



By-Law: Election Rules and Regulations

This By-Law describes the rules and regulations for elections at the GSA.

1. Introduction

1.1. Interpretation

This By-Law shall be subject at all times to the provisions of the Articles and shall be read in conjunction therewith.

1.2. Alterations of the By-Law

This By-Law shall be amended from time to time by Association Council by a two-thirds majority, but should be reviewed at least every two years.

1.3. Application

This By-Law shall also apply to voting and campaigning for Referendums also.

2. Rule Breach

In submitting a nomination for candidacy in a GSA election, it is expected that the candidate has read and agreed to the GSA By-Law Election Rules and Regulations. Any candidate found in breach of these rules will be automatically disqualified from the election.

3. General

3.1. The following posts shall be elected by cross-campus ballot (all registered postgraduate students have a vote):

3.1.1. Sabbatical Officers

3.1.2. Student Trustees

3.1.3. Some Part-Time Officers Roles (as detailed in the Part-Time Officer By-Law)

3.2. The following posts shall be a restricted or limited ballot (only students of a certain group or who define as a certain group have a right to vote):

- 3.2.1. Course Representatives
- 3.2.2. Faculty Representatives
- 3.2.3. Some Part-Time Officers Roles (as detailed in the Part-Time Officer By-Law)

4. Notice of Elections

- 4.1. York GSA will publish details of any elections it intends to hold at least 10 working days before the intended close of nominations.
- 4.2. Elections shall be held at time which are intended to enable the largest possible number of members to vote.

5. Eligibility

- 5.1. Candidates must be a member of the York Graduate Students' Association and be enrolled on a postgraduate programme at the University of York (including PhD students in their writing-up year and with the exception of Sabbatical Officers running for a second term).
- 5.2. Candidates must meet the eligibility requirements of specific roles in order to run for the position.
- 5.3. If a candidate fails to meet the requirements for the role, they will be withdrawn from the election.
- 5.4. All candidates must attend a Candidates Briefing or send a proxy.
- 5.5. All candidates must provide a manifesto by the published deadline.

6. Nominations

- 6.1. All nominations shall be submitted using an accessible process declared by the Returning Officer.
- 6.2. A receipt will be issued to confirm the submission of each completed nomination.
- 6.3. Candidates must attend a Candidate Briefing session or send a proxy before their nomination will be officially confirmed.

7. Manifestos

- 7.1. All manifestos must be submitted by the date outlined in the election timetable.
- 7.2. Manifestos will be displayed with nomination information on the GSA website or voting platform.
- 7.3. Manifestos must not exceed 1500 characters.

8. Voting

- 8.1. All voters must be allowed to cast their ballot freely.
- 8.2. The timing of the opening and closing of voting shall be specified on the GSA website.
- 8.3. Voting shall be by secret ballot using the single transferable vote (STV) system, as defined by the Electoral Reform Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and shall include re-open nominations (RON) as a candidate.
- 8.4. Should RON be elected the candidates, the post in question shall remain vacant until a by-election is held or the position can be filled through co-option.
- 8.5. The voting period for any position shall run for at least 3 working days.
- 8.6. If the result of voting in an election or referendum is a tie, then the result will be decided in line with the electors commission's rules by the drawing of lots. The method of selection will be decided and conducted by the Returning Officer or their nominee.
- 8.7. All results will be published on the GSA website.

9. Question Time

- 9.1. The GSA shall organise a Question Time event for the election of Sabbatical Officers at which members will have the opportunity to hear candidates speak and ask them questions.
- 9.2. Question Time will be open to all candidates seeking election to these positions.
- 9.3. Candidates should inform the Deputy Returning Officer in writing if they are unable to attend the Question Time.

10. Campaigning

10.1. Definition

Campaigning is understood as any activity or action used to promote the candidate.

10.2. Campaign Teams

10.2.1. Candidates' can choose to work with a team to help with their campaigns.

Campaign team members are anyone who distributes publicity or campaign material or activity that actively encourages other students to vote for a candidate.

10.2.2. Campaign teams must be made up on full members of the York Graduate Students' Association only.

10.2.3. Candidates are responsible for the following:

10.2.3.1. The conduct of their campaign team

10.2.3.2. For briefing their campaign team on the rules

10.2.4. If any member of a campaign team is found in breach of the rules, candidates must evidence that they have taken reasonable steps to inform them of the election rules. Any breach of a campaign team member means they are required to leave the campaign team immediately.

10.3. Timing

10.3.1. Candidates must follow timing set out by the election guidance issued which will indicate what time they are allowed to campaign from. If candidates do not adhere to this, it will be considered a breach of the rules.

10.3.2. All campaign and publicity materials must be taken down within 48 hours of voting closing.

10.4. Liability

Candidates are liable for their campaign and publicity material. Candidates must not bring the GSA or the University of York into disrepute. During the election period, all GSA and University of York policies must be adhered to by candidates.

