

Rule 7 – Elections

The members of the Union select its officers and leaders through elections. This Rule explains the rules which govern those elections.

1. General Rules

- 1.1 The Union is a democratic organisation and so its elections are of paramount importance. To this end the Union aims to
 - (a) conduct elections in a spirit of fairness, friendliness and co-operation, and
 - (b) ensure all students at the University have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of the election.
- 1.2 All elections required under Committee By-Laws will follow the appropriate sections of this Rule and Elections By-Laws.

2. What Elections these rules apply to

- 2.1 The Union elects students as representatives into a wide range of committees, positions and activities. These Rules detail the procedure for electing students to/as the following:
 - (a) Sabbatical Officers,
 - (b) Student Trustees,
 - (c) Student Leaders,
 - (d) Voluntary Officers.
- 2.2 Where the need for an election arises that is not detailed in this Rule, or where existing positions changed or are added to, the Democracy Zone Committee shall decide which are the most appropriate guidelines to follow.

3. Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer

- 3.1 Returning Officers and Deputy Returning Officers
- 3.2 In the case of elections for Sabbatical Officers (and any elections held in conjunction with elections for Sabbatical Officers):
 - (a) the Returning Officer (RO) shall normally be an individual external to the Students' Union, and
 - (b) the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) shall normally be the Vice-President Democracy and Creative Industries;

and such appointments shall be made by Union Senate.

3.3 In the case of elections for any other position:

- (a) the Returning Officer shall normally be the Union President, and
- (b) the Deputy Returning Officer shall normally be a relevant Sabbatical Officer;

and such appointments shall be made by Democracy Zone Committee.

3.4 In the case of a conflict of interest arising on the part of a Sabbatical Officer in respect of an election or elections, Democracy Zone Committee shall appoint a Sabbatical Officer (not participating in any way in that election) in their place.

3.5 The appointment of an RO or DRO shall not extend past the end of any academic year.

3.6 The DRO, with support from Democracy Zone Committee, shall be responsible for running the elections on a day-to-day basis.

3.7 The RO shall be solely responsible for interpreting all election procedures referred to them by the Democracy Zone Committee.

4. Election Procedures

4.1 All elections procedures shall follow the same principles.

4.2 Democracy Zone Committee should include further guidance to enable these Rules in its By-Laws.

4.3 Democracy Zone Committee will determine the exact dates of all elections in line with this Rule, at the start of the academic year, which they will approve and publicise.

4.4 All elections shall normally have the following stages

- (a) notice given and invitation to nominate,
- (b) nominations received and accepted,
- (c) candidates training,
- (d) campaigning (possibly including hustings),
- (e) voting, and
- (f) the count and declaration.

4.5 The Democracy Zone Committee may use electronic voting for any elections,

when they reasonably believe more votes may be cast than by other means of balloting.

- 4.6 Details concerning elections which are not specified by these Rules or the Elections By laws shall be decided by the Democracy Zone Committee.
- 4.7 Democracy Zone Committee will prepare a report following major elections for presentation to Union Senate and others as required.

5. Style of Elections:

- 5.1 All elections will be one of the following:
 - (a) Cross-campus ballot - Where campaigning is held across all sites and voting is through ballot boxes and/ or electronically.
 - (b) General Meeting - Where campaigning and voting takes place during a General meeting at which interested students may vote.
 - (c) Formal meeting - Where campaigning and voting takes place during a formal Senate or committee meeting at which selected students vote.
- 5.2 Democracy Zone committee will ensure that elections are run in the style most appropriate to the roles being elected.
- 5.3 Democracy Zone Committee will develop appropriate by-laws for each style, based on those contained within this Rule.

6. Electoral Qualifications

- 6.1 Only and all full members of the Union may stand and vote in Union elections, subject only to:
 - (a) No person may hold more than one of the positions of Sabbatical Officer, Trustee, Student Leader or Chair of Senate at the same time.
 - (b) No person may hold more than one position created within the same by-law at the same time
 - (c) Students shall be eligible to hold only two Sabbatical terms of office within the Union after initially registering as a student at the University of Southampton. Sabbatical Officers shall be otherwise awarded equivalent rights of election as those given to other full members of the Union.
 - (d) Only students from a site may stand or vote in elections for the posts

specific to that site or sites, with the exception of the Vice President Student Communities which shall be open to all full members.

- (e) Only undergraduate or post-graduate taught students from a faculty may stand or vote in elections for the Officer posts specific to that faculty.
- (f) Only postgraduate students may stand or vote in election to the positions of Postgraduate Students' Officers.
- (g) Only international students may stand or vote in election to the position of International Students' Officer.
- (h) Only members of Council or a specific committee shall vote in an election held at that meeting.
- (i) One Open Place on each Zone Committee and Forum shall be reserved for an undergraduate student who is in their first year of study..
- (j) Elections for Zone Student Groups Representatives (including the Creative Services Representative) shall be conducted in accordance with the by-laws of the respective Zones (which may provide that particular categories of students are eligible to stand and/or vote in such elections).
- (k) As provided for by Rule 4, sections 3.5 and 13.5, the Open Place members on each Committee and Forum shall be elected so that at least one-half of the total membership of the Committee or Forum is held by women.

