



Election Rules and Regulations: Beds SU Spring 2026 Election

Approved Version 1.3 Updated 16 January 2026

1. Election principles

Beds SU has a legal responsibility to undertake free, fair and transparent elections, as set out in the Education Act 1994. Elections are run on the following principles:

- 1.1. Candidates must treat other candidates, students and members of the public with respect, in line with Beds SU's values and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 1.2. Candidates and their campaigns must be transparent and accountable to the Union.
- 1.3. Candidates and their campaigns must not do anything to gain an unfair advantage.
- 1.4. Candidates and their campaigns must not undermine the fair and democratic running of elections.
- 1.5. Voting takes place electronically. Any electronic device used for voting is treated as a ballot box.
- 1.6. Candidates are responsible for the actions of their campaign teams and supporters who are deemed to be acting on their behalf.
- 1.7. Candidates and their campaigns must comply with Union and University rules and regulations, and with the law and any applicable local, regional or national restrictions.

2. Election conduct

The following conduct applies during elections:

- 2.1. Campaigners must not undertake campaigning activity that other candidates could not reasonably also undertake.
- 2.2. Campaigners must take reasonable steps to ensure their supporters

comply with the campaign rules at all times. If a complaint is made, campaigners must be able to demonstrate the steps they have taken to ensure compliance.

2.3. Campaigners may only alter, move, or remove their own campaign materials, including online materials.

2.4. Campaigners may only use mailing lists where it is lawful to do so. In most cases this requires the explicit consent of all members on the list to use their details for the purpose of electioneering.

For the avoidance of doubt, this includes, but is not limited to: BREO communities created for academic purposes; social media groups that are not specifically related to elections; and chat groups (such as WhatsApp) that originated for any other purpose.

2.5. Campaigners must allow voters to cast their ballot freely.

2.5.1. While a voter is casting their vote, their vote must remain private. Campaigners must not communicate with the voter, stand near them, monitor their actions, or otherwise interfere with their vote.

2.5.2. During face-to-face campaigning, campaigners must not use electronic devices (personal or public). This includes, but is not limited to, mobile phones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers.

2.6. Candidates must not share campaigning material or budget with any other candidate.

2.7. Candidates are expected to campaign positively. They must take a constructive and civil approach towards other candidates.

2.8. Candidates must comply with these rules, alongside the broader regulations on elections set out in Beds SU's Bylaws.

3. Election spending and budget rules

3.1. Candidates and their campaigners must not spend or use personal funds during their campaign without explicit prior authorisation from the Deputy Returning Officer. All expenditure and allocations will be provided and managed by Beds SU and offered equally to all candidates.

3.2. Beds SU will provide a print allocation to all candidates. Candidates must not produce their own printed materials. All printing requests must be made through the process outlined in the Candidate Hub and will be managed

centrally by the Union.

- 3.3. Items that are freely and readily available to all campaigners may be used without prior approval. An indicative (non-exhaustive) list will be included in the Candidate Hub each year.
- 3.4. If a candidate wishes to use something as part of their campaign that requires any form of budget, expenditure or allocation, they must approach the Students' Union before proceeding. Any approval granted to one candidate will equally be offered to all candidates.
- 3.5. The Deputy Returning Officer may establish additional compliance requirements at the close of voting, such as declaration of expenses or campaigning materials. Such requirements will normally be published to candidates at least 10 working days in advance of the close of voting. Failure to meet any compliance requirements established by the Deputy Returning Officer may result in disqualification.
- 3.6. Candidates must comply with these budget rules at all times. Any breach, including but not limited to spending personal money, printing materials independently or using unapproved items may result in sanction/s or disqualification.

