

# Guidance Document on Elections and Referenda- Michaelmas Term Elections 2016



## What this document includes:

### **1) Introduction**

- a) Terminology
- b) Nominations
- c) Manifestos
- d) How can students vote?

### **2) Campaigning**

- a) Starting and stopping
- b) Conduct
- c) Paper publicity
- d) Non-paper publicity & Budgets
- e) The internet
- f) Endorsements

### **3) Complaints**

### **4) Sanctions & the Returning Officer**

- a) Who is the Returning Officer?
- b) Sanctions of the Returning Officer
- c) Sanctions of the Democracy Committee
- d) Disqualification and Annulment

# Part 1- Introduction

This guidance document, made pursuant to the Articles of Governance and Bye Laws of the Students' Union, is in place to ensure that elections and referenda are guided by principles of:

- Inclusiveness
- Accessibility
- Fairness
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Competitiveness

All persons involved in the elections period, including candidates, campaigners, staff members and students, are subject to the Equality and Diversity Policy of LSESU, and must be treated with respect.

**Candidates and campaigners should make sure they have read and understood these rules before planning their campaign. Breaking any of these rules may result in sanctions being placed on a candidate, campaigner or campaign.**

## A) TERMINOLOGY

- 'Sabbatical Election' refers to the Postgraduate Students' Officer position.
- 'Non-Sabbatical executive' refers to the Mature and Part-time Students' Officer positions.
- Positions not listed above are defined as 'all other elected positions'.

## B) NOMINATIONS

- Nominations are open from Monday October 12<sup>th</sup> at 10am to Monday October 19<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.
- Nominations must be made on the official nominations form provided online at [www.lsesu.com/elections](http://www.lsesu.com/elections).
- Where a candidate wishes to withdraw from an election they may do so at any time and must do so in writing to the Returning Officer.
- **NUS elections**: LSESU has a NUS delegate entitlement of two elected delegates, at least one of which must be a self-defining woman.

## C) MANIFESTOS

- Manifestos and slogans must be submitted before 12pm on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October. Manifestos and slogans received after this time are **not** guaranteed to be published.
- Amendments to manifestos and slogans published by LSESU after the deadline of 12pm on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October will be made at the discretion of the elections staff.
- **Word limits:**
  - i) Sabbatical Candidates: 200
  - ii) All other positions: 150
- **Maximum 6 word slogan** for all positions. The voting system does not except special characters (e.g. # and !) so avoid using them in your slogans.

## D) HOW CAN STUDENTS VOTE?

- Voting is open from 10am, Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October until 7pm, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October.
- All full members shall be eligible to vote once the voting software has confirmed their identity.
- If a full member is not able to vote online, for any reason, they can present an ID and their student number to a member of designated Union staff who shall then ensure that their vote is cast.
- If a student is having difficulties logging into vote please ask them to email [su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk).
- If they are still experiencing problems, candidates or campaigners must not take their details and offer to pursue the problem on their behalf.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the elections and please contact the Engagement Coordinator on 0207 107 7414 or [F.Quinn@lse.ac.uk](mailto:F.Quinn@lse.ac.uk).

When these rules make reference to the Returning Officer, they are contactable at [su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk).

# Part 2- Campaigning

## A) STARTING AND STOPPING

- Campaigning cannot start until 2pm on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October. Other key dates and times will be communicated by the Returning Officer, on behalf of the Democracy Committee.
- Candidates must not formally announce their candidacy before campaigning begins. If a candidate does send a message out to friends asking for help it is advised the Returning Officer be copied in.
- Campaigning is allowed up until the close of voting.
- Once a candidate has attended a briefing and prior to the start of campaigning they may access resources in the Activities Resource Centre to start preparing for their campaign. This includes printing and banner painting.
- Materials may not be removed from the ARC until the start of campaigning.

## B) CONDUCT

- The leader of a campaign is responsible for the conduct of their campaigners, and for ensuring election rules are understood and adhered to by all those involved in a campaign.
- In the case of an election, the leader of a campaign is the candidate. The candidate is therefore responsible for the behaviour of all those campaigning for them, and is liable to be sanctioned for repeated rule breaches by these campaigners.
- If a complaint is upheld against a candidate from a particular campaign, they will be asked to stop campaigning for said candidate for the duration of the campaigning period. If they continue to do so after this point, the candidate themselves will be liable for sanction as detailed below.

### **Candidates and Campaigners may not:**

- Force, coerce or in any way intimidate students to vote, particularly when they are near or during the process of voting.
- Campaign in the same room as a student whilst they are voting, nor can they provide students with the means to vote, e.g. by giving them a tablet or laptop.
- Campaign at any point within the LSE Library building.
- Campaign at any point in any computer room. This includes work spaces in

departments and rooms specifically designated for computer use, such as C120 in the Clare Market Building and the computer areas in the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre.

