

ANNUAL COMMITTEE ELECTIONS HANDBOOK

// 2024

Keele  SU

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The purpose of this handbook is to support clubs and societies with their annual committee election. It will serve as a guide for existing committees about what to expect, what is needed from you and how you can ensure the longevity of your student group. We'll be sharing tips and guidance for committees throughout the election period.

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WHY DO WE HAVE ELECTIONS?

One of the core values of the Students' Union is democracy, and this extends to all our student groups in order to provide fairness and equal opportunity to all. Every year we host a big election for clubs and societies with the purpose of electing a brand-new committee in time for the new academic year. This election is vital to the survival of student groups, as they ensure there is someone to keep a club or society going after the existing committee has moved on.

Elections can at times be confusing due to the sheer number that are held throughout the year. This is why we hold all the club and society elections at once.

According to our by-laws, each club or society is required to have a minimum of a President/Captain, Treasurer and one other position of your choice in order to be affiliated to the SU. This is to provide a basic, skeleton structure to a committee that can be built upon and expanded as a group develops.

Any questions should be sent to su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

KEY DATES 2024 // October By-Elections

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Nominations Open | Tuesday, 22 nd October, 9am (GMT) |
| Nominations Close | Monday, 28 th October, 9am (GMT) |
| Voting Opens | Tuesday, 29 th October, 9am (GMT) |
| Voting Closes | Thursday, 31 st October, 9am (GMT) |
| Results | ASAP – By 5pm Monday 4 th November |

WHO CAN RUN IN THE ELECTION?

Just like the wider Students' Union, clubs and societies are student led. This means that only current students are eligible to run for a position or vote in the election. Furthermore, a student must be a member of a club or society in order to take part.

As long as this criteria is met, absolutely anyone can run for a position. It doesn't matter what year they're in, what they study, how long they have been part of the club/society or if they have been on a committee before – everyone is eligible to run and vote.

There are very few circumstances where further requirements must be met for a position, and these tend to be restricted to liberation roles (for example, a group might want a Women's Officer position to be open

only to women students). If you think this is the case for your student group, please email su.activities@keele.ac.uk to find out more.

The only other restriction is that a student cannot hold more than one position on the executive committee (e.g. they can't be both President and Treasurer).

You can submit nominations, manifestos and vote through the Keele SU website. Each available position will have a separate ballot which will list candidates in a randomised order. We use Single Transferable Vote here at Keele SU, which is where voters are able to preference candidates.

To see a really simple explanation of STV [watch this video](#)





WHAT DO COMMITTEES NEED TO DO IN THE RUN UP TO THE ELECTION?

The beauty of holding elections online is that committees don't have much work to do beforehand! All clubs and societies are entered into the election automatically and they are administered by the Activities Team. All we need from you is a list of the positions that will make up your committee next year, if you are making any changes. Other than that, you can leave the elections to us! However, here are a few ideas that you might want to think about to encourage your members to run. After all, the survival of your group might very well depend on this election!

Hold an All-Member Meeting

It might be that you're thinking of changing the committee structure by adding a position, changing a role or making the committee smaller. It's a good idea to get the opinion of your members before doing this, but at the very least you should discuss this as a committee before filling in the form to tell Activities. Be sensible about how many committee positions you have – ensure you are being realistic about how many people might and that the committee represents the size of the club/society.

Ensure the whole committee is familiar with the election process

Whilst it is tempting to delegate the election to one particular committee member, it's important that everyone is involved and knows the process. Attending briefings held by Activities, keeping an eye on your emails and making good use of the committee resources section of the website are all ways that you can do this!

Start advertising!

Your members will need plenty of notice of the election so that they can decide if they want to run. You don't necessarily have to do anything fancy straight away but announcing the dates of the election is a good start!



ADVERTISING THE ELECTION

The election period can be really exciting, as it's a chance to develop your club/society by welcoming new people onto the committee. However, recruiting a new committee can be a bit tricky, and this year is further hindered by the pandemic. It's more important than ever to get creative with your advertisements, so here are a few ideas!

Use the tools that are available

All student groups have a page on the Keele SU website which you can use to post updates and information. You can also email all your members through your admin tools! Groups also have a Microsoft Teams account which you can use to contact your members.

