

Queen Margaret University Students' Union Election Regulations

The Students' Union is a democratic and student – led organisation and is committed to running fair and open elections. These regulations define the election process and the responsibilities of those involved in it, whether as organisers or candidates.

There are two types of Students' Union Elections:

- *ANNUAL ELECTIONS* to elect the Officers' Committee.
- *BY-ELECTIONS* to elect Officers' Committee positions not elected at the Annual Election or which have become vacant

General

1. The Elections of all full time and part time elected officer positions will be governed by these Election regulations.
2. All members of the Students' Union will be eligible to stand as a candidate and vote in the Students' Unions' Elections in accordance with any additional eligibility requirements.
3. Students may only hold one Students' Union Elected Representative position at a time and may therefore only submit one nomination in an Election.
 - a. Where a student may be interested in multiple positions, they should speak to a relevant SU staff member or sabbatical officer to better understand the roles before submitting a nomination.

Nominations

4. At least 10 days prior to the nominations period, the Students' Union will publish the key dates and times of the election on the Students' Union website, including:
 - a. The dates and times of opening and closing of nominations;
 - b. The dates and times of opening and closing of the voting period
 - c. The positions that are to be contested in the election;
 - d. How candidates may submit their nominations
5. No person involved in the running or monitoring of the elections is permitted to nominate or formally support a candidate.
6. Nominations will be submitted in accordance with guidelines issued by the Deputy Returning Officer.
7. All submitted nominations must include the full name and student number of the candidate.
8. The Deputy Returning Officer will ensure a receipt for each submitted nomination is provided to the candidate.
9. If no nominations are received for a position, the Deputy Returning Officer will have discretion to either:
 - a. Extend the deadline for nominations

- b. Treat the election as if Re-Open Nominations had been elected and hold a new election at a later date and time.
- 10. The Deputy Returning Officer shall organise opportunities for students to ask questions of candidates.

Returning Officer

- 11. There will be a Returning Officer who will supervise the conduct of all elections to which these regulations apply.
- 12. The Returning Officer will be appointed on an annual basis by the Trustee Board.
- 13. The Returning Officer may not be any of the following: a. a member of the Students' Union, b. a trustee of the Students' Union, or c. an employee of the Students' Union.
- 14. The Returning Officer will appoint a member of the Students' Union Staff to be the Deputy Returning Officer. The Deputy Returning Officer may appoint other members of Staff to be Assistant Returning Officers for the duration of an election, who may be delegated any of their functions or roles.
- 15. The Deputy Returning Officer, subject to the approval of the Returning Officer, will issue Operational Guidelines to all Students' Union Staff Members involved in the administration of an election, which will govern their conduct.
- 16. Notwithstanding Article 1, any question on the interpretation of these regulations or issued guidelines will be resolved by the Returning Officer.
- 17. The Returning Officer will have power to:
 - a. Disqualify or penalise candidates
 - b. Give directions to candidates during an election
 - c. Instruct the removal of campaign materials etc.
 - d. Order recounts
 - e. Annul an election and order a new one in its place.

Voting

- 18. Voting will be conducted by online ballot via the Students' Union website.
 - a. If, during the Voting Period, voting is inaccessible to a significant number of students for longer than one hour due a technical issue, then the Voting Period may be extended to compensate for this, at the discretion of the returning officer.
- 19. Voting will be anonymous.
 - a. Candidates and campaigners should not be in close proximity to voters while they are voting.
- 20. For single vacancy positions, the Alternative Vote system will be used.
- 21. For multiple vacancy positions, the Single Transferable Vote system will be used.
- 22. The option to Re-Open Nominations (RON) will be offered on all ballots, which will be treated as if it were a candidate for the purposes of counting.
- 23. If Re-Open Nominations is elected, the position will be declared vacant, and a new election will be held at a time and date specified by the Deputy Returning Officer.

24. The counting of votes will be conducted by the Returning Officer. Results will only be considered valid once the Returning Officer has certified that the election has been conducted freely and fairly.
25. Votes will not be counted while there are outstanding complaints awaiting the decision of the Returning Officer.

Results

26. The results of the election shall be announced via Students' Union Media within forty-eight (48) hours of the completion of the count.
27. The results of all Students' Union elections shall be certified and communicated by the Returning Officer at the soonest opportunity after the conclusion of the count.
28. The Deputy Returning Officer shall report to the Trustees and the Senate on at least an annual basis the outcome of elections and recommendations for improvements, along with any other pertinent matters.

