

SU Election Rules for ALL Elections

Why do we have Election Rules?

- Our rules aim to ensure elections are fair & inclusive to all students.
- Rules frame elections and campaigning activity by setting the boundaries of what can be deemed as acting fairly.
- If you are planning to be a candidate for any election, please be aware of our rules and read up below.
- Referenda have their own additional rules.

The following rules apply to all SU elections. The Returning Officer may stipulate further rules for individual elections and campaigns.

Elections rules are in addition to general SU and University rules and regulations, and the Law.

Key Roles

Returning Officer

For all elections, the Returning Officer (RO) is Charlie Slack, Director of Student Leadership & Support. The RO is appointed annually by The SU's Board of Trustees and is ultimately responsible for ensuring free and fair elections in The SU. Election complaints can be escalated to the RO, however, they delegate their authority to the DROs who oversee elections day-to-day.

Deputy Returning Officer

For all elections, the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) is currently Amy Young, Insight and Engagement Manager. The DROs are responsible for the day-to-day running of SU Elections and oversee the SU Officer Elections. The DROs will examine and respond to all elections grievances in the first instance. The DROs are also responsible for supporting candidate welfare during Officer elections and is in frequent contact with candidates. Contact the DROs by emailing: sureturningofficer@bath.ac.uk.

Democratic Procedures Team

The SU's Democratic Procedures Team (or DPT for short) are a group who discuss and debate how to make The SU's democratic procedures as fair and inclusive as possible, this includes SU elections, referenda, and SUMmit and Standpoint Procedures.

External Appeals Officer

For all elections, the External Appeals Officer (EAO) is currently Prof. Bernie Morley, Board of Trustee Member for The SU Bath.

Acting Returning Officers

Elections that relate to a particular area and where candidates are voted for by other students within the same group e.g. Academic Rep, SU Group committees, are directly overseen by Acting Returning Officers (ARO). The AROs are the SU Officers responsible for the area. Their powers are delegated by the RO and DRO and they remain responsible to the RO and DRO for the conduct of these elections.

Campaigners

'Campaigners' is the term used throughout these rules to mean candidates of SU elections as well as members acting on behalf of candidates (e.g. campaign teams).

Eligibility

- Cross-campus elections (SU Officer, Senate Representative, SUMmit Open Place members, DPT Open Place members) are open to all current registered University of Bath students.
- Some elections are limited to the members of a particular group. For example, only current registered student members of a SU Group will be able to stand and vote in that Group's committee elections.
- For the Officer roles and some other Leadership roles, you must be 18 years old at the time of taking up the role. If you are unsure, please contact sureturningofficer@bath.ac.uk as soon as possible to check.

Principle Election Rules

Principle Rule 1

Campaigners must act in the interests of a fair election.

Principle Rule 2

Campaigners must treat all others with respect. This includes engaging in healthy debate and not campaigning negatively.

Principle Rule 3

Campaigners should only undertake activities that others can also reasonably do.

Behavioural Rules

- All candidates are accountable for the actions of anyone acting on their behalf. This includes being able to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to ensure that their supporter's actions comply with the campaign rules in the event of a complaint against them.
- Campaigners will make no unsubstantiated claims of another campaign, person, or organisation.
- Campaigners may only alter, move or remove their own campaign materials.

Manifestos

- Manifestos cannot exceed 500 words.
- Manifestos must be in line with The SU's values and be inclusive - for example, this includes not mentioning drinking of alcohol in a manifesto, to ensure we don't exclude those who don't drink alcohol (through choice, religion, being under 18, etc.).
- Manifestos must not mention individuals by name.
- Manifestos must not mislead students or contain false information.

Expenses

- Expenses can only be incurred for SU Officer elections. This means that no money can be spent on a campaign for candidates running in any other SU election.

