**ELECTION RULES AND REGULATIONS**

**Rules**

Any questions or queries you have about an area election should in the first instance be directed to the DRO, Rulings on the interpretation of the rules shall be made by the RO, Peter Robinson NUS

Any queries regarding the rules should be made to the DRO (mdavies@marjon.ac.uk) and ***before*** engaging in any action that may be in breach of the rules.

Principle Rules

* Do not do anything that another candidate cannot do
* Treat all other election candidates, students and staff with respect

Behavioural Rules

* All candidates must act in the interests of a fair election
* All candidates will be held liable for the actions of anyone acting on their behalf
* No candidate shall seek to gain advantage over another candidate by spending more than the allowed limit because they have greater funds or resources at their personal disposal.  (Expenditure is *only* allowed in SU Officer Elections and referenda.  *No* expenditure is allowed in other elections.)

Complaints Process

* All students, staff and candidates are able to complain about the conduct of candidates.
* All complaints must be fact and evidence based so that a measured investigation can take place.
* All complaints must be in writing and submitted to the DRO no later than two hours prior to the voting deadline.
* Any complaint outside the conduct of the Election should still go through normal university channels.

Breach of Rules

* Any breach of the rules may incur a sanction. Sanctions may include total disqualification and the application of a disqualification margin. The chosen sanction is influenced by the original breach, the timing of the complaint and estimated advantage gained by the rule breach.
* In the case of total disqualification, the RO will be asked to rule on the seriousness and consequences of the breach before a candidate is disqualified.  This decision can be appealed, in the event of appeals the first point of contact is the DRO.
* In the event of a breach, the RO may decide upon an appropriate sanction which is intended to reverse unfair advantage gained by the breach. Possible sanctions might include: to deduct the estimated number of votes ‘influenced’ by the action, ban the candidate from any further campaigning activities or a public investigation and apology by candidates. In a severe case of breach the election will be suspended.

Candidates

* Any student registered at Plymouth Marjon University, who has not opted out, may stand and may vote, subject to the limitations below.
* No candidates for any elections may run on a slate i.e. each candidate must stand as an individual and not as part of a team.
* Unopposed sabbatical candidates must be available for hustings and stand against re-open nominations.

Unopposed non-sabbaticals, or remaining candidates as a result of all others withdrawing, may automatically take office on Election Day.

Guidelines for Candidate Statements (Manifestos)

* Each candidate should provide a statement (manifesto) setting out their main objectives for the year. The manifesto is a document which says who the candidate is, why they are standing for election and what they intend to do, should they get elected.
* Manifestos for all elections must not be more than 500 words long. (This is a limit not a target).
* Manifestos must abide by the rules and must not defame or libel any other candidate or individual.
* Candidates may include past/present Union posts.
* SU Officers may not propose or second or otherwise support any candidate(s).
* Nomination forms and manifestos must be submitted together
* A deadline for the submission of the nomination and the manifesto will be set for each election.  Nominations and/or manifestos received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Campaigning

* A date from which candidates may campaign will be set.  Any candidate campaigning prior to the publicised beginning of campaigning may be disqualified.
* No individual club or society or activity group may actively support the election of any candidate(s)
* Candidates who are involved in Union media should inform the DRO/RO to avoid any conflict of interest.
* There must be no 'negative campaigning', such as candidates or their supporters making unsupported attacks on other candidates' manifestos or making attacks of a personal nature against other candidates.  Any challenge which is not deemed to be of a personal nature is allowed.  Candidates and their supporters should treat other candidates and their supporters with dignity and respect.  The final judgement on whether a candidate has contravened this lies with the Returning Officer.
* Hustings shall be held at times and dates to be determined by the DRO and agreed by the RO. Any candidate absent from hustings shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the election. The RO or a nominee shall undertake the adjudication of hustings.

Computers and the web

* Candidate websites are permitted in SU Officer elections.
* marjonsu.com and University mailing lists cannot be used to further an individual's campaign.
* Candidates may not use email mailing lists or group emails.
* Candidates in SU Officer Elections may only use email mailing lists or group emailing lists to communicate with their immediate campaigns team.
* Use of Facebook and other social media is allowed but must comply with the rules.
* There must be no negative comments about other candidates or any other individuals where campaigning is permitted.  Candidates are allowed to comment on opponents' manifesto points but are not permitted to make personal attacks, defamatory remarks or comments regarding their potential capability.
* Candidates should report any abuse of the Rules to the DRO in the first instance.
* Any abuse of these Rules may lead to disqualification.

Candidates and Campaigners may not:

* Force, coerce or in any way intimidate students to vote, particularly when they are near or during the process of voting.
* Campaign in the same room that MSU has an assisted voting station nor can they provide students with the means to vote, e.g. by giving them a tablet or laptop.
* Campaign at any point within the University Library.
* Campaign at any point in any computer room. This includes work spaces in departments and room specifically designated for computer use, such as in the library - campaign within two metres of the computers provided by MSU for the specific purpose of voting
* Vote on behalf of another student, any such incident will be viewed as a breach of these rules.
* Reference another candidate’s personal traits of character.
* Misrepresent another candidate’s views.
* Intimidate any participant in the election, candidate, campaigner, student, staff or other.
* Deliberately sabotage any campaign. Deface any materials, publicity, online media, social networking sites etc. of another candidate.
* Make any attempt to influence the impartiality of the returning officer or paid staff.
* Do permanent damage to any Union or University area.

