

LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

Election Rules 2026

1. Eligibility

Only full members of Open SU (referred to in the Articles of Association as the Open University Students Association), who meet the definition detailed by Articles 11.1.1 and 11.1.3 of our [Articles of Association](#) as detailed below, can stand for election for all roles on the Student Leadership Team or as Student Trustees.

11.1.1 Each and every registered student, aged 18 or over, who has not opted out by notifying the Chief Executive of their wish not to be a Member of Open SU.

11.1.3 Any student who has achieved their registered qualification and applied for and been granted extended membership to cover a gap in registered student status not exceeding twenty-four months.

Eligibility outlined in our [Bye-laws](#)

4.3.4 At the time of nomination for election, undergraduate candidates must not be on 'restricted status' with The Open University. Postgraduate taught candidates must not have failed, or failed to complete, three or more consecutive modules.

4.3.5 All Student Members wishing to stand for election or co-option to the SLT must declare as part of their nomination:

i) any unspent convictions other than traffic convictions resulting in a Fixed Penalty Notice or equivalent.

ii) if they are subject to any reason which would bar them from a Trustee role. These are defined by the Charity Commission and include:

- having an unspent conviction for one or more of the offences listed [here](#)
- having an IVA, debt relief order and/or bankruptcy

- having been removed as a trustee in England, Scotland or Wales (by the Charity Commission or Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator)
- having been removed from being in the management or control of anybody in Scotland (under relevant legislation)
- having been disqualified by the Charity Commission
- being a disqualified company director
- being a designated person for the purposes of antiterrorism legislation
- being on the sex offenders' register
- having been found in contempt of court for making (or causing to be made) a false statement
- having been found guilty of disobedience to an order or direction of the Charity Commission

Other eligibility criteria

- Candidates must not have been expelled from Open SU membership or have been suspended from volunteering due to a disciplinary ruling.
- Anyone who has been removed from an elected role or volunteer role due to lack of engagement or because of fitness to volunteer within the last 12 months will not be eligible to stand.
- Candidates for all roles must be based in the UK, Republic of Ireland or continental Europe. The only exception would be candidates for the International Representative, who could live outside of Europe but would need to either attend meetings remotely, or travel only as per an expense cap.
- Candidates should not hold a current paid staff role at either The Open University or Open SU.
- Students enrolled in an OpenLearn course, or any module/course worth zero credits, are not eligible to stand in the elections.

2. Role-specific eligibility

- Standard DBS checks will be required before commencement to the following roles: President, Deputy President, Vice President Finance and Membership, Vice President Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Vice President Welfare, Disabled Student Representative, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Representative, LGBTQIA+ Student Representative and Student Trustees.
- Candidates for the roles of President, Deputy President, Vice-President Finance and Membership, Vice-President Welfare and Student Trustees must not be disqualified from acting as a Charity Trustee or Company Director. These candidates must also not be listed on the Insolvency Register.
- All candidates for roles on the Student Leadership Team and Student Trustees must not be disqualified from acting as a Charity Trustee. This is

because of the semi-fiduciary nature of all roles being positions of trust and representatives of OU students; members will be representing the organisation both internally and externally and will be the public face of Open SU in publications, all associated online platforms and at events.

Please refer to the Charity Commission information below for details of disqualification criteria:

- [gov.uk/guidance/automatic-disqualification-rules-for-charity-trustees-and-charity-senior-positions](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/automatic-disqualification-rules-for-charity-trustees-and-charity-senior-positions)
- [gov.uk/Disqualification Reasons Table](https://www.gov.uk/Disqualification-Reasons-Table)

Please be aware that we will carry out eligibility checks on all candidates prior to announcement of candidacy. Successful candidates who will sit on the Board of Trustees will be required to sign two forms: the Charity Commission’s declaration of eligibility and responsibility; the Fit and Proper Persons Declaration form and a Trustee and Director details form. It is an offence under Section 60(1)b of the Charities Act 2011 to knowingly or recklessly provide false or misleading information.

Faculty and Area Representatives:

- Faculty Representatives must either be enrolled for a module or registered for a qualification within the appropriate faculty.
- Candidates for Area Representative roles can only stand for their home Nation/Region where they currently reside.

If you have any queries regarding eligibility to stand for election to any position, please don’t hesitate to contact the Returning Officer at oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk during the nominations process.

3. Roles available

Elected Officer team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President • Deputy President (Student Voice) • Vice President Finance and Membership • Vice President Belonging and Opportunities • Vice President Equity, Diversity and Inclusion • Vice President Welfare
Elected Representative team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Representative • Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Representative • Disabled Student Representative • LGBTQIA+ Student Representative • Area Representative, England • International Representative

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Representative, Ireland • Area Representative, Scotland • Area Representative, Wales • Faculty Representative, Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) • Faculty Representative, Business and Law (FBL) • Faculty Representative, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) • Faculty Representative, Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)
Student Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six vacancies for a one-year term

Candidates can only stand for one role.

Further details on all roles, including role descriptions and summary information can be found on our [elections website](#).

