



# Students' Union Elections: Candidate Handbook

**Please read through this handbook before nominating yourself for a position in a  
SOAS Students' Union election**

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# 1. Introduction

Interested in running for a position within the SOAS SU part-time Executive Officer or as a SOAS SU full-time Sabbatical Officer? **Please read through this handbook before nominating yourself for a position!**

This handbook details the election process, roles available, and rules you must abide by.

**The Students' Union will assume all nominated candidates have read this handbook.**

Claiming to not know any information contained within this handbook will not be accepted as reason for any rule breaking or missed deadlines.

## Key Contacts

1. **Elections Clerk (EC):** Responsible for setting up and administering the elections. Your first contact for any election-related questions or complaints. This role sits within the Students' Union.
2. **Deputy Returning Officer (DRO):** Responsible for making decisions on all election complaints and issues. Your first contact for any complaints against the Elections Clerk. This role sits within SOAS.
3. **Returning Officer (RO):** Responsible for making final decisions on difficult or complex complaints and issues. You will not need to contact the RO directly. This role sits within the NUS.

It is the job of the DRO and RO to ensure a fair election.

**Contact details for the Elections Clerk, Deputy Returning Officer and Returning Officer will be published on the [SU Elections webpage](#).**

## Election Timeline

All SU Elections have an extended **Nominations Period**, where you can submit your nomination. This is followed by a compulsory **Candidate Meeting**, after which point **Campaigning** begins. During the Campaigning period of Spring Elections we also host a **Hustings**. After 1-2 weeks of Campaigning, **Voting Opens** for 2-5 days. One hour after **Voting Closes** is the **Complaints Deadline** of the election, which is the final point for complaints to be submitted. **Results** are typically announced 30 minutes - 1 hour after the complaints deadline.

For the dates and times of your election timeline, please visit the [SU Elections webpage](#).

## 2. Background

### What is the Students' Union?

It's a big question! To reduce it down, SOAS SU aims to provide **support** and **representation** to the students of SOAS. We do this in many ways:

- Organising events
- Running societies and sports
- Campaigning on issues affecting students
- Representing student issues in the school at SOAS committees and boards
- Working directly with students to address issues and provide individual support

We aim to improve the student experience for everyone at SOAS which is both a very large and difficult, but overly rewarding, task.

**For more information:** Feel free to speak to one of the Sabbatical Officers!

### What positions are available?

Decisions within SOAS SU are made at various levels:

1. By **students**, in Union General Meetings and Referenda
2. By our **Executive Committee**, in Executive Committee Meetings
3. By our **Trustee Board**, in Trustee Board Meetings

**Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is made up of all the part-time Executive Officers and full-time Sabbatical Officers. This committee represents students and the officers' students groups they represent in SU decisions.

**Trustee Board:** The Trustee Board is also made up of all the part-time Executive Officers and full-time Sabbatical Officers. This board represents the Students' Union as a charity, and is the top-level decision making board.

If elected for a position in the SU you will be both an executive **and** a trustee of the Union. More information on what this means will be provided in the Candidate Meeting.

**Executive Officers and Sabbatical Officers:** SOAS Students' Union has 19 **Executive Officer** positions which are part-time, voluntary positions, representing student groups or issues within the Union. There are also 4 **Sabbatical Officer** positions which are full-time, paid positions, acting as the figure heads for the Students' Union and representing the student body as a whole. All roles are 1 year in duration.

For more information on the positions and responsibilities:

- See Schedule 2: Officer Positions - <https://soasunion.org/democracy/governance/>
- Speak to the person currently in the role - <https://soasunion.org/democracy/executivecommittee/>
- Or come and speak to the Elections Clerk or SU General Manager

Sabbatical Officer roles are elected in Spring only, along with the majority of the Executive Officer roles. A small number of Executive Officer roles are elected in Autumn only, along with any roles which remain unfilled from the previous Spring election.

**To find out what roles are available in the upcoming SU Election, please refer to the [SU Elections webpage](#) for more information.**

## Context to the elections

The Students' Union holds elections in Spring and Autumn to elect the Executive and Sabbatical Officers. These roles are vital in the operation and representation provided by the Students' Union.

We aim to ensure the elections remain fair and positive for all candidates and voters. We therefore ask candidates to adhere strictly to the rules of the election and we will investigate any complaints made. Candidates must also abide by the normal Students' Union, SOAS, and general societal laws and rules. Candidates found breaking any rules or laws may be disqualified from the election and reported to the relevant authority.

# 3. Nominations

## What You Need

To nominate yourself for a full-time or part-time officer position within the SU you will need:

1. A manifesto
2. A photo of yourself

Your manifesto should outline why you want the position you're applying for; what you think you can bring to the role and what you hope to do in the role. This is what students will read to understand more about you and make their decisions on who to vote for!