10.5. Campaigning Online

- 10.5.1. Campaigning online is subject to the same rules as any other campaign activity.
- 10.5.2. Whilst candidates and their campaign teams can send emails and social media messages as part of their campaign, they:
 - 10.5.2.1. Must not make use of Official University or GSA mailing lists or data for campaigning purposes
 - 10.5.2.2. Must not make use of Official University or GSA social media pages or profiles for campaigning purposes.
 - 10.5.2.3. May post in closed groups on social media for campaign purposes, IF they have their post approved by the group administrator..
 - 10.5.2.4. Candidates can use their personal social media accounts for campaigning.

10.6. Unfair advantages

No candidate may use a position of responsibility to actively endorse their campaign (e.g. course rep or sabbatical positions) Candidates may not use any campaign material which is unavailable to other candidates and gives them an unfair advantage.

10.7. Location

- 10.7.1. Candidates and their Campaigners may only alter, move or remove their own campaign/publicity materials. Any interference of other candidates campaign material will be considered a breach of the rules and will result in disqualification.
- 10.7.2. Candidate publicity can be displayed on any public noticeboard across campus.

10.8. Negative Campaigning

- 10.8.1. Candidates may criticise other candidates campaigns but must never be personal. Candidates must not reference another candidate's personal

traits of character or misrepresent another candidate's religious, political, or other views and actions.

11. Endorsements

- 11.1. Third party endorsement is strictly prohibited.
- 11.2. You cannot be publicly endorsed by any member of:
 - 11.2.1. The University
 - 11.2.2. GSA employees
 - 11.2.3. GSA volunteers (whilst they are performing their duties)
 - 11.2.4. The Board of Trustees
- 11.3. Candidates may endorse other candidates but are prohibited from sharing or pooling resources.
- 11.4. A member running for multiple positions in the same set of elections will be treated as separate candidates.

12. Expenditure

12.1. Definition

Candidate expenditure is defined as expenditure in pursuit of promoting a candidate.

12.2. Budget

- 12.2.1. Some roles have a maximum amount candidates can spend on their campaigns which will be published on the GSA website and can then be reimbursed by the GSA once a budget declaration form and receipts are received for expenditure.
- 12.2.2. Budget declaration forms and receipts must be submitted to the Deputy Returning Officer by the close of voting.
- 12.2.3. Candidates are not permitted to pool or share resources with other candidates.
- 12.2.4. Candidates may not receive sponsorship in any kind to support their campaign.

12.2.5. Breaching the campaign budget will result in disqualification.

12.3. Edible Goods

All costs of production and/or purchase of any edible goods must be deducted from the candidates budget. No candidate is permitted to give out free or discounted alcohol as a way of promoting their campaign.

13. Count and Announcements

13.1. The count shall be supervised by the Returning Officer or their nominee.

13.2. A count shall not commence any earlier than 24 hours after closing of voting.

14. Returning Officers

14.1. The Returning Officer shall be appointed in accordance with the Articles of Association for the period of any election.

14.2. The Returning Officer shall:

14.2.1. Be an external appointment.

14.2.2. Monitor the actions of the Deputy Returning Officer.

14.2.3. Oversee the fair conduct of the elections

14.2.4. Rule on the validity of any complaints

14.2.5. Issue guidance to candidates during the elections

14.2.6. Oversee the count and verify the election results

14.2.7. To submit a report to Council and the Board of Trustees after the conclusion of the elections.

14.3. The Deputy Returning Officer shall be the Representation and Democracy Coordinator for the period of the election to support the Returning Officer in their duties.

15. Neutrality

All GSA employees and volunteers must remain neutral throughout the election period whilst performing their duties.

16. Conduct and Complaints

- 16.1. All complaints regarding the conduct of elections must be made to a member of the returning officer team in writing with evidence provided in order for the Returning Officer Team to take action.
- 16.2. The Returning Officer Team shall respond to any properly submitted complaints within 24 hours upon receipt.
- 16.3. Complaints relating to any part of the campaign must be received by the 12pm the following day after the close of voting. Only complaints related to the count can be considered after this time.
- 16.4. The decisions of the Assistant Returning Officer can be appealed to the Returning Officer. The decision of the Returning Officer is final.
- 16.5. The Returning Officer Team may also take action without receipt of a complaint if they deem necessary.
- 16.6. In addition to these rules, candidates must also abide by the University of York and GSA policies and any other relevant procedures.

17. Disciplinary Action

If anyone breaches the GSA Zero Tolerance Policy and is found to be bullying, harassing or threatening another student or staff member, they will be subject to the GSAs Disciplinary procedures, and may be referred to the University for further action.