



BRIGHTON
STUDENTS' UNION

Elections

Policy

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UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

STUDENTS' UNION

Policy Version Number	001
Changes since previous version	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Removed references to NUS as returning officer.• Removed references to NUS Conference.• Removed references to elections with multiple seats and single transferable voting.• Removed references to hybrid voting.• Removed references to liberation roles.• Changed the election announcement times.• Added section that states students need to share data to participate in the election.• Changed section on observing the count.
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Policy Owner	Director of Membership Services

1. Introduction and Definitions

- 1.1. An election is a formal voting process open to all full members of the University of Brighton Students' Union (hereafter referred to as "the Union" or "BSU").
- 1.2. This policy establishes the baseline requirements for conducting elections within the Union, including but not limited to Sabbatical Officer Elections (also referred to as Leadership Elections) and Society Committee Elections. In-class Course Rep Elections are governed by the Student Voice Policy and are not covered under this Election Policy.
- 1.3. The Election Policy constitutes the "Election Rules," alongside any supplementary guides, handbooks, or informational materials issued by the Union. During election periods, candidates must comply with this policy and all other relevant Union and University policies and procedures.
- 1.4. For the purposes of this policy, "term time" is defined according to the standard term dates published by the University of Brighton.
- 1.5. A By-election, for the purposes of this policy, refers to an election conducted outside the normal election period, typically necessitated by the resignation or removal of a Sabbatical Officer.

2. General Regulations for Elections

- 2.1. Each member is entitled to only one vote per election.
- 2.2. Voting shall be conducted by secret ballot, adhering to the rules approved by the Electoral Reform Society for Alternative Vote (AV).
- 2.3. Re-Open Nominations (R.O.N.) shall be included as a voting option in all elections.
- 2.4. If Re-Open Nominations receives the majority of votes, the position in question shall remain vacant until a by-election is held.
- 2.5. The overall responsibility for the conduct of elections rests with the **Trustee Board**, which shall appoint a Returning Officer and a Deputy Returning Officer.
- 2.6. The Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer may convene a **Steering Group**, composed of current staff and officers, to support the planning and administration of the election.
- 2.7. To maintain transparency in the electoral process, no current Officer who is eligible to stand for a Leadership Election position shall have decision-making authority over the election process, including but not limited to policy changes, complaints resolution, or participation in the Steering Group.
- 2.8. In the event of the resignation or removal of a Sabbatical Officer during their term, the Trustee Board shall have the authority to:
 - 2.8.1. Call a by-election to appoint a successor; or
 - 2.8.2. Allocate the duties of the vacant position among the remaining Sabbatical Team until the next scheduled election cycle.

2.9. By-elections shall be conducted in accordance with the same rules and procedures as the Leadership Elections.

3. Returning Officer

3.1. For the Leadership Elections, the Returning Officer shall typically be an external professional sourced from another Students' Union. They will ensure that the elections are conducted in accordance with this policy and all rules governing the conduct of campaigns.

3.1.1. Under no circumstances shall a Sabbatical Officer serve as the Returning Officer.

3.2. For Society Committee Elections, the designated Union manager shall act as the Returning Officer.

3.3. The Deputy Returning Officer(s) shall have delegated operational responsibility for organising elections and ensuring the proper conduct of the Leadership Elections. Their decisions shall be subject to approval by the Returning Officer where necessary.

3.4. The Deputy Returning Officer(s) shall be responsible for the following:

3.4.1. Ensuring the rigorous application of all election procedures.

3.4.2. Producing a detailed report on the results and conduct of the election for presentation to the subsequent Trustee Board.

3.4.3. Communicating the election outcome to the student body.

3.4.4. Notifying the University of any irregularities and confirming that all elections have been conducted in compliance with the requirements of the 1994 Education Act, relevant Schedules, and Standing Orders.

4. Eligibility to Stand as a Candidate

4.1. All Full Members of the Union are eligible to stand as candidates in the Leadership Elections for Sabbatical Officer roles. For Society Committee positions, only Full Members who hold membership of the relevant Society are eligible to stand.

4.2. For clarity, Associate Members and Honorary Members are not eligible to stand in any elections.

4.3. Candidates may be disqualified from standing if they are currently involved in or subject to any Union or University disciplinary procedures that would prevent them from fulfilling the responsibilities of the role.

4.3.1. For Leadership Elections, this decision will be at the discretion of the Trustee Board.

4.3.2. For Society Elections, this decision will be at the discretion of the Deputy Returning Officer.

4.4. Candidates for Sabbatical Officer positions must confirm their eligibility to act as a Trustee before standing. This includes ensuring they do not meet any of the Charity Commission's criteria for automatic disqualification from serving as a Trustee.

5. Elected Positions

- 5.1. The Trustee Board is responsible for determining which positions will be elected each year, including any changes to the Sabbatical Officer roles. Any amendments to the Sabbatical Officer positions must be formally approved by the Trustee Board to ensure alignment with the Union's strategic objectives and governance requirements.
- 5.2. The number of Society Committee positions available for election each year shall be determined collaboratively by the Engagement Manager and the Activities Officer. This process ensures that the positions reflect the current needs and priorities of each Society, as well as the overall objectives of the Union's engagement strategy.

