



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF CORNWALL

Rule 158 of the Book of Constitutions (BoC) still exists, but the process for carrying out "enquiries as to candidates from other localities" has been radically altered and simplified by the HERMES digital system.

Here is a breakdown of how HERMES has changed the process for checking a candidate's background, particularly concerning other localities:

1. The Change to Rule 158 in the Book of Constitutions

UGLE has officially amended several rules in the Book of Constitutions to align with the HERMES system's digital processes. The text of Rule 158 itself has been changed.

- **The Original Intent:** Rule 158 traditionally required the Lodge Secretary to conduct "enquiries as to candidates from other localities" (i.e., if a candidate did not live or work near the Lodge), often involving manual checks with Secretaries of neighbouring Lodges or the Provincial Grand Secretary. This was done to verify the candidate's character and ensure they were not known to have been rejected elsewhere.
- **The Modern Rule (Under HERMES):** The current version of Rule 158 (and related rules) now primarily applies to an enquirer who lives and works in a country outside of UGLE's jurisdiction (a "Foreign Joiner" or initiate from abroad). In this specific case, the matter must still be referred to the Grand Secretary to make inquiries.

2. How HERMES Replaced Manual Local Enquiries

For candidates residing within the UGLE jurisdiction (England, Wales, and Districts/Provinces overseas), the need for manual local enquiries (checking with neighbouring Lodges) has been largely superseded by the automated checks performed by the HERMES system itself:

- **Online Registration Form (ORF):** The process begins with the Lodge Secretary entering a prospective candidate (Enquirer) onto HERMES. The Enquirer then completes a secure Online Registration Form (ORF).
- **Automated Vetting (The HERMES Check):** Once the ORF is submitted, HERMES automatically performs a system-wide check against the central UGLE database. This check immediately identifies several crucial factors:
 - Any previous attempt by the candidate to join Freemasonry in the last 10 years.
 - Whether the candidate is currently or was previously known to UGLE records, including any disciplinary status (such as resignations or exclusions).
 - The candidate's declarations regarding criminal convictions.
- **"Locality" is Less Relevant:** Because the UGLE database is centralized, the system knows, almost instantly, if a candidate has a history within the Craft, making the old geographic check between Secretaries less critical for assurance.





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In summary:

Aspect	Pre-HERMES Process (Manual Rule 158)	Post-HERMES Process (Digital)
Primary Tool	Lodge Secretary manually contacting local Lodge Secretaries or the Province.	Automated checks are performed by the HERMES system against the central UGLE database.
Data Shared	The secretary shared the candidate's personal details with other Secretaries (justified by consent for application assessment).	Candidate submits data securely via the Online Registration Form (ORF), which is then processed digitally by UGLE and the Province.
Current Application of Rule 158	Applied broadly to candidates not local to the Lodge.	Primarily limited to candidates from countries outside of UGLE's jurisdiction.

The modern application process is now governed by a digital workflow, which is why UGLE had to make amendments to the Book of Constitutions to reflect the shift from paper forms and manual enquiries to the secure, centralised data system that HERMES provides.

