

Guidance for Society Committees Running Elections

We understand societies find themselves in a challenging situation during the Covid-19 crisis. We require Societies to elect their committees for the 2020/21 academic year and are providing the following options;

Option A: Current committee members continue in President, Secretary and Treasurer Role

Option B: Societies run their own elections online

Option C: Wolves SU runs elections on behalf of societies

This guidance is intended for societies choosing option B

What positions should we elect?

We only require societies to elect a President, Treasurer and Secretary. You may elect more however we would encourage not electing positions that may not be needed at this point. If you do elect more positions, you must let the SU know who these are.

What are the rules?

These elections must be run in line with the Students' Union Election Principles and all society members must be able to vote in the elections. We will require proof that elections were conducted fairly and reserve the right to declare election results null and void.

As the current society committee you MUST ensure that the elections are fair. We expect the following to be upheld;

- 1. All eligible members of the society must be invited to run for a committee position**
- 2. All members of the society must be invited to vote for the committee**
- 3. Each member gets only one vote for each position**
- 4. Non members of the society are strictly prohibited from voting in the election**
- 5. Candidates must observe the election principles**
- 6. Candidates must be eligible for a committee position next year (IE they plan on being a student at Wolverhampton next year)**

The election principles that relate to Society Elections are as follows;

- a. Only do things another student at the University of Wolverhampton would be able to do;
- b. Treat other students and staff with respect;
- c. Do not behave or engage in ways that would cause the election to be unfair;

Already run an election?

We understand that some proactive societies have run elections already. As long as they met the above rules, we will accept these results.

How should the society recruit candidates?

Societies should send out communications to all members, inviting them to put themselves forward. They could do this by responding to an email, or via a web form that you as a society create. Candidates should be invited to write manifestos (a short written explanation telling other members why they

should vote for them and what they hope to achieve in the role). Societies should give members a deadline by which to nominate themselves (we believe one week is appropriate).

What if only one person puts themselves forward?

This would be an uncontested election. If only one person puts themselves forward for a position then the committee can decide to automatically elect this person to the position, meaning that no election needs to happen. If you choose to do this, we would recommend that you give your members the opportunity to object to this, and if you receive any objections then you should run the candidate in an election against RON (giving voters an option of Re-Open Nominations).

Does voting have to be secret?

If possible, voting should be conducted in secret, but we understand that this may be very difficult. As such, we will accept voting not conducted in secret. This gives societies a few more options when deciding on an online system for voting.

What vote counting system should we use?

Whilst the Students' Union uses a preferential voting system, meaning that voters rank candidates in order of preference, we believe this is too complicated for societies to administer on their own. As such, we are allowing a simple majority vote to be used. This means that the candidate with the most votes should be elected. If you wish to use an alternative system, such as STV, then you are permitted to do so, as long as the election is still fair and the process explained to students.

What if there is a tie?

If 2 or more candidates receive the same amount of votes then you could choose to run the election again, with only these candidates running or you should randomly assign the winner. This is standard practise, but it must be entirely random. You can use a coin toss or a random number generator to decide a winner and you should record this process as the Students' Union reserves the right to investigate that this process was done fairly. You can also ask the Students' Union to conduct this process for you.

What are the ways I can run an online election?

This is not an extensive list, but it should give you a few options to choose from. Like with nominations, you should give your members a timeframe in which to vote. This could be a week, or you could decide to run your election during an online AGM, in which case, it would happen within the meeting.

1. Using a web form

Use a secure online web form such as Google Forms or Survey monkey. This is free survey software that allows users to ask people questions. If using a web form, you should send an email to all students with all of the candidates names and any manifestos and a link to complete the survey. You can create a multiple choice question for each position with the candidates as the options. For example

Question: Who would you like to be President?

Answers:

A – Beyonce

B – Ariana Grande

C – Lizzo

You will then be able to see who gets the most votes and elect the appropriate person. For example

A – Beyonce 17

B – Ariana Grande 2

C – Lizzo 18

In this instance, Lizzo would win as she has the simple majority.

This type of election is complicated to set up, but it makes vote counting very easy as you can instantly see who has the most votes. It may be more appropriate for larger societies to use a webform.

If running an election via a webform you **MUST**:

- Ensure students are only voting once. As such you should collect student numbers to check for duplications and also for any students who are not members of your society that may be trying to vote.
- Ensure that you do not reveal how someone has voted. This is a breach of the society code of conduct and you may face disciplinary action if found to be doing this
- Ensure that the answers are only accessible to the committee. If one of the committee members is also a candidate then they **MUST NOT** have access to the form
- Not collect any more data than student number and vote. Do not collect names and email addresses as this is personal data.
- Explain to students that the committee members administering the election will see how they have voted

2. Collect votes via email

You can simply ask members to respond with their votes to your email with candidate names and manifestos. You will then need to collate all of these responses and count them up. You could use a spreadsheet tally to do this. You should use a society email and not an account connected to an individual.

This is a simple way to set up an election but a difficult way to count an election. It may be more appropriate for smaller societies.

If running an election this way you must

- Ensure that you do not reveal how someone has voted. This is a breach of the society code of conduct and you may face disciplinary action if found to be doing this
- Ensure that the answers are only accessible to the committee. If one of the committee members is also a candidate then they **MUST NOT** have access to the email
- Explain to students that the committee members administering the election will see how they have voted

3. Vote in an online meeting

You could choose to run your AGM on zoom, houseparty or google meet. This would not be a secret ballot, so we do not recommend it, but you may feel it is most appropriate for your society. You could combine this online meeting with a form and only have the form open during the meeting. This would mean that you can reveal the results instantly.

If you decide to collect votes via an online meeting then ask participants to put their hand up or indicate on the online chat who they are voting for. You should ask the candidates to leave the meeting so that members are more inclined to vote how they want. Remember to count the votes of the candidates themselves.

You may wish to use an online meeting to allow candidates to promote themselves to voters such as running a candidate question time event.

If running an election this way you must

- Ensure that you do not reveal to candidates how someone has voted
- Explain that voting will not be anonymous. If a student requests an anonymous vote then you should endeavour to make this possible for those students.

Things to avoid

Picking the first to volunteer – Please allow sufficient time for any student who is interested to stand for a position. This is why we ask that you give students a deadline if they are nominating online.

Choosing a student – You may have a particular student in mind that you think would make a good committee member. If you have a student in mind then please actively encourage them to stand for committee in a fair and democratic way.

Committee members with election privileges showing preference for candidates – All of those involved in administering the election such as those with access to a web form or group email address must not show preference to any candidate.

Using any non democratic system to choose a committee – You may wish to run a candidate question time event online but you must not use selection methods such as conducting interviews or allow current committee to choose their successor.

How will the SU be checking elections are run fairly and properly

At any time, the SU reserves the right to check that elections are being run fairly. This is not to try and catch out committees running complicated elections, but to ensure that the democratic rights of your student members are protected.

We will be emailing all society members, telling them that we have advised committees to run elections and to get in touch if they have any concerns about how elections are being run.

Please get in touch with the Students' Union if you have questions about the elections.