



Election Rules

1. Introduction

UPSU is a democratic organisation with elected representatives at all levels of its decision making; these reps are elected from the student body, by students at key points throughout the academic year.

UPSU promotes the nominations and voting processes along with showcasing the elections generally, it remains impartial and does not promote individual candidates. UPSU supports candidates by offering training on key campaigning skills, offering advice and guidance on campaign material and campaigns ideas, and communicates the rules.

These rules apply to all UPSU run elections and all candidates, anyone acting on behalf of candidates must also abide by them. Candidates are expected to attend all relevant training and events and to promote themselves and the UPSU elections generally.

Whilst we have tried to cover most aspects of campaign and elections process, this is not an exhaustive list and it remains the responsibility of candidates to ensure that they clarify any queries prior to carrying out any elections activity.

For further information about any UPSU run election, please contact elections@upsu.com

2. Wider Context

It is important to remember that during the election campaign candidates continue to be bound by sets of rules that, whilst not strictly election rules, still have a bearing on candidate conduct.

2.1 All candidates must abide by the following rules and policies;

2.1.1 Union Bye-laws and Policies: All Union governing documents and policies must be adhered to. Candidates should be aware that breaking Union rules may result in disciplinary action as well as jeopardising their candidacy.

2.1.2 University Rules: All candidates and anyone campaigning must adhere to the University [Student Code of Conduct](#) and all other University rules and policies.

Breaking University rules can result in a University disciplinary in addition to any sanction applied from the election rules.

2.1.3 The Law: For instance, laws protecting the defacement of property and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Breaking the Law can result in a civil action or criminal prosecution.

Any of these outcomes may put a candidacy in jeopardy and may result in a combination of University, Students' Union or Police investigation

3. Nominations

3.1 All nominations will need to be made under the name used to register with the University so UPSU can verify student status; candidates will need to notify UPSU as soon as possible if they wish to use an alternative name. Using a different name is permitted in the case of an old name or deadname, UPSU just need to ensure that the intention is not to mislead voters as to a person's identity.

3.2 Candidates must submit the requested information within the specified timeframe to run in the election, failure to do so will result in a candidate's nomination being withdrawn. UPSU will give formatting requirements, assist in the development of ideas and will have final authorisation prior to publication of official materials on the UPSU website.

3.3 All full members of UPSU are eligible to stand for a position in the elections providing they are currently enrolled on a University of Plymouth course, are based in the UK (those candidate running for full-time roles will need to ensure they can be present on the main Plymouth campus on the commencement of the term of office), and they are not disqualified on grounds outlined in rules 3.4 and 3.5. In the case of Faculty President roles, candidates must belong to the faculty they would represent.

3.4 Students who are currently suspended or interrupted from their studies are unable to stand for an elected position with UPSU.

3.5 UPSU will work in collaboration with the University to ensure that students are eligible, both at the time of nomination, post voting and up to the point of signing a contract of employment and starting role as a Sabbatical Officer. Should any Officer elect have any disciplinary proceedings brought against them and upheld, or have outstanding debt payable to the University, they may forfeit their right to take office.

3.5 Students who have been found guilty of an offence under UPSU's disciplinary procedures, either as a member of staff or as a student, will need to submit their nomination to a panel comprising of the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO), relevant staff member and the Lead Sabbatical Officer. Candidates should email elections@upsu.com

as soon as possible, within the nomination period, if any student needs to submit their nomination in this way.

The panel will decide if the nomination can go forward based upon the severity of the issue and the disciplinary decision made. If the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) has been directly involved within the disciplinary process, UPSU's Chief Executive will replace the DRO as a member of the panel.