Most groups also have various social media accounts at their disposal. Whether you use Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, make sure you're utilising these to reach as many students as possible!

Do they know what to do?

Ensuring your members know when/how the election is really important! Make sure you have the dates somewhere accessible well in advance – perhaps on your webpage. It's vital your members know how to nominate themselves too. Of course, Keele SU will do our very best to ensure the process is as simple as possible, but it won't hurt to reinforce the message to your members! In the past, societies have done 'how-to'

videos showing students how to use the website.

Publish your role descriptions!

Unless you're creating a new position, every club and society should have a description for each committee role in your constitution. It's a good idea to publish these somewhere so that students know that positions are available and what will be involved.

Host Q&As and drop-in sessions

Hosting sessions can encourage someone to get involved! In the past, societies have done video interviews, Instagram stories, Facebook live videos to get people involved and share their own experiences of what it's like being on a committee.



ELECTION ETIQUETTE, RULES & REGULATIONS

To make the election as fair an accessible as possible, there are a few rules that committees need to follow.

- Anyone can run or vote in your election, as long as they are a student and a member of your club/society
- A person's race, background, nationality or identity do not matter, as all societies are open to all students (e.g. someone from Lancashire is welcome to join the Yorkshire society!)
- It doesn't matter what year they are, what they study, how long they have been part of the club/society or if they have been on committee before
- Creating specifications that might exclude or discourage certain groups is not allowed, even if these are just 'ideal' qualities (for example, you can't say that you must have been on the committee before to be president, or that you have to be a medical student to join a medical society committee)
- Committees must not endorse certain candidates, show favouritism or try to influence voters

After nominations close, we will be unable to accept any further nominations. Because of this, please ensure your members nominate themselves with plenty of time to spare in case they experience any technical difficulties.

If anyone is unable to vote or nominate themselves in the election, it usually means they have not bought their membership. If this is not the case, please email su.itsupport@keele.ac.uk.

Complaints about fairness are taken very seriously and could result in the election being deemed invalid. If you have any questions, please email su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Using the online election system

We do elections online to make them accessible, anonymous and inclusive of all students. It doesn't matter where a student is, they can run/vote from anywhere in the world whenever is convenient for them. Students can use any form of technology to get involved (laptop/phone/tablet etc) but if anyone is having any technical issues, please encourage them to get in touch with su.activities@keele.ac.uk before the close of the election.

Executive Committee Structure

Previously, committees were required to have a minimum of a President/Captain, Secretary and Treasurer in order to continue into the new academic year. Going forward, groups will only need a President, a Treasurer and a *third position of your choice*. Hopefully this will give groups more freedom to structure your committee as you wish, whilst ensuring there are still enough people on committee to run your club or society.

One Chance Election

Due to staffing constraints, we will only be able to run one set of committee elections before the end the academic year. This means that any groups failing to elect three committee members will not be able to continue into the next academic year and must reapply as a new society in August should they wish to continue.

We will allow elected committee members to "act up" into the core positions of President and Treasurer should these be unfilled, but only if there are at least 3 committee members elected. There will be no society and club by-elections until the new academic year. We will contact clubs and societies who do not have sufficient candidate numbers to continue at least one week before nominations close, so that committees can push core roles.

Struggling to recruit?

How you can ensure your Executive Committee Is filled ready for the new academic year.

Stay Active

Students are less likely to run in an election if they believe your club/society to be inactive. You might have members that only joined this year and or are new to the University. As a result, it might be an idea to make sure they know what kinds of things your club or society usually gets up to!

Consider making the committee smaller

It might be that you have fewer members this year and therefore fewer potential candidates for the committee. If you need to chop down the committee ahead of the election to ensure the most vital positions are filled, that's okay! You can always re-add the other positions through a by-election at a later date once you are confident your group has a solid foundation.

Give plenty of notice of the election

Life as a student can be hectic, so giving plenty of notice of the election is vital so that people can plan around deadlines, family and work commitments.

