



www.abersu.co.uk/elections
#ABERELECTIONS

STUDENTS' UNION

ELECTION GUIDANCE

BE PART
OF SOMETHING

ELECTIONS



We appreciate that teaching and professional services staff are very busy, especially in the current circumstances, and often the thought of having to be aware of how union elections are run may sound unachievable.

However, this short guide tackles some of the most common concerns and questions raised by staff as well as providing an overview of our elections and associated processes.

CONTENTS

WHY DOES THE STUDENTS' UNION HAVE SO MANY ELECTIONS?	4
WHEN DO ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE?	4
WHO CAN RUN IN AN ELECTION?	5
ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR RULES I NEED TO BE AWARE OF AS A STAFF MEMBER?	5
CAN I ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO STAND IN THE ELECTION?	5
CAN I HELP A STUDENT CAMPAIGN IN THE ELECTION?	6
CAN I ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO VOTE?	6
CAN I SUPPORT CERTAIN CANDIDATES?	6
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FULL-TIME OFFICER AND VOLUNTEER OFFICER?	6
HOW DO STUDENTS VOTE IN THE ELECTION?	7
WHERE CAN CANDIDATES CAMPAIGN?	7
WHAT SUPPORT DO CANDIDATES RECEIVE FROM THE STUDENTS' UNION?	7
WHEN DO SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES TAKE UP THEIR POSTS?	7

WHY DOES THE STUDENTS' UNION HAVE SO MANY ELECTIONS?

Undeniably Student's Unions have more elections than almost any other organisation. However they provide a vital mechanism for students to make decisions about who represents them.

As a charitable organisation elections provide an opportunity to promote our current work to the wider student body, while enabling them to shape its future work. It is also a legal necessity under the 1994 Education Act that certain roles are elected by cross campus ballot.

That all being said for many the act of voting in a union election remains a unique experience and for some, one which holds a level of scepticism. However it's important for students to recognise whether they choose to get involved or not, our elections elect officers that are paid each year to represent the needs and opinions of Aberystwyth University students.

These individuals sit on key committees, meet with staff across the institution, and are often asked about the thoughts and views of the student body. This alone is a very crucial reason for students to vote.

WHEN DO ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE?

Dates vary each year but typically, standing in our main elections closes in late-February each year, with voting taking place in mid-March.

In cases where positions are unfilled we also hold by-elections in late April/May and October/November which also tend to co-inside with Academic Rep and NUS Conference elections held during these periods.

All dates for upcoming elections can be found on our website.

WHO CAN RUN IN AN ELECTION?

All registered students can stand in our elections including International Students. The only situation that gets a bit more complicated is for Postgraduate Research Students who are in a 'writing-up' or resubmission period and hold the status of 'candidates'.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR RULES I NEED TO BE AWARE OF AS A STAFF MEMBER?

While there are a number of rules which govern the election ultimately these underpin two core principles which are expected of candidates...

Firstly that they do only what other candidates have equal opportunity to do;

Secondly that they treat all students, candidates and staff members with respect.

We always recommend considering these principles when considering how to deal with an election based query. A more detailed breakdown of the rules for each election **can be found on our website.**

CAN I ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO STAND IN THE ELECTION?

Absolutely. The encouragement of someone else saying you'd make a great candidate can be the confidence boost someone needs to stand. To support this, we provide a Suggest a Student mechanism for students and staff alike to suggest students (anonymously if they wish) to stand for a role. We often find this system gives students the confidence boost they need to give elections a go!



CAN I HELP A STUDENT CAMPAIGN IN THE ELECTION?

Both University and Students' Union staff are not allowed to take part in any campaigning activity including help with writing manifestos. Any Student Staff may do this, but this has to be in their own time and not whilst they are on paid duties or through opportunities that are only available to them because of their role.

CAN I ENCOURAGE A STUDENT TO VOTE?

Absolutely. But you must only encourage them to vote in general. No University or Students' Union staff are allowed to encourage students to vote for particular candidates. If this happens it may cause the relevant candidate(s) to be disqualified.

CAN I SUPPORT CERTAIN CANDIDATES?

No. Aberystwyth University and Aberystwyth Students' Union must remain impartial. While we want all staff to promote the elections to students, this should be done in such a way that you promote candidates equally or give them the same opportunity.

For example if you allow a candidate to email a contact list of students or do an online lecture shout out you must allow other candidates to be able to do the same if they wished.

It's important to consider beforehand the best way of facilitating opportunities, for example circulating digest of submissions after a set deadline in the case of an email or asking students to return at the end of lecture in the case of a shout out if time is tight.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FULL-TIME OFFICER AND VOLUNTEER OFFICER?

The **5 Full-time Officers** are elected and paid for one year outside of their studies whereas Volunteer Officers typically carry out their role alongside their studies.

In total we have **17 Volunteer Officer** positions of which the majority represent specific groups of students whether based on liberation, interest or faculty.

HOW DO STUDENTS VOTE IN THE ELECTION?

We use the Single Transferable Vote (sometimes referred to as the alternative transferable vote) to decide our elections. This allows voting by preferences rather than one single vote. Voting is primarily done through ApAber with a unique electronic ballot, a link of which is also sent to their Aberystwyth University email as a failsafe.

If you are aware of any student who wants to vote but is having difficulties voting please advise them to email us on union.elections@aber.ac.uk

Through working in partnership with Information Services in recent years we have seen turnout increase from 18% three years ago to 37% in 2020, one of the highest in the UK.

WHERE CAN CANDIDATES CAMPAIGN?

This year our elections will be held physically wherever possible and it is essential that students follow all legal restrictions when campaigning. Each year we liaise with various departments to update and confirm rules regarding publicity on campus. These are also included in the candidate briefing which can be found on our website.

WHAT SUPPORT DO CANDIDATES RECEIVE FROM THE STUDENTS' UNION?

All candidates are given training on the elections and associated rules and process. Each candidate also receives a limited amount of expenses to cover campaigning costs.

The elections team are available throughout the standing and campaigning periods to answer any questions students or candidates have.

All candidates also have access to our trained Student Advisor who they can contact on union.advice@aber.ac.uk

This year we have also introduced our Access to Office Fund to support students who face additional barriers to standing.

WHEN DO SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES TAKE UP THEIR POSTS?

All successful candidates start their year in office on the 1st July, with induction training and support throughout the summer.





WHAT CAN I DO IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have any further questions,
you can contact the Elections Team
on **union.elections@aber.ac.uk**

Alternatively you can contact
the Deputy Returning Officer
directly **alr80@aber.ac.uk**

