

Club & Society Elections – Guidance

Guidance and FAQs for Club & Society Elections

Summary

- Elections for signatory positions for all Clubs and Societies will be conducted **online** via the Union website.
- Eligible students can nominate themselves, upload candidate information, and cast their vote in elections via the [Elections Portal](#)
- Club & Society Elections will include a **nominations period**, a deadline for candidates to upload information to be shown on the voting page, and a **voting period**.
- Results will be published online following the close of voting once the count for all open elections has been completed.
- All active, onboarded groups will have their annual signatory elections automatically arranged and will not need to book or request an election.
- Groups who fail to elect all three signatories in the main elections period will have their vacant signatory roles entered into a subsequent bye-elections period.
- Students will only be eligible to run/vote in elections for clubs and societies to which they **have a membership the close of the electoral roll**. This date will be set and advertised ahead of each elections or bye-elections period.
- It is the responsibility of current signatories to promote elections to your members, including ensuring that students who wish to vote/run in the election have purchased official [memberships](#) on the Union website. You can check your current members via your [Signatories Panel](#).
- Eligible students will be able to run for one signatory position per club/society to which they have a current valid membership.
- The voting system will be STV (single transferrable vote), allowing voters to rank all candidates in order of preference.
- Only one vote and one candidate per each signatory position will be required to make the election valid. Clubs and societies will need to successfully elect all three of their signatory positions in either the main elections period or subsequent bye-elections in order to avoid entering dormancy.
- There are a significant number of [benefits](#) to this new process. Most importantly, the Union must offer a process which is centralised, secure, and consistent for all groups.
- The elections [rules and principles](#) must be adhered to by all candidates and voters.
- This new process is detailed on our [website](#), and will be communicated to signatories, members, and the wider student community ahead of the elections process.

Elections Process

Elections for signatory positions for all Clubs and Societies will be conducted **online** via the Union website, following the advertised elections timeline. The need to book, run, and report on the outcomes of AGMs has been removed as no meetings will be required in the new process.

The new process will include a **nominations period**, a **deadline for candidates to submit their information to be displayed on the voting page**, and a **voting period**. Results will be published online following the close of voting once the count for all elections has been completed. This process will be the **only way to elect your signatories**.

There will be a deadline ahead of the elections period for the **close of the electoral roll**. The electoral roll is the list of all students who are eligible to run/vote in these elections. The electoral roll will be comprised of all students who have a current valid official [membership](#) on the Union website by the close of the electoral roll. **Students will only be eligible to run/vote in elections for clubs and societies to which they have a current valid membership.**

All active, onboarded groups will have their election automatically arranged and will not need to book or request an election. **Any groups who have not completed the required onboarding process before Easter will not have an election arranged for them** and will therefore enter dormancy at the end of the academic year.

Eligible students will be able to run for one signatory position per club/society to which they have a current valid official [membership](#) on the Union website. Students can therefore run for a signatory position in more than one club/society, however they will be limited to only running for **one signatory position per group**.

Process Change – Rationale & Benefits

The vast majority of other Students' Unions conduct their club and society elections in this way, as AGMs and EGMs are vastly outdated processes. This new process will bring us up to speed with the improvements other Unions have made already. 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.

There are also a significant number of benefits to this new approach. These are summarised in our document of [Rationale and Benefits](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the rules of the elections?

A: There is a separate document which sets out the [rules and principles](#) of the election.

Q: What candidate information will candidates be able to submit?

A: Candidates will be able to submit a preferred name, photo, and a short explanation of why students should vote for them via our Elections Portal before the deadline for candidate information. This will be shown to voters on their voting pages. Candidates can submit different information for each of the signatory positions they nominate themselves for, tailored to the relevant group.

Q: Why can't students run for multiple signatory positions per club/society?

A: In this voting system, all votes for all signatory positions will run **simultaneously**. There is no way to enable sequential elections to allow students to run for more than one signatory position per group. Issues would arise if a student won multiple positions within the same society. We understand this may be disappointing to some groups who are concerned about students having to choose which signatory position to run for, but this is the best way to ensure the democratic security of our elections. Students can still run for as many non-signatory positions as they wish, depending on how groups structure their own non-signatory committee elections/recruitment. We are open to feedback to help improve the process in future.

Q: Why is eligibility to vote/run in the elections tied to memberships?

