

Club & Society Elections – Rationale

New Elections Process Rationale and Benefits

Process Change - Rationale

The vast majority of other Students' Unions conduct their club and society elections in this way. This new process will bring us up to speed with the improvements other Unions have made already. AGMs and EGMs are vastly outdated processes which have a significant number of issues associated to them, including creating barriers for students who cannot attend the meetings, and limiting the democratic security of the elections. They are also hugely demanding in terms of resource for booking meetings and therefore create limitations for when groups can run elections to fill vacancies, restart after dormancy, or start new groups.

The most important factor is that the Union needs to have confidence in the democratic fairness of our elections process, and we cannot continue to run our club and society elections in their current form. We need to introduce a process which is centralised, secure, and consistent for all groups.

Process Change – Benefits and Improvements

There are a significant number of benefits to this new approach.

Easier democratic engagement - Students previously may have been unable to run/vote in multiple elections at once if AGMs were booked to take place at the same time. In this situation of clashing AGMs, students were forced to choose which AGM to attend, limiting their ability to participate in the democratic process for the other group(s) whose AGMs were taking place at the same time. In this new process, students have five full days to nominate themselves in any of the groups of which they are a member, and three full days to cast their vote in those elections. There is no barrier to democratic participation across all groups to which they hold valid memberships.

Removal of meetings - Students previously also faced a number of barriers to attending AGMs, whether held online or in-person. This included AGMs being booked at inconvenient timings, having other responsibilities such as part-time work, caring responsibilities, or being on placement, or any other barriers such as having to commute or dealing with illness or disabilities which prevented engagement. Other students may simply have missed the meeting through not knowing it was taking place. AGMs were previously scheduled for one hour, so if students missed this singular hour, they were prevented from taking part in the democratic process. In this new process, none of these barriers will remain.

Democratic security - AGMs were previously open to interference in the democratic process from students in attendance, especially when current committees were expected to run these meetings themselves with limited training in running these meetings. In this new process, the

Union will have full democratic oversight of all elections and will be able to guarantee a secure democratic process for candidates and voters.

Union-run elections - When expected to self-officiate AGMs, some smaller committees faced issues in finding a current non re-running committee member who could run the election. In this new process, this requirement is removed as the Union will run all elections centrally.

Improved records - Previously, the data collection of who had been successfully elected at AGMs was done manually, creating significant delays in handover processes. In this new process, successful candidates will be known to the Union as soon as the results are released, making the handover process smoother.

Automatic elections - Previous committees were expected to book AGMs, and failing to do so meant that the club or society instantly went dormant. In this new process, all active clubs and societies who have completed onboarding to the Union website will have elections arranged for them by the Union, meaning that no active, onboarded group will go dormant for failing to arrange an election.

Improved process for booking extraordinary elections - Groups would also go dormant upon committee handover if they failed to elect all three signatories during the AGM. Whilst it is still the case that groups will need to successfully elect all three signatories in these elections in order to stay active to next year, the previously administrative burden of organising EGMs meant that groups were very limited as to when they could run a re-election to restart or replace resigned signatories. In this new process, arranging extraordinary elections in these instances will be made easier also, with scope to run bye-elections more easily ahead of the new academic year to reduce the impact of dormancies.

Removal of minimum number of attendees - Previously, the requirement for quoracy/reaching a certain minimum number of attendees at AGMs also created dormancies for smaller groups. In this new process, the requirement for the election to be valid is simply one candidate and one vote minimum per position. This should limit dormancies for smaller groups with a lower membership base.

Longer nomination period - In AGMs/EGMs, clubs and societies only had at maximum an hour to ensure they had candidates for all three signatory positions. If no volunteer was found, the AGM would be invalid and the group would enter dormancy. In this new process, groups will have a full working week to promote elections and to encourage nominations. This should hopefully reduce dormancies due to lack of nominations.

Improved voting system - Our previous voting system was first past the post/simple majority which meant that voters were only able to select one candidate to vote for. In this new process, the voting system will be single transferrable vote (STV). Voters can rank all candidates for a position by order of preference, not limiting their democratic choice. STV as a voting system means that candidates with the lowest broad base of support from voters will be eliminated until a single candidate has enough first-preference votes to win the position.