

Your SU Leadership

Elections

Rules and guidance



Elections rules

This document highlights the rules and standards of behaviour expected in General Union Elections as set out in Byelaw 4: Elections of the Union and the General Union Election Regulations.

Our approach

Your Students' Union (SU) is responsible for ensuring that our elections are run in a free and fair manner. To do this, the SU sets out rules to ensure that our elections meet this responsibility. When making rules, and any rulings on complaints, we aim to uphold the following values:

Democratic

Elections are the mechanism by which our members can choose their student leaders. Wherever possible it should be the members who decide and be the decision makers.

Ethical

Our rules ensure everyone has a fair and equitable chance of winning and not an equal chance of winning. Therefore, we will not make rules regarding actions campaigners take that disadvantage themselves. We also recognise that we are not in control of the 'social capital' candidates may have in the student community.

Helpful

We will be transparent in what we do and any sanctions to rule breaches will aim to proportionally redress the balance of an election where a rule breach occurs.

Inclusive

Opportunity of access is important and therefore rules are established to ensure an equitable opportunity of access to our elections.

Should you have any questions regarding these rules and principles, please contact a member of the elections team (elections.su@coventry.ac.uk).

Candidate conduct

Candidates should ensure they follow the rules and regulations set out by the Union. We encourage candidates to adopt the following principles whilst they are involved in elections.

Dignity and respect

Campaigners (candidates and their supporters) should treat other campaigners, students and members of the public with dignity and respect.

Do not take advantage

Campaigners (candidates and their supporters) should not do anything to gain an unfair advantage.

Focus on you

Campaigners (candidates and their supporters) should focus on their own campaign plan and follow it through. For their wellbeing, they should not concern themselves with others campaigns.

Supportive culture

A friendly and open culture is important, and a nice word can go a long way to support someone's mental health. Elections are a competition but this does not mean you cannot support each others wellbeing. Candidates can still endorse each other or be part of a group and we encourage a helpful and inclusive culture.

If you feel another candidate is struggling, please refer them to a member of the elections team (elections.su@coventry.ac.uk) so we can offer support.

Rule one

Candidates shall not spend over the amount provided by the SU. Candidates shall be required to submit their campaign budget up to two hours after the close of voting.

Guidance

Candidates are provided with a set campaign budget (if applicable), that allows them to reclaim these costs from the SU for their election activity. Candidates must not exceed the amount specified and will not be able to reclaim over the amount specified. Candidates can use items that are freely and readily available to all campaigners without itemising them. However, if candidates want to claim money back for these items, it will form part of their budget. Candidates will have a deadline to submit their campaign expenses to the SU elections team.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates will need to demonstrate that any items not budgeted for were freely and readily available.

Rule two

Candidates can campaign as a group of candidates (slate). This includes merging or sharing of campaign budget, campaign materials and campaign team members. Any slate is limited to four (4) candidates.

Guidance

A 'slate' is defined as a group of candidates that run in multi-seat or multi-position elections on a common platform. Candidates are allowed to create slates of up to four (4) members in addition to having campaign teams with other students to support their election campaign activity. Another candidate cannot be part of your campaign team if you are already in a slate of four (4).

Members are allowed to role share selected positions in elections. When they stand as a role share, they are treated as a single candidate. This means that they would only have one (1) candidate profile and appear on the ballot as a single option. Therefore, candidates standing for a position as a role share are not considered a slate.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidate(s) will need to demonstrate that they were not actively engaging in a slate of more than four (4). If a complaint is supported, then any sanctions may also be applied to the candidate(s) involved in the slate.

Rule three

Candidates can be endorsed by any student member or group of the SU. Candidates cannot be endorsed or seek endorsement from non-SU members. This includes members of university staff, SU staff or external companies.

Guidance

Your SU Elections are specifically for our members (Coventry University and CU Group students) to elect their student leaders. Anyone external to this such as companies or students from another university are not permitted to participate in the election. This means that they are not allowed to support candidates by being on their campaign team, providing discounts not available to other candidates or other activities that can be seen to endorse or support one candidate over another. However, candidates may be permitted limited support of external individuals as part of reasonable adjustments. For example, if they need support putting up materials.

Candidates are allowed to get endorsements and support from other students and student groups such as sports clubs or societies. These groups can choose to endorse candidates if they follow the student group endorsement guidance. This asks that these groups vote (either all members or committee) on which candidate to endorse. Groups that have not endorsed a specific candidate should allow all candidates to promote to their members without favouritism towards a single candidate.

