

Hallam Students' Union Officer Election 2026

Guiding Principles

These principles apply to all elections for students at HSU.

Candidates must:

1. Treat everyone with respect – including other candidates, the electorate and other students, HSU and University staff, and members of the public.
2. Respect the environment in which they campaign – including on and off campus, and online.
3. Respect and uphold the principle of free and fair elections and be open to challenge from the electorate.
4. Behave in a manner befitting the office they are running for and uphold the reputation of Hallam Students' Union.
5. Not do anything that gives them an unfair advantage.

HSU will:

1. Make sure all elections are run in a free and fair way.
2. Ensure that all election candidates understand the rules and how to campaign for votes.
3. Promote the importance of the election to the electorate.
4. Give the electorate the information they need to make an informed vote.
5. Prioritise the wellbeing of all candidates.

Applications of the Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles outline how candidates are expected to conduct themselves during the Election. This section highlights some practical and common examples of how the Guiding Principles will be applied. The Deputy Returning Officer of the Election may sanction candidates for conduct that goes against the Guiding Principles, even if the conduct isn't specifically mentioned below.

Candidates who are found to go against the Guiding Principles may incur sanctions that could include, but are not limited to, the suspension of a candidate's campaigning activity, or the disqualification of the candidate from the Election. You can find more information about sanctions further down this document.

You should read this document carefully and ensure you understand everything. If you have any questions about anything in this document, or you are unsure if an action would break the rules, you should contact the Elections team at democracy@shu.ac.uk. If you break a rule, then not knowing the rules, or misunderstanding them, will not be treated as a mitigating factor.

The **Deputy Returning Officer** of this Election is: Kathryn Burkitt, CEO of Hallam Students' Union. The **Returning Officer** of this Election is: Peter Robertson, Director of NUS Charity.

1. Treat everyone with respect – including other candidates, the electorate and other students, HSU and University staff, and members of the public.

Examples of things that would break this principle include:

- a. Personal attacks against other candidates, including making false or unprofessional accusations.

Candidates who feel that another candidate has behaved inappropriately should submit a complaint to the Deputy Returning Officer. However, genuine criticism of another candidate's application content is in the spirit of the Election.

- b. Continuing to engage with a student who has made it clear that they no longer wish to speak to you.

2. Respect the environment in which you campaign – including on and off campus, and online.

Examples of things that would break this principle include:

- a. Campaigning for votes in a way that disturbs students' ability to study.
- b. Not asking for permission to campaign for votes in a physical or digital space.
- c. Continuing to campaign for votes in a space where you have been asked not to.
- d. Using materials that are likely to damage property.

3. Respect and uphold the principle of free and fair elections and be open to challenge from the electorate.

Examples of things that would break this principle include:

- a. Interfering with, observing, or attempting to observe a student while they are in the process of voting, even if the student has asked you to.
- b. Providing misleading information about the voting process.
- c. Making it difficult for a student to vote for a different candidate.

4. Behave in a manner befitting the office you are running for and uphold the reputation of Hallam Students' Union.

Examples of things that would break this principle include:

- a. Being dishonest with the electorate or with University or Union staff.
- b. Behaving in a way that would bring the Students' Union into disrepute.
- c. Lateness or unreliability for Election meetings.

5. Don't do anything that gives you an unfair advantage.

Examples of things that would break this principle include:

- a. Using existing mailing lists to campaign for votes.

This includes, but isn't limited to, using Society membership lists that Committee members can access, or lists of students and Course Reps for use by Course or Lead Reps. This also includes making use of university address books.

- b. Multiple candidates campaigning as a 'slate'.

We define a slate as any activity that could imply that students should vote for several candidates jointly, rather than for candidates on their individual merit. It also includes candidates pooling budget or resources to use jointly. Candidates may campaign informally as a group.

- c. Buying or using campaign materials that aren't available to other candidates or spending more than your budget.

This could include buying materials with a discount that isn't available to other candidates or using items that you already own that other candidates are not likely to have access to.

Other Election Rules

These rules ensure that the Election process overall is fair.

Candidate Eligibility

All candidates must fulfil the following criteria to be a candidate in the Election. If at any point it is ruled that a candidate does not fulfil one of these criteria, then the Deputy Returning Officer reserves the right to immediately exclude the candidate from the Election.

1. By the relevant deadline, all candidates must:
 - a. Fulfil all eligibility criteria as laid out in [Bye-law 5](#) in the Students' Union's Bye-Laws
 - b. Be eligible to be a Trustee of a charity according to [UK law](#)
 - c. Have submitted a complete candidate application, as outlined in the application guidance
 - d. Attend all mandatory training sessions and agree to be bound by the Election rules for the duration of their candidacy
 - e. declare candidate expenditure and provide the necessary evidence
2. Hallam Students' Union will ensure that all deadlines and requirements are communicated to candidates via email.