4. Timetable

These are the key dates that all candidates and members should note and bear in mind.

Event	Date (2026)
Nominations open	Tuesday 10 March
Nominations close	Tuesday 24 March
Mandatory candidate briefing period	Tuesday 24 March to Friday 3 April
Announce candidates and profiles published	Thursday 9 April
Voting opens	Friday 17 April
Voting closes	Wednesday 6 May
Results announced	Friday 8 May

5. Nomination form

To stand for election, candidates must complete a nomination form via the online voting portal at www.cesvotes.com/opensu. Candidates should understand that the completed nomination form and answers provided will be published as their candidate profile throughout the process.

It is mandatory for candidates to provide a photo of their person for publication on the voting website. If the candidate does not include this information, and does not respond to communications requesting this, they will be removed from the election process.

It is mandatory for candidates to provide their surname for publication on the voting website. If the candidate does not include this information, and does not respond to communications requesting this, they will be removed from the election process.

Eligibility will be checked using the details provided and it is up to candidates to ensure that this is complete and accurate. Inaccurate information may lead to a candidate's nomination being rejected by the system.

All candidates will have a manifesto published electronically by Open SU. The manifesto will be made up of answers to questions that candidates answer on their nomination form and will explain to the student body why they are standing for election to a particular position and why voters should vote for them. There will be a word limit for each question. Manifestos will not be proof-read for the accuracy of spelling and grammar, but any wording thought by the Returning Officer to be inappropriate will be removed.

All candidates will be invited to engage with a **mandatory** briefing video and pass a short quiz following submission of their nomination. The purpose of this briefing is to support candidates in understanding the process, the time commitments and role remits.

Candidates will receive a link to the briefing and the quiz after nominations have closed. Candidates who have any issues accessing the briefing or quiz should email oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk.

Extra guidance and support on standing for election, writing a manifesto and creating your campaign is available on the [elections website](#).

6. Campaigning

Once we have completed eligibility checks and announced the candidates who have met all the requirements, candidates are free to begin their election campaign.

We ask that candidates keep three key principles in mind when campaigning:

Be Fair: Don't break the rules. Don't pressurise voters. Only do what others have an equal opportunity to do. Keep in mind the [seven Nolan principles of public life](#), which provide a good framework for how you should seek to act during and after the process.

Have Respect: Respect the other candidates and the voters. Disagreements happen but address them constructively. Make every effort to be kind and considerate and take time to think about how your communication might be interpreted by others.

Be Positive: Enjoy the process and get creative about the opportunity that lies ahead. Explain to your fellow students why you want to be involved and what you might want to achieve. Your enthusiasm will rub off on voters.

7. Campaigning rules

Candidates...

- ✓ must note that as soon as their nomination is submitted, they are representing Open SU.
- ✓ must promote their own candidacy for the elections in order to campaign and engage with voters across a range of platforms.
- ✓ must not make use of personal connections or funding, commercial relationships or resources available to them by way of their position to gain an advantage over other candidates.
- ✓ currently holding a volunteer role may continue to act in that capacity throughout the process. However, they must not discuss their candidature during official duties or use accounts or affiliations with Open SU to campaign. This includes private Teams channels, meetings or via direct email communications with students.
- ✓ may only campaign in spaces that are accessible to everyone and allow all candidates to post (this includes if you are the owner of a specific space or page e.g. a Club or Society social media page).
- ✓ may share your candidacy with fellow students in forums and social spaces relating to your course, providing this has been agreed by tutors and does not interrupt other students' studies.
- ✓ must refrain from running or encouraging negative campaigns against other candidates, Open SU, or the elections process itself. This would constitute bringing the organisation into disrepute and would be dealt with accordingly. Debate is encouraged and candidates or voters can critique manifestos or campaign ideas, but comments should be about the detail, offering alternative opinions and ideas in a positive manner.
- ✓ must note that derogatory comments about other candidates will not be tolerated on any platform and may risk a candidacy being withdrawn if a complaint is upheld.
- ✓ must understand that they will be held responsible for the actions taken by others on their behalf.

- ✓ must not utilise external media coverage of the elections or candidates without approval of the Returning Officer prior to publication.
- ✓ must respect that every student has the right to vote confidentially and freely. Candidates must not help students during the process of voting, assistance will be available by emailing oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk or via the online voting portal.
- ✓ must ensure they do not seek endorsement for their campaign through a decision or from official representatives of the Student Leadership Team, Executive, Board of Trustees, subsidiary of Open SU, our staff team or advisors, University staff, Club, Society or Group, commercial or political organisation. The representatives of the aforementioned bodies also have a responsibility for avoiding the endorsement or dismissal of campaigns and maintaining neutrality during the election period.
- ✓ must not form group slates or joint campaigns with other candidates regardless of roles sought.
- ✓ must not endorse or reject other candidates for different roles as part of their campaign.
- ✓ must not harass or spam voters, official Open SU websites or media channels. Campaigning does mean a degree of self-promotion and messaging will be tolerated, but candidates should be mindful not to go overboard with such activities (guidance for campaigning is available on the [elections website](#)).
- ✓ must allow other candidates the opportunity to campaign and not attempt to block or interfere with such activity.
- ✓ must not block, alter or re-interpret official communications, images or publications from Open SU about the Elections.
- ✓ must not contravene any relevant laws and University codes of practice and generally act in a manner with the decency befitting the role they are running for.

