



Spring Elections 2023 Rulebook

Spring Elections 2023 Timeline

Nominations will open on November 14th, at 9:00am and close February 20th, at 9am.

Training will take place on the 1st Floor Activity Hall at the SU, on February 22nd, from 2pm, and February 23rd, from 2pm – you are only required to attend one of these two sessions.

All **manifestos** must be submitted via our [website](#) by 12pm, on March 1st.

Campaigning will start on March 6th, at 9am.

Question Time will take place on the 1st Floor Activity Hall at the SU, on March 6th, at 2pm.

Voting will open on March 7th, at 9am and closes March 9th, at 12 noon/midday.

Elections **Results** are planned to be announced at our Results Ceremony on March 10th, details will be confirmed closer to the time.

Any and all **complaints** must be submitted to union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk, by 2pm on March 9th.

Budget

Sabbatical Officer Candidates shall each have a budget of £50.

Voluntary Officer Candidates shall each have a budget of £30.

Elections Rules

Ignorance of the rules will not normally be considered a defence in the event of a breach of a rule.

1. **No coercion.** This means candidates cannot pressurise or force students to vote for them. Standing over a student and watching them vote will be seen as coercion. Candidates must not give electronic devices to voters when asking them to vote. Candidates cannot take someone's phone and cast their vote for them. All students should be given a free and fair choice at the point of voting.
2. **No bribery (financial or otherwise).** This means that candidates and campaign teams cannot pay students to vote for you or offer to do something for them in order to get them to vote for you. Candidates must not bribe other candidates to participate in any not approved slate(s) or to be part of an existing slate(s).
3. **No illegal discrimination.** Candidates should not do anything that could be discriminatory against protected characteristics (Gender Identification, Race, Religion, Disability, and Sexual Orientation).
4. **Candidates must be open and honest in their campaigning.** Online spamming and trolling types of behaviour and physical intimidation may be considered to be a breach of this rule.
5. **Local rules apply within the University.** All current Aston University and Aston SU rules must be complied with. For example, no campaigning is allowed in the University library. This includes printed materials. Candidates should also not create campaign content in the University library.

6. **Pre-campaigning is not allowed.** This means campaigning before campaigning has been permitted by the SU.
7. **All candidates must stick to the fixed budget.** Overspending of the budget will result in disqualification. Candidates may use their budget for printing materials. Candidates may use the free printing facilities available to them via the University. For each free A4 item printed will reduce your campaign budget by 10p and for A3 by 20p. In addition, there will be a further 10p sustainability surcharge for each A4 and 20p for each A3. This surcharge applies whether or not the printing is from free printing. The charges must be paid for within the budget. Candidates must declare the amount of printing they have used. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.
8. **All campaign materials should be approved in principle by the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO).** This does not include every social media post but core materials such as manifestos, posters and flyers/leaflets must be submitted in advance to be approved.
9. **Current officers or students in a position within the union/university must not use facilities or information available in their official capacity to them to advantage themselves.** For example, SU Course Reps using email lists/social media that they have as a result of being a Rep to contact voters. This does not include social media accounts that are owned by that student within a personal capacity or access to individuals through your own private networks.
Current officers should not use social media accounts that they use for their officer position in order to campaign.
10. **Union clubs and societies can endorse or support a particular candidate.** Club and society committees must vote to endorse a candidate and the Student Voice team should be informed. Individual members of a particular club or society can state using their personal social media for example, "I am the Secretary of Aston Coffee Drinkers Society and I say vote for Candidate X". The group can also say "Aston Coffee Drinkers Society supports Candidate X and vote for Candidate X ..."

11. Candidates must not canvas or seek the support of Aston University or SU staff.
12. Campaigning must be done by students at Aston to students at Aston. Campaign teams can only be formed with Aston University Students
- 12.1 Candidates must inform the Union Voice team(union.voice@aston.ac.uk) who their campaign teams are before the voting opens.
- 12.2 Candidates will be held responsible for their campaign team members' behaviour.
13. Candidates are not allowed to have endorsement of any kind for the purpose of campaigning from external companies, organisations, business, and/or people.
14. **Candidate teams/slates are permitted.** The DRO should be informed when a slate/team exists. If the DRO is not informed that a group of candidates are standing on a slate/team the DRO will look to the facts and the reality of the situation to decide whether candidates are standing as part of a slate/team.
- 14.1 A slate/team are a group of candidates (2 or more) running together. Candidates who run as a slate are able to combine their budget to produce joint campaigning materials such as leaflets, posters etc.
15. Complaints should be submitted to the DRO (union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk) in a timely manner and at the latest, 2 hours after voting has closed. Please note, in order for the DRO to make a valid decision, evidence is required. If you witness a breach of campaigning rules please indicate the specific time, date, and location, to assist with the investigation.