A: Previously, any student was eligible to stand for a signatory position unless a meeting was booked as being closed to members-only. The majority of AGMs were booked for members-only, but it would have been possible in open AGMs for students with zero experience in a club or society to run for a signatory position and win the role. In this new process, only students with a current valid membership will be eligible to run or vote in the elections. This will ensure a level of connection to the group before being able to hold a signatory position. All groups should be using official SharePoint memberships to record their member base already, as this has been the consistent position of the Students' Union.

Q: What if we do not have enough students with memberships to be eligible to vote/run?

A: You will have until the **close of the electoral roll** to ensure that your engaged students have purchased an official membership if they want to be eligible to vote/run in the election. It is your responsibility as signatories to promote this to your members as official [memberships](#) on the Union website are the only official way for members to join groups and to join the electoral roll. You can check how many memberships you currently have via your [Signatories Panel](#).

Q: What happens if one or more signatory positions within a club/society do not receive any nominations?

A: Your club or society will need to successfully elect students into all three signatory positions during the club & society elections period or bye-elections period in order to remain active. This therefore represents no change from the previous process.

Q: Can the current committee see the number of current nominations to help promote certain roles?

A: No. As current committee would be eligible to vote/run in the election, it is not appropriate for them to have a higher level of access to information about nomination numbers compared to other prospective candidates. We understand that committees may be concerned about knowing if they have enough candidates, so we would strongly encourage current committee to talk widely and openly about elections with their members over the coming weeks in order to improve the chances of having all positions filled. Current committees can run events or produce comms to introduce each of the roles, to meet with prospective candidates, and should be able to gauge interest levels as a result.

Q: Why is STV the voting process?

A: STV voting ensures that winning candidates have a broad base of support from voters by allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference. Winning candidates will be successful due to a high number of higher preference votes, eg. first or second place votes. Candidates with consistently low levels of support across the pool of voters will not be elected as they will be less likely to win higher preference votes.

In STV, fewer votes are “wasted”. If a voter’s first preference candidate does not have enough first place votes to win outright, a voter may still see a candidate they have ranked highly be elected and may therefore be more satisfied with the results of the election.

Q: How many votes are needed for the election to be valid?

A: One vote per signatory position. This is all that would be needed to be able to elect a candidate into the role, so provided each signatory position in your club or society receives at least 1 nomination and 1 vote, your election will be valid.

Q: What happens in the event of a tie for a position?

A: Under STV, tiebreaks are decided at random by coin toss. This is the widely recognised way to determine tiebreaks and this will be used in Club & Society elections.

Q: When will the results be made available?

A: We intend to publish the results of all club and society elections in the evening following the close of voting. The exact timing will depend on how long it takes to count all the elections.

Q: Why is the social side of AGMs being removed?

A: We believe that conducting elections in a fixed one hour meeting creates barriers to democratic engagement, especially for students with personal circumstances preventing them from attending. AGMs, therefore, and the requirement to run an elections meeting has been removed. However, groups can run social events to encourage nominations, such as a “meet the committee” event, or even a hustings-style event during the voting period.

Q: How do we run a hustings event?

A: Plan, book, and run the event as you would any other. It should be arranged to take place during the voting period when candidate details are public. You must ensure all your members are invited and any candidates who attend are given equal opportunity to speak. You can find the list of your current members via your [Signatories Panel](#).

Q: What about non-signatory positions?

A: Currently, the elections process will only be used to elect signatory positions. This is because of the huge variety of non-signatory positions and recruitment/election/selection processes. Work will be ongoing in the future to explore if this system can be used for non-signatory positions, involving consultation with committees before making any changes.

Q: Will this increase the likelihood of dormancies?

A: We do not believe that this process will increase the likelihood of dormancies. We feel there is great benefit to groups in helping them remain active, due to the significant increase to the length of time to find candidates (from one hour to 5 days), the removal of the requirement to book an election, and the removal of the requirement to have 10 minimum attendees in a meeting at which the full membership of your group may not have been able to be present. We will also be able to more easily arrange bye-elections to take place before the summer to fill any vacant gaps following the main elections period.

Q: Is this process final?

A: The process in terms of the electoral system and voting system will be the process in all club and society elections moving forward. We will not be reverting to AGMs. Developments, improvements, and changes to timescales will absolutely be considered and may be implemented in future years. This is the first year of this new approach, so we are open to making changes where possible.

Q: Who should we contact with further questions?

A: If you have any questions about the elections process from a democratic standpoint, please contact Hannah.jones@surrey.ac.uk. If you have any questions about handover, memberships, or other club and society-related questions, please contact Jodie.varma@surrey.ac.uk. If you have any questions about the Union website, club/society portal, or the elections platform itself, please contact sam.hallam@surrey.ac.uk.