Campaigning

- No 'Early campaigning' is permitted. Early campaigning is when a candidate promotes the candidate and asks students to vote for them. Therefore, the following are **not** seen as 'early campaigning':
 - Telling close friends about your prospective candidacy.
 - Creating election content in a public place ahead of the election period (as long as there is reasonably no form of campaigning).
 - Researching for a campaign/manifesto. Prospective candidates can contact specific students/student leaders indicating that they are 'considering running for a role'. In this regard, telling others that you are considering to run (is not telling them you are running), and not telling them the position (unless it is reasonably relevant) also makes it clear you are not lobbying for votes or trying to put others off of running.
- Campaigners may not use mailing lists.
- You must ask the Admin's permission before posting in social media groups.
- Campaigning cannot occur in the following places:
 - The Library
 - Outside the SU Advice Centre (level 3 of the Student Centre)
 - Student Support (4 West)
 - University commercial outlets
 - Sports Training Village
- The use of AirDrop and equivalent is not permitted.
- Campaigners can only put up posters and banners on campus during SU Officer Elections.
- Campaigners must allow voters to vote freely and without interference. All electronic devices are counted as ballot papers in this context.
- SU Officers cannot endorse any candidate, but students may in a personal capacity. This is to ensure elections remain open and accessible to all students and that the process is fair.
- Candidates must not run on a slate. Slates are defined by candidates running on the same platform, normally along with similar branding and/or asking their supporters and the electorate to support another candidate.
- Campaigners may have to attend mandatory meetings. These will be made clear for the relevant election.

Campaigns should be fully transparent and accountable to The SU.

Endorsements and staff

- SU Student Group Endorsement is only permitted for SU Officer Elections.
- Individual current registered students at the University of Bath can endorse candidates in a personal capacity.
- External endorsements are not permitted.
- Members of staff shall not become actively involved in the politics of The SU, or be encouraged to do so, and shall remain neutral during elections (and therefore cannot endorse candidates). SU staff in this context are University employees who work under the direction of the Chief Executive, and does not apply to SU Officers and Student Staff when not at work.
- Members of staff can be approached for professional advice and shall give information equally to all campaigners.

Breach of Rules

- All rulings on the interpretation of the rules will be made by the Returning Officer or their nominated representative (i.e. DRO). Interpretation will be in the interest of the electorate above all others.
- Elections rules are in addition to general SU and University rules and regulations, and the Law.
- If a breach of these rules has occurred, the Returning Officer or their nominated representative may apply a sanction.
- Sanctions can include, but are not limited to:
 - A direct reminder
 - An informal or formal warning
 - A public warning
 - Temporary campaign ban (online or in-person)
 - Disqualification
- Complaints, grievances, and appeals must follow the grievance procedure.

Grievance Procedure

Any full member of the Students' Union can submit an election grievance if they believe a candidate's behaviour during an election is in breach of the rules.

How to submit a grievance

Grievances will normally only be accepted within 24 hours from the incident and if emailed to sureturningofficer@bath.ac.uk. No grievances will be accepted after 1 hour from the close of voting.

All outstanding grievances will be resolved before the conduct of the count. The only accepted grievances after this will be in relation to the count itself and must be submitted within 1 hour of the announcement of the results.

What happens next?

Grievance submissions will be considered by the Deputy Returning Officer, and sometimes in consultation with the Elections Chair or Elections Committee. The DRO will decide whether to accept (uphold) or reject the grievance, and you will be notified in writing of any resulting action.

What information should a grievance contain?

To help the Deputy Returning Officer consider your grievance, it should be factual and contain clear evidence about the complaint. Grievances that are comprised of hearsay or activity that does not directly affect you may not be successful. The Deputy Returning Officer reserves the right to consider grievances as vexatious and may take disciplinary action accordingly.

Appeals

If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the grievance, they may be able to request the opportunity to appeal. The appeal stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation.

Appeals must be made in writing no later than 1 hour of the decision and must be submitted in the normal procedure outlined above. This will normally be considered by the Returning Officer and can be escalated to the External Appeals Officer in some incidences (if the matter relates to the elections process rather than the conduct of candidate or their campaign team where applicable).

The RO will decide whether to accept (uphold) or reject the appeal, and you will be notified in writing of any resulting action.

The RO's decision is final and completes the appeals process. If a student wishes to appeal if they feel that the SU, including the DRO or RO, has not followed the election processes they can appeal to the External Appeals Officer.

Appeal regarding the Elections Process:

A member of the SU may appeal to the External Appeals Officer (through the Returning Officer) if they feel that the SU, including the DRO or RO, has not followed the election processes.

Evidence will be needed to support an appeal or the appeal will not normally be considered.

The External Appeals Officer will consider the appeal and decide either:

- There are not sufficient grounds for appeal and the External Appeals Officer will write to the student informing them the appeal will not proceed and why.
- There are grounds for an appeal in which case the External Appeals Officer will review the case and provide the student with an outcome.

SU Officer Election specific rules

In addition to all of the previous Election Rules, the following rules also apply to SU Officer Elections.

Acceptable Behaviour Framework

In the interest of a fair election, guidance has been produced for Election candidates, campaign teams, student media, student groups, current SU Officers, any student interested in commenting on Officer elections.

