



BRIGHTON
STUDENTS' UNION

Elections Policy

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UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON STUDENTS' UNION

Policy Version Number	002
Changes since previous version	• Removed all references to Course Reps to reflect the transition to the Student Voice Leader model. • Introduced strengthened eligibility requirements for Sabbatical Officer candidates, including full-time availability, academic suspension/completion by 1 May, right-to-work checks, and clarified disqualification criteria. • Tightened society election rules so only members who joined before nominations may stand or vote. • Reframed Returning Officer content under a new Key Roles and Responsibilities section for improved clarity. • Updated voting system details to reflect the transition from MSL to Rubric. • Merged Campaigning, Publicity, and Expenses into one section and confirmed no expenses are permitted for Society Elections. • Revised the Complaints and Appeals section to introduce stronger evidence requirements and clearer investigation processes. • Made minor editorial and structural improvements to enhance clarity and consistency.
Equality Impact Assessment	No negative impact is assessed.
Date Passed by Trustee Board	December 2025
Date For Review	November 2028
Policy Owner	Director of Membership Services

1. Introduction and Definitions

- 1.1. An election is a formal process through which Full Members of the University of Brighton Students' Union (hereafter referred to as "the Union" or "BSU") exercise their right to vote for representatives or officers.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the core principles, rules, and procedures governing all Union elections. It applies to, but is not limited to, Sabbatical Officer Elections (also referred to as Leadership Elections) and Society Committee Elections.
- 1.3. This document, together with any supplementary guides, handbooks, or instructions issued by the Union, constitutes the official "Election Rules." During election periods, all candidates and participants must comply with this policy and all other relevant Union and University regulations and procedures.
- 1.4. For this policy's purposes, term time refers to the standard academic term dates published by the University of Brighton.
- 1.5. A By-election refers to any election held outside the normal election period, usually to fill a vacancy resulting from the resignation or removal of a Sabbatical Officer or other elected representative.

2. Key Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1. The overall responsibility for the conduct of elections rests with the Trustee Board, which shall appoint a Returning Officer and a Deputy Returning Officer.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. 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.
 - 2.4.1. Under no circumstances shall a Sabbatical Officer serve as the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer.
- 2.5. For Society Committee Elections, the designated Union manager shall act as the Deputy Returning Officer. DOMS RO – Include in complaints section.
- 2.6. 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.
- 2.7. The Deputy Returning Officer(s) shall be responsible for the following:
 - 2.7.1. Ensuring the rigorous application of all election procedures.
 - 2.7.2. Producing a detailed report on the results and conduct of the election for presentation to the subsequent Trustee Board.
 - 2.7.3. Communicating the election outcome to the student body.
 - 2.7.4. 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.

3. General Regulations for Elections

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. The number of Society Committee positions available for election each year shall be determined by the Activities Manager in conjuncture with the Activities Officer. This process ensures that the positions reflect each Society's current needs and priorities and the overall objectives of the Union's engagement strategy.
- 3.3. Each member is entitled to only one vote per election.
- 3.4. Voting shall be conducted by secret ballot, adhering to the rules approved by the Electoral Reform Society for Alternative Vote (AV).
- 3.5. Re-Open Nominations (R.O.N.) shall be included as a voting option in all elections.
- 3.6. If Re-Open Nominations receives the majority of votes, the position in question shall remain vacant until a by-election is held.
- 3.7. In the event of the resignation or removal of a Sabbatical Officer during their term, the Trustee Board shall have the authority to:
 - 3.7.1. Call a by-election to appoint a successor; or
 - 3.7.2. Allocate the duties of the vacant position among the remaining Sabbatical Team until the next scheduled election cycle.
 - 3.7.3. If a sabbatical officer resigns or is removed after being elected but before assuming their post, the Trustee Board may order a recount of the election. The recount will exclude the resigned officer from the vote count.
- 3.8. By-elections shall be conducted according to the same rules and procedures as the Leadership Elections.

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.
- 4.2. For Society Committee positions, only Full Members who hold membership of the relevant Society are eligible to stand.
- 4.3. For clarity, Associate Members and Honorary Members are not eligible to stand in any elections.
- 4.4. 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.
 - 4.4.1. For Leadership Elections, this decision will be at the discretion of the Trustee Board.
 - 4.4.2. For Society Elections, this decision will be at the discretion of the Returning Officer.
- 4.5. Successful candidates must not have any outstanding debt to the University or Students' Union by 1st May. Any failure to adhere to this rule will result in their removal from their post and instigate the process outlined in 3.7.

- 4.6. 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.
- 4.7. Candidates elected to Sabbatical Officer roles must be able to undertake the position on a full-time basis. The summer induction period involves mandatory training and meetings with university staff, and the role carries a substantial, fixed meeting schedule throughout the year, largely determined by the University. As these commitments cannot be adjusted around academic study, the role cannot be held concurrently with any course requiring attendance during working hours.
- 4.7.1. This requirement applies to all students, including postgraduate, part-time, international, distance-learning students, and those studying at University of Brighton partner institutions.
- 4.8. All elected candidates must, by 1st May preceding the start of the Sabbatical Officer term, provide formal written confirmation from the University of Brighton that they have suspended, interrupted, or completed their studies and will be free from all academic commitments by the start date. They must also complete and submit all required right-to-work documentation, including any uploads to relevant government portals, to confirm their legal right to work in the UK. Failure to meet these requirements may result in the candidate being deemed unable to commence employment and therefore ineligible to assume the role.
- 4.8.1. Failure to provide this confirmation by the deadline will result in the elected candidate being deemed ineligible to assume the role, and the Union will implement the process set out in 3.7.
- 4.8.2. Candidates are solely responsible for managing any required changes to their visa status, funding arrangements, or enrolment status, and must ensure they remain compliant with UKVI regulations.
- 4.9. All candidates must be able to commence full-time employment on the official start date of the Sabbatical Officer term, as stated in promotional and publicity materials. There is no option to undertake the role on a part-time, phased, or transitional basis.

