**Oxford University Student Union**

Company no. 07314850 Charity no. 1140687

**ELECTION RULES** 2024

(Directions)

The Oxford SU election rules are created to ensure that we have an election environment which is positive, fair, and accessible. The election is governed by these Rules (formally known as “Directions”), as well as the Regulations (accessible [here](https://www.oxfordsu.org/about-us/how-were-run/governing-documents/)). Your attention is drawn in particular to Regulation 2.1, which creates a general duty to act to ensure that elections are fairly and properly conducted.

## Contact Information

Elections Team [elections@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk](mailto:elections@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk) Returning Officer [returningofficer@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk](mailto:returningofficer@oxfordsu.ox.ac.uk)

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# Part A: General

## • Principles

These principles are how we, the Elections Committee, believe our elections should be conducted. These principles are not directly enforceable but should guide the interpretation of the Regulations and Directions.

* 1. **Be respectful**: Treat all students, candidates, and election staff with respect.
  2. **Play fair**: Do not seek an unfair advantage over other candidates.
  3. **Ask**: If in doubt, ask the Elections Team first.

## • Timeline

The election timeline can be accessed at [www.oxfordsu.org/representation/elections/](http://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/elections/).

The key dates are:

* Nominations Deadline: 08:00 Fri 7th week (1 Mar)
* Manifesto deadline: 12:00 Fri 7th Week (1 Mar)
* Campaigning Period Begins: 17:00 Fri 7th Week (1 Mar)
* Voting open between 08:00 Mon 8th Week (4 Mar) and 13:00 Thu 8th Week (7 March)

# Part B: Nominations

## • Nominations

Any person wishing to become a Candidate must submit a nomination through the nomination form on the Oxford SU website before the deadline. After submitting the nomination, they must:

* Declare to the Elections Team any roles they hold in relevant societies (see Direction 6 below)

## • Manifestos

Candidates are strongly encouraged, but not required, to submit a manifesto explaining their experience and policies.

Candidates who choose to submit a manifesto must submit a plain-text manifesto. Candidates may also submit a formatted manifesto.

The word limit is 500 words. Image descriptions must be included in the plain-text version of a formatted manifesto. Image descriptions are excluded from the word count.

The Returning Officer may at any time reject or require changes to be made to any manifesto if it fails to comply with this Direction, or contains false, misleading, unlawful, or offensive material. The Returning Officer may require a candidate to provide evidence of factual claims made in a manifesto.

## • Manifesto Summaries

Candidates are strongly encouraged, but not required, to submit a ‘manifesto summary’, briefly outlining their experience, policies, and pledges.

The word limit for the manifesto summary is 50 words.

The Returning Officer may at any time reject or require changes to be made to any manifesto summary if it fails to comply with this Direction, or contains false, misleading, unlawful, or offensive material. The Returning Officer may require a candidate to provide evidence of factual claims made in a manifesto summary.

## • Role Declarations

Candidates must declare to the Elections Team any committee or executive roles they have held in ‘relevant’ Oxford organisations since joining the University. Relevant roles only include those within a College JCR or MCR, the Oxford Union Society, or an Editorial role at a student newspaper. See Regulation 17 for further details.

They must declare these roles in any manifesto they produce. Such declarations are excluded from the word count.

# Part C: Campaigning

## • Campaigning

Campaigning is any activity designed to raise an individual’s profile as a candidate amongst the whole or part of the electorate.

## • Campaign Period

Candidates must only campaign after the campaigning period begins on Friday 7th Week (1st Mar). Candidates may prepare campaign materials (e.g., a Facebook page) before the campaigning period begins, but must not publish such materials until the campaign period.

Candidates may seek endorsements under Direction 15 before the campaign period begins, but neither the candidate nor the endorsing organisation or individual may publish that endorsement until the campaigning period begins.

## • Negative Campaigning

Campaigns must focus on why that candidate is the best for the role. Candidates are not allowed to run negative campaigns. This means criticising another candidate’s campaign or their character, but candidates may critique a candidate’s policy or manifesto pledges.

