadlines and dates for general branch activities. When complete a copy of this list should be given to all Branch Officers, CEC representatives, the Standing Committee Regional Representative and to all School Stewards in the Branch. The following may be of assistance in the drafting of the Year Plan:

AUGUST	1st	Commencement of School Year
	-	Draft Year Plan of Branch Meetings and Activities
SEPTEMBER	1st	Implement Branch Recruitment Plan
	-	Contacts with Stewards
	-	Visits to Schools
	-	School Stewards' Branch Seminar
	-	Meeting for New Members
OCTOBER	(1st-22nd)	Elect Branch Officers
	-	Elect Branch Auditor
	31st	Latest date for Head Office receipt of Branch Officers' Names
NOVEMBER	1st	Latest date for Branch Audit
	30th	Latest date for Head Office receipt of Branch Convention Motions
DECEMBER	1st	Number of Branch Convention Delegates and CEC Representatives computed on basis of Branch Membership on 1st December
	31st	Latest date for Head Office receipt of names of Branch CEC Representatives
		Forward end of year branch bank account statements to Head Office.
JANUARY	7th	Latest date for Head Office receipt of Branch Nomination of Candidates for Standing Committee Regional Elections
	31st	Latest date for Head Office receipt of Branch Nomination of Candidates for Presidency, Vice-Presidency, Honorary Treasurer, Education and Equality Committees
	31st	Latest date for Head Office receipt of Names of Convention Delegates
	31st	Latest date for Head Office receipt of amendments to Convention Motions and Branch Prioritisation of Motions
FEBRUARY/MARCH		Standing Committee Regional Elections
MAY	1st	Latest date for Election of School Stewards