4. Rule breaches

- 4.1. Any breach of these rules will result in sanctions and/or disqualification.
- 4.2. The Returning Officer has final responsibility for interpreting these rules and the Union Bylaws. Interpretation will be made in the interests of the electorate (voters) above all others.
- 4.3. These rules apply in addition to general Union and University rules and regulations and the law. Any breach of these may also result in sanctions and/or disqualification and may jeopardise the candidate's student status.
- 4.4. A candidate may ask the Deputy Returning Officer for a pre-emptive ruling on their interpretation of these rules. Any ruling will be shared with all candidates within 24 hours of the decision being made.
- 4.5. It is each candidate's responsibility to keep up to date with rulings and updates.

BEDS SU BYELAWS

PART 11: Elections

11.1 Purpose

- 11.1.1 Beds SU elections will be conducted in accordance with the Education Act 1994, the University's Code of Practice on the Students' Union and these Bylaws, and the Chief Executive Officer is accountable for ensuring that election governance arrangements are lawful, transparent and compliant, with the Senior Management Team responsible for the day-to-day administration of elections.
- 11.1.2 This Byelaw is to be used for the Union's elections when electing senior students' union representatives that would be deemed to hold major office in the students' union, which will include roles dually elected to the University of Bedfordshire's Governing Body.
- 11.1.3 This Byelaw may be applied to the election of other students' union roles.

11.2 Election Arrangements

- 11.2.1 The Senior Management Team will define the detailed arrangements for each election, including the appointment of appropriate persons to act as Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer, and will the Student Affairs Committee, to ensure that election operations are accessible and reflect the student interest.
- 11.2.2 The Senior Management Team will determine and publish the election timetable, which must allow sufficient time and detail for all Members, including those with atypical study patterns or accessibility needs, to be aware of the election, submit nominations and participate fully and fairly.
- 11.2.3 A notice of elections shall normally include:
 - 11.2.3.1 *Date and time of nominations opening and closing;*
 - 11.2.3.2 *Procedure for nomination;*
 - 11.2.3.3 *Date and location of hustings/s, if any;*
 - 11.2.3.4 *Election Rules and Regulations;*

11.2.3.5 Date and time of the opening and closing of voting;

11.2.3.6 Date and time of the election results announcement;

11.2.3.7 Contact details for elections queries.

11.2.4 Elections for senior elected representative Officers of the students' union will be carried out via secret online ballots, with other elections mimicking this practice.

11.2.5 The Returning Officer will be nominated by the Senior Management Team, this will ordinarily be the National Union of Students. They shall work independently of the Union and provide an external decision when rulings are appealed.

11.2.6 The Senior Management Team will establish the roles required for operational oversight of the elections, such as a Deputy Returning Officer role.

11.2.7 A member of the Union's staff will usually be the appointed the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) and shall have oversight of the operational running of the elections. They will operate under delegated authority of the nominated Returning Officer, who interprets and enforces rules approved by the Senior Management Team, in advising and ruling on all elections-related matters.

11.2.7.1 The DRO shall appoint appropriate Union staff to manage the operational running of the elections and day-to-day support of candidates.

11.2.7.2 Further Assistant roles may be defined and established in a given elections exercise at the DRO's discretion.

11.3 Eligibility to stand as a candidate

11.3.1 The rationale for eligibility rules will be shared with the Trustee Board and the University for oversight and will be published to Members when election arrangements are announced.

11.3.2 A fixed snapshot of the membership data will be taken before the opening of nominations when determining eligibility criteria.

11.3.3 Eligibility to stand for election will be based on the snapshot and on any suitability or assessment criteria that apply to the role, which will be published in advance of nominations.

- 11.3.4 Eligibility rules may include reasonable requirements that ensure an elected student will normally be able to complete the duties of office throughout their term, as well as taking account of factors such as course length, expected completion dates and interruptions.
- 11.3.5 The Union may exclude very short-term or temporary student enrolments from eligibility to stand for roles requiring a full term of office where such eligibility would be inconsistent with fair elections, practical impediments such as visa compliance or the effective discharge of elected duties.
- 11.3.6 Members eligible to stand for election (as detailed in the Articles of Association and Part Two: Membership) must complete the nomination process as laid out in the notice of elections before the close of nominations. This nomination will normally include:
- 11.3.6.1 *Their full name (as on their University records);*
 - 11.3.6.2 *The name that they wish to have displayed upon the ballot paper;*
 - 11.3.6.3 *The required information for voters (set out by Beds SU annually).*
- 11.3.7 Any member who is eligible to stand for election may only stand for one position in any one category in any given election (e.g. one Sabbatical Officer position, one part-time Officer position).