Keep an eye on your emails

If the existing committee doesn't stay engaged and up to date with the Activities team, then this is likely to affect how successful your election is. Whilst elections might not feel like a massive priority with everything going on, they are essential to the survival of your group so it's really important that you try to pay attention and get involved. If anyone is struggling with this and is worried about the election, please drop us an email at su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

Prioritise the Executive Committee

Whilst all positions play an important role on a committee, the three core positions are a minimum requirement for remaining affiliated to the Students' Union. If you choose to keep all your other roles, it might be worth emphasising the importance of these positions to your members, especially at a time when it might be more difficult to recruit a new committee. There's no point having a Publicity Officer and Welfare Officer if you don't have a President or Treasurer!

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE ELECTION?

Results will be released as soon as possible after voting closes, although we are unable to give you a specific date due to the volume of election results that we will have to process.

Handover/Re-affiliation

When results are released, a handover period of almost three months will commence where the old committee will work with the new committee to 'show them the ropes'. During this time, you should work together to 're-affiliate' with the Students' Union – a mandatory process which will help you prepare for the new academic year and give the SU all the information we need to support you going forward. Re-affiliation will include but is not limited to documents such as an updated constitution and an appropriate risk assessment. More information on this will be given closer to the time.

Committee Conference/Training

All committee members must complete the online training on the KLE. New committee members will be granted access to this when they take over in August. This training is compulsory for all students on committees, so make sure you have put time aside to do it.

Every year the SU holds a training day for new committees to learn the basics of their role. We haven't announced what this will look like yet, so keep your eyes peeled.

Goodbye to the old committee, hello to the new one!

Even though a new committee has been elected, the old committee is still in charge of running their club or society until July 31st. From August 1st, the new committee will be put in position and will receive access to their admin tools.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T FILL ALL YOUR COMMITTEE POSITIONS


It's Due to staffing constraints, we will only be able to run one set of committee elections before the end the academic year. This means that any groups failing to elect three committee members will not be able to continue into the next academic year and must reapply as a new society in August should they wish to continue.

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Other Committee Positions

These roles are less of a priority and can be left until the new academic year if you wish, as this will allow new students to get involved. You are welcome to submit a by-election form before then, although priority will be given to societies with missing executive committee positions.

Please note that we will likely not be running any by-elections from August until after Welcome Week as engagement with elections during the summer is often very low. It's a good idea to wait until a new cohort of students have joined Keele before recruiting for any remaining positions.



Can a club or society opt out of the bulk election?

No. Student groups are democratic, and it's important a new committee is elected with plenty of time for a handover. We have a lot of groups to manage whilst making sure they are all run fairly, which is why elections are done all at once. It also helps avoid a lot of confusion! If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

Instead of doing the election online, can we do it through an AGM/UGM instead?

According to the SU's bye-laws, all society elections have to be done online, facilitated by Activities. We do elections online to make them accessible, anonymous and inclusive of all students. Voting at an AGM/UGM (whether online or in-person) can prevent students from taking part for various reasons, including simply not being able to make the meeting. Furthermore, there's no guarantee that an election during a meeting would be fair, and it also wouldn't comply with our Union-wide Single Transferable Vote system.

Students haven't purchased membership through the website, but we still want them to be able to vote. What can we do?

Only members of societies and clubs can vote in their respective elections, so you would need to encourage all students

who would like to vote to buy their memberships on the Keele SU website.

Is this election for both clubs and societies?

Yes! All student groups take part in this election, whether you're from a sports club or a society.

Can we choose the date for the bulk election?

Unfortunately not. We have over 1200 positions to fill, and it would be impossible for us to do this if each group chose their own dates. You can choose your own dates for by-elections though, and there's more information about this on the Keele SU website.

Is there training available for committees on how to manage elections?

Yes! Throughout the elections period, we will be hosting training, drop-in sessions and more for both existing committee members and candidates who are thinking of running. Keep a look out for dates cropping up, we will let you know via email.

How do we know if we have any empty positions left during nominations?

We will send regular elections updates round to inform committees that there are still positions with no candidates up for nomination. This will hopefully help you fill empty roles and help you meet the minimum requirements for re-affiliation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Club and Society Elections are administered by Membership Services (Societies).

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Membership Services (Student Experience) e:

su.activities@keele.ac.uk

T: 01782 733 826

W: KeeleSU.com



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