

ELECTION & REFERENDUM RULES

We want students to have a positive experience during elections and referendums. To ensure this we have some rules in place. This election is overseen by an external Returning Officer (RO), who is responsible for ensuring that elections are conducted fairly and democratically. It is also overseen by an external Deputy Returning Officer (DRO). They will interpret these election rules in response to any concerns, complaints and appeals.

The aim of the election and referendum rules is to create a free and fair election in accordance with the Education Act 1994 Section 20-22. The rules aim to create fairness between candidates and campaign teams and fairness to the voter, thereby giving integrity to the election process and the Students' Union overall.

There are three main areas these rules will oversee:

LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

The Leadership Elections refer to any election in which a Sabbatical Officer or University Councillor is elected. These would typically occur in Lent Term.

ACADEMIC REP ELECTIONS

The Academic Rep Elections refer to any election in which a Subject or School Rep is elected. These would typically occur in Michaelmas Term.

SU REFERENDUMS

A referendum refers to a cross campus ballot on a specific question, answerable by a simple armative/negative response. These can occur at any point during the academic year. Certain regulations are in place within the [Articles of Association](#) and [By-Law 9: Referendums](#).

RULES

GENERAL CONDUCT

1. Students should be free to decide who they would like as their representatives or how they would like to vote, and this decision should not be made by candidates/campaigners or unfairly influenced by candidates.
2. Students, other candidates, their supporters, staff, and the general public should be treated with respect.
3. Candidates should run fair, honest, and transparent campaigns and you may only do what other candidates have an equal opportunity to do.
4. All Union and University policies, procedures and regulations must be adhered to during the elections. Candidates must also abide by all legal legislation.
5. All candidates and their campaigners must abide by the election rules.

6. Slates (groups of candidates supporting one another) are not permitted.
7. Hate speech, in line with the Equality Act 2010, is banned in all contexts.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Leadership Elections
 - 1.1. All candidates must be Student Members of Cambridge SU.
 - 1.2. In addition:
 - 1.2.1. Candidates for the positions of President (PG) must be postgraduate members of the SU.
 - 1.2.2. Candidates for the positions of President (UG) must be undergraduate members of the SU.
 - 1.3. Candidates are only able to run for one role during the Leadership Elections.
 - 1.4. Eligibility for the University Councillor role is determined by the [University of Cambridge Statutes and Ordinances \(pp. 118\)](#).
 - 1.5. All Sabbatical Officer positions are ex-officio trustees of the SU, candidates may only be eligible to run provided they are also eligible to be trustees under the [charity commission's](#) rules.
2. Academic Rep Elections
 - 2.1. All candidates must be Student Members of Cambridge SU.
 - 2.2. In addition:
 - 2.2.1. Candidates for a Subject Rep position must be on an eligible course, as set out by the Academic Rep mapping formed in collaboration with the University Faculties and Departments.
 - 2.2.2. Candidates for a School Rep position must be an undergraduate or postgraduate member of the relevant School.
 - 2.3. Candidates are able to run in any role they are eligible for, meaning that students can run for multiple positions.
3. Referendums
 - 3.1. All Campaign Leads and campaigners must be Student Members of Cambridge SU.

CAMPAIGNING

1. Individuals expressing an interest to run in the elections are not considered candidates until they have received an email confirming this.
2. Any individual wishing to stand for election must not campaign or publicly announce until campaigning has officially opened.
3. All materials should be free of offensive and derogatory language.
4. Information or slogans which are directed at other candidates is not permitted.
5. Candidates and their campaigners must not make direct or indirect personal remarks, including but not limited to protected characteristics, about other candidates, other students, or staff while campaigning. Any use of offensive/derogatory language will be deemed to be against the rules.
6. Materials must not bring Cambridge SU or The University of Cambridge into disrepute or cause reputational damage. You are also not permitted to use the University of Cambridge or the Students' Union logos within your campaigning materials.

7. Use of email lists is not permitted. The only exception to this rule is if a Society has decided to endorse a candidate; they may then use their own mailing lists etc. to announce this.
8. Candidates must be respectful to students and avoid spamming or sending unwanted or unsolicited messages. Candidates must also ensure they respect the privacy of students.
9. Full-time Elected Officers of the SU may not campaign for any candidate in an election, except themselves, and they cannot campaign on paid time. They must take annual leave to campaign during work hours.
 - 9.1. For avoidance of doubt, Full-time Elected Officers, in their capacity as members of the Executive Committee, are able to be Campaign Leads in referendums, and campaign either by mandate or as they see fit as per By-Law 9: Referendums.
10. Fly-posting, graffiti and other forms of defacement are all illegal in Cambridge and cannot be used. In addition, the defacing or removal of other candidate's materials is prohibited.
11. Candidates, their campaign teams, or any other person attempting to influence a voter must be further than three metres of an individual when they are casting their ballot.

