

## **The AUSA Student Election Rules**

The financial procedures only apply to the Sabbatical Election.

### **AUSA Student Election Rules**

#### **Rule 1**

Candidates are expected to maintain the principles of a fair and free election.

#### **Rule 2**

Both the law and university policy apply to all election activity.

#### **Rule 3**

Candidates are expected to run campaigns maintaining respect for both other candidates and the process.

#### **Rule 4**

Candidates should only engage in campaign activity that is accessible to all candidates.

#### **Rule 5**

Only members of AUSA may participate in any part of the election using resources available in their capacity as a member.

#### **Rule 6**

All official AUSA resource must remain impartial to election activity.

#### **Rule 7**

All election financial procedures must be adhered to.

#### **Rule 8**

Digital campaigning may only take place once candidates have been announced.

## **AUSA Student Election Regulations**

### **General Regulations**

1. The rules will be interpreted and enforced by the Returning Officers/Elections Committee. The Returning Officers/Elections Committee are responsible for the good conduct and administration of elections and have the power to govern and interpret all matters relating to elections in accordance with the Rules. Rulings of the Elections Committee are subject to appeal by the Returning Officers and any decision made by the Returning Officers are final and will be clearly communicated to all candidates.
2. Where rules or regulations refer to 'candidates' this encompasses any member participating in election activity on behalf of a candidate. The candidate is held responsible for all actions related to their election activity.

## **Election process**

1. Nominations
2. Financial Procedures
3. The Count

## **Nominations**

1. All nominations must be submitted before the deadline as set out on the AUSA website and must be submitted through the online form on the AUSA website.
2. Member, or previous member of the Election Committee that has been involved with any decision relating to the current Elections, may be eligible to nominate themselves for Election only at the discretion of the returning officer
3. No nominations will be accepted outside of this time frame unless owing to extenuating circumstances, at the discretion of the Elections Committee.
4. A completed nomination will consist of a completed online nomination form, including a manifesto. Please note the manifesto deadline will be after the nomination deadline, allowing you to make changes post nomination deadline. Nominations are not required to include supporting proposers.
5. Candidates must nominate themselves under the name they are registered with the University or by an alternative name by which they are commonly known. Such an alternative name must be clearly specified on the nomination form and the Senior Returning/Returning Officer(s) retains the right to deem alternative names inappropriate.
6. Members may nominate themselves for only one position at student council. If they already hold a position at student council, they are unable to nominate themselves for any further positions.
7. No nominations will be accepted without a manifesto submitted by the relevant deadline.
8. Candidates are highly encouraged to submit a picture of themselves along with their nomination.

## **Financial Procedures**

1. The financial procedures only apply to the Sabbatical Election.
2. All campaign expenses incurred by a candidate must be recorded on a Candidates' Expenses Form and must be emailed to [elections@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:elections@abdn.ac.uk) by the deadline outlined in the relevant Nominations Pack.
3. Candidates must submit a Candidates' Expenses Form regardless of whether they have spent anything on campaign materials; a blank return will be accepted as an indication of no spend.
4. Candidates may only spend a total of £75 in their election campaign; all of this, pending audit of the expenses form, will be reimbursed. This figure is provisional and will be confirmed to candidates at the candidate briefing.
5. Every reasonable expense must be incorporated into this budget including but not limited to; blue tack, Cellotape, rope, and online advertisements.
6. Cardboard is a free resource and will count as £0.00.

7. If running on a slate, members of the slate cannot combine their publicity materials and budget. Each person within the slate must have their own publicity materials. Candidates may display a slate logo on their own materials.
8. Where materials are not sold by AUSA and receipts cannot be produced it will be given a market value by the Returning Officer(s). All candidates will receive a booklet of fixed costs at the Candidate Briefing.
9. Anything used in a campaign must be accessible to all candidates regardless of financial ability.
10. Candidates may use and/or create their own website and social networking page to promote their campaign. Any costs incurred for this must be recognised in the campaign budget.
11. All election materials (leaflets, posters, graphics, etc.) can be submitted to AUSA in advance of publication in order for their compliance with election rules to be assessed. Assessments will be carried out by a member of the Returning Officer team or the Elections Committee in a timely manner not exceeding one working day. This assessment is not required, but is encouraged if candidates feel unsure about compliance with the rules.
12. After the close of voting all candidates are required to perform a clean-up of campuses (Old Aberdeen, Foresterhill, Qatar, SCNU and Hillhead). By failing to comply with this regulation, the Elections Committee reserves the right to add a financial penalty of up to £10, which will be factored into the candidate spending limit.

## **The Count**

1. During Sabbatical election, before the count can begin, there must first be scrutiny in the first hour after voting closes of Declarations of Candidates' Expenditure.
2. Once all deliberations have been completed, the count may begin.

