

# 10. Elections

## 10.1. Returning Officers

### 10.1.1. The Returning Officer shall:

- 10.1.1.1. Be a suitably qualified person external to the University of York, appointed by the Board of Trustees;
- 10.1.1.2. Be ultimately responsible for the election;
- 10.1.1.3. Monitor the actions of the Deputy Returning Officer;
- 10.1.1.4. Oversee the fair conduct of the elections in compliance with the articles and by-laws;
- 10.1.1.5. Rule on the validity of any complaints;
- 10.1.1.6. Issue guidance to candidates during the elections;
- 10.1.1.7. Oversee the count and verify the election results;
- 10.1.1.8. Submit a report to the Council and the Board of Trustees after the conclusion of the elections;
- 10.1.1.9. Publish a list of any election rules or interpretations for each election in advance of the election taking place having taken advice from the Deputy Returning Officer.

### 10.1.2. The Deputy Returning Officer shall:

- 10.1.2.1. Be appointed by the GSA President for each election and cannot be an ordinary member of the Association;
- 10.1.2.2. Support the Returning Officers in duties delegated to them;
- 10.1.2.3. Set out and publish an election timeline before nominations open.

### 10.1.3. Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer have the discretion to:

- 10.1.3.1. Introduce other election officials;
- 10.1.3.2. Advise and lead the elections area of the GSA;
- 10.1.3.3. Attend relevant training and meetings;

- 10.1.3.4. Run events and activities to increase candidate and voter turn-out and engagement;
- 10.1.3.5. Make decisions on the structure and process of elections;
- 10.1.3.6. Implement ways to inform students about and increase involvement in elections, including by producing marketing material or otherwise having their messages sent to members via the GSA's communication channels;
- 10.1.3.7. Suggest and implement strategies to support candidates during the election period;
- 10.1.3.8. Create plans to ensure that the elections represent the diverse postgraduate student population at the University of York.

## **10.2. Eligibility**

- 10.2.1. Candidates must be an ordinary member of York Graduate Students' Association.
- 10.2.2. Candidates must meet the eligibility requirements of specific roles in order to run for the position.
- 10.2.3. If a candidate fails to meet the requirements for the role, they will be withdrawn from the election.
- 10.2.4. All candidates must provide a manifesto by the published deadline. In case of a manifesto exceeding any defined limit, the manifesto will be redacted after that limit.
- 10.2.5. The following posts shall be elected by cross-campus ballot (all registered postgraduate students have a vote):
  - 10.2.5.1. Sabbatical Officers
  - 10.2.5.2. Student Trustees
  - 10.2.5.3. Scrutiny Officers

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

10.2.6. 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):

10.2.6.1. Course Representatives

10.2.6.2. Faculty Representatives

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

### **10.3. Timing**

10.3.1. Elections shall be held at a time which are intended to enable the largest possible number of members to vote.

### **10.4. Question Time**

10.4.1. The GSA shall organise a Question Time event for the election of Officers at which members will have the opportunity to hear candidates speak and ask them questions.

10.4.2. Question Time will be open to all candidates seeking election to these positions.

10.4.3. Candidates should inform the Deputy Returning Officer in writing if they are unable to attend the Question Time.

### **10.5. Nominations**

10.5.1. All nominations shall be submitted using an accessible process declared by the Returning Officer.

10.5.2. A receipt will be issued to confirm the submission of each completed nomination.

- 10.5.3. Candidates must attend a candidate briefing session or send a proxy before their nomination will be officially confirmed.
- 10.5.4. Members wishing to stand as a candidate in any election will be required to complete and supply to the Deputy Returning Officer all relevant nomination material in advance of the close of nominations.