SPENDING

1. Leadership Elections
 - 1.1. Campaign spending for a candidate must not exceed the spending budget they have been allocated. (£100 for Sabbatical Officer roles, £40 for University Councillor).
2. Referendum
 - 2.1. Campaign spending for a campaign team must not exceed the spending budget they have been allocated by the Returning Officer. (£100, Michaelmas 2025)
3. If using materials or resources you already own or have access to, and which it is not reasonable to assume all candidates would have access to, you must declare these to the Deputy Returning Officer, who will attribute a cost to be taken out of your campaigning budget. When using free resources, these must all be readily available to all candidates.
4. Cambridge SU must receive receipts or other declarations, and evidence of spending or campaign materials used no later than 4pm on the day that voting closes.

ENDORSEMENTS (LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS)

1. Clubs and Societies may endorse a candidate if they democratically decide to do so in accordance with their own constitutional requirements. Evidence of the way in which the decision was taken must be made available if requested.
2. JCRs and MCRs may not endorse candidates.
3. Selective moderation of posts to email lists, groups or social media pages resulting in any candidate(s) being favoured shall be considered an endorsement.
4. Students should not seek or promote endorsements from anyone not a member of Cambridge SU.

QUERIES, CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The election complaints process is outlined in By-Law 8, Clause 9: Election Complaints. (Appendix 1)

All candidates are strongly advised to consult the DRO if they are unsure of any aspect of the rules via elections@cambridgesu.co.uk. You are able to appeal rulings to the Returning Officer by emailing elections@cambridgesu.co.uk.

If at any point a candidate, campaigner or student has concerns about the election or its process, they should email the Returning Officer and their Deputy via elections@cambridgesu.co.uk.

You are able to email the Returning Officer, their Deputy and the elections team at any time via elections@cambridgesu.co.uk for guidance, clarification of the rules or a ruling, without submitting an official complaint.

Complaints must be received within 24 hours of observing, or becoming aware of, the incident in question. All complaints relating to the elections process, organisation or polling must be submitted in writing prior to the end of polling to the Deputy Returning Officer. All complaints relating to the count must be received within 24 hours of the completion of the count.

Appeals following a ruling must be submitted within 24 hours of receiving the decision from the Deputy Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer and Deputy will acknowledge all complaints and appeals within 24 hours of receipt.

APPENDIX 1: BY-LAW 8, CLAUSE 9: ELECTION COMPLAINTS

9. Election Complaints

- 9.1. Any complaint conduct during elections must be submitted in writing to the Deputy Returning Officer.
- 9.2. All complaints relating to the elections process, organisation or polling must be submitted in writing prior to the end of polling to the Deputy Returning Officer
- 9.3. All complaints relating to the conduct of the count must be submitted in writing to the Deputy Returning Officer within 24 hours of the completion of the count.
- 9.4. The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer shall have powers to issue warnings, disqualify or suspend candidates and halt all or part of the election, and take any other reasonable action they think fit.
- 9.5. The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer shall be empowered to refer complaints to the Union's Grievance and Complaints Process (By-Law 10) or Member Disciplinary Procedure (By-Law 16) as they see fit. If the complaint would involve a serious admission of civil or criminal liability, the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer should automatically refer the complaint to the Board of Trustees.
- 9.6. Any Student Member may appeal to the Returning Officer to overturn the decision of the Deputy Returning Officer on an election complaint in writing within 48 hours of the announcement of the decision.
 - 9.6.1. The Returning Officer shall consider the appeal within 7 days of full term of its receipt, or shall respond the Student Member who submitted the appeal detailing reasons why consideration of the appeal must be delayed;
 - 9.6.2. After considering the appeal the Returning Officer should publish the outcome to Student Members, and directly inform the Student Member who submitted the appeal, any candidates affected by the Returning Officer's decision, and the Junior Proctor within two days of full term;
 - 9.6.3. If the Student Member who submitted the appeal, or any election candidate affected by the outcome of the appeal, is dissatisfied by the outcome of their appeal to the Returning Officer, they shall have the right to further appeal to the Junior Proctor.