Expenses

- Expenses can only be incurred for SU Officer elections.
- SU Officer campaigns must not exceed £50 in expenditure, of which £20 will be reimbursed from the SU.
- The SU will supply all candidates for Officer elections with some basic campaign resources, free of charge.
- All campaigners must submit all their campaign costs with receipts to the Deputy Returning Officer. The final deadline for expenses will be made clear for each individual election. If no expenditure is incurred this must be declared to the Deputy Returning Officer.
- Items freely and readily available to all campaigners can be used without deduction from expenses and can be used without itemisation.

- Plain shirts and sheets will be expensed at £1 each regardless of cost. Printed shirts and transfer papers must be expensed at cost.
- The guidance around the expensing of printing costs will be made clear for each individual election.
- No 'part expensing' is permitted (you must expense the total cost of the entire item you have purchased, e.g. the entire paint can, not just the cost of half of it – even if you just used half.)
- Postage & Packaging costs do not need to be expensed.

Campaigning

- Campaign teams cannot exceed 15 people in total, in which a detailed list of campaigners must be submitted to the Deputy Returning Officer before campaigning begins. All members of a campaign team must be current registered students at the University of Bath. Students can only be a member of one campaign team within an election. Candidates are not included within this limit.
- No 'Early campaigning' is permitted. Early campaigning is when a candidate promotes the candidate and asks students to vote for them. Therefore, the following are not seen as 'early campaigning':
 - Telling close friends about your prospective candidacy.
 - Recruiting people for campaign teams (in a non-public manner, i.e. not posting in large groups to recruit as this could look like you are campaigning covertly).
 - Creating election content in a public place ahead of the election period (as long as there is reasonably no form of campaigning).
 - Researching for a campaign/manifesto. Prospective candidates can contact specific students/student leaders indicating that they are 'considering running for an SU Officer position' or 'doing some research as you may be running to be an SU Officer', for example. In this regard, telling others that you are considering to run (is not telling them you are running), and not telling them the position (unless it is reasonably relevant) also makes it clear you are not lobbying for votes or trying to put others off of running.
- Campaigners can only put up banners on campus during SU Officer Elections.

- Banners or similar must be fixed only with string, rope or cable ties. Posters or similar must be fixed only with string, the use of blu-tac, tape or similar adhesives are expressly forbidden.

SU Student Group Endorsement

Student Group Endorsement is only permitted for SU Officer Elections.

- Student groups must comply with our Election Rules, but can 'endorse' particular candidates in an appropriate way. See separate guidance document.

Student Media conduct during elections

- Student Media must:
 - Comply with Principle election rules and act in the interest of a fair election.
 - Remain impartial and unbiased throughout election periods.
 - Follow the guidance within the Election's 'Acceptable Behaviour Framework'.
- Members of media who are also Officer candidates:
 - Must not be involved in any form of student media activity from the moment that nominations close.
 - Must not be privy to any 'behind the scenes' media elections content planning (i.e. access to group chats, shared drives, etc.).
 - Are not permitted to enter the media spaces from the moment nominations close, until results are announced. There are exceptions, candidates would be permitted to enter a media space if they are:
 - Invited to participate in some form of media activity which has been extended to all candidates for that officer position.
 - Granted written permission by the Returning Officer, Deputy Returning Officer, or Student Voice Coordinator, for any reasonable circumstance (e.g. to provide a technical service or advice in the event of a problem for which no other solution can be reasonably found).
 - Needed in an emergency where health & safety reasons require the attention of people nearby.
- Members of media who are also members of candidates' campaign teams:

- Must not be involved in any form of commentary, opinion pieces, or campaign/manifesto analysis related to SU Officer elections. However, they may be permitted to fulfill operational or technical roles if required (i.e. operating a camera at an event). This is applicable from the Manifesto deadline, until after results are announced.
- Must not be privy to any 'behind the scenes' media elections content planning (i.e. access to group chats, shared drives, etc.).
- Are permitted to participate in their own shows, writing of articles, and so on, if there is no relation or reference to Officer elections in any way. This is applicable from the Manifesto deadline, until after results are announced.
- Must only access media spaces where there is no reasonable alternative, and should only do so to work on shows or content completely unrelated to Officer elections. This is applicable from the Manifesto deadline, until after results are announced. There are exceptions, see above.

This document was last edited 12 February 2024

Updates made on 12 February: clarification regarding endorsements and updates related to the role of the External Appeals Officer.