- Vote on behalf of another student.
- Campaign by canvassing or knocking door-to-door in student accommodation.
- Vote on behalf of another student.
- Reference another candidate’s personal traits of character.
- Mis-represent another candidate’s views.
- Intimidate any participant in the election, candidate, campaigner, student, staff or other.
- Deliberately sabotage any campaign other than their own. This includes submitting complaints that are later revealed to be without foundation. If a candidate or campaigner makes more than one complaint that is found to be without foundation during the course of an elections period the leader of the campaign will be liable for sanction in line with the structure laid out in part 4.
- Deface any materials, publicity, online media, social networking sites etc. of another candidate.
- Make any attempt to influence the impartiality of the Returning Officer or paid staff.
- Do permanent damage to any Union or School area or property.

### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

When talking about the differences between two candidates, it would be acceptable to say “candidate A has a better understanding of issues in halls because their plans are just what is needed to make halls better.” It would not be acceptable to say “candidate B knows absolutely nothing about halls, and they don’t care about halls, as they haven’t said anything about it in their manifesto”

- Candidates who are currently or have previously been an LSESU or LSE officer, volunteer or part-time staff member must not use any facilities or communication methods available to them and not to other students i.e., any union office or equipment, student groups, mailing lists etc.
- Candidates and campaigners must not use any media group publications or broadcasts to promote their campaign without offering the same exposure to all other candidates and campaigners.

## **C) PAPER PUBLICITY**

- The paper allowances are as follows:
  - Postgraduate Students’ Officer: 250 A4
  - All other elected positions: 150 A4

- Only black and white printing is permitted. If any materials are printed in colour, this will be considered a breach of these rules.
- Double sided printed on A4 sheets of paper is considered as two sheets of A4.
- Printing on a single side of A3 paper is considered as two sheets of A4.
- Candidates and campaigners may not use paper other than that issued by the staff in the ARC on behalf of the Returning Officer.

## D) NON-PAPER PUBLICITY & BUDGETS

- Free items are identified as items that anyone could reasonably get hold of for free.
- Election campaigns can cost money to run, so we have a limit in place to ensure that the cost is not a barrier. Candidates are expected to keep accurate information about their expenditure, and must submit this (with receipts) to the Returning Officer, on behalf of the Democracy Committee, before voting is completed.
- Any materials not provided in the ARC come out of your campaign budget. Such items will be deducted from campaign budgets at the price that anyone would get it for - the public price
- The budget is as follows:
  - Candidates for Sabbatical Election positions are able to spend up to £40
  - Candidates for Mature & Part-time Students' Officer are able to spend up to £20
  - Candidates for all other elected positions are able to spend up to £15
- **This expenditure will not be refunded by the Students' Union**
- Home printed/designed t shirts are given a value of £2 per t shirt.
- You can use any item that anyone could reasonably get for free. This would usually include cardboard, wood, paint, adhesives, chalk, pens and pencils.
- If you have any questions, ask the Returning Officer before you purchase (and use) something for your campaign. Costs incurred by your campaigners are covered by this limit too.

### **FOR EXAMPLE:**

You can make banners from cardboard boxes and paint and it won't be taken out of your budget. But if your Mum owns Cadbury's you can't give out free chocolates because she gave them to you – even though they were technically free to you. You would be charged for each bar of chocolate you gave out at the price they would be available to everyone else.

## E) THE INTERNET

- Internet campaigning is the same as any other campaigning and is subject to all of the rules stated in the Articles of Governance, the Bye Laws and this guidance document. You should ensure anyone acting on your behalf, or to benefit your campaign, understands their responsibilities.



## **Candidates and campaigners may not:**

- Exceed the allocated budget limit
- Act in an anonymous capacity, or pose as another person
- Use an already existing email list. This is defined as a list or collection of contacts of students you have, which they have not explicitly given you permission to email/Facebook message about elections in general or your or another candidate's campaign in particular.
- Posting messages in closed Facebook groups is allowed, however it is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that other candidates will be permitted to also post in the group.