11.4 Election Rules

- 11.4.1 Elections for senior representative roles of the Union must be fair and accessible to all members, and its procedures must be published and adhered to.
- 11.4.2 Each election will operate under a set of Election Rules and Regulations specific to that election, which must be approved by the Senior Leadership Team. The Election Rules and Regulations will derive their authority from these Bylaws and must be consistent with them. In the event of any conflict between the Election Rules and Regulations and these Bylaws, these Bylaws will take precedence.
- 11.4.3 The Returning Officer's decision is final.
- 11.4.4 The Elections Rules and Regulations for each election must be published to Members at or before the open of nominations, and will be published on the Beds SU website with a link adjacent to the notice of elections.

- 11.4.5 All candidates will receive a copy of the Union's Election Rules and Regulations and will sign to confirm that they have received them.
- 11.4.6 The Senior Management Team may amend the Election Rules and Regulations during an election where this is necessary to protect the fairness, integrity or accessibility of the election. Any amendment must be developed in liaison with the Student Affairs Committee, limited to members who do not hold a personal conflict in relation to the election.
- 11.4.7 Any amendment to the Election Rules and Regulations must be published online for Members and communicated directly to all candidates by email. The Senior Management Team must set a notice period for the amendment to take effect that is fair and reasonable and gives all candidates sufficient time to understand and comply with the updated rules.

11.5 Breaches of Rules

- 11.5.1 All suspected breaches of the election rules must be formally submitted in writing to the Deputy Returning Officer, using the process and forms outlined in the Elections Rules and Regulations, no later than 24 hours after the incident has occurred or the concern has been realised, unless otherwise specified in the election timetable.
 - 11.5.1.1 *The DRO may select to accept late submission at their discretion.*
 - 11.5.1.2 *The Deputy Returning Officer may open an investigation into any suspected election irregularity even where no formal complaint has yet been submitted, and any such matter will be logged as an Election Irregularity Report and investigated in the same way as other complaints.*
 - 11.5.1.3 *Complaints may include alleged breaches by candidates or their supporters and may also relate to procedural failings on the part of Beds SU where a candidate has evidence that the Union's processes have not been followed or applied correctly.*
- 11.5.2 For a complaint to be considered, clear evidence must be provided and attached which allows the Deputy Returning Officer to make a judgement on the balance of probabilities, including but not limited to photographs, videos, screenshots of webpages, copies of emails and neutral, honest witness statements from any person.

- 11.5.3 Witness testimony may be used as supporting evidence; however, the Deputy Returning Officer and/or Returning Officer may give it such weight as they consider reasonable based on its credibility, independence and clarity, and testimony that appears subjective, coordinated or otherwise unreliable may carry limited value in any decision.
- 11.5.4 The Deputy Returning Officer will log and acknowledge all admissible complaints, investigate and will issue a written decision and any associated penalty within a reasonable timeframe set out in the Elections Rules and Regulations, which will normally be within two working days unless the case is complex.
- 11.5.5 The DRO may appoint one or Investigating Officers to gather evidence and speak to relevant parties,
- 11.5.6 In complex cases requiring additional investigation, including where further evidence is needed or multiple complaints overlap, the Deputy Returning Officer may extend the usual timescales, and must notify the parties of the revised timeline; where appropriate, the Deputy Returning Officer may seek advice from or delegate investigatory functions to the Returning Officer, while retaining responsibility for issuing the initial decision.
- 11.5.7 The Deputy Returning Officer or a nominated elections official will be responsible for communicating with all parties involved in disputes, normally using the candidate's University email address, and will keep a clear written record of complaints received, investigations undertaken and decisions made.
- 11.5.8 General information on complaints received and resolved may be published to Members during the election at the DRO's discretion.
- 11.5.9 Where the Deputy Returning Officer determines that a breach has occurred, they may impose penalties that are fair and proportionate to the seriousness and materiality of the breach in the context of the election, which may include written warnings, restrictions on campaigning activity, reparative actions such as issuing corrections or clarifications, or disqualification of a candidate where necessary to protect the integrity of the election, and in determining materiality the Deputy Returning Officer will consider the likely impact of the breach relative to the number of votes cast and the stage of the election.
- 11.5.10 For issues of gross misconduct concerning candidates and/or their campaign team, the Students' Union reserves the right to use the Beds SU