We encourage candidates to act in a supportive manner, giving other candidates dignity and respect despite being in competition with each other. We allow candidates to support one another in the form of endorsements. An endorsement is defined as a 'public statement of your support for something or someone'. In practice this will allow you to share/repost other candidates materials, for example on social media, to support your fellow candidates. Candidate endorsements are at the sole discretion of candidates, and you should not actively push or seek endorsements from your fellow candidates. Candidates still cannot participate in activities that are deemed negative campaigning.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates will need to demonstrate, where it relates to external support, that they did not seek or encourage any such endorsement or support. Should a candidate get external support they did not disclose with the SU they needed as part of reasonable adjustments, this will firstly be considered as a request for reasonable adjustments. If adjustments are not approved, it will continue as a complaint. If the complaint concerns the endorsement or support from a student group, the candidate must demonstrate that the decision by that group to endorse followed student group endorsement guidance.

Rule four

Candidates must take reasonable steps to ensure that the actions of their supporters comply with the election regulations, rules, and guidance.

Guidance

Candidate(s) are the individuals running in the election and are accountable as a candidate in the election. Should a candidate create a campaign team of students to support their campaigning activity, it is their responsibility to ensure that they follow the election rules.

Campaign team members are not accountable themselves (unless it concerns rule five) as they are not a candidate in the election. Therefore, any rule breaches by campaign team members are applied to the candidates and the person responsible and accountable.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidate(s) will need to demonstrate that they took reasonable steps to ensure their supporters were aware of and asked to abide by these election rules.

Rule five

Candidates must adhere to all SU and Coventry University Group policies. This shall include following any instructions and guidance regarding where candidates are permitted to campaign.

Guidance

Campaigners (Candidates and their supporters) are still Coventry University or CU Group students and members of Your SU. Therefore, they must still adhere to all policies and regulations set the University and SU.

Should a complaint be submitted?

This would be referred to the University and/or SU disciplinary processes and could result in suspension from the SU and/or University. This may also result in disqualification from the elections.

Rule six

Candidates must not undertake activities that are deemed negative campaigning, such as smear campaigns, that focus on another candidate's character.

Guidance

Campaigners should treat each other with dignity and respect and should not seek to degrade, bully, or harass other campaigners. However, campaigners can engage in healthy and friendly debate over election topics such as policies or pledges.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates will be questioned on their actions and if a complaint is upheld, like with any other complaint, will have sanctions on their campaigning or be disqualified from the election.

Rule seven

Candidates must allow the electorate (voters) to cast their vote secretly, freely, and fairly. Candidates must not attempt to influence/coerce voters whilst they are in the process of voting.

Guidance

This means that they should not coerce their decision whilst they are in the process of casting their ballot. It also means not providing voters with a reward (financial or other) for voting for a specific candidate.

For the avoidance of doubt all electronic devices, such as mobiles, should be considered voting devices and therefore candidates should avoid approaching students when they are using these devices in case they are in the process of voting.

Should a student not understand how to vote, candidates should refer them to the elections team. This avoids candidates being accused of breaching this rule if their intention was to help but not influence.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates must be able to demonstrate that they did not coerce voters into voting for them regardless of whether the voter was voting at the time.

Rule eight

Candidates must only alter, move, or remove their own campaign materials whilst campaigning and voting is open except when the candidate is part of a slate. In which case you can alter, move, and remove your slate's materials.

Guidance

Candidates should only focus on their own campaigns and therefore should not seek to interfere with the campaigning activity of other candidates. This means that they should not move, alter or remove other candidate's campaign materials unless:

1. materials position covers up important signage such as fire exits
2. materials are causing, or have the potential to cause, a hazard
3. voting has finished, and candidates are helping each other take down their campaign materials

If it does not meet one of the above circumstances, candidates should not touch other candidates' materials unless you are in a slate with them.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates must demonstrate that one of the above conditions were applicable or provide a sufficient reason for touching other candidates' materials.

Rule nine

Candidates shall not undertake campaigning activity which others could not reasonably do.

Guidance

Campaigners should not carry out any activity that other campaigners would not have the opportunity to do, such as asking a student group to post a message in a private group and asking them not to do this for other candidates. However, it is not your responsibility to encourage other candidates to do the same activity. Similarly, campaigners that have access, or permissions, to resources through any voluntary or employed work should not use their access to advance their campaign if other candidates would not have the same access. For example, access to multiple AULA Common Rooms through a role such as a representative.

Should a complaint be submitted?

Candidates will need to demonstrate that the activity was something that other candidates could reasonably have done.