

# OU STUDENTS ELECTIONS

## OU Students Association Election Rules 2024

### **1. Eligibility**

Only full members of the 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 Central Executive Committee 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 the Association.

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.

Candidates must not have been expelled from Association membership or have been suspended from volunteering due to a disciplinary ruling.

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 the OU Students Association.

### **2. Role-specific eligibility**

- Candidates for President and Deputy President must have the right to work in the UK, as these are paid positions. Candidates will be asked to confirm their eligibility during the nomination process.
- Candidates for the roles of President, Deputy President, Vice-President Administration and Vice-President Student Welfare must not be disqualified from acting as a Charity Trustee or Company Director.
- All candidates for all other roles on the Central Executive Committee, 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 the Students Association in publications, all associated online platforms and at events.
- Candidates for Student Trustee positions must not be disqualified from acting as a Charity Trustee or Company Director.

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

(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/automatic-disqualification-rules-for-charity-trustees-and-charity-senior-positions>).

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/820804/Disqualification\\_Reasons\\_Table\\_v2.odt](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820804/Disqualification_Reasons_Table_v2.odt)

Please be aware that we will carry out eligibility checks on all candidates prior to announcement of candidacy. Successful candidates will be required to sign the Charity Commission's declaration of eligibility and responsibility. It is an offence under Section 60(1)b of the Charities Act 2011 to knowingly or recklessly provide false or misleading information.

Standard DBS checks will be required before commencement to the following roles: Student Trustee, President, Deputy President, Vice President Administration, Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Vice President Student Welfare.

Faculty and Area Representatives:

- Faculty Representatives must either be enrolled for a module or registered for a qualification within the appropriate Faculty.
- The Open and Access Representative must fulfil one of the following criteria:
  - Currently studying an Access module.
  - Have studied an Access module within the last two years.
  - Be currently studying towards an Open degree.

- 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](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk) during the nominations process.

### 3. Roles available

Association Officers	8 positions in total: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ President</li> <li>✓ Deputy President</li> <li>✓ 6 Vice-Presidents (Administration; Community and Engagement; Academic Student Voice; Student Representation; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI); Student Welfare).</li> </ul>
Student Trustees	6 positions in total.
Student Member of (OU) Council	1 position.
Faculty Representatives	5 positions in total. One for each University Faculty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)</li> <li>✓ Business and Law (FBL)</li> <li>✓ Open and Access</li> <li>✓ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)</li> <li>✓ Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)</li> </ul>
Area Representatives	5 positions in total. 1 each for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ England</li> <li>✓ International</li> <li>✓ Ireland</li> <li>✓ Scotland</li> <li>✓ Wales</li> </ul>
Other Representatives	2 positions in total. 1 each for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Representative</li> <li>✓ Sustainability Representative</li> </ul>

**Candidates can only stand for one role.**

Further details on all roles, including role descriptions and summary information can be found on the [OU Students Association election website](#).

### 4. Timetable

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

Event	Date (2024)
Nominations Open	Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup> March
Nominations Close	Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> March
Mandatory candidate briefings	1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> April
Announce Candidates and Profiles Live	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> April
Video Q and A for President and Deputy President	Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> April
Voting Opens	Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> April
Voting Closes	Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> May
Results Announced	Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> May

## 5. Nomination form

To stand for election, candidates must complete a nomination form via the online voting portal at [www.cesvotes.com/ousa2024](http://www.cesvotes.com/ousa2024). Candidates should understand that the completed nomination form and answers provided will be published as their candidate profile throughout the 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 the Students Association. 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. Additional words above the word limit will be deleted. 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 attend a **mandatory** briefing with Association staff following submission of their nomination. The purpose of this session is to:

- support candidates in understanding the process, the time commitments and role remits.
- establish whether there is anything we need to know to allow us to best support you throughout the process.
- Allow you to ask questions about the role, process, or other aspects.
- Verify your identity and confirm your intention to commit the role if elected.

Multiple time slots will be available, non-attendance will result in your nomination being removed. Candidates who are unable to attend any of the advertised briefings should email [oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk) to make alternative arrangements if they want to progress their nomination.

Candidates must upload a photograph. The photograph can be a photo of you, or a logo or object which represents your campaign. It is important to remember though, many voters prefer to see who they are voting for. If you choose to use a photo of yourself, it should be a suitable portrait picture. Please bear in mind that any content must be suitable for public consumption and shouldn't breach any of the campaign rules.

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

## 6. Campaigning

Once a candidate has submitted their nomination form, they are free to announce their own candidacy and 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 the Students Association.
- ✓ 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 role within the Association may continue to act in that capacity throughout the process. However, they must not discuss their candidature during official duties.
- ✓ must refrain from running or encouraging negative campaigns against other candidates, the OU Students Association, or the elections process itself. This would constitute bringing the Students Association 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 through the Association and the online voting portal.
- ✓ must ensure they do not seek endorsement for their campaign through a decision or from official representatives of the Executive, Board of Trustees, subsidiary of the Association, Association staff team or advisor, university staff, 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 spam voters or official Association 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 [election 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 the Association 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, Association staff, University staff and the reputation of both the Association 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](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk).

## **9. Candidate Q&A**

Following the close of the nominations process, all eligible candidate profiles will be uploaded to the online voting portal and made public by Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024. All voters and other candidates will be able to read the profiles and manifestos.

After attending the mandatory briefing, candidates for the President and Deputy President roles will be sent 2 additional questions and invited to submit video responses to each question. The video responses will then be shared via the Students Association website ahead of the opening of voting.

Candidates can request support from the Students Association staff team to record a video response. This support will only be to facilitate recording, and will not include help to answer the questions.

Submission of video responses is not mandatory, however, candidates who fail to submit a video response to the questions should do so in the knowledge that this may place them at a disadvantage against other candidates.

## **10. Voting**

Voting is open to Association 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. Eligible students will receive voting information in due course via direct email from the Association 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 1<sup>st</sup> May should email [oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk).

There will be a facility to vote for 'none of the above candidates' for all single-position roles (Association Officers, Student Member of Council, Faculty Reps, Nation and Area Reps). 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 in all elections for the Association Officers, Trustees, Student Member of Council and Faculty Reps.

Voters can only vote for the Area Rep 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 election results will be announced live in the first OU Students Association Conference 2024 Debate session on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May. The full results will be published on the [Association website](#) immediately after this session on Friday 10 May.

Candidates will be informed of the result of their election directly by email 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, or is removed subject to the disciplinary process prior to the start of the new term, the Students Association 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 OU Students elections email inbox will be monitored throughout the period by staff supporting the elections 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](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk) no later than 10th June 2024. Any complaint received after this date will be dealt with via the Students Association's [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 voters docked
- ✓ Disqualification of a candidate or a voter
- ✓ Referral of the matter to the Association's disciplinary procedures
- ✓ Referral of the matter to the University's disciplinary procedures

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

Per By-law 10, the Chief Executive is the Returning Officer for the Association. Upon agreement with VP Admin, delegated responsibility for these elections will be placed with the nominated Deputy Returning Officers for these elections.

Returning Officer team: Beth Metcalf, Chief Executive and Dan Moloney, Director of Engagement and Amy Undrell, Head of Strategy and Insights.

Complaints should be sent via email only to [oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk](mailto:oustudents-elections@open.ac.uk).