Autumn Elections 2022

Rulebook

Autumn Elections 2022 Timeline

Nominations will open on October 10th, at 9:30am and close October 24th, at 9am.

Training will take place on the 1st Floor Activity Hall at the SU, on October 25th, form 2pm until 3:30pm.

All **manifestos** must be submitted via our website by 12pm, on October 27th.

Campaigning will start on October 31st at 9:30am.

Voting will open on November 1st, at 9:30am and close November 3rd, at 12 noon/midday.

Elections **Results** are planned to be announced at our Results Ceremony on November 4th, details will be confirmed closer to the time.

Any and all **complaints** must be submitted to union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk, by 2pm on November 3rd.

Voluntary Roles

- **NUS Delegates x 4**

Each year, Aston students elect delegates who will go to the National Union of Students (NUS) National Conference. This year there will be 4 positions available to run for NUS Delegates.

NUS is an organisation formed out of 'constituent' students' unions in Higher Education and Further Education across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

NUS represents students on a national scale, lobbies the government, supports individual students' unions and campaigns on a variety of issues directed by the student membership. As a delegate, you're a vital part of setting the NUS's direction for the year to come.

If you want to secure a change in the way Universities are run, or a Government policy that impacts students, or the work the NUS currently does for students, you could run to be a NUS delegate.

Each NUS Delegate Candidate has a budget of £15.

- **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Officer**
- **Disabled Students Officer**
- **International Students Officer**
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer Students Officer**
- **Mature Students Officer**
- **Commuter Students Officer**
- **Postgraduate Students Officer**
- **Sustainability Officer**
- **Women 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.

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

Elections Rules - Guiding Principles

Clarifications to the Guiding Principles may be added throughout the election. Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) decisions and directions to candidates will also be added as appropriate.

1. All Candidates should have equal and fair access to be able to communicate with students.

2. Current officers or students in a position within the union/university must not use that position 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.

DRO CLARIFICATION

> 2.1.1. Candidates who have a position within the SU/University should not use their control or access to SU/University social media accounts that aren't accessible to all candidates. For example, if a candidate is a member a union club or society and that club or society has a social media account (using the name of the club or society) the administrator of the account should not promote a particular candidate. If any posts on such an account are made to support a particular candidate then all candidates for the position must be allowed access the account to post promoting themselves. The DRO recommends not promoting particular candidates on such accounts.

2.1.2. Union clubs and societies should not endorse or support a particular candidate. 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" but the society should not say "Aston Coffee Drinkers Society supports Candidate X and vote for Candidate X ..." Candidates who received this kind of endorsement should ask that it is taken down and the DRO should be informed.

2.1.3. Candidates are not allowed to have endorsement of any kind for the purpose of campaigning from external companies, organisations, business, and/or people.

3. Candidates must not canvas or seek the support of Aston University or SU staff.

4. There will be equal support offered to all candidates by the SU.

5. Candidates must be open and honest in their campaigning.

6. All students should be given a free and fair choice at the point of voting.

7. Voters should not be harassed or given direct instruction on how to vote at the point they are making their vote.

8. Campaign teams can only be formed with Aston University Students. Campaigning must be done by students at Aston to students at Aston.

9. Candidates should not negatively campaign. Candidates should not focus on bad things or perceived bad things about other candidates. This does not prohibit candidates pointing out factual inaccuracies in the campaigns of opponent candidates. Campaigning should be based on what you (the candidate) will bring to the role.

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

11. 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. Candidate teams/slates need to be declared by the manifesto submission deadline (see above), any candidate teams/slates formed after this point, will be considered against the rules. Campaigning team members can only campaign for one candidate at a time, if these candidates have not declared a slate in advance.

12. Candidates will be held responsible for their campaign team member/s' behaviour.

13. Candidates are permitted to print leaflets for their campaign team up to a maximum of 20 leaflets in total in accordance with Election Rule 4. Candidate teams may be larger than 20 people however only a maximum of 20 leaflets should be printed in total.

Election Rules

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.

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. Campaigning.

All candidates must stick to the fixed budget. Overspending of the budget will result in disqualification.

In-person campaigning is allowed, as long as you are mindful of any health safety rules, local rules and respect individuals' boundaries.

Campaigns should be sustainable, accessible, and Health and Safety compliant.

Digital campaigning should follow social media platform rules and regulations. For further information, refer to SU Guidance. Spamming and trolling types of behaviour may be considered to be a breach of this rule.

Pre-campaigning is not allowed. This means campaigning before campaigning has been permitted by the SU. This includes but is not limited to setting up social media accounts (i.e. candidates and their campaign teams cannot set them up (if visible) and/or populate them with posts, stories, followers, etc. prior to the start of campaigning).

No posters and/or campaigning are allowed in the University library. Candidates should also not create campaign content (both pictures and videos) and/or print any material for campaigning purposes within the University library.

. All candidates must off set their printing by following these rules:

    a. No flyers/leaflets are permitted, except as outlined in (b).

    b. Each candidate and campaign team member is permitted to have 1 A5 printed promotion leaflet, per person. Each candidate is permitted to print and distribute to their campaign team member/s 1 A5 promotion leaflet for the entire duration of the campaigning and voting period up to a maximum of 20 leaflets.

    c. For every 20 posters* you must account £5 from your budget to plant a tree**.

    d. Please be mindful of the adhesive you use to put up your flyers/leaflets/posters i.e., no tape or stick glue.

*Anything above A4 is considered a poster by the Students' Union.

** All printing should be accounted for via claim forms and submitted to union.voice@aston.ac.uk as part of their budget submission.

5. **All campaign materials should be approved in principle by the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO).**

This does not mean every email, every Instagram post and/or every Tweet, but manifestos, posters and flyers/leaflets must be submitted in advance to be approved.

6. **All current Aston University and Aston SU rules must be complied with.**

Local rules apply. For example, the Library will not allow any campaigning inside the Library. This includes speaking to anyone within the library and its premises. A breach of this local rule is a breach of the Election Rules.

Different parts of Aston University will have different rules. Some Colleges may allow candidates to put posters up in their office. Others may not. If they allow 1 candidate to put up posters they must allow all candidates to do so. Aston University is not allowed to show preference to one candidate over another.

7. Any complaints should be submitted to the DRO (union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk) in a timely manner and at the very latest, 2 hours after voting has closed.

BREACHES OF ELECTION RULES

Any breaches of rules should be reported to the Deputy Returning Officer on union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk.

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. Complaints will be accepted for 2 hours after the close of voting.

What happens if the rules are broken?

Some examples:

- The candidate could be asked to issue an apology, and this could be placed on the SU website/social media.
- A candidate could be disqualified from the election.
- A candidate could be reported to the university and/or other authorities.

Appendix 1

Social Media Rules and other Campaigning Suggestions

It is important to understand that social media platforms are just tools that are designed in order to build online communities and make the communication processes easier.

Candidates can:

- You can use social media to promote your campaign.
- Make sure all content that you upload is accessible (i.e., readability, pictures, colours etc. should be reader friendly for everyone).
- Follow the guidelines of the social media platforms you're using. For example, if you spam individuals or pages on Instagram, Instagram will block your profile (same as for other social media platforms).

Candidates can't:

- You can't spam individuals or pages on social media (i.e., sending 5 similar messages or adding extensive comments to individuals or pages will get your account blocked).
- You can't use any external clubs or societies profiles to promote your campaign.

For current Officers (Sabbatical or Voluntary Officers) running in the elections:

You can:

- You can use your personal social media account(s) to promote your campaign.
- Make sure all content that you upload is accessible (i.e., readability, pictures, colours etc. should be reader friendly for everyone).
- Follow the guidelines of the social media platforms you're using. For example, if you spam individuals or pages on Instagram, Instagram will block your profile (same as for other social media platforms).

You can't:

- You cannot use your current officer social media platforms (i.e., Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) to promote the elections, even during nominations, or to campaign for the role you are running for again or for another role.
- You cannot use your work or SU related accounts however your personal accounts are fine of course.

Campaigning Suggestions:

- Positive campaigning: Don't bully/troll/harass individuals, pages, and fellow candidates on social media, other platforms, or in-person (including if you somehow see them over any external/internal online meetings).

- Make the most out of your social media campaign. Here are 3 suggestions for your social media posts:

a. **Infographics**: A great way to visually present long information or statistics, which allows you to get creative with colours and design using various charts and graphs. While creating the infographics, you may want to pay attention to:

Keep it simple.

Visualise – use visual elements such as images, icons etc.

Make it easy to view – use clear fonts, make sure that dimensions of the final image are correct, and the text is readable.

Check your facts and figures, citing the sources.

b. **Stories:** A great way to interact with your followers and gives them a chance to get to know you better as a candidate. When posting stories, remember:

Keep it simple.

Be creative – do a quiz, post a question, do a poll, etc.

Don't forget to add subtitles if you can!

c. **Pictures:** One of the easiest ways to attract attention and to deliver the right message.

You can use Canva to edit your posts and pictures (it's user friendly and has great tools).

Avoid zooming in on pictures.

Think about what you want to achieve or your idea behind the picture.

Further guidance for social media platforms:

Facebook [Forbidden Content](), [Best Practices]() & [Community Standards]().

Instagram [Community Guidelines](), [Guidelines FAQs]() & [Terms of Use]().

[What is Meta]() & [Meta Platform Terms]().

Discord [Terms of Service](), [Community Guidelines]() & [Safety Centre]().

LinkedIn [User Agreement](), [Professional Community Policies]() & [Safety]().

TikTok [Community Guidelines](), [Terms of Service]() & [Safety Centre]().

Twitter [Rules](), [Terms of Service]() & [Safety and Security]().

Snapchat [Community Guidelines](), [Terms of Service]() & [Safety Centre]()

Appendix 2

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.