6. Timing of Elections

- 6.1. Elections shall be scheduled to maximise participation by ensuring the largest possible number of members have the opportunity to vote. Leadership Elections will typically take place during the second academic term.
- 6.2. The Deputy Returning Officer, in consultation with relevant Union managers, shall publish a comprehensive timeline of key election dates. This timeline shall include, but is not limited to:
 - 6.3. Deadlines for nominations,
 - 6.3.1. Mandatory meetings with candidates,
 - 6.3.2. Publication schedules for election-related media,
 - 6.3.3. Voting periods,
 - 6.3.4. Announcement of results, and
 - 6.3.5. Any other dates necessary for the effective administration of elections.
- 6.4. Details of online voting periods and in-person ballot station availability shall be clearly communicated to all students through the Union's communication channels, ensuring accessibility and awareness.

7. Voting

- 7.1. Voting for Leadership Elections will be conducted online via the Union's official website, www.brightonsu.com.
- 7.2. Society Committee Elections will typically be held online, often alongside the Leadership Elections, to increase visibility and engagement for both election processes.
- 7.3. All Full Members are eligible to vote for Sabbatical Officer roles in the Leadership Elections.
 - 7.3.1. To participate in online voting, students must have granted the University permission to share their data with the Union via the University's Student View portal at least 24 hours before the start of voting.
 - 7.3.2. Students should ensure that the "Consented" option for sharing data with the Students' Union is selected in the "Manage your consents" section of the Student View portal.

7.3.3. Only members of the relevant Society are eligible to vote in their elections. Membership must have been confirmed before the close of nominations.

7.3.4. If students are unable to log in to the Brighton Students' Union website, they should verify that they are using the correct login details, which must match the details used for logging into all University systems.

7.3.5. If login issues persist, students need to update their data-sharing permissions in the Student View portal. Changes will take up to 24 hours to take effect.

7.3.6. For further assistance, students can contact the Union at helloBSU@brighton.ac.uk.

7.4. The Deputy Returning Officer will oversee the count for all elections once voting has concluded. The votes will be counted using the election software provided by MSL, embedded in the Union's website at www.brightonsu.com. The MSL system ensures secure, transparent, and efficient processing of votes.

8. Publicity & Expenses

8.1. Any publicity created by candidates should not breach any of the Union's rules or regulations, name individuals in a derogatory manner or in any way bring the Union into disrepute.

8.2. The Deputy Returning Officer shall outline the rules around publicity expenses to each candidate prior to the election. The Deputy Returning Officer will create an equal system that will not prevent any potential candidate from standing or receiving an unfair financial advantage.

8.3. Candidates are not able to use cheap goods or services from friends, family or other associates unless they are made available to all candidates in the election.

8.4. If applicable, expenses forms must be submitted before the close of voting.

9. Results

9.1. For the Leadership Election results will normally be announced the same day as the close of voting unless there are complaints or issues to resolve. In such cases, the Union reserves the right to delay the announcement of results until any issues or complaints have been addressed and resolved.

9.2. Results for Society Committee Elections will be announced as promptly as possible, and in any case, no later than 48 hours after the close of voting.

9.3. Election results will be published on the Students' Union website. This will include a detailed breakdown of the vote count at each stage of the election process, ensuring transparency and clarity for all members.

10. Complaints

10.1. While every effort will be made to ensure a fair and transparent election, candidates or students may wish to raise complaints. Complaints may be made on the following grounds:

- 10.1.1. Misconduct of candidate
 - 10.1.2. Breach of election regulations
 - 10.1.3. Breach of Union or University regulations
 - 10.1.4. Illegal activity
- 10.2. Complaints must be submitted through the online complaints form as soon as the issue arises. The complaint should include clear and relevant evidence to support the grounds for the complaint, enabling the Deputy Returning Officer to take appropriate action.
- 10.3. Complaints concerning the conduct or administration of the election must be lodged by the end of the voting period. Complaints received after the close of voting may only refer to the conduct of the vote count. Exceptions to this rule may be made at the discretion of the Returning Officer.
- 10.4. The Deputy Returning Officer will respond to the complaint within two (2) working days of receipt and investigate in a manner that they deem appropriate. The Deputy Returning Officer will then produce a written report, which shall be published within ten (10) working days of the dated acknowledgement of the complaint. If there are difficulties with this, i.e. not being able to complete the investigation thoroughly, the Deputy Returning Officer will inform the complainant and agree a suitable time with them.
- 10.5. The Deputy Returning Officer, after deliberating the evidence, may make the following decisions:
- 10.5.1. To not uphold the complaint
 - 10.5.2. To uphold the complaint and take sanctions against an individual(s)
 - 10.5.3. To disqualify candidate(s)
 - 10.5.4. To suspend the election
 - 10.5.5. To order a new ballot / electronic vote
 - 10.5.6. To order a recount
- 10.6. Complaints raised by election officials or observers will be dealt with through the same process.
- 10.7. Complaints raised by candidates or students about election officials including the Deputy Returning Officer should be lodged immediately with the Returning Officer.
- 10.8. The complainant or accused may request an appeal of the decision by writing to the Returning Officer within 5 days of receiving the outcome.
- 10.9. Complaints about the Returning Officer shall be reported to Trustee Board.
- 10.10. The ruling of the Returning Officer on any complaint shall be final.
- 10.11. Appeals to the result of a declared election result can only be made through the complaints procedure as outlined above.
- 10.12. For the avoidance of doubt, no other Union democratic procedure, such as a referendum or general meeting can overrule an election result or reopen an election.