Voters ...

- ✓ are reminded to behave responsibly and fairly during the election period in line with our [Values and Behaviour Policy](#) and other applicable codes.

Everyone...

- ✓ is reminded to be respectful of each other, current elected Student Leaders or Trustees, staff, University staff and the reputation of both Open SU and the University generally.

The Returning Officer reserves the right to deal with any other inappropriate behaviour in line with the spirit of these rules.

8. Withdrawing from the process

Candidates may withdraw at any point in the process by informing the Returning Officers on oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk.

9. Candidate questions

Following the close of the nominations process, all eligible candidate profiles will be uploaded to the online voting portal and made public by Thursday 9 April 2026. All voters and other candidates will be able to read the profiles and manifestos.

Candidates who wish to do so are welcome to set up a thread on our online chat platform, [OU Student Connect](#) to allow students to ask questions about your manifesto and your candidacy.

To continue in the election process, President and Deputy President candidates (the two paid elected roles) must attend a live 'hustings' or 'Question and Answer' session on Wednesday 15 April at 7-8pm. President and Deputy President candidates will provide a short verbal introduction, followed by answering questions submitted by students.

The live hustings are mandatory. If a President and Deputy President candidates cannot attend the live session, they will be removed from the election process.

10. Voting

Voting is open to all members who meet the definition detailed by Articles 11.1.1 and 11.1.3 of our [Articles of Association](#).

For the avoidance of any doubt, candidates are allowed to vote.

Voting will be held online via the Civica online voting portal: www.cesvotes.com/opensu. Eligible students will receive voting information in due course via direct email from Open SU and from our election partners, Civica. When casting votes on the online portal, students should rank candidates in order of preference and can rank as many or as few of the candidates as they wish.

Any voter not in receipt of a voting email by Wednesday 29 April should email oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk.

There will be a facility to vote for 'none of the above candidates' for all single-position roles (Elected Officers and Elected Representatives on the Student Leadership Team). Where 'none of the above candidates' receives the most votes, the position will be filled in the next election. This option will not be present for multi-position roles (Student Trustees).

Voters can vote for all Student Leadership and Student Trustee roles except for Area Representatives. Voters can only vote for the Area Representative that represents their home nation/region.

All votes will be counted following the close of voting and conducted using the rules laid down by Civica for running elections by the Single Transferable Vote system. [Click here](#) for an explanation of how Single Transferable Vote works.

11. Results

The full results will be published [our website](#) on Friday 8 May.

Candidates will be informed of the result of their election directly by email approximately 30 minutes before the public announcement, and will be asked to keep the information confidential until the public announcement is made.

If a candidate who is successfully elected withdraws from the process, does not respond to our attempts to contact them following the election or is removed subject to the disciplinary process prior to the start of the new term, Open SU will ask Civica to recalculate the election results excluding that candidate and, where possible, will offer the role to the candidate that wins based on the recalculation.

12. Discipline, moderation and complaints

The election email inbox will be monitored throughout the period by staff supporting the election process. Please be aware that we anticipate a high volume of email traffic, but we will endeavour to respond to emails as soon as we can.

Any complaints about candidate conduct or the elections process should be raised with the Returning Officer in a timely manner to oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk **no later than 12 June 2026**. Any complaint received after this date will be dealt with via our [Values and Behaviour Policy](#).

All complaints must be **substantiated with evidence and explicitly state which rule(s) has been broken**.

Action will be taken where complaints are upheld by the Returning Officers.

Such action could include:

- ✓ Informal warning

- ✓ Formal warning, which may also be published on our official channels
- ✓ Candidate or voter asked to issue an apology or retraction, which may also be published on our official channels
- ✓ Percentage of votes/number of votes docked
- ✓ Disqualification of a candidate or a voter
- ✓ Referral of the matter to our disciplinary procedures
- ✓ Referral of the matter to the University's disciplinary procedures

The role descriptions (candidate packs) and these Election Rules outline the expectations for candidates. If candidates are not engaging in the election process (including not watching briefings or attending required meetings, responding to emails or providing the required information) then the Returning Officer is at liberty to remove them from the process.

Decisions by the Returning Officers are final and not subject to appeal. The Returning Officers reserve the right to consider complaints as vexatious and may act accordingly. The Returning Officer is supported by Deputy Returning Officers.

Per [Bye-law 10](#), the Chief Executive is the Returning Officer for Open SU. Upon agreement with Vice President Finance and Membership (currently known as 'Vice President Administration'), delegated responsibility for these elections will be placed with the nominated Deputy Returning Officers.

Returning Officer team: Dan Moloney, Director of Strategy and Democracy and Amy Undrell, Head of Programmes.

Complaints should be sent via email only to oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk.