

COMMITTEE ELECTION CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

// 2021-2022

Keele SU

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The purpose of this handbook is to support students who are running in a committee election within a club or society. There's no doubt that committee elections will be a little different this year, but we're confident that we can still deliver exciting, engaging, and fair elections. The elections will be entirely online, with all associated events such as training, results and society/club meetings hosted online. We'll be sharing tips and guidance for both new candidates and existing committees throughout the election period.

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WHAT IS A COMMITTEE?

Committees are an elected group of students who run our clubs and societies. They organise events, give out information and help recruit new members. All clubs and society must have a minimum of a President, Secretary and a Treasurer - also known as the 'executive committee', although many groups have other roles too.

Executive Committee Positions

These are the three core positions necessary for a student group to run successfully. We have given you a general guide to what the positions involve, but please note that some groups may have added to the responsibilities or delegated them to other roles.

President - The President is the face of the society (some groups have Club Captains or a Chair) and is the principal spokesperson and representative of the society. They chair committee meetings and have a responsibility to attend all SU meetings in the interests of the society. They are responsible for performing the duties of any unelected officers in their absence.

Secretary - The Secretary functions as a vice-president. They are responsible for taking minutes at all society meetings unless delegated to someone else. They maintain the membership and mailing lists, and are responsible for any internal and external communications.

Treasurer - The Treasurer is ultimately responsible for the society finances, and ensures that funds are spent sensibly and within the society's means. They are responsible for approving society expenditures, keeping financial records and providing a financial report at committee meetings and/or UGMs. They are also in charge of writing and submitting any grant applications the society makes.

Other Committee Positions

These roles totally depend on the needs of a club or society, how many members there are and what the workload is like. Here are some common examples!

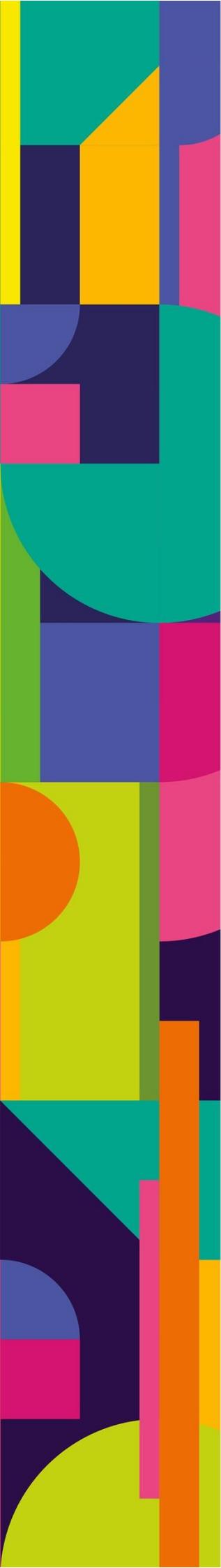
Social Secretary - Responsible for organising society events, booking rooms, transport, catering etc for socials and meetings

Publicity Officer - Oversees marketing and social media for the society

Welfare Officer - There as a friendly face in case any members have any issues or need someone to talk to. Their job is to signpost students to welfare services when needed, and make sure society activity is inclusive and accessible.

1st/2nd/3rd Year Rep - Common in academic societies. These provide representation for different year groups within societies.

Kit Officer - Many clubs and physically active societies have a kit officer who might be responsible for designing, ordering, and distributing kit amongst members/players



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. This year the election will also be run alongside the part-time officer elections so that we have one big period of elections instead of lots of little ones.

According to our by-laws, each club or society is required to have a minimum of a President/Captain, Secretary & Treasurer 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 //

Nominations Open	Wednesday 7th April, 9am (GMT)
Nominations Close	Wednesday 28th April, 9am (GMT)
Manifesto Deadline	Wednesday 28th April, 9am (GMT)
Voting Opens	Monday 3rd May, 9am (GMT)
Voting Closes	Friday 7th May, 5pm (GMT)
Results	W/C 10th May
Re-affiliation Deadline	Saturday 31 st July
New Committee Takes Over	Sunday 1 st August

Just before and during the nominations period, the SU will be running online sessions on why you should nominate yourself for a committee position. We will be covering all the benefits of being on a committee, as well as giving hints and tips for running in the election, including manifesto advice and a Q&A. The dates for these sessions are as follows:

Thursday 1st April - 5pm (GMT)
Wednesday 7th April - 5pm (GMT)
Tuesday 13th April - 5pm (GMT)
Thursday 22nd April - 5pm (GMT)

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.