## **F) ENDORSEMENTS**

- Any Society or Club that wants to make an endorsement must email the Democracy Committee stating their intention to endorse before nominations close.
- The Media Group, RAG and Halls Committees are not allowed to endorse candidates or positions in elections or referendums, however they are allowed to provide coverage of the elections and name candidates, as long as this could not be interpreted as an endorsement.
- We will publish a list, at the close of nominations, of all clubs and societies that are allowed to endorse candidates in the election. Candidates should be careful to avoid emailing all clubs and societies seeking their endorsement before the start of campaigning, as it may be perceived as campaigning behaviour.
- Clubs and societies, which notify us of their intention to endorse, may not specify which candidates they would like to endorse prior to the close of nominations. If a club/society decides that there are no suitable candidates they want to endorse after the release of candidate names, they have a right to withdraw their intention to endorse.
- All members of that Society or Club, and the Democracy Committee, must be informed, in advance, of how (and when) an endorsement would be decided. The very least would require a vote of the existing committee in an open meeting that all members are able to attend.
- Elected Officers of the Union are subject to the same rules as all other students.
- Endorsements received after this time may not be published in time for the start of voting. All Society and Club endorsements should be received by 1pm on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March, so that we can publish this info on our website before voting opens.



# Part 3- Complaints

- All complaints about candidates, campaigners, the voting process, or any other specific process relating to an election should be made in writing to the Returning Officer ([su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.returningofficer@lse.ac.uk)).
- In the first instance the Returning Officer will consider a complaint and make a ruling within 1 working day.
- All complaints regarding a candidate or campaigner must be submitted by the close of polling for the election to which the complaint refers.
- All complaints regarding the count must be made no later than 5pm the day after polling closes.
- In order for a complaint to be upheld, candidates and campaigners involved in submitting the complaint are asked to provide as much evidence as possible to support this complaint. For example, any complaint made about online conduct will ideally include a screenshot with a date and time, as well as an indication that this information was seen or acquired in an appropriate manner.
- The Democracy Committee will act as the appeal body where an appeal is lodged against a ruling of the Returning Officer.
- An appeal against a ruling by the Returning Officer should be made in writing, within 24 hours of the ruling being published, to the Democracy Committee ([su.democracy@lse.ac.uk](mailto:su.democracy@lse.ac.uk))
- If a member of the Democracy Committee is either standing in an election, has proposed a motion, or is campaigning in any way they must not take part in Democracy Committee proceedings during that particular election/vote
- Where the Democracy Committee becomes inquorate, the General Secretary will nominate four Trustees of the Union who will take on the responsibilities of the Democracy Committee for the duration of that voting period. One of these four Trustees can include the General Secretary, and if four are not available, as many as possible will meet, and the General Secretary will nominate other students of good standing (e.g. member of the Executive or President of a society).

# **Part 4- Sanctions**

## **A) WHO IS THE RETURNING OFFICER?**

The Returning Officer is a member of the Democracy Committee, they are chosen by other members of the Democracy Committee. This Committee is elected through a cross campus ballot each year.

Their role is to ensure the elections are fair, and administer the sections of the Articles of Governance, Bye Laws, and Guidance Documents relating to elections and referenda.

## **B) SANCTIONS OF THE RETURNING OFFICER**

Where a complaint against a candidate is upheld, the Returning Officer may issue sanctions against a candidate or campaigner.

If a complaint is upheld, the sanctions structure that the Returning Officer will use will normally be as follows:

- If this is the first complaint upheld against a candidate: Candidate receives an official warning or is barred from campaigning for a period of time.
- If this is the second complaint upheld against a candidate: Returning Officer recommends that the candidate is disqualified to the Democracy Committee,

As part of their role, the Returning Officer may also issue any other sanction, short of disqualifying a candidate or annulling an election/referendum that they deem reasonable.

These sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- Fining a candidate or campaign through either reducing the amount of money they may spend or by reducing their paper publicity allowance
- Banning a candidate or campaigner from campaigning for a period of time
- Banning a campaigner from the rest of the campaign (where the campaigner is not the candidate)
- Recommend that an election/vote is annulled to the Democracy Committee

## C) SANCTIONS OF THE DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE

Where an appeal is made against a ruling of the Returning Officer, the Democracy Committee may issue any sanction, short of disqualifying a candidate or annulling an election/referendum that they deem reasonable. These sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- Fining a candidate or campaign through either reducing the amount of money they may spend or by reducing their paper publicity allowance
- Banning a candidate or campaigner from campaigning for a period of time
- Banning a campaigner from the rest of the campaign (where the campaigner is not the candidate)
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### **Democracy Committee Involvement in Elections:**

- If a member of the Democracy Committee is standing, or involved, in an election they don't have to resign from the DC, they just cannot take part in the DC for the duration of that election. If more than one member of the DC are in this position, the DC becomes inquorate and therefore the General Secretary will nominate four Trustees of the Union to take on DC's responsibilities

## D) DISQUALIFICATION AND ANNULMENT

Where the Returning Officer is unable to reinstate fairness in an election/referendum they may deem it necessary to disqualify a candidate or annul a vote. Where this occurs the Returning Officer must make a written recommendation to the Democracy Committee who will make a ruling.

Only after exhausting the Students' Union's complaints procedures, complaints may be taken through the School's complaints procedure.