Appendix 1: Sabbatical Roles

- President

The President is the figurehead of the Students' Union. They lead the Officer team, and are the Deputy Chair of the Students' Union's Board of Trustees. They represent the student body in meetings with the University, to ensure that students' opinions are taken into account when important decisions are made, and they engage with students from all demographic groups. Just like all other officers, the President will also work on the pledges they made in their election manifesto.

This is a fulltime, paid role, running from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 with mandatory training from 19 June 2023 to 30 June 2023. The gross annual salary for this position is £22,149 per annum.

[Full Job Description](#)

- Vice President Education (VPE)

The Vice President Education is the Union's leader on all things related to the academic experience. They attend - and often chair - key meetings within the University that affect how teaching & learning works at Aston, and are a key point of contact for Student Representatives of all kinds across the University. The VP Education also runs campaigns & projects that have the goal of improving students' academic experience at Aston - whether that's to do with learning resources, study space, assessment and feedback, or something else. As with all the other Officers, the VP Education also works on the pledges that they included in their manifesto when they were standing for election.

This is a fulltime, paid role, running from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 with mandatory training from 19 June 2023 to 30 June 2023. The gross annual salary for this position is £22,149 per annum.

[Full Job Description](#)

- **Vice President Welfare (VPW)**

The Vice President Welfare's main job is to promote wellbeing among Aston students. With exam stress, balancing work, study & your social life, and worries about your future life and career, it can be tough being a student sometimes. The VP Welfare works hard to alleviate these issues for students. They run projects and campaigns aimed at promoting mental and sexual health, healthy living, and community, to ensure that the Aston experience is as positive as possible for students. They also make sure that the students' welfare is considered in Union & University decision-making.

This is a fulltime, paid role, running from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 with mandatory training from 19 June 2023 to 30 June 2023. The gross annual salary for this position is £22,149 per annum.

[Full Job Description](#)

- **Vice President Student Activities (VPSA)**

Your time at University is about more than just getting a degree; it's a time for making new friends, new experiences and finding new passions. The Vice President Student Activities aims to promote the extracurricular activities that the Students' Union has to offer – including [Societies, Sports Clubs](#), social events and more. The VP Student Activities also runs projects and campaigns to promote sports and an active lifestyle and ensures that our extracurricular activities are accessible to all groups of students.

This is a fulltime, paid role, running from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 with mandatory training from 19 June 2023 to 30 June 2023. The gross annual salary for this position is £22,149 per annum.

[Full Job Description](#)

- Vice President Communities (VPC)

The Vice President – Communities leads the Students' Union's engagement initiative for groups and communities of students that fall outside the traditional remit of a club or society. The role will work to promote diversity and belonging between students who share a common characteristic such as but not limited to; mode of study, student classification, protected characteristics under the Equalities Act, geography and location of study. The post will further support projects to raise awareness of the Students' Union amongst the wider student body with a view to increase engagement.

[Full Job Description](#)

Appendix 2: Voluntary Roles

- Union Chair
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students Officer
- Disabled Students Officer
- International Students Officer
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer (LGBTQ+) Students Officer
- Mature Students Officer
- Women Students Officer
- Part time & Commuter Students Officer

Each of the Voluntary Officers shall be elected from the types of students who self-identify as belonging to the groups described in their title and their role shall be to engage with these groups and represent their views to the rest of the Executive and to the University and try to resolve any conflicts between the views of different groups.

Appendix 3: Elections Byelaw

Byelaw 4

Elections and Referenda at Aston Students' Union

Introduction

Aston Students' Union is a democratic organisation led by people you choose. This is done through a series of elections that all student members can vote in. Referenda are a chance to ask all students their view on big issues.

Glossary

Elections	The process by which student leaders are selected.
No Confidence	A motion to remove an official of the Union.
Referenda	Referenda are votes which are open to the entire student body for them to decide on a specific question.
Returning Officer	The person who oversees elections and referenda.
Ranked Voting	A voting method that allows students to rank candidates in order of preference rather than just their first choice.

The Returning Officer

401 The Trustee Board will appoint a Returning Officer for a term of up to three years. They will not be a student or Associate Member of the Students' Union and may be an organisation with specialism in returning elections.