4. Candidate and Campaigner Conduct

- 4.1. UPSU expect all candidates and their campaigners to adhere to the following election and campaigning principles:
 - 4.1.1. Fair and open
 - 4.1.2. Democratic
 - 4.1.3. Accessible
- 4.2. UPSU encourage candidates to treat each other with respect and do not permit negative campaigning against other candidates.
- 4.3. If candidates and campaigners choose to comment on, or discuss another candidates campaign, they must question the point objectively and not make any personal derogatory remarks.
- 4.4. Campaigning and campaign materials must not be; discriminatory, offensive, defamatory or of a harassing nature
- 4.5. All candidates or students campaigning on behalf of others must not bring the University of Plymouth or UPSU into disrepute.
- 4.6. Candidates and campaigners must not mislead voters as to the feasibility of ideas, either their own or of others.
- 4.7. Misleading or untruthful information will not be permitted.
- 4.8. Any inappropriate behaviour will be treated seriously and could result in a University and/or Union disciplinary, as well as sanction in relation to the elections rules.
- 4.9. Student staff working for the SU or University are not allowed to campaign whilst they are on duty, either for themselves or another candidate. Student staff may fully participate in the elections when they are off duty.
- 4.10. Full time members of UPSU staff cannot campaign at any time.

- 4.11. Sabbatical Officers that are re-running can campaign at any time but are not able to work for UPSU or undertake any Union/University business. Leave must be taken for the campaigning period. Sabbatical Officers that are not re-running may support candidates whilst not working and must take leave to do so.
- 4.12. Part-time elected/appointed representatives cannot use their position to endorse or promote a specific candidate/s, they may however promote the elections generally or a specific role where appropriate. For example, a Course Rep may promote the fact that voting is open and encourage their cohort to vote, or a School Rep may promote the Faculty President election to their network of students.
- 4.13. Only registered students of University of Plymouth that are full members of UPSU can campaign.
- 4.14. Candidates must ensure that anyone campaigning on their behalf complies with the Election rules, this includes all activity by supporters online and in person.
- 4.15. Candidates and their campaigners must not promote, share, alter, move or remove any other candidates' materials without prior, express permission. Nor may they take any materials associated with any other candidate out of context to use in their campaigning.
- 4.16. No candidate may use any personal information, contact information or social media contacts they have access to as part of a paid, elected or voluntary role, or through activities they participate in for campaign purposes.
- 4.17. Use of University email is not permitted for campaigning purposes, either by candidates themselves or on their behalf. However, the SU or University may use email to promote the wider election.
- 4.18. Candidates cannot use UPSU resources without prior permission; this includes but is not limited to; laptops, cameras, printers, office space or any promotional materials or photographs that belong to UPSU.
- 4.19. Candidates are not allowed to use any SU or University logo or straplines in their campaign.
- 4.20. Candidates may post to any social media apps such as Facebook or Twitter. They may not post from any social media accounts that they have admin access to, unless it is their own account associated with their campaign. If a student led committee or group choose to endorse a candidate, they may express that support on their social media.

- 4.21. Student groups such as Clubs and Societies may, with the majority agreement of the committee, endorse candidates. If a candidate is part of the Committee, the decision should be made without the presence or influence of the candidate in question. Committee permission should be given for using the group logo, the committee posting candidate endorsement from any social media accounts or using group activities as a campaigning opportunity. See Student Group Endorsement Rules for more information.
- 4.22. Candidates and their campaigners must not bully, intimidate or otherwise coerce a member into voting for a particular candidate or preference.
- 4.23. All voters must be allowed to cast their ballot freely and without influence. Candidates and their campaigners should not;
 - 4.23.1. Watch over a student whilst they are voting. If a candidate or campaigner can see how a voter is casting their ballot they are in breach of the rules.
 - 4.23.2. Communicate with a voter in anyway once they are in the process of voting, (either verbally or by pointing out roles/candidates).
 - 4.23.3. Offer to reward a voter should they vote a certain way.