Expenses

* Election campaigns cost money to run, so we have a limit in place to ensure that the cost is not a barrier. Candidates are expected to keep accurate information about their expenditure, and must submit this (with receipts) to the DRO, before voting is completed.
* Candidates are allowed a strict allowance which must not be exceeded.  The amount of this allowance will be £60 of which £30 will be refunded by MSU after the election.  Receipts must be produced for all materials used, whether paid for or free.
* You can use any item that anyone could reasonably get for free. This would usually include cardboard, wood, paint, adhesives, chalk, pens and pencils.
* If you have any questions, ask the DRO before you purchase (and use) something for your campaign. Costs incurred by your campaigners are covered by this limit too.
* No candidate may receive financial or other material assistance from any external body e.g. political organisations, or sponsor.

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| FOR EXAMPLE You can make banners from cardboard boxes and paint and it won’t be taken out of your budget. But if your mum owns Cadbury’s you can’t give out free chocolates because she gave them to you – even though they were technically free to you. You would be charged for each.  |

Training

Tailored training and/or briefings are offered to all successful candidates to prepare them for the role they have been elected to.

Campus Campaigning

In 2021 campaigning will be by social media only

Facebook and other social media

* Candidates can only use The official MSU Twitter Account @Marjon.SU
* A campaign team is permitted to use social media groups for internal communication (groups must be closed/private and should be limited to the core campaign team - 15 maximum).  The DRO must be added to these groups. Candidates can set up a social media page
* Ensure that any other pages (e.g. any activity group such as sports clubs or societies) do not like the page - this may be deemed as that activity group supporting that candidate
* Candidates are not permitted to post on the MSU Facebook page or the Fresher’s and year groups, in accordance with Data Protection laws
* No activity group should give preferential treatment to specific candidate(s) e.g. if a candidate was to post in a group and another candidate also wishes to post in that group, the group administrators must not favour one candidate over another
* Any individual may post anything they like provided they are doing so as an individual and not as an officer or representative of any activity group.
* MSU will set up a SU Officer Election Event in which candidates in that election are permitted to post.
* If you are an administrator of a page and you post on that page, the post is displayed as being written from that page and not from an individual.  Remove yourself as an administrator to correct this (not applicable for candidates' pages, only if you are an administrator of an activity group etc.).
* Candidates should not spam.

Responsibilities of the Returning Officer &

Deputy Returning Officer and Election committee

* The Returning Officer (RO) who shall not be a full member of the Union shall be appointed annually by the SU Executive.
* The RO, who must remain totally impartial, shall be responsible for good conduct throughout the election and have sole interpretation of the election regulations. They shall not engage with any discourses with any candidate save that of clarifying election rules.
* The Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) shall be responsible for the administration and the election processes.
* The RO, in partnership with the DRO, shall ensure that the election of all Union posts takes place before the end of March each year.
	+ The dates of elections for Union Officers, a copy of election timetable and a copy of the election regulations shall be posted, by the DRO, on the Union notice boards at least 21 University working days before the elections.
	+ Nomination forms will be available from the DRO or their nominee and shall be available from the MSU Office or services reception 10 University working days before the election. The nomination form shall contain a copy of the description of the role of each position in the election.
	+ The RO may be assisted in the count by a number of individuals appointed by her/him.
	+ The DRO shall inform candidates of the time and the venue of the count. Candidates may have their representatives attend as observers only.
	+ The DRO shall produce a list of candidates, together with the proposer and seconder; it shall be displayed on the Union notice boards within 48 hours of the close of nominations.
	+ The RO, sanctioned by the Executive will draw up election rules.
	+ The DRO must publicise the location and arrangements of the hustings and assisted voting stations, together with a list of candidates manifestos
	+ The DRO must ensure that provisions have been made, as far as possible, to enable all full members to vote.
	+ Any challenge or complaint concerning the administration and election process will be heard and determined by the RO within 48 hours of such a complaint being lodged by a full member of the Union, the candidate or their nominee. Complaints of this nature must be received before the count.
	+ In determining a resolution to the complaint, the RO after hearing all the appropriate evidence may/not uphold the complaint; or may halt elections, sanction or disqualify candidates.
	+ In the event of posts falling vacant then a by-election shall be arranged by the DRO. Nominations shall open no later than three working days after confirmation of the vacancy arising or, in the event that the election would run into vacation time within three days of the start of term. All other elections regulations apply.

Further Regulations and Rules

* + Members of the Union can stand for election upon completion of a nomination form signed by the candidate and at least one proposer and one seconder, together with 18 supporters of the nomination. Nomination forms must reach the DRO or a person appointed by him/her not later than at the appointed deadline before the election.
	+ Candidates may produce a manifesto or poster, which must be handed in with the completed nomination form.
	+ Suitable identification of full membership shall be provided by the voter.
	+ Reopen nominations RON shall be a candidate in all Union elections.
	+ Voting shall be by secret ballot and shall be conducted according to the rules of the operation of the alternative transferable voting system as set by the Electoral Reform Society. *(*[*www.electoral-reform.org.uk/alternative-vote*](http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/alternative-vote)*).*
	+ Results of the election should normally be posted immediately and become official within 48 hours providing no complaint has been lodged with the RO.
	+ The count will take place immediately after the voting closes in a private space. Once the count has begun no one is allowed to enter or leave the room.
	+ The voting list must be counted before votes are counted to establish the expected number of ballots.
	+ In the event of technical failure the RO might decide to revert to a manual ballot or postpone the voting deadline until the fault is rectified.

Manual Method. The votes are counted by attributing ballot papers against the name of the candidate that has a 1 preference, or such a mark that satisfies the