Example manifestos from those currently in positions can be found on the poster boards outside the SU Officers, or here: <https://soasunion.org/democracy/executivecommittee/>

We ask candidates to upload a photo of themselves so that others can get to know who you are - if elected you will be the accountable face of your position!

For any issues experienced in uploading a photo or manifesto, or for any exceptional reasons whereby students would rather abstain from having a photo of themselves displayed, please speak to the Elections Clerk who will look into suitable solutions or alternatives.

## Manifesto Transparency:

Being elected into Sabbatical and Executive Officer positions puts you in spaces and conversations you may not normally be able to access as a student. Many students use these opportunities to help promote existing student campaigns or bodies of work. It is important however that your manifesto does not unintentionally erase the work students have already put into these campaigns and works. It is important that, where mentioning a pre-existing campaign or body of work in your manifesto, you make clear:

1. What has been your involvement in this work so far?
2. What would you hope to do to help, given your new position?

### **Bad example:**

"I want to promote x campaign in the School and make sure it is a priority for SOAS.

This doesn't indicate any previous involvement, explain what work has been done so far, or what exactly the candidate would hope to do".

**Good examples:**

“I will help lobby funding for x campaign. This campaign fights for x, y and z; and plays an important part in educating the SOAS student body. While I have not been involved with this campaign previously, being elected into this post will allow me to enter conversations with SOAS management, and I would love to use this position to help the work of this campaign grow”.

“I will make sure that y work is continued to be placed as a priority within the SU. Having joined y in my first year I have been actively attending meetings and organizing events with them ever since. As an executive officer I will ensure this work is centred further in the SU and the students it aims to serve are represented!”

These 2 examples make clear if you've been involved in the campaign/work before, examples what the campaign/work has done, and states how the new position would allow you to benefit the campaign/work.

You do not have to have been involved in a campaign/work in order to promote it through your manifesto. You do however need to make sure you're not making students who have been involved previously feel as though you're using their work for votes. If unsure, speak to someone from the campaign/work to ask how you could help if elected, and if they would be happy for you to promote their campaign/work through your manifesto!

**Remember:** Students can question and raise issues with your manifesto at any time during the election period.

## How to Apply

During the nominations period, go to the [SU Elections page](#) on the SOAS SU website and click on the Elections Widget.

1. Select '**Post List**' to view the positions available in the election.
2. Select '**Stand In Election**' to nomination yourself for a position.  
You will need to input your name, email address and phone number. You will then be shown a list of all the positions available in the election.
3. If you are eligible to stand for a position you will see the action '**Stand**' underneath the position. Select this and your nomination will be input!
4. You will then need to upload your manifesto and photo by selecting '**Upload**'.
5. Your nomination will be approved by the Elections Admin once a photo and manifesto has been uploaded. **Please make sure you upload these as your nomination is not complete without them!**

6. Liberation officer positions are only available for students who self-identify with the liberation group. You can self-identify by selecting '**Profile**' on the elections widget.
7. If you are experiencing issues with non-liberation officer positions, or have self-identified but still encounter errors, please send a screenshot of the error to the Elections Clerk who will be able to help.

You can run for part time Executive Committee positions with 1 other person. To do this:

1. Both of you will need to self-identify with any liberation officer position, if this is what you're applying for
2. Select '**Post List**', 'and '**Stand In Election**'. You will need to input both of your names but only one person's email and phone number.
3. Select 'Stand' to input your nomination. You may submit 1 manifesto between the 2 of you, written as a collective. You should also submit 1 photo of the 2 of you.

You can apply for a maximum of 1 Executive position and 1 Sabbatical position.

## 4. Candidate Meeting

### What and When?

**What:** The candidate meeting is a **compulsory** meeting for everyone who is nominated for a position in the elections.

This meeting will run through the election rules in greater detail, the responsibilities of being an executive and trustee, and answer any questions on campaigning and procedures you might have.

**You cannot start campaigning until you have attended the candidate meeting!**

If you miss the pre-arranged candidate meeting you will need to email the Elections Clerk ahead of time to arrange a meeting at another time.

**When:** Check the [SU Elections webpage](#) for the Election Timeline



# 5. Candidate Hustings

## What and When?

**What:** Hustings are an opportunity for candidates to present their manifestos to the student body and answer any questions students might have. This is a chance for the student body to get to know you better as a person and what you stand for.

**Only positions up for election in Spring Elections have a hustings!**

Executive officer positions must give a 1-minute speech and Sabbatical officers must give a 3-minute speech. This is a time to introduce yourself, summarise your manifesto, and explain why you're a good candidate for the position.

Students will then have the opportunity to ask questions which every candidate must answer. These questions will not be given ahead of time.

Please make sure that you, and anyone in your campaigns team, remains respectful during these hustings. Please give everyone the ability to talk and get their points across.