## **10.6. Campaigning**

- 10.6.1. Campaigning is understood as any activity or action used to promote the candidate.
- 10.6.2. 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.
- 10.6.3. Campaign teams must be made up of full members of the York Graduate Students' Association only.
- 10.6.4. Candidates are responsible for the following conduct of their campaign team. 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.
- 10.6.5. Candidates are liable for their campaign and publicity material.
- 10.6.6. Candidates must not bring the Association into disrepute.
- 10.6.7. Candidates must not make use of official University or Association data, mailing lists or social media pages or profiles for campaigning purposes, unless explicitly permitted to all candidates.
- 10.6.8. No candidate may use a position of responsibility to actively endorse their campaign (e.g. course rep or sabbatical positions)

- 10.6.9. Candidates may not use any campaign material which is unavailable to other candidates and gives them an unfair advantage.
- 10.6.10. Candidates may only alter, move or remove their own campaign/publicity materials.
- 10.6.11. Candidates may criticise other candidates' campaigns but must not reference another candidate's personal traits of character or misrepresent another candidate's religious, political, or other views and actions.
- 10.6.12. No candidate is permitted to give out free or discounted alcohol as a way of promoting their campaign.

#### **10.7. Endorsements**

- 10.7.1. Third party endorsement is strictly prohibited.
- 10.7.2. Candidates cannot be endorsed by any member of the University, the Association staff, Trustees or volunteers (whilst they are performing their duties).
- 10.7.3. Candidates may endorse other candidates but are prohibited from sharing or pooling resources.
- 10.7.4. A member running for multiple positions in the same set of elections will be treated as separate candidates.

#### **10.8. Budget**

- 10.8.1. Some roles have a maximum amount candidates can spend on their campaigns and can then be reimbursed by the GSA once a budget declaration form and receipts are received for expenditure.
- 10.8.2. Budget declaration forms and receipts must be submitted to the Deputy Returning Officer by the close of voting.
- 10.8.3. Candidates may not receive sponsorship in any kind to support their campaign.

- 10.8.4. All costs of production and/or purchase of any edible goods must be deducted from the candidates budget.

### **10.9. Voting**

- 10.9.1. All voters must be allowed to cast their ballot freely.
- 10.9.2. Voting shall be by secret ballot using the single transferable vote (STV) system, as defined by the Electoral Reform Society and shall include re-open nominations (RON) as a candidate.
- 10.9.3. 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.
- 10.9.4. The voting period for any position shall run for at least 3 working days.
- 10.9.5. If the result of voting in an election or referendum is a tie, then the result will be decided in line with the electoral commission's rules by the drawing of lots. The method of selection will be decided and conducted by the Returning Officer or their nominee.

### **10.10. Complaints**

- 10.10.1. All complaints regarding the conduct of elections must be made to the Deputy Returning Officer in writing with evidence provided prior to the count, except where the complaint relates to the conduct of the count itself.
- 10.10.2. The Returning Officer Team shall respond to any properly submitted complaints within 24 hours upon receipt.
- 10.10.3. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution of the Deputy Returning Officer, or the Deputy Returning Officer is the subject of the complaint, the complainant may make the complaint in writing to the Returning Officer whose ruling shall be final.

- 10.10.5. The Returning Officer Team may also take action without receipt of a complaint if they deem necessary.

#### **10.11. Rule Breach & Disciplinary Action**

- 10.11.1. Candidates must abide by the University of York and Association rules and policies and any other relevant procedures.
- 10.11.2. Any candidate found in breach of the outlined rules will be automatically disqualified from the election, will be subject to the Association's disciplinary procedures, and may be referred to the University for further action.

#### **10.12. Count & Results**

- 10.12.1. The count should be conducted in accordance with rules outlined by the Electoral Reform Society for running elections by Single Transferable Vote.
- 10.12.2. A count shall commence as soon as practicable after the expiry of a 24 hour period from the close of voting, and only once all complaints and appeals about campaigners have been resolved.
- 10.12.3. Complaints about the count must be made in writing to the Returning Officer no later than one working day after the announcement of the result.
- 10.12.4. All election results shall be reported by the Deputy Returning Officer to the next meeting of Association Council and shall be published on the Association's website.