'Code of Conduct' guidelines in addition to the Election Rules. The University of Bedfordshire's student behavioural policies shall remain applicable throughout and in some circumstances, actions may jeopardise student status within the institution.

- 11.5.11 The final deadline for receiving complaints will be one hour after the close of voting.
- 11.5.12 The calculation and announcement of the election results will not normally take place until all complaints and any subsequent appeals have been resolved by the Returning Officer team in accordance with this Part and the Elections Rules and Regulations.

11.6 Appeals Process

- 11.6.1 The stage of appeal lies with the Returning Officer.
- 11.6.2 A candidate may appeal a penalty or decision made against them or their campaign team by the Deputy Returning Officer by submitting an appeal to the Returning Officer within the timeframe set out in the Elections Rules and Regulations, which will normally be no later than 24 hours after the outcome of the complaint has been shared.
- 11.6.3 In the first instance, the Deputy Returning Officer will receive any appeal, prepare it for review by the Returning Officer and then submit to the Returning Officer without unnecessary delay.
 - 11.6.3.1 *In complex cases, such as those requiring additional investigation, timelines may be extended.*
- 11.6.4 The Returning Officer will review the Deputy Returning Officer's decision on the basis of the evidence available and any additional material they consider necessary, will apply the balance of probabilities as the standard of proof, and may uphold, reduce, increase or overturn the original penalty, taking into account the materiality of any breach in the context of the election.
- 11.6.5 Where a candidate submits an appeal against a penalty imposed by the Deputy Returning Officer, the penalty in question will be suspended until the outcome of the appeal is given; if the Returning Officer rejects the appeal and chooses to uphold or increase the penalty, and there is insufficient time to carry out the penalty before the close of voting or calculation of

results, the Returning Officer may exclude the candidate from the election in order to protect the integrity of the result.

- 11.6.6 The Deputy Returning Officer or a nominated elections official will inform the candidate in writing of the Returning Officer's ruling within 24 hours of the ruling being taken, or as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 11.6.7 The Returning Officer's ruling is final within Beds SU processes, and meetings of Beds SU, including the Trustee Board, cannot overturn the Returning Officer's ruling, provided that nothing in this clause prevents the University from reviewing the conduct of elections under its Code of Practice in order to discharge its statutory duties under the Education Act 1994.

11.7 Election Results

- 11.7.1 The counting of votes must take place as soon as is practicable after the close of balloting.
- 11.7.2 Counting of ballots may be conducted by digital systems, automated calculation or by hand, and must be overseen by the Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer or their nominated deputy.
- 11.7.3 Election results may only be concluded once all relevant complaints have been considered in line with this Part and the Elections Rules and Regulations.
- 11.7.4 Election results may be delayed in the event of the death of a candidate, another emergency situation or if delays are required to ensure the validity of the results. Candidates must be notified of any revised timelines as soon as is practicable.
- 11.7.5 Election results must be announced by authorised representatives of the Students' Union under the direction of the Deputy Returning Officer. The results must be published and communicated to all candidates within a reasonable timeframe that maintains confidence in the democratic process.