

## NEW CORONAVIRUS ROYAL ARCH FAQs

### General Guidance

1. Now that the suspension has come to an end, the Scribe E of any Chapter that was due to meet during the period of the suspension, but was prevented from doing so, must enter into the Chapter Minute Book a statement substantially in the following form: “As a result of the suspension, owing to the Coronavirus pandemic, by the ME The First Grand Principal (in his capacity as Grand Master) of all meetings from 17 March to 17 July 2020 the Chapter was unable to meet during that period.”
  2. If the Chapter’s Installation meeting was due to be held during that period, each of the Principals elect must be installed at the first convocation he attends after the resumption of meetings (Royal Arch Regulation 48, 3rd paragraph, final sentence). If an emergency convocation is called for this (or any other) purpose, no dispensation is required as the Principals alone have the authority to call it (Regulation 59). BUT if the convocation is held at a different venue from that named in the by-laws a dispensation **will** be required for that purpose.
  3. If the election convocation could not be held because of the suspension, a contingency not expressly provided for in the Regulations, Regulation 73 refers the matter to the Book of Constitutions. There, Rule 106 provides that failure to elect is to be dealt with in the same way as if the Master Elect had died – which in turn refers back to Regulation 54, which **requires** Principals to be elected at the next regular convocation to be held. Notice of the election must be given on the summons. The Principals so elected can be installed forthwith and will be deemed to fulfil the qualification for election to a higher Chair at the next regular election convocation.
  4. In either case an Installation Return must then be submitted to the Grand Scribe E in accordance with Regulation 60. If necessary, a Treasurer and a Janitor must be elected and invested with the other Officers.
  5. Regulation 58 provides that there is no power to cancel a regular convocation of a Chapter. Now that the suspension has come to an end, a summons **must** therefore be issued in accordance with the Chapter’s by-laws for every regular convocation that falls to be held after that date (for more information, see below). The penalty for a breach of the Rule is potentially admonition or suspension (Rule 179, Book of Constitutions), at the discretion of the Grand Superintendent. **NOTE:** If, when the summons has been issued, it becomes clear to the Scribe E that the number of apologies is such that a quorum (see A4 below) will be unattainable, there will be no point in Companions making an unnecessary journey. He should therefore tell the members so, and then at the moment when the Chapter is due to be opened (but not earlier) he may presume a lack of a quorum and treat the meeting as abandoned. However, the Scribe E must not merely assume that the members of the Chapter do not wish to meet.
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**Q1. The Chapter wishes to re-elect the current First Principal, but he is currently also the First Principal of another Chapter; is a dispensation required to enable him to serve for a second year?**

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

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

A2. Five (**excluding the Janitor**), of whom two must be members of the Chapter, and three must be qualified to occupy the respective Principals' chairs, though it is not a requirement that any of the latter be members of the Chapter concerned. In order, however, for the ceremony of Exaltation to be worked the minimum number is seven (**excluding the Janitor and any candidate**). If on the day of the convocation a quorum cannot be achieved, the meeting **must** be abandoned, and a note entered in the Minute Book. "The regular convocation of the Chapter on [day] [date] [month], 2020 was duly called in accordance with the attached summons. Owing to the continued effect of the Coronavirus pandemic the required number of Companions to open the Chapter could not be assembled and the convocation was abandoned" is the wording suggested.

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

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

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

A4. The Chapter should make all reasonable efforts to find an alternative Masonic Hall (which is Covid-secure) for its convocation. If it proves impracticable, the convocation will have to be abandoned because it will obviously be impossible to achieve a quorum. A summons should, however, be issued – for a convocation at the regular Hall – against the possibility that it may be operational by the time of the convocation. If, once that has been done, it becomes clear to the Scribe E that the number of apologies is such that a quorum will be unattainable, see the Note to paragraph 5 above.

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

A5. A temporary Charter of Confirmation, in the form of a letter of authority, should **immediately** be sought from the Grand Scribe E, via the Provincial Grand Scribe E. (Regulation 47.)

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

A6. An abandoned convocation cannot (by definition) be rescheduled, but necessary business can be transacted at an emergency convocation (provided it is not business that may **only** be done at a regular convocation) or at the next regular convocation. If it was the Installation convocation that had to be abandoned, see paragraph 2 above.

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

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

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

A8. The suspension between 17 March and 17 July will be automatically be discounted, as constituting *force majeure*. From that point onwards, a Chapter is only liable to lose its entitlement to a Centenary Warrant if it fails to meet for a whole year (and therefore becomes liable to be erased under Rule 189, Book of Constitutions). Provided that the Chapter has made all reasonable efforts to hold convocations, a longer period than a year may be disregarded by the Grand Chapter.

**Q9. How should ballots be held?**

A9. No doubt Chapters will find their own solutions, and ensure that any balls or other tokens used are handled correctly to prevent contamination, and are cleaned appropriately both before and **after** use.

**Q10. Can individual Chapter members be prevented from dining together after a convocation?**

A10. It would be an individual choice, and there is no Rule by which they can be prevented from doing so, provided that there is no breach of government guidance. NOTE: Chapters in England must not **organise** a meal for their members because that would breach the government guidance on visiting restaurants in groups of more than two households (or six people if outside). Welsh government guidance currently prevents Chapter convocations in Wales, but does not prevent meals, organised by Chapters, of up to 30 people in safe socially distanced outdoor eating areas of restaurants.

**Q11. During the lockdown, many Chapters held social gatherings and committee meetings using remote conferencing facilities; can committee meetings still be held in this way?**

A11. There is no Rule that requires committee meetings to be held face to face, which was why it was permissible during the lockdown to hold such meetings by electronic means. The practice may certainly continue if it is the wish of the Chapter.

**Q12. Is it necessary to hold a Provincial Meeting, especially if it is intended merely to re-appoint most of the officers (there may be a few who do not want to serve another year)?**

A12. It is a **requirement** of Regulation 37 that an Annual Convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter be held. There will be more business – essential administration (e.g. approval of accounts) – to transact than merely the appointment or the confirmation of the appointment of the Provincial Grand Officers and past ranks.

**Q13. If a Provincial Convocation is to be held, what steps should be taken to keep numbers to a legal size?**

A13. It is suggested that the summons for the convocation contain some wording such as “Owing to the Government’s restriction on numbers imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Companions, other than those whose attendance is **essential**, are requested **not** to seek to attend Provincial Grand Chapter. Admission will be by ticket only.”

**Q14. What is the quorum for a meeting of Provincial Grand Chapter?**

A14. No number is anywhere formally prescribed. It is suggested that the quorum should be the same as for a Private Chapter.

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