Elected positions

29. This Regulation applies to the positions set out in the table below. Only members of the electorate indicated in the table below who have not opted out of membership of the Students' Union may vote for that position.
30. All candidates for the positions to which this Regulation applies must be members of the corresponding electorate to be eligible to stand, as set out in the table below.

Position	Electorate
President – Academic Life	All registered students
President – Student Activities	All registered students
Equality & Diversity Officer	All registered students
Union Affairs Officer	All registered students
Post Grad Officer	All Students at a Post-Graduate level
Societies Officer	All registered students
Sports Officer	All registered students
Wellbeing Officer	All registered students
International Students Officer	International students
BME Officer	BME Students

Expenditure

40. For an election, the Deputy Returning Officer will set an expenditure limit. Candidates may not spend more than this limit during their campaign.
41. The Deputy Returning Officer will provide to candidates an allowance to spend on their campaigns.

42. All publicity used by a candidate (including by their campaign team) during the election must be declared and given a monetary value.

43. After the close of voting, candidates will submit to the Deputy Returning Officer a statement of their expenditure.

44. Candidates must verify their statement of expenditure by providing receipts for all items they spent money on during on a campaign.

Conduct in Elections

45. The Deputy Returning Officer, subject to the approval of the Returning Officer, will provide to candidate's guidelines on acceptable conduct during elections. Candidates must act in accordance with these guidelines.

46. The Deputy Returning Officer will provide training sessions in the rules of this Regulation and any issued guidelines to all candidates.

47. Throughout an election, all candidates must adhere to the following principles of acceptable conduct:

- a. Do only what other candidates have an equal opportunity to do
- b. Treat all students, candidates and staff members with respect.

48. Unacceptable conduct during elections includes but is not limited to any of the following practices (including attempts):

- a. The use of University or Students' Union resources to further the election of a candidate (except where explicitly permitted by the Returning Officer)
- b. The defacement of or interference with a candidate's publicity
- c. Bribery of voters or election officials
- d. Threatening behaviour or harassment of voters or election officials
- e. Producing offensive or defamatory publicity
- f. Preventing the free and confidential exercise of a vote by voters
- g. including the improper use of mobile devices
- h. Compromising or interfering with the integrity of the election.

49. In the interest of preserving the spirit of student elections and activism, candidates should inform campaigns purely from both their own and other students' experiences and ensure that they themselves are the author of their election materials. Where an election campaign is being suspected of being created by generative AI, this may result in the candidate being removed from the election.

50. The Returning Officer may issue penalties to candidates, including disqualification from the election, for breach of the conduct guidelines.

51. Candidates may make use of campaigners who assist them during the election. However, the candidate will remain responsible for the conduct of these campaigners and

candidates must take all practicable steps to ensure campaigners are in compliance with these Regulations and issued guidelines.

52. Breaches of these Regulations and issued guidelines that are committed by campaigners will be treated as if the candidate themselves breached this Bye Law and issued guidelines.

53. For the purposes of an election, a campaigner is defined as someone who would be reasonably thought to be acting on behalf of a candidate to further the election of that candidate.

Complaints

54. Complaints that a candidate or a member of their campaign team has acted in contravention of these Regulations or issued guidelines will be accepted up until one hour after the close of voting.

55. Complaints must be submitted in writing in a format decided upon by the Deputy Returning Officer.

56. If necessary, the Deputy Returning Officer will investigate the complaint to obtain further evidence.

57. The Returning Officer will rule upon the complaint and if necessary, issue penalties at their discretion.

Appeals

58. An appeal against a decision of the Returning Officer may be made on the following grounds: a. The interpretation of these Regulations or any of the issued guidelines used during the election is unreasonable: b. The correct procedure set out in these Regulations or issued guidelines has not been followed: c. The Returning Officer has been prejudiced or biased: d. The Returning Officer has failed to fully take into account the available evidence.

59. Appeals must be made no later than 12 noon on the day after the decision of the Returning Officer is communicated to that candidate.

60. If an appeal is made by a candidate, an appeals panel will be convened by a Students' Union staff member who has not been involved in the administration of that election.

61. The appeals panel will consist of three independent people who would be eligible to be appointed as the Returning Officer.

62. The appeals panel will appoint a chair from within its number.

63. The appeals panel will hear the evidence from the Deputy Returning Officer and any representations made by the appealing candidate.

64. The appeals panel's decisions are final and cannot be appealed further.

65. The Trustee Board will approve and revise from time-to-time terms of reference to govern the procedures of appeals panels.