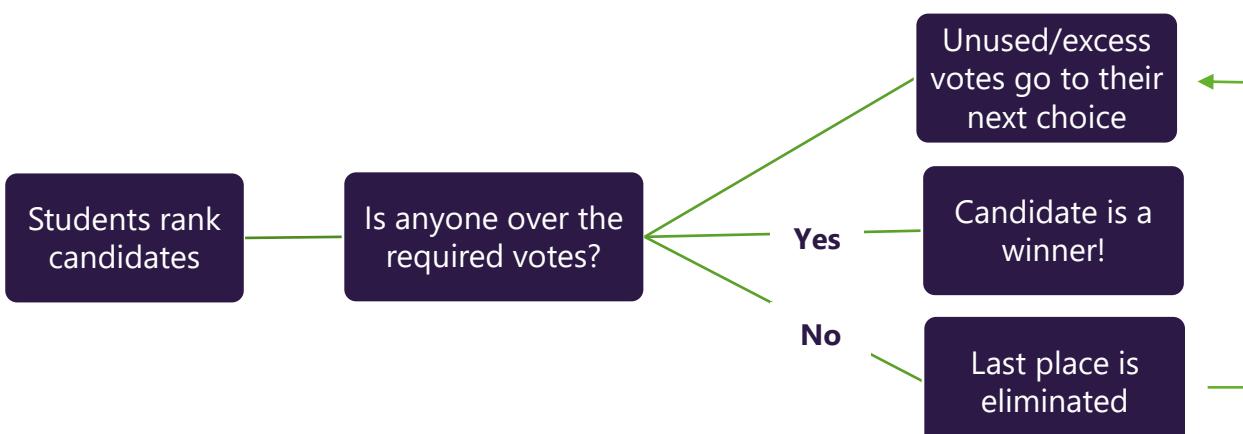
As long as this criteria is met, absolutely anyone can run for a position. It doesn't matter what year they're in, what they study, how long they have been part of the club/society or if they have been on a committee before – everyone is eligible to run and vote.

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.)

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.





MANIFESTO GUIDANCE

Your manifesto is your opportunity to convince students to give you their vote. Many students voting in the Club & Society Committee elections won't know you personally, so you need to explain who you are, why you are standing and what you hope to achieve.

Manifestos aren't a compulsory part of committee elections, but they help you stand out from other candidates. Think about who you would vote for - a candidate who has included a full manifesto, or a candidate who has simply nominated themselves?

Format

Manifestos should be written and submitted after nominating yourself for a role, but before the nominations deadline. You have a limit of 1000 words but we encourage you to stick to no more than 4-500 tops. There will be lots of roles available, so think about how many manifestos voters will have to read! You're welcome to format this in any way you like, but below we've included some guidance on key details you might want to include.

About you - Write a bit about yourself, the role you're running for and your time at Keele so that students know who you are!

Why you're running - Tell students why they should vote for you, your qualities that you believe would make you a good committee member and some of the things related to the role that matter to you. Maybe you've been an active member for a while, or perhaps you have been on a committee for another group?

Up to 5 Key Priorities - You can talk in detail here about the specific areas of work you wish to focus on. This might be increasing membership numbers,

Top tips for candidates!

Which role should you run for?

Think about why you want the role and what you hope to get out of it. What are you good at, and what skills do you want to develop?

What are your interests?

Do you have any suitable experience that you should mention? Think about your involvement with the club/society in the past and your other experiences working with the SU. What, in your opinion, should be the objectives for the group? Think about what makes the club/society unique and how you can ensure or enhance this!

Don't be afraid to criticise the club or society!

Progress is never made without constructive criticism! Think about the group's strengths and weaknesses and what you would develop as a committee member. Manifestos should strive for improvements for students. Be careful though, an overly negative manifesto may discourage some students from voting for you. Also consider that if elected, you may be working with people who have been on committee before.

Think about what will stand out

Perhaps you have a catchphrase, a pledge or a quote that you could use? Voters will have a lot of manifestos to read and many will only read a small section, so make sure you can summarise your manifesto well!

Know your audience

Remember who will be reading your manifesto and pitch it accordingly. Students may turn off at overly political language but will also recognise when a lack of care has been taken. Make your manifesto straightforward and relevant!

Do your research

Don't just assume you know what members want and what issues they face. Speak to other members and the existing committee to find out what they want and how the club/society works. If your manifesto is filled with relevant and current issues, you're going to gain more votes.

Pictures & Hyperlinks

Feel free to use these to enhance your manifesto. If you're using images, make sure you provide alt-text.

CAMPAIGNING

There isn't usually a lot of campaigning with club and society elections, but that doesn't mean there aren't things you can do to help win votes!

Stay Active

Other members are less likely to vote for you if you rarely engage with the club or society or have never taken part in any of their events.

Social Media

Utilise social media as much as you can, as it's probably where you'll have the most influence - especially this year! Use public forums such as your club/society Facebook group or group chat. Don't get drawn into arguments on social media (and don't feed the trolls!!!).