402 The Trustee Board will appoint someone whom they believe can be independent from the democratic processes and has sufficient experience to oversee the elections.

403 The duties of the Returning Officer shall be:

- a) Ensuring that elections are fair and that all eligible students can vote in them.
- b) Promoting engagement in the Students' Unions democratic processes to ensure a wide range of candidates and offer as much voter choice as possible.
- c) Creating forums that allow candidates to promote themselves so that students can be informed voters.
- d) Overseeing referenda.
- e) Being the final authority on any decisions to do with referenda and elections.

404 The Returning Officer shall have the authority to do the following:

- a) To have ultimate responsibility for the interpretation of all election rules for the Union and how they are carried out.
- b) To appoint Deputy Returning Officers.
- c) To set timelines for elections and referenda as well as any rules. These shall be laid out in a rulebook to be published at least 2 weeks before any election and 1 week before any referenda.
- d) To ensure that all candidates in an election have a fair opportunity to promote themselves and that any platform provided by the Union is equal for all. This shall include any coverage by Union run student media.
- e) To set out the rules for any election counts and oversee the count for election to major union offices.

- f) To report to the Trustee Board and governing body of the University on any elections to major union office.
- g) To be the sole person able to disqualify candidates from an election.
- h) To approve the results of an election count or referendum.

405 The Returning Officer may appoint one or more individuals to be Deputy Returning Officer to oversee the administration of elections. They may not be members of the union but may be employees of the union or anyone else that the Returning Officer deems to be suitable. They shall have any duties or authority delegated to them by the Returning Officer except that they cannot disqualify candidates or approve the results of a count for major union office.

Election Rulebook

406 The election rulebook shall include the following:

- a) Rules on nomination for election and the details that students must provide to be eligible.
- b) Timescales for nominations and campaigning.
- c) Rules concerning campaigning during the election and student group endorsements.
- d) Rules explaining how students can vote including any provision for online voting.
- e) Rules for complaints about elections and the sanctions that the Returning Officer may implement on candidates.
- f) Rules concerning candidates who wish to campaign together as a "slate".
- g) Information about Trustee responsibilities and the requirement of eligibility to be appointed a Trustee, for candidates for the roles of Sabbatical Officers.

- h) Information relating to any requirements set by external bodies - for example NUS for their conferences.

407 Candidates for election may be held responsible for the conduct of their campaigning team if the Returning Officer believes that the candidate was (or should have been aware) of an activity during the election period.

408 As well as the election rules outlined above, candidates will be subject to the general rules of the Union, the university, and national laws. Should any of these be broken by a candidate or their team then the candidate may be disqualified.

409 The elections shall be undertaken through a ranked vote method with the option for students to vote to Re-Open Nominations.

Complaints during elections

410 Any complaints about an election must be received in writing (including email) and be received no more than 2 hours after the close of voting.

411 Where possible complaints should be raised within 24 hours of the issue about which a complaint has been raised.

412 No election count will take place until all complaints relating to that position are resolved.

413 The Returning Officer's judgement on elections shall be final and without an Appeal. Students may raise a concern about the Union under the 1994 Education Act if they wish.

Referenda

414 A referendum to debate any issue, with the exception of a vote of no confidence in a Trustee or elected representative, shall be called by:

- a) a Secure Petition signed by 200 student members in accordance with Articles.
- b) a simple majority vote of the Trustee Board or.
- c) a simple majority vote of Union Council members.

415 The quorum for a referendum will be at least 4% of members.

416 A referendum to issue a vote of no confidence in a Trustee or elected representative shall be called by either:

- a) a Secure Petition signed by 500 student members in accordance with Articles.
- b) a simple majority vote of the Trustee Board or.
- c) a simple majority vote of Union Council members.

Referenda Rules

417 The regulations for the Referendum shall be set by the Returning officer but shall include:

- a) A notice period of the referendum of at least 14 days (21 for a change in the Articles). The notice can be issued on the Students' Union website and should be disseminated digitally to Members.
- b) Provision held by secret ballot outlining the process for voting including how many days it shall be open for.
- c) The date and time where the count will take place and how the result will be publicised.
- d) The procedure for submitting complaints and how they will be dealt with.

418 There will be an Appeals process concerning the outcome of the referenda and the conduct of the Returning Officer. Appeals should be submitted to the Board of Trustees no later than 5 days following receipt of a response from the Returning Officer. The Board's decision is final.