Providing the costs of any resources used in campaigning are accounted for, candidates may use non-alcoholic items to attract voters to talk to them (sweets, hot drinks and biscuits have all been used before). This is an incentive for voters to engage with candidates and cannot be used as a reward for voting a specific way.
 - 4.23.4. It is not permitted for Candidates or campaigners to encourage voters to use a digital device belonging to a candidate or their campaigns team. Voters can be directed to open access computers and official voting activity led by the SU if the voter is not using their own device.
- 4.24. Candidates and campaigners are required to pay due attention to health and safety and care for university and SU property whilst campaigning on campus. This includes things like; providing a risk assessment for campaigning activities/events, providing a list of ingredients/allergens for any food given out, being mindful of causing an obstruction/covering important safety notices and not damaging property.

5. Campaigning

- 5.1. The aim of a candidate's campaign should be to engage with students to encourage them to vote for the candidate in question, based upon their campaign information.
- 5.2. All campaigning activity should adhere to all election rules, including expenses guidance and be within the election principles of being, fair and open, democratic and accessible.
- 5.3. Campaigning activity (i.e. communicating with voters and trying to get votes) can only take place during the voting period. This includes;

- 5.3.1. all physical campaigning activities such as wearing campaign clothing
- 5.3.2. use of banners
- 5.3.3. holding events/activities, either in person or online
- 5.3.4. attending club/society events to promote your candidacy
- 5.3.5. participating in a podcast, interview, meeting or other opportunity to promote yourself

5.4. Candidates may undertake the following activities before campaigning opens to enable them to effectively prepare for their campaign;

- 5.4.1. Prepare digital campaigning materials – designing materials and building a profile (candidates can set up a campaign page using an image and page name to start getting followers)
- 5.4.2. Contact a Club/Society committee to ask for endorsement (candidates may liaise with the committee but not the wider student group prior to voting opening and should not engage in activity that could be deemed campaigning)
- 5.4.3. Research - candidates can ask others for feedback about their ideas
- 5.4.4. Gather a campaign team - people who help a candidate campaign, although this is not necessary
- 5.4.5. Plan campaign activities – including setting up campaign meetings and events (these cannot be promoted until voting opens)
- 5.4.6. Candidates can share that they are running in advance of the campaigning period but a cannot ask people for votes or use wording of a similar nature

Physical Campaigning can only take place during the campaigning/voting period and includes; t-shirts and campaigns clothing, flyers, badges, banners, installations, events, stalls. Essentially things that you can touch.

Digital (non-physical) campaigning includes: Social media, websites, videos.

5.5. Campaigning is permitted in the following places:

- 5.5.1. The SU - The main entrance, the Lounge, the Big Room (also known as the Main Bar) and the Little Room
- 5.5.2. In-person campaigning is only permitted within the main campus boundary and within the official university buildings outside of the main campus.
- 5.5.3. Official University buildings (excluding halls of residence and dedicated office space) includes Cookworthy, John Bull Building, the Marine Centre, Partner Colleges and satellite campus locations.

5.6. All activities and events, other than just speaking to students, must have prior permission and be risk assessed as appropriate.

5.7. Stickers are not allowed

- 5.8. Campaigning may not take place at the following places:
- 5.8.1. The SU - the Hive, any SU office spaces or toilets
 - 5.8.2. The library or any open access or quiet study spaces
 - 5.8.3. Halls of residence
 - 5.8.4. Outside of the main campus boundary or official university buildings.
- 5.9. If a candidate wishes to promote their campaign in a lecture or tutorial, or other academic space, either online or in person, they must request permission of the lead academic for that session. If the academic agrees, they must allow other candidates to do the same, if requested
- 5.10. All campaigning materials must be tidied up once voting has closed