Emails

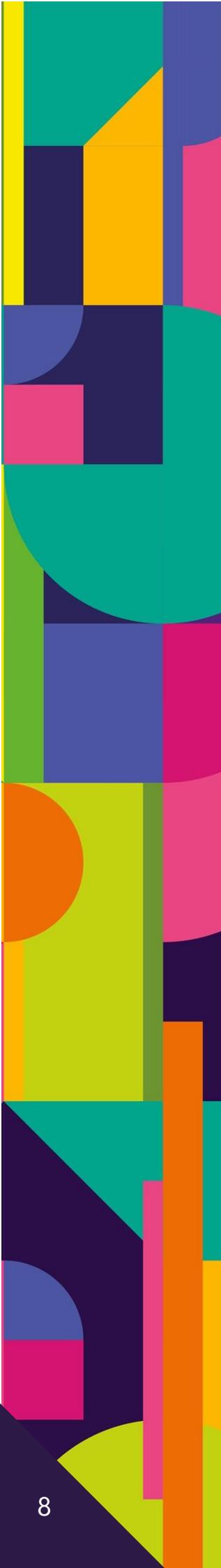
If you plan on sending out emails then remember that you cannot use any special relationships or privileges. For example, if you're already on committee then you should not use your email privileges as other candidates may not have access to this. Instead, you could ask a member of the existing committee who isn't running to collect manifestos off ALL candidates and email them out for members for you.

Club/Society AGMs or UGMs

Some groups will hold a Q&A or a 'hustings' in the run up to the election, allowing candidates to speak to other members and talk about their manifestos. Why not ask the existing committee when/if they will hold one?

Encourage other members to vote!

Not everyone knows that they can vote in club and society elections, or even how to. Encouraging other students to vote is so important as an election cannot count if no votes have been cast. Perhaps ask the existing committee to share the dates somewhere accessible, or perhaps you could post them in the group chat?



ELECTION ETIQUETTE, RULES & REGULATIONS

To make the election as fair and accessible as possible, there are a few rules that should be followed.

- Anyone can run or vote in the election, as long as they are a student and a member of the relevant 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 you are, what you study, how long you have been part of the club/society or if you have been on committee before, you can still run!
- Creating specifications that might exclude or discourage certain groups is not allowed, even if these are just 'ideal' qualities (for example, existing committeees 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
- Candidates must respect other students running for the same role; you should focus on why you would be good for the role, not why others would be bad

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 or candidates being disqualified. If you have any questions, please email su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

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 get in touch with su.activities@keele.ac.uk before the close of the election.

AU Membership

Normally, students would have to be a member of the AU as well as a club in order to vote in their committee elections. Due to Covid disrupting activities so much this academic year, we have refunded all AU memberships to all students who purchased it, however we have ensured that you have retained these memberships. AU membership will not be a requirement to vote in club committee or AU committee elections this year.

Club/Society Membership

We realise that many students haven't bought membership this year because of Covid, and we don't want the financial aspect of buying memberships to be a barrier in the upcoming elections. We want to empower our committees to find a solution to this that will suit your group best whilst also allowing your members to vote. Please see the FAQ section for more information.

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, and a Re-affiliation Handbook will be created similar to this one to talk you through the process.

Committee Conference/Training

Every year the SU holds a training day for new committees to learn the basics of their role. Last year, committee conference had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, and we have yet to decide what it will look like this year. However, rest assured that you will get plenty of notice!

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.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I want to run for a committee position but don't know which to go for. How do I know which is right for me?

Speak to the existing committee to get an idea of what each role involves and what the workload looks like. If you would prefer to speak to a member of staff, drop us an email at su.activities@keele.ac.uk.

I didn't run in the annual committee elections, have I missed the opportunity to run a club or society?

Absolutely not! Groups hold by-elections all the time to fill empty positions and even add new ones. Speak to your committee if you want to get more involved. You never know, it might be that you end up setting up your own society!

I haven't bought membership this year because of Covid, but I still want to vote and/or run in the elections.

What do I do?

Many committees have set up a free membership this year to eliminate this financial barrier. Drop them a message to see what they advise, or email the Athletic Union or Activities to have yourself added to the membership list.

I nominated myself for a position but I've changed my mind. What do I do?

You can withdraw yourself from the election at any point through the website. If you're struggling or want to withdraw after results have been announced, email Activities.

Can I run for more than one position?

Yes! We recommend thinking carefully about this before you do, as every committee position is a big responsibility and you don't want to overload yourself. You can't hold two executive positions, but you're welcome to run for two or more other positions.

I'm struggling to vote/nominate myself in the election. What should I do?

If you're struggling to nominate yourself, it's really important you get in touch before nominations close as we will be unable to let you run afterwards. If you've bought your membership and you're still having trouble, email su.itsupport@keele.ac.uk.



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