6.2 For all Sabbatical, Trustee, Student Leader and Union Councillor elections, re-open nominations (R.O.N) shall automatically be a candidate. .

6.3 A candidate defeated by R.O.N. shall be eligible to re-stand in the subsequent bye-election.

6.4 A candidate is a woman if they self-define as a woman.

7. Timetable for Elections

7.1 The following positions shall be elected for the current year, and to continue until 30th September in the academic year following their election, by and from the relevant constituency in the autumn term (in time to attend the first Council meeting) except by a decision of Council:

(a) Postgraduate Students' Officer (taught).

7.2 The following positions shall be elected for the next year by cross campus ballot no later than the last week of the spring term, except by a decision of Council:

(a) Sabbatical Officers,

(b) Student Trustees and Student Leader Trustees, and

(c) Student Leader positions (excepting the Student Groups Representatives as provided for by section 6.1(j), and the PGT Officer).

7.3 The following positions shall be elected for the next year by cross campus ballot no later than the last week of the summer term, except by a decision of Council:

(a) The Chair of Senate.

8. Notice and Invitation to nominate

8.1 Notice will be posted and the nominations period clearly publicised at least 5 clear days before nominations close.

8.2 Democracy Zone committee will determine how many Union members must nominate a candidate in each election.

8.3 It is the responsibility of all candidates to ensure that their nominations are received by the deadline in the official format determined by the Returning Officer.

9. Nominations received and accepted

9.1 The Returning Officer may refuse to accept nominations that do not fulfil the above requirements.

9.2 In the event of the number of nominations in Voluntary Officer elections being fewer than or equal to the number of vacancies:

(a) where RON is a candidate, the election will be run, and

(b) where RON is not a candidate, the candidate(s) shall be declared elected.

9.3 If places remain or become vacant in any election a further election shall be held. This shall be treated as a by-election.

9.4 A list of candidates will be posted as soon as practicable.

10. Candidates’ Briefing

- 10.1 All candidates are required to attend the candidates briefing session(s) held.
- 10.2 Democracy Zone Committee will ensure that briefings are set up as necessary to give all candidates a chance to understand the rules and procedures for the forthcoming election.

11. Campaigns and Hustings

- 11.1 Democracy Zone Committee will determine the timings of Campaigning; no candidate may begin campaigning before that date.
- 11.2 Democracy Zone committee should produce campaigning rules and distribute to all candidates.
- 11.3 For all Sabbatical, Trustee and Student Leader elections a chance for members to question the candidates must be held at least once during the campaign period.
- 11.4 Question times for elections held in meetings shall take place at the meeting concerned at the discretion of the RO.

12. Voting

- 12.1 Voting takes place at a central polling station placed in the Union and any other booth set up at the discretion of the Democracy Committee.
- 12.2 Voting in online elections will also be available via the Union website.

13. The count and declaration

- 13.1 The count shall take place as soon as practicable after the close of poll in a secure area.
- 13.2 Guidelines concerning the conduct of the count shall be laid down by the Democracy Zone Committee, and shall include the following provisions:
 - (a) Counting of votes shall be in accordance with By-Laws.
 - (b) No person may leave the count without the direct permission of the Returning Officer.
 - (c) Any person, at the discretion of the Returning Officer whose behaviour interferes with the good conduct of the count shall be required to leave the count and may be subject to disciplinary action.

- (d) The result of the count shall be declared after the Returning Officer is satisfied that a true and accurate result has been arrived at.

13.3 A declaration of the result of the election shall be posted as soon as practical.

- (a) The results of elections for Voluntary Officers will be reported to the next meeting of the relevant Committee.

14. By-Elections

14.1 Should a position become vacant, a by-election shall be held to fill the vacancy.

14.2 The bye-election should be held at the same time as the next block of ordinary elections.

14.3 The RO may deem this to be impracticable, in which case it should be run as soon as possible with nominations declared open within five working days of receipt of notice of the election.

14.4 Nominations will then close not less than three and not more than five working days from their opening.

14.5 The date of poll shall be determined by the Returning Officer such that it is not less than two and not more than five days after the close of nominations.

14.6 All aspects of a main election should be included in a by-election at the discretion of Democracy Zone Committee.

14.7 Officers elected in by-elections shall serve until the day on which the original Officer would have retired.

14.8 The President has the discretion to appoint a member of the Union or any other Union Officer to act in the capacity of the vacant role in the meantime. A recalled Officer may not her/himself be appointed as the acting Officer. Such an acting Officer takes office from when appointed until the result of the election for the vacancy is declared. An acting Officer has no vote on any committee on which she/he sits.

15. Complaints and Appeals

15.1 All candidates and their campaign teams are required to abide by the letter and spirit of all election rules and procedures.

15.2 The Returning Officer will investigate all complaints or breaches which are drawn to their attention.

- 15.3 Democracy Zone Committee may be asked to be the first arbiter of such complaints or breaches.
- 15.4 There will be a clear procedure for considering breaches, which will reflect the disciplinary procedures of the Union.
- 15.5 The ultimate sanctions include those listed below, but these may only be finally decided by a vote at Senate:
- (a) Nullifying the election (which could include a recommendation to re-open nominations, or to re-run the election with the same candidates.)
 - (b) Disqualifying a candidate from the election either during the campaigning or after the result is declared.
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