## **Regulations of the rules**

### **Rule 1: Candidates are expected to maintain the principles of a free and fair election.**

1. A free and fair election is defined as the will of the electorate as expressed in genuine, free and fair elections on the basis of universal, equal and secret participation.
2. Corrupt practices within the election will not be tolerated and may lead to sanctions or disqualification from the election. Corrupt practices are defined as:
  1. Giving money or any gift to a voter in order to secure votes.
  2. Giving, providing or paying, wholly or in part, for any food, drink or entertainment for any voter in order to secure votes.
  3. Use of or threatening to make use of any force, violence, or restraint toward anyone in relation to the election, either by a candidate or someone acting on the candidate's behalf.

4. Falsification of any document or information that is a requirement of the election procedures.
  5. Any other serious misconduct or behaviour that undermines the conduct of the elections as determined by the Elections Committee/Returning Officers, including, but not limited to, discriminatory behaviours and online harassment.
3. Candidates should at all times adhere to the relevant data protection regulations and not use any email lists which may compromise this. For the avoidance of doubt, University mailing lists or AUSA mailing lists may not be used. AUSA Standing Committees, Fora, student groups, societies and sports clubs must remain impartial. Student Media Groups need to ensure their coverage is unbiased and balanced.

**Rule 2: Both the law and university policy apply to all election activity**

1. Any activity that is illegal or against byelaws and/or regulations of the University of Aberdeen or AUSA areas/buildings is deemed to be in breach of the election rules.
2. Candidates may be subject to action from the Returning Officers/Elections Committee in addition to any action by individuals or organisations outside of AUSA.
3. All candidates are expected to follow government guidelines in relation to health and safety, in the candidate's current location, while campaigning. Failure to do so may result in immediate disqualification.

**Rule 3: Candidates are expected to run campaigns maintaining respect for both other candidates and the process.**

1. Debate within the election is welcomed and encouraged but should be related to matters of the election and the candidate's suitability to represent the student body and not that of an individual's identity, appearance, belief system, or any other protected characteristic.
2. All rules and regulations apply to any member participating in a candidate's election or campaign activity.
3. Candidates are held responsible for the actions of any member participating in their election or campaign activity.

**Rule 4: Candidates should only engage in campaign activity that is accessible to all candidates.**

1. Innovative campaign activity and candidates being creative in order to stand out is welcomed and encouraged. This may be a fun video, a stunt or other niche way of getting your message out to students.
2. All campaigns must be conducted in a way that maintains a fair and free election.
3. Candidates may not use personal favours to reduce the cost associated with any campaign activity; market value cost must be associated with all

campaign activity. Please see the election financial procedures for further information.

**Rule 5: Only members of AUSA may participate in any part of the election using resources available in their capacity as a member.**

1. Any person actively campaigning on behalf of a candidate must be a current member of AUSA.
2. AUSA staff and University staff who are not members of AUSA are not permitted to support specific candidates in representative elections and must remain neutral.
3. Academic staff etc. cannot publicly support candidates in the election or campaign.
4. Postgraduate Research (PGR)/PhD Students, or any other student acting in the capacity of a tutor or demonstrator, cannot in their role as seminar leaders/lecturers, etc. support or campaign on behalf of students. They can however promote the election.
5. No Sabbatical Officer may endorse any candidate in an official capacity – this includes publicly campaigning or posting on social media for any candidate on an official work account. Sabbatical Officers are encouraged to promote the elections and help boost turnout.
6. Sabbatical officers are required to take annual leave to campaign physically should they be running in the elections and care to not use any AUSA resources, including official online accounts, nor online campaign while working, or otherwise benefit from their current position as a Sabbatical Officer.

**Rule 6: All official AUSA resource must remain impartial to election activity.**

1. No member of AUSA staff shall be allowed to campaign for or wear the publicity of a candidate in the elections whilst carrying out the duties for which they are employed.
2. Advertisement within the AUSA estates is only allowed in the sabbatical election and is subject further approval from the Elections Committee. Unless specified in the nominations pack speak to the Elections Committee chair or e-mail [elections@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:elections@abdn.ac.uk) to get approval, so they can ensure all advertisement opportunities are equal for all candidates in the election.
3. From the announcement of the election dates to the announcement of the final result, AUSA shall adhere to guidelines ensuring neutrality in the election.
4. It is suggested that at least one debate/Q&A session between all candidates takes place. This only applies to Sabbatical Officer Elections.
5. Candidates are allowed to use the AUSA logo in their promotional materials. No other corporate or charity logos are allowed, including the University of Aberdeen.

**Rule 7: All election financial procedures must be adhered to.**

1. Please see the financial procedures.
2. For sabbatical officer election the spending limit shall provisionally be £75. For all other elections no spending shall be permitted.