6. Online Campaigning

- 6.1. Candidates and campaigners must adhere to the same rules, principles and behaviours online as they would at a physical event. This includes adhering to;
- 6.1.1. Union Bye-laws and policies such as the Members Code of Conduct
 - 6.1.2. University Rules and policies such as the Student Code of Conduct
 - 6.1.3. The Law: legislation around online behaviour such as the Malicious Communications Act 1988
- 6.2. UPSU has a zero tolerance approach to conduct that could legitimately be perceived by its recipients as:
- 6.2.1. Cyber Bullying/Stalking
 - 6.2.2. Trolling / Online Impersonation
 - 6.2.3. Excluding
 - 6.2.4. Sexual harassment
 - 6.2.5. Discriminatory comments and behaviour
 - 6.2.6. Abuse and unwanted attention
 - 6.2.7. Threatening or violent behaviour or language
- As a students' union we need to abide by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.
- 6.3. Any inappropriate behaviour, either in-person or online, will be treated seriously and could have repercussions not only for someone's candidacy in the election but could also potentially result in a University or UPSU disciplinary investigation. Remember, candidates are also responsible for the actions of their supporters when campaigning on their behalf.
- 6.4. Live streaming will be considered publishing and therefore all the same campaigning rules apply during a live stream.

6.5. It is not permitted to post from any accounts that are associated with a business, that are currently monetised or have in the past been monetised through advertising income or other payments in kind, or that have attracted large numbers of followers by giveaways or competitions, even if they are candidates own accounts or those run by students of the University of Plymouth.

Candidates should consider where they are posting and who is sharing their campaign materials, remember only University of Plymouth students can campaign.

Candidates should consider copyright and ownership of any images and artwork that may be used during a campaign.

Candidates should consider their digital footprint when creating their campaign materials. If personal social media accounts are used, candidates should bear in mind what friends, family and future employers will see. With this in mind, it is strongly recommended that candidates create separate campaigning accounts.

7. Campaign expenditure

7.1. Full-time Candidates may spend a maximum **£70** on their campaign. Full-time Candidates may be reimbursed up to **£40** on production of relevant receipts.

7.2. Part-time Candidates may spend a maximum **£20** on their campaign. Part-time Candidates may be reimbursed up to **£10** on production of relevant receipts.

7.3. The maximum allowance must not be exceeded

7.4. Items that candidates use in their campaign must be allocated a realistic cost, even if they are items that are already owned. Even if candidates do not intend to claim any money back

7.5. Reasonable exclusions

When it comes to certain resources candidates may use in their campaign, it can be assumed all candidates have equal and fair access to them. For example, it is reasonable to assume that all candidates own a mobile phone in order to use social media – it is not expected that they will need to account for the cost of a phone or laptop.

Another example is if a candidate wanted to bake cakes. It would be expected that they would account for the cost of ingredients, but they would not need to factor in the cost of an oven, it can be reasonably assumed that all candidates would have access to an oven.

If a candidate printed some flyers and forgot to write their name on them, they would need to account for the cost of the flyers but it could be reasonably assumed that all candidates had access to a pen, the pen would not need to be accounted for.

7.6. Replicable freebies, discount and pre-owned items

Actions must be replicable by anyone else in the election. For example, anyone can go to a local shop and ask for empty cardboard boxes to make a fancy-dress costume as part of their campaign. If a candidate already owned a fancy-dress costume that cost £25, they would need to account for that £25 in their campaign expenditure. If a candidate went to the fancy-dress shop to buy a costume and because they knew the owner, they said the candidate could have it for free – that would not be allowed because that would not be offered to all other candidates.

7.7. What is reasonable and replicable is determined by the Deputy Returning Officer and Returning Officer, not the individual candidate. Please check if you are unsure of anything.

7.8. UPSU must have adequate receipts to refund candidates. A receipt must be from the business in question and detail the amount paid, what was purchased, its cost and the date it was purchased.

8. What to do if you have a query

Contact the Elections Team at elections@upsu.com ASAP who will advise how to proceed with your concern.

8.1. Formal complaints may not be raised anonymously, although candidates may informally discuss issues at any time with the Elections Team who may then seek the advice of the Deputy Returning Officer, as appropriate.

8.2. It is each candidate's responsibility to raise any issues before the close of voting, all issues will need to be resolved prior to the count of votes.

8.3. Once the result has been counted and announced, no new issues will be heard unless they are in relation to the count of the vote.

8.4. The range of sanctions for infringement of the rules may include, but is not limited to; a formal warning, deduction of votes, removal from the ballot paper for a specified period of time, and ultimately withdrawal from the election.