Candidates may respond to and critique the other candidates’ answers in the hustings.

## • Campaign Expenses

Candidates must not spend more than the £40 expense limit. Candidates must declare all items used for campaigning.

Already-owned equipment can be used without counting toward the expense limit if it is reasonable to assume that all other candidates will have access to an equivalent. If it is not reasonable to assume this, then already-owned equipment will count towards the expense limit at the current fair market value of the equipment.

Paid software can be used without counting toward the expense limit if widely available alternatives exist. For example, Photoshop does not count toward the spending limit because there are free alternatives such as Gimp and Pixlr.

Candidates must submit their Expense Form to the Elections Team within 30 minutes after the close of voting, i.e., before 13:30 on Thursday 8th Week (7 Mar).

## • Treating

Student Members (including candidates) must not engage in treating, which means offering material incentives (e.g., snacks) to any person with a view to encouraging them to vote a certain way or not to vote in an election.

## • Misuse of SU Office

Candidates must not misuse resources that they have access to by virtue of a position they hold within Oxford SU, such as SU Campaign Co-Chair or RAG President. Except where outlined in Direction [15 • below](#_bookmark17), candidates must not campaign (as defined in Direction 7) using funds or platforms afforded to them in their SU roles.

## • Mailing Lists

A mailing list is any list of email addresses, physical addresses, or phone numbers. Candidates can only use mailing lists which were created solely for the purpose of their campaign. Any mailing lists created for the purpose of campaigning must be opt-in and deleted immediately after the election.

Organisations which have made an endorsement compliant with Direction 15 may use pre-existing mailing lists to campaign for the candidates they have endorsed.

## • Social Media

Candidates are allowed to campaign on social media.

## • Endorsements

Candidates may seek the endorsement of individual Student Members. Candidates must not seek or claim the endorsement of Oxford SU employees or trustees, Student Council or any of its committees, or any Oxford SU Schemes or Projects.

Candidates may seek endorsements from Oxford SU Campaigns and non-Oxford SU organisations (e.g., clubs and societies), provided the candidate does not take part in any vote or decision-making which could lead to an endorsement.

Candidates must not claim an endorsement unless it was made in compliance with the following:

* Oxford SU Campaigns may only endorse a candidate at an Open Meeting following a democratic vote in which all Full Members of the Campaign can participate, and in which there is an option to make no endorsement.
* Non-Oxford SU organisations may only endorse a candidate following a democratic vote in accordance with the rules of that organisation (e.g., by a committee vote or a poll of all members).

Anyone making endorsements may make as many endorsements as they wish (e.g., they may endorse multiple candidates for one position).

## • Slates

Candidates must not combine into slates, which are groups of candidates who endorse each other and/or share campaign materials (see Regulation 21.3).

## • Campaign Team Members

Anyone who campaigns for a candidate is presumed to be a Campaign Team Member of that candidate, unless the candidate shows that on gaining knowledge of the actions of that person, they have made reasonable efforts to discourage the campaigning.

Any conduct of a Campaign Team Member is treated as if it were the conduct of the candidate.

## • Miscellaneous

Student members (including candidates) must not:

* Threaten or intimidate any person in connection with an election
* Bribe any person in connection with an election

# Part D: Complaints

## • Complaints

The Returning Officer strives to address concerns about electoral conduct informally where reasonable. This does not affect anyone’s right to submit a formal complaint.

Formal complaints may be submitted in accordance with the Regulations and these Directions.

The scope, determination process, and potential outcomes of a formal complaint are defined in Regulations 13-20.

## • Format

All formal complaints must be made via the form made available [on the website](https://www.oxfordsu.org/representation/elections/) for that purpose.

The Returning Officer will be happy to advise members on submitting a formal complaint.

## • Time Limit

All formal complaints must be submitted before 13:30 Thursday 8th Week (7 Mar), except that those relating to the counting of votes may be submitted up to 24 hours after the results are published.

All formal complaints must be submitted as soon as reasonably practicable, but always within 48 hours of the complainant becoming aware of the incident unless they demonstrate a reasonable excuse for not doing so within the formal complaint.