**Rule 8: Campaigning may only take place as specified in the nominations pack and/or on the website.**

1. Physical campaigning is defined as, but not limited to, distributing print media, use of banners, T-shirts, all other written materials and door knocking.
2. Campaigning off the University of Aberdeen Campuses requires a prior approval of the elections committee. This includes examples of campaigning in halls of residence (excluding Hillhead), ASV, other public places, and venues such as squares, pubs, etc. If a candidate wants to campaign in such premises, it is their responsibility to seek this approval.
3. Digital media campaigning includes all materials shareable on social media and websites. This may include, but is not limited to, social media content, or videos to promote the candidates.
4. Prospective candidates may only release their manifesto once their candidacy and manifesto have been approved by the Elections Committee and all candidates have been announced by the Elections Committee. This does not limit the prospective candidate to announce their candidacy on social media, however references to manifesto pledges are strictly not allowed.
5. All candidates are encouraged to share information about the election, such as timelines and the importance of voting.

**Complaint Regulations**

1. All members are entitled to lodge a complaint should they feel any of the 8 rules have been breached.
2. All complaints must be lodged through the elections complaint form and refer to which rule has been breached. The regulations of the rule in question should also be referenced. The Elections Committee will consider no other form of complaint.
3. Complaints relating to any part of the campaign must normally be received prior to the results announcement and should be submitted as soon as possible to enable The Elections Committee to make appropriate rulings.
4. The Elections Committee will not consider complaints of activity such as the removal of posters and other materials without sufficient evidence.
5. All complaints must be received prior to the results announcement. Any complaint submitted past this time will only be considered if there is overwhelming evidence the actions reported have had a severe impact on the outcome of the election.
6. The Elections Committee shall make rulings on any properly submitted complaints within 48 hours of receipt.
7. The Elections Committee may also take action without receipt of a complaint if they deem it necessary.
8. Levels of Misconduct – There are 3 levels of misconduct in the election based on severity of the misconduct, which result in different penalties given the

candidate is found in breach of the election rules. They are expanded on at the end of the rules under “Levels of Misconduct and Penalties”

9. The Elections Committee may defer decision-making to the Returning Officers should they believe they are incapable of making a decision, for example, in the instance of a conflict of interest or by request of a candidate who has appealed a decision taken by the Elections Committee.
10. Ignorance of any rules will not be accepted as an acceptable excuse for rule breaks.
11. Any ruling of The Elections Committee shall be communicated to all candidates and available on the AUSA website for transparency.
12. Any ruling of Elections Committee shall be subject to appeal to the Returning Officer Team.
13. Ruling of the Returning Officer Team are final and have no further right of appeal.

### **Levels of Misconduct and Penalties**

1. Level One Misconducts:
  - a) Use of inappropriate material
  - b) Plagiarising manifesto from previous sabbaticals or from sabbaticals at other unions/associations
  - c) Minor Anti-Social behaviour
2. Level Two Misconducts:
  - a) Repeat Class One Misconducts
  - b) Misuse of AUSA or the University resource to gain unfair advantage over other candidates (Including AUSA employees actively campaigning during their working hours)
  - c) Campaigning outside of the given timeframe, and gaining an unfair advantage
  - d) Campaigning in premises where it is forbidden, and approval has not been given
  - e) Using threatening or abusive language
  - f) Intentionally damaging property of candidates, or other members of the AUSA community
3. Level Three Misconducts:
  - a) Repeat Class Two Misconducts
  - b) Behaving in a violent, indecent or threatening manner
  - c) Engaging in deception towards the Elections’ Committee or the Returning Officers
  - d) Engaging in a way which compromises health and safety of others
  - e) Behaving in a discriminatory way
  - f) Harassing a member of AUSA community
  - g) Exchanging money or goods in return for votes
  - h) Not complying with the Election Financial Procedures

The Elections’ Committee and/or Returning Officers reserve the right to escalate the offense to a higher level if the impact and severity of the misconduct on the election outcome becomes too significant. If a misconduct is not provided above, then the

Elections' Committee or Returning Officers will assess the severity of the impact on the election and in their ruling provide the level of misconduct in the outcome.

1. Level One Penalties:
  - a) A written reprimand
  
2. Level Two Penalties:
  - a) A written reprimand
  - b) A Fine of no more than £50 which will be taken out of the campaigning budget. If this will take candidate over the campaign budget, they need to inform Elections' Committee immediately and provide evidence of everything they spent to the point the outcome is given to them. They will not be disqualified but no additional spend will be allowed. Any additional spending will automatically disqualify the candidate.
  
3. Level Three Penalties:
  - a) Immediate suspension from the election
  - b) Referring the case to AUSA and/or University Disciplinary processes

The Elections' Committee and/or Returning Officers may impose combination of the outcomes available to them. The outcome will be communicated to all candidates as soon as possible subject to the Complaints Regulation section 6 and 11.