Budgets and Resources

3. Candidates have a set budget of £50 per candidate for use during their campaign. This cannot be exceeded under any circumstance. This money will be reimbursed to the candidate once they have declared their candidate expenditure.

Physical Campaigning

4. Candidates may only engage in physical campaigning at the times and in the locations specified by the Deputy Returning Officer.

Endorsements

5. An endorsement is anything that encourages people to vote for a specific candidate or boosts their visibility during the Election. This includes direct statements like "Vote for Candidate A", and indirect actions such as sharing their campaign posts, reposting their videos, or using your account or group's account to amplify their message.
6. Only Student Members of Hallam Students' Union can endorse a candidate in the Election.
7. Some Student Members are only allowed to endorse a candidate in a personal capacity:
 - a. HSU Officers
 - b. Student Trustees
 - c. Student staff (either at the University or Union)

These groups must not endorse candidates through official accounts, official emails, during work shifts, or while acting in a representative role for the Union.

8. Societies and Clubs may not endorse candidates. Individual members, including Committee members, are allowed to endorse in a personal capacity.

COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND SANCTIONS

Complaints

9. Any member of the Students' Union is entitled to submit a complaint about an Election candidate or a member of their campaign team.
10. All complaints must:
 - a. Be submitted using the official Election Complaint form, which can be found at www.hallamstudentsunion.com/elections/complaints
 - b. Explain clearly which rule or Guiding Principle is alleged to have been broken
 - c. Include sufficient evidence to investigate the complaint

Complaints that do not fulfil these criteria will not be investigated.

11. Providing the complaint fulfils the criteria, the Elections team will respond to the complaint within 24 hours.
12. If the Deputy Returning Officer has grounds to believe that a breach of the rules has occurred, the Deputy Returning Officer will request a meeting with the candidate to discuss the nature of the complaint. The request will include the timeframe in which a response is required.
13. If the candidate does not respond within the timeframe, then a meeting may be held in their absence, and the candidate may not have the opportunity to provide any mitigating evidence.
14. The Deputy Returning Officer may also request additional information from relevant parties such as other Hallam Students' Union teams or the University.
15. After the meeting, the Deputy Returning Officer will consider the available evidence and decide whether, on the balance of probability, a rule has been broken.
16. If the Deputy Returning Officer finds that a rule has been broken, they may apply a sanction as outlined below. The sanction will be communicated to the candidate via the email address submitted during the application process.
17. Complaints may be received up to 5 working days after the close of voting.
18. Complaints made after the close of voting will only be investigated if the rule break is deemed serious enough to have changed the outcome of the Election.
19. The Deputy Returning Officer may also instigate investigations into Election rule breaks without the need for a complaint to be submitted, where there is reasonable cause to believe a rule has been broken.

Sanctions

20. If the Deputy Returning Officer determines that a rule has been broken, a sanction may be applied at their discretion. The sanction could include, but is not limited to:
- a. Suspension of campaigning activities for a set period
 - b. A formal caution, of which several will result in disqualification
 - c. Restriction of campaign budget
 - d. Restriction of inclusion in SU Election publicity
 - e. Requiring the candidate to promote other candidates
 - f. Requiring a formal public apology from the candidate
 - g. Disqualification
21. Ignorance of a rule will not be considered a mitigating factor in deciding on a sanction.
22. Rule breaks by anyone campaigning for a candidate will be treated as if the candidate committed them.

Aggravating Factors

23. Sanctions may be increased if aggravating factors are present. These may include:
- a. Dishonesty or deception
 - b. Repeat offences
 - c. Abuse of power
 - d. Discrimination based on protected characteristics
24. Where aggravating factors apply, the response may include immediate disqualification.

Appeals

25. Candidates may appeal any sanction. Information on how to appeal will be provided in the sanction email, and appeals are reviewed by the Returning Officer.
26. Appeals must be received within 24 hours of receipt of the sanction.
27. Rulings from the Returning Officer will be communicated in a timeframe set out by the Returning Officer upon receipt of the appeal.
28. The Returning Officer will consider whether the complaints process was correctly followed, and whether the outcome was reasonable. The Returning Officer will not typically consider the nature of the complaint again or order further investigation of the complaint.

Results

All results will remain provisional until the Returning Officer is satisfied with the conduct of the Election and following the closure of any complaints.