5. Timing of Elections

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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:
- 5.2.1. Deadlines for nominations,
5.2.2. Mandatory meetings with candidates,
5.2.3. Publication schedules for election-related media,
5.2.4. Voting periods,
5.2.5. Announcement of results, and
5.2.6. Any other dates necessary for the effective administration of elections.
- 5.3. 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.

6. Election Timeline and Voting Process

- 6.1. Voting for Leadership Elections will be conducted online via the Union's official website, www.brightonsu.com.
- 6.2. Society Committee Elections will typically be held online, often alongside the Leadership Elections,

to increase visibility and engagement for both election processes.

- 6.3. All Full Members are eligible to vote for Sabbatical Officer roles in the Leadership Elections.
- 6.4. Only Full Members of the Union who have obtained membership of the relevant Society before the start of nominations are eligible to vote in that Society's election.
 - 6.4.1. For additional rules relating to Society Committee Elections, including membership eligibility and committee requirements, refer to the Societies Policy.
- 6.5. 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 1 week prior to the start of voting.
- 6.6. 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.
- 6.7. 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.
- 6.8. 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.
 - 6.8.1. For further assistance, students can contact the Union at HelloBSU@brighton.ac.uk.
- 6.9. 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 Rubric, embedded on the Union's website at www.brightonsu.com. The Rubric system ensures secure, transparent, and efficient processing of votes.

7. Campaigning, Publicity & Expenses

- 7.1. Candidates for Sabbatical Officer roles must not begin campaigning until they have attended the mandatory candidate briefing. Campaigning includes any action intended to persuade students to vote for a candidate.
- 7.2. All publicity, whether digital or printed, must comply with Union rules and policies, must not name individuals in a derogatory manner, and must not bring the Union or University into disrepute.
- 7.3. The Deputy Returning Officer will outline the publicity and expense rules to all candidates before campaigning begins. An equal and fair expenses system will be provided to ensure no candidate gains a financial advantage.
 - 7.3.1. There are no permitted expenses for Society Elections, in line with the Societies Policy.
- 7.4. Candidates must not use discounted goods or services from friends, family, or other associates unless the same goods or services are equally accessible to all candidates.
- 7.5. All candidate expense forms must be submitted by the deadline set by the Deputy Returning Officer, and no later than the close of voting.

8. Results & Publication

- 8.1. For Leadership Elections, the Union will normally announce results on the same day that voting closes. If any complaints or issues are raised, the Union may delay announcing results until these have been

resolved in accordance with the election complaints procedure.

- 8.2. Results for Society Committee Elections will be announced as promptly as possible and no later than 48 hours after the close of voting.
- 8.3. Election results will be published on the Students' Union website. This will include a breakdown of the vote count at each stage of the voting process, ensuring transparency for all members.

9. Complaints & Appeals

- 9.1. While every effort will be made to ensure a fair and transparent election, a reporting party may submit a complaint only on the following grounds:
 - 9.1.1. Misconduct of a candidate
 - 9.1.2. Breach of election regulations
 - 9.1.3. Breach of Union or University regulations
 - 9.1.4. Illegal activity
- 9.2. Complaints must relate directly to the election process and be supported by clear, relevant, and verifiable evidence. The Union will not investigate complaints based on hearsay or assumptions without evidence.
- 9.3. Complaints must be submitted through the online complaints form as soon as possible after the issue arises and must include:
 - 9.3.1. A clear description of the alleged breach
 - 9.3.2. The specific regulation(s) believed to have been breached
 - 9.3.3. Evidence, such as screenshots, photos, statements from identifiable witnesses, or other documentation
 - 9.3.4. Complaints that do not include sufficient evidence may be rejected without investigation.
- 9.4. Complaints concerning the conduct or administration of the election must be lodged before the close of voting.
- 9.5. Complaints submitted after voting closes may only relate to the conduct of the count.
- 9.6. The Returning Officer may grant exceptions only where strong justification is provided (e.g., evidence becoming known only after voting closes).
- 9.7. The Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) will acknowledge the complaint within two (2) working days and assess whether:
 - 9.7.1. The complaint falls within the grounds listed in 9.1
 - 9.7.2. The evidence meets the threshold for investigation
- 9.8. If so, the DRO will investigate in a manner they deem appropriate and produce a written outcome within ten (10) working days of acknowledging the complaint. If the DRO requires additional time (e.g., to obtain further evidence), they will inform the reporting party and agree to a revised timeline.
- 9.9. Following consideration of the evidence, the DRO may decide:
 - 9.9.1. Not to uphold the complaint
 - 9.9.2. To uphold the complaint and apply sanctions to a responding party
 - 9.9.3. To disqualify a candidate
 - 9.9.4. To suspend the election
 - 9.9.5. To order a new ballot / electronic vote
 - 9.9.6. To order a recount
- 9.10. Complaints from Election Officials or observers will be handled through the same process.
- 9.11. Complaints raised by a reporting party about the conduct of the Deputy Returning Officer must be

submitted to the Returning Officer.

- 9.12. A reporting party or responding party may appeal a decision by submitting a written request to the Returning Officer within five (5) working days of receiving the outcome. Appeals must clearly state:
 - 9.12.1. The grounds for appeal
 - 9.12.2. How the original decision may have been flawed procedurally
- 9.13. The ruling of the Returning Officer on any appeal or complaint is final.
- 9.14. Challenges to the declared result of an election may only be made through these complaints and appeals procedures.
- 9.15. 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.