**When:** Check the [SU Elections webpage](#) for the Election Timeline

# 6. Campaigning

## Allowances

Sabbatical Officer positions: £30

Executive Officer positions: £15

This is the maximum amount you (including your campaigns team) may spend on your campaign. You cannot use your own money or get financial sponsorship. Doing so may result in you being withdrawn from the election.

**You must keep any receipts for resources used in your campaign.** For items you already own or can't get a receipt from (e.g. school printing) you must use the following prices to make your own receipt:

- A4:
  - Black & White | Single sided: 3p
  - Black & White | Double sided: 5p
  - Colour | Single sided: 15p
  - Colour | Double sided: 25p
- A3:
  - Black & White | Single sided: 6p
  - Colour | Single sided: 25p
- Bed sheet: £1
- T-shirt: £1
- Art equipment: £2

**All receipts for items used as part of your campaign must be submitted to the Election Clerk by the close of voting.**

Failure to submit receipts for items you've used in your campaign, or providing false receipts, may result in you being withdrawn from the election.

## Rules

The following rules have been put in place to ensure a fair election. Breach of these rules may result in disqualification from the election.

## Conduct

1. Campaigners may form a campaigns team, however they must ensure their team adheres to the election rules. Any complaints made against the actions of a campaigns team will count as a complaint against the candidate
2. Campaigners may only alter, move or remove their own campaign materials
3. Campaigners should not undertake campaigns activity which others could not also reasonably do
4. Campaigners must allow voters to cast their ballot freely and must not communicate with voters in any way once they have begun to complete their ballot
5. If running for re-election, a sabbatical officer may not undertake any elections work while at work. This must be done in their own personal time or during lunch breaks.

## Budget

1. Campaigners must not spend more than their budget
2. All campaigners must submit evidence of all campaign resources used and receipts to the Elections Clerk no later than 1 hour after polls close. If candidates don't spend any money during their election they should also make this clear to the Elections Clerk.

These rules are in addition to the general Union and University rules, and also the Law.

The Returning Officer takes responsibility for the interpretation of these rules and the Union bye-laws. Interpretation will be in the interest of the electorate above all others.

## Guidance

The following guidance aims to ensure the smooth running of the elections. Candidates should adhere to these guidelines. Failure to do so may result in you receiving a sanction or disqualification from the election.

- Candidates should only stick up promotional materials on the walls in the JCR, SU Bar, and Postgraduate Common Room
- Candidates may get endorsement from a sports team / society, but must do so by a majority vote of the team / society
- Candidates must adhere to the Students' Unions [Safer Spaces Policy](#)
- Candidates must treat other candidates, students and members of the public with respect
- Candidates will not act in such a way as to bring the elections process, the Union or the University into disrepute
- Candidates' campaigns should be fully transparent and accountable to the Union
- Candidates must not undermine the fair and democratic running of elections
- Candidates must not seek financial sponsorship for this election
- Candidates must not use electronic devices when soliciting votes and voters should vote on their own devices

- Candidates must not break any general Union and University rules and regulations. This also includes the Law

Complaints against candidates must be made using the following form, available from the [SU Elections webpage](#).

## 7. Voting

The Students' Union elections use Single Transferable Voting, and all votes are made on the SOAS SU website.

When voting, students are given the option to rank candidates in order of preference. If there are no candidates the student wants to elect they can opt to Re-Open Nominations. If the student has no preference at any point, they can select No Further Preference.

Candidates are ranked based on the number of 1st choice votes they receive. The candidate with the lowest number of votes at the start will be eliminated from the running. Anyone who voted for that candidate will then have their second choice vote applied to the remaining candidates. This method continues until a candidate is elected.

In order to be elected a candidate needs to get a simple majority of votes.

## 8. Rule Breaking

Complaints regarding rule breaking should be made using the **Complaints Form**, available on the [SU Elections webpage](#), submitted to the Elections Clerk no later than up to 1 hour after the voting closes.

Rule breaking may be noted by any member of the SU, SU staff, or another candidate in the election. All reports of rule breaking, submitted before the deadline, will be investigated by the Deputy Returning Officer. Evidence submitted alongside a complaint will aid in the complaints process, and candidates have the right to appeal any decision made by the DRO or RO. Appeals can be made using the Students' Union [complaints procedure](#).

If a complaint is received, the results for the position in question will not be announced until the complaint has been fully resolved.

# 9. Results

Provided there are no issues with the voting system, or any outstanding complaints, all results will be announced 30 minutes - 1 hour after the Complaints Deadline.

Results are final, and the exact numbers of the count will be available. The final count is conducted by the Elections Clerk, alongside the SU General Manager and a third person (not running in the election) to ensure everything is done fairly.

If a position remains unfilled the SU constitution will be consulted, along with the Sabbatical Officers and Executive Committee, as to whether or not another election should be run in order to fill the position.