

# Surrey Decides - Election Rules

## Full Union Officer Elections Rules and Simplified Rules

### Surrey Decides Rules

These rules are in place for Union Officer team elections, including Bye-Elections.

#### General

Election Principles: 1) Fair access for all potential candidates 2) Secure voting by members 3) A robust election process in which the members have confidence

1. The running of fair elections in accordance with the Union's Bye-laws shall be the responsibility of the Returning Officer on behalf of Governance Committee of the Board of Trustees.
2. All candidates and their supporters are expected to follow the rules of the election, and any warnings, rulings or guidance sent to them by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer.
3. All candidates and their supporters are expected to conduct themselves in a manner according with the election principles.

#### Nominations and Eligibility

4. Eligibility checks on the criteria outlined in these rules will be undertaken by the Students' Union and University of Surrey, and candidates who fail to meet the below requirements will be withdrawn from the election. If the election has already occurred, the Officer or Officer-Elect may be removed from their position.
5. Candidates must be valid Full Union Members during the election process, and from election until they assume office, with the following exceptions:
  - a. Candidates who are due to graduate and are not returning to any form of study the following year may assume office after graduation for Full Time Sabbatical Officer Trustee Roles only.
  - b. Candidates may assume any role after graduation, providing they are enrolled for another course giving full membership in the next academic year.
6. Candidates for Part-Time Officer roles must be a current student for the duration of their time in office. If a successfully elected candidate for a Part-Time Officer role ceases to be a current student before assuming office or during their time in office, the role-holder will be removed from their position.
7. Candidates for Officer Trustee roles must be eligible to be a Trustee in the United Kingdom. Further information on this is available [here](#).
8. Candidates for Officer Trustee roles must be aged 18 upon assuming office.
9. Candidates may not stand for election having previously been disqualified from Students' Union elections.
10. Candidates may not stand for election having previously been terminated from employment with the Students' Union.

11. Candidates must not be subject to any previous or live major disciplinary investigations, warnings, or sanctions with either the University or Surrey Students' Union.
12. An individual may not serve as an Officer Trustee for more than two years, consecutive or non-consecutive.
13. An individual may not stand for more than one post in the same election.
14. Candidates must submit their nomination before the advertised deadline for the closing of the nominations period.
  - a. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to allow amendments to incorrect nomination details after the advertised deadline.
  - b. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to accept nominations after the advertised deadline if appropriate extenuating circumstances are presented.

### **Candidate Information**

15. Candidates will be given the opportunity to submit candidate information, including a manifesto, for the purposes of informing voters about their candidacy.
16. Candidates must submit their candidate information before the advertised deadline for the closing of candidate information submissions.
  - a. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to allow amendments to incorrect candidate information details after the advertised deadline.
  - b. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to accept candidate information after the advertised deadline if appropriate extenuating circumstances are presented.

### **Campaigning**

17. No campaigning may take place before the advertised start of the campaigning period.
18. Before the start of the campaigning period begins, candidates may privately organise their campaign. Candidates must not undertake any activities which directly or indirectly advertise their candidacy to voters or potential voters before the advertised start of the campaigning period whilst organising their campaign.
19. Any action that could be interpreted as early campaigning will be investigated by the Returning Officer.
20. After the advertised start of the campaigning period, candidates may campaign for votes. Candidates and their supporters must not:
  - a. Campaign or place campaign materials in the following prohibited locations: the entire Library building (including the ground floor area outside Co-Op), all Hive spaces, the Dots, and the Nest.
  - b. Undertake unsolicited door-knocking (cold calling) on doors of residences, including any outer doors.
  - c. Campaign in a manner which removes a voter's free choice through behaviour which may be interpreted as intimidation or harassment.
  - d. Obtain votes in a manner which removes a voter's free choice through financial bribery or by using another student's voting details.
  - e. Block access to University buildings, disrupt the academic activities of the University, or cause disturbance to others.
  - f. Endanger themselves or others by placing campaign materials in dangerous/hard to reach areas, obstructing vision panels in doors or fire exit signs, or by creating a hazard.
  - g. Disrupt the normal workings of the campus, or cause damage/litter the University or Union property. Posters should only be placed on central poster boards, and are not allowed on painted walls or on trees.
  - h. Store or leave campaign materials in the Union Building, including Rubix, the Front Room, and Union Offices.

