RHSU

# leadership elections

## rules & regulations

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# Election rules and regulations

It is impossible to provide a set of rules and regulations that cover every potential scenario that could happen during an election campaign. When investigating conduct, incidents or complaints, the Deputy Returning Officer and Returning Officer will make a judgement based on the following ethos:

*All candidates must conduct themselves in a 'free and fair' manner that reflects the values and policies of the Students' Union and the regulations set out in the University's Student code of conduct.*

If in doubt, we advise you to run your campaign ideas (in complete confidence) past the Assistant Returning Officer before you put them into action.

These rules and regulations apply to all Students' Union elections. By submitting a nomination, candidates agree to adhere to the rules and regulations.

## 1. General

1. The elections will be overseen by the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer will delegate day to day responsibility to the Deputy Returning Officer.
2. Names will appear on ballot papers as per the University registration. In cases where a shorter form or alternative is used, dispensation may be granted at the Deputy Returning Officer's discretion.

## 2. Eligibility

1. For all positions, only current Royal Holloway students and sabbatical officers in their first year of office are eligible to stand in a Students' Union election.
2. For Community Officers, those who self-define within the inclusion and academic communities can stand and/or vote in the election. For Faculty Reps, those belonging to those academic Faculties will be able to stand and/or vote in the election. Lastly, for sports clubs, societies and media outlets, only paid and full members can stand and/or vote. There are additional criteria for the fulltime positions which is stipulated in charity law due to the trustee aspect of the roles. This is outlined in the Guide to Standing.
3. Students with the following circumstances may not stand for any position:
    a. Students who have previously been disqualified from any Union election.
    b. Students who have previously been removed as an Officer.
    c. Students who have previously had their employment terminated by RHSU.
    d. Students who are banned from Union or University spaces.
4. Any student that is undergoing or has undergone a disciplinary investigation may have their right to stand revoked at any time if the result of the investigation would have not allowed the student to stand as per the eligibility outlined in the rules and regulations, up to and including upon commencement of the role. Any disciplinary action will be reviewed by the Deputy Returning officer, who will consult any relevant third parties in making their decision around eligibility to stand.

## 3. Campaigning

1. Dates will be set and published for the start of campaigning. The official start date for campaigning is designated for the formal announcement of candidacies and the creation of social media accounts. No active campaigning, such as distributing materials or advertising themselves publicly is permitted before this date. However, candidates are able to discuss their candidacy informally with friends before the official start date.
2. Candidates will be required to submit a candidate statement, in a format to be determined by the Deputy Returning Officer. The details and limitations will be communicated at the point of nominations going live. Any statements submitted must be in line with the Students' Union's Members' Code of Conduct.
3. For Sabbatical Officer elections, the candidates must attend a mandatory 121 with the Chief Executive Officer or delegated member of the senior management team by the deadline provided, otherwise their nomination will be withdrawn.
4. For the Leadership Elections, all candidates must attend a compulsory candidate briefing session.
5. During the Leadership Elections period, the Students' Union will provide a number of physical ballot stations on campus during the voting period. An exclusion zone for campaigning around these will be made clear to all candidates.
6. Candidates are not permitted to place any physical posters/banners etc around campus. For the avoidance of doubt, posters can be placed in personal spaces where permission has been given.
7. Candidates may operate a campaign team. Candidates are responsible for the actions of their campaign team and any inappropriate actions undertaken by that team may result in an election sanction action against the candidate as outlined in this document. All candidates must register their campaign team members in advance of the campaigning period. This will be via a process determined by the Deputy Returning Officer.
8. Campaigning is strictly forbidden in the below areas. Additional spaces may be added, and candidates will be updated as relevant.
    a. Libraries or reading rooms
    b. Computer rooms
    c. The Chaplaincy and associated spaces
    d. Email lists (i.e. mass email)
9. Candidates and members of their campaign team must allow voters the opportunity to cast their vote in private, and under no circumstances must votes be cast on a voter's behalf. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes touching personal devices that voters may use to cast their vote for any reason, and they should be a reasonable distance apart from the voter when they choose to cast their vote.
10. Students' Union staff must remain impartial throughout the election; however, student staff are able to show support or join a campaign team for a particular candidate providing this is not whilst working for the Students' Union or wearing any RHSU uniform.
11. All candidates and their campaign teams should understand that they are also subject to the Union's Code of Conduct, as outlined in Byelaw F and may be subject to complaints by members which may additionally be investigated under the Byelaw G.

## 4. Finances

1. Candidates for Sabbatical Officer are allowed to spend up to £50 of their own money on campaign resources (non-refundable).
2. All other candidates for any other roles are allowed to spend up to £20 of their own money on campaign resources (non-refundable).
3. For the Leadership Elections, financial declaration forms (including all receipts) must be submitted to the Deputy Returning Officer within one hour of voting closing for approval. Any queries will be investigated as required.
4. Candidates may not accept material sponsorship from any source to assist with their campaign that would not have been available to other candidates unless it is accounted for in their budget.

## 5. Endorsements

1. Candidates may not endorse other candidates and must campaign as an individual. This includes running on a slate. For the avoidance of doubt, running on a slate refers to when candidates campaign together as a group or support each other through any medium or messaging.
2. Student Communities (Student Groups, Inclusion and Academic Communities) are permitted to endorse candidates in the leadership elections, the committee should decide on a process by which to do this appropriately considering their own community. If anyone in a community feels dissatisfied by how this process occurs, they should bring it up with the committee, if not action is taken, they can make a complaint to the DRO. When endorsing candidates, Communities must ensure they do not break any rules of the elections or go against the Union's values or code of conduct.
3. Communities are not permitted to endorse candidates within their own elections.

## 6. Complaints and Sanctions

1. All complaints must be submitted within 24 hours of the alleged incident and no later than 1 hour after voting closes, via the official online complaints form, and will include the following information:
    a. Name and contact details of person making complainant (anonymous complaints will not be considered)
    b. Name of person being complained about
    c. Details of incident (including time and date)
    d. Details of any witnesses
    e. Details of which rules have been broken
    f. Details of the action requested
2. All complaints must be received within one hour of voting closing. Any complaints received after this time will not be investigated as part of the elections process (although they may be considered under the disciplinary procedure outlined in the Students' Union Constitution).
3. Any evidence submitted should be provided by the impacted party only.

4. All complaints will be investigated by the Deputy Returning Officer, who will consider the facts and make an appropriate decision based on the evidence provided and outcomes of an investigation. This ruling will be communicated to all parties involved and included in the annual Returning Officer's Elections Report.
5. Any decisions made by the Deputy Returning Officer can be appealed via a written statement to the Returning Officer (but must include factual information as to why the original decision is considered un-just). Appeals can only be submitted by those impacted.
6. Both the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer are empowered to investigate any matters related to the election, infringement of election rules or complaints regarding candidate or campaign team conduct. If they find that there has been an infringement they may:
    a. Warn the candidate that any future infringement will result in a campaigning ban or disqualification
    b. Issue a campaigning ban
    c. Issue a campaigning ban that includes a temporary removal from the election ballot
    d. Disqualify the candidate
7. Any decisions made by the Returning Officer are final.

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