- i. Place campaign material in non-University owned locations, including public bus stops off-campus.
  - j. Deliberately sabotage any other candidate's campaign.
  - k. Claim false endorsements from Clubs or Societies.
21. University or Students' Union staff may remove campaigning materials if they are located in prohibited or dangerous locations, damage University or Union property, or risk endangering others.
22. All campaign material must be removed from campus before the election results are announced.
23. Candidates and their supporters who are either a current or former Union Officer, volunteer, or staff member must not campaign using any facilities, resources, or communication methods available to them directly as a result of the position held with the Union, and which are unavailable to other students.
24. Current or former full-time employees of the Students' Union (Sabbatical Officers) standing for election must not campaign using any resources available to them as a result of their current position, including staff facilities, social media accounts, and any other resources that are unavailable to other students.
25. Current part-time employees and Sabbatical Officers of the Students' Union must not campaign whilst undertaking work for the Union. Current Sabbatical Officers standing for election should arrange time off work to campaign, and must not undertake student-facing work during the campaigning period.
26. A Question Time event will be organised for each position in the election, chaired by a full member who has agreed to abide by the chairing code of conduct in force at that time. Alternative provision such as submitting a video or written statement will be offered to all candidates who declare accessibility requirements, and upon request for candidates who submit valid reasons for their inability to participate in person by the advertised deadline.
  - a. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to accept a candidate's valid reasons for their inability to participate in-person.
  - b. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to accept valid reasons submitted after the deadline.
27. Participation in Question Time, either in-person or through alternative provision, is compulsory for all candidates, with exceptions for those with declared accessibility requirements which prevent them from participating in any way in the event. Failing to participate in any way in Question Time will result in a penalty of one strike.
28. Candidates ensure that all campaign costs and the overall value of their campaign materials remain within the advertised budget for their role.

### **Campaign Budgets**

29. Candidates are entitled to spend an allocated budget in line with the amount advertised for the position they are running for. The total value of a candidate's campaign must not exceed the limit advertised.
30. The value of a candidate's campaign includes all campaign materials, services, advertisements, and freely gifted materials which have a market value above £0.00.
31. Pre-owned materials, freely gifted materials or materials purchased for a candidate by another individual must be counted towards the total value of a candidate's campaign, costed at a fair current market value of the materials. The sole exception is materials provided by the Students' Union free of charge to all candidates.
32. Establishing how to cost materials at a "fair current market value" requires candidates to consider the ability and costs to other candidates to replicate acquiring the same materials, including accounting for discounts, delivery or carriage costs, and access to goods and services.
33. Candidates who are unsure how to cost materials should contact the Deputy Returning Officer before utilising the materials for their campaign.
34. Candidates will be fully reimbursed by the Students' Union for any personal spending on their campaign. Proof of purchase will be required for reimbursement.

35. Candidates must submit their budget declaration by the advertised deadline before the close of voting.
  - a. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to allow amendments to incorrect budget declarations after the advertised deadline.
  - b. The Returning Officer shall have sole discretion to accept budget declarations after the advertised deadline if appropriate extenuating circumstances are presented.
36. Candidates must complete the budget declaration even if the total value of their campaign was £0.00 to allow the election administrators to verify all candidates remained within their campaign budget limit.
37. Failing to submit a budget declaration, exceeding the campaign budget limit or making a fraudulent, incomplete, or inaccurate budget declaration is a serious offence that could result in disqualification from the election.

## **Voting**

38. Voting in Union Officer elections shall be conducted as a cross-campus ballot in line with the advertised voting period, using the Single Transferrable Vote voting system.
39. In the event of a tie, the result will be decided through a method of selection by chance, in line with guidance from the Electoral Commission.
40. If re-open nominations (RON) is elected in a multi-seat election, that seat and any subsequent vacant seats will be re-opened for nominations in a bye-election. If re-open nominations is elected in a single-seat election, the position will be re-opened for nominations in a bye-election.
41. No member shall have more than one vote. Candidates must not cast any votes using another member's voting details.
42. Full members have the right to vote in private in the election, free of intimidation, undue pressure, or interference and able to make a free choice on who to vote for.
43. Interfering with another student's vote in a manner which removes their right to a free and/or secret choice of who to vote for is a serious offense that could result in disqualification from the election.
  - a. Individuals who interfere with another student's vote in this manner who are not candidates in the election will be subject to the Students' Union [Disciplinary Policy](#).

## **Elections Oversight**

44. The Returning Officer shall be externally appointed by Governance Committee and may not be a member or employee of the Students' Union. Their responsibilities include:
  - a. Overseeing the fair conduct of the elections in accordance with the Bye-laws.
  - b. Ruling on the validity of extenuating circumstances presented by candidates.
  - c. Ruling on the validity of any complaints relating to candidate conduct during the election.
  - d. Issue guidance, warnings, or penalties to candidates during the elections.
45. The Returning Officer and the Governance Committee may in turn appoint members of Students' Union or University staff to act as Deputy Returning Officers to deputise for them in matters of returning the election. Their responsibilities include:
  - a. With the support of the Returning Officer, overseeing the fair conduct of the elections in accordance with the Bye-laws.
  - b. Overseeing operational delivery of the election.
  - c. Initial handling of elections complaints, including making rulings and referring decisions to the Returning Officer when necessary.
  - d. Issuing election rules clarifications to candidates, voters, and staff where relevant.

46. Election administrators appointed by the Chief Executive shall be responsible for the operational support of the election, including election administration and organising elections events.
47. Candidates must adhere to the election rules during the election, and abide by any warnings, rulings, or guidance provided by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer.
48. If the DRO and RO find that a rule is required to be added or amended during the election, this will be communicated to all candidates and publicly available information will be updated accordingly.
49. Candidates should only contact the Deputy Returning Officer or Returning Officer for clarification or interpretation of these rules. Candidates should contact the DRO in the first instance for rules clarifications. This will be the only official process for seeking clarifications.
50. Any clarifications sought by candidates outside the DRO or RO will not be considered official clarifications. Repeatedly seeking rules clarifications outside the DRO or RO will be considered a breach of these rules, and candidates who repeatedly seek rules clarifications outside the official route will be reported to the RO.

### **Elections Complaints**

51. Complaints about the conduct of candidates or their supporters must be submitted in writing with supporting evidence via the advertised complaints channel before the close of the voting period.
52. The Deputy Returning Officer will either make a ruling on the complaint or refer the complaint to the Returning Officer. The DRO may seek relevant evidence from the relevant candidate if required.
53. Outcomes of complaints will be communicated to candidates by the Deputy Returning Officer. Upheld complaints may lead to the issuing of one or more of the following penalties:
  - a. Written warning or final warning
  - b. 1 or more strikes against a candidate with 3 strikes leading to election disqualification
  - c. Suspension of campaigning
  - d. Removal, relocation, or revision of campaigning materials
  - e. Outright disqualification
  - f. Suspend or cancel the election
  - g. An alternative penalty deemed appropriate by the Returning Officer
54. Making vexatious or dishonest complaints is not permitted. Vexatious complaints are those made without sufficient grounds, purely to cause disruption to a candidate or elections administrators.
55. The rulings of the Returning Officer are final.
56. Complaints about the conduct of the Returning Officer can be submitted to Governance Committee by email to the Chair of the Committee.
57. Following the completion of the election process, the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer shall produce a summary report of complaints received and rulings delivered.

## **Simplified Surrey Decides Rules**

To ensure we meet our elections principles, we have rules in place that must be followed. Below is a simplified version of our rules to be as easy to understand as possible, but all candidates must still carefully review the full elections rules.

Election Principles: 1) Fair access for all potential candidates 2) Secure voting by members 3) A robust election process in which the members have confidence

1. The Returning Officer is responsible for the running of fair elections in line with the Union's Bye-laws.
2. All candidates and their supporters are expected to follow the rules of the election.
3. All candidates and their supporters are expected to conduct themselves in a manner according with the election principles.

### **Nominations and Eligibility**

4. Candidates must be valid Full Union Members during the election process, and from election until they assume office. Candidates who are due to graduate and are not returning to any form of study the following year may assume office after graduation for Sabbatical Officer roles only.
5. Candidates for Part-Time Officer roles must be a current student for the duration of their time in office.
6. Candidates for Officer Trustee roles must be aged over 18 upon assuming office, and must be eligible to be a Trustee in the United Kingdom.
7. Candidates must be in good disciplinary standing with the University and Students' Union, must not have been disqualified from Students' Union elections previously, and must not have been terminated from Students' Union employment previously.
8. An individual may not stand for more than one post in the same election.
9. Candidates must submit their nomination before the nominations deadline.

### **Candidate Information**

10. Candidates will be given the opportunity to submit candidate information, including a manifesto.
11. Candidates must submit their candidate information before the candidate information deadline.

### **Campaigning**

12. No campaigning may take place before the start of the campaigning period.
13. Before the start of the campaigning period begins, candidates may privately organise their campaign. Candidates must not directly or indirectly advertise their candidacy before the start of the campaigning period whilst organising their campaign.
14. After the start of the campaigning period, candidates may campaign for votes. Candidates and their supporters must not:
  - a. Campaign or place campaign materials in prohibited locations: the entire Library building (including the ground floor area outside Co-Op), all Hive spaces, the Dots, and the Nest.
  - b. Undertake unsolicited door-knocking (cold calling) on doors of residences.
  - c. Campaign using behaviour which may be interpreted as intimidation or harassment.
  - d. Obtain votes through financial bribery or by using another student's voting details.
  - e. Disrupt the academic activities of the University.
  - f. Endanger themselves or others by placing campaign materials in dangerous/hard to reach areas, obstructing vision panels in doors or fire exit signs, or creating a hazard.
  - g. Disrupt the normal workings of the campus, or cause damage/litter the University or Union property.
  - h. Store or leave campaign materials in the Union Building, including Rubix, the Front Room, and Union Offices.
  - i. Place campaign material in non-University owned locations, including public bus stops.
  - j. Deliberately sabotage any other candidate's campaign.
  - k. Claim false endorsements from Clubs or Societies.
15. All campaign material must be removed from campus before the election results are announced.

16. Candidates and supporters who are either a current or former Union Officer, volunteer, or staff member must not campaign using any facilities, resources, or communication methods available to them directly as a result of the position held with the Union, and which are unavailable to other students.
17. Current part-time and full-time employees of the Students' Union must not campaign whilst undertaking work for the Union.
18. A Question Time event will be organised for all positions. Participation in Question Time is compulsory, with alternative provisions made for candidates with accessibility requirements or those with accepted valid reasons for being unable to attend in-person. Failing to participate in Question Time in any way will result in one strike.

### **Campaign Budgets**

19. Candidates must not exceed the campaign budget limit advertised for their role.
20. The value of a candidate's campaign includes all campaign materials, services, advertisements, and freely gifted materials which have a market value above £0.00.
21. Pre-owned materials and materials received free of charge must also be counted towards the total value of a candidate's campaign, costed at a fair current market value of the materials. The sole exception is materials provided by the Students' Union free of charge to all candidates.
22. "Fair current market value" reflects the cost and ability for other candidates to replicate sourcing the materials, and should account for any discounts, delivery or carriage costs, and availability of goods and services.
23. Candidates must submit their budget declaration by the deadline, even if the total value of their campaign was £0.00.
24. Failing to submit a budget declaration, exceeding the campaign budget limit or making a fraudulent, incomplete, or inaccurate budget declaration is a serious offence that could result in disqualification from the election.

### **Voting**

25. Voting in Union Officer elections shall be conducted as a cross-campus ballot, using the Single Transferrable Vote voting system.
26. Re-open nominations (RON) will be a candidate in all elections. If RON is elected, vacant positions will be elected in a bye-election.
27. No member shall have more than one vote. Candidates must not cast any votes using another member's voting details.
28. Full members have the right to vote in private in the election, free of intimidation, undue pressure, or interference and able to make a free choice on who to vote for.

### **Elections Oversight**

29. The Returning Officer shall not be a member of the Students' Union. They are responsible for overseeing the fair running of the election, the interpretation of the rules, and ruling on election complaints.
30. The Deputy Returning Officer will deputise for the Returning Officer. They are responsible for day-to-day running of the election, initial handling of elections complaints, and issuing election rules clarifications.
31. Candidates must adhere to the election rules during the election, and abide by any warnings, rulings, or guidance provided by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer.
32. Candidates should only contact the Deputy Returning Officer or Returning Officer for clarification or interpretation of these rules. This will be the only official process for seeking clarifications.

### **Elections Complaints**

33. Complaints about candidates or their supporters must be submitted in writing with supporting evidence via the Complaints Form before the close of the voting period.
34. The Deputy Returning Officer will either make a ruling on the complaint or refer the complaint to the Returning Officer. The DRO or RO may seek evidence from the relevant candidate.
35. Upheld complaints may lead to one or more of the following penalties:
  - a. Written warning or final warning
  - b. 1 or more strikes against a candidate with 3 strikes leading to election disqualification
  - c. Suspension of campaigning
  - d. Removal, relocation, or revision of campaigning materials
  - e. Outright disqualification
  - f. Suspend or cancel the election
  - g. An alternative penalty deemed appropriate by the Returning Officer
36. The rulings of the Returning Officer are final.