

Motion Name: Clarifying the role of Democratic Standards Committee during Elections

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Seconders: Pat Gibbs (pat.gibbs@bristol.ac.uk)

Background:

1. Students' Union Elections are monitored by the Deputy Returning Officer, with an external Returning Officer to offer any final rulings (Byelaws 3.4, 3.5)
2. Election and Referenda Rules are set out by Democratic Standards Committee, who are democratically elected students (Byelaws 3.3, 3.8, 4.7, 10.8)
3. In reality the SU carries out rulings on elections via the Deputy Returning Officer, using the election rules, and the Returning Officer is consulted if there is a major rules breach which needs to be escalated
4. Bristol SU allows self-nomination in our elections, but the byelaws make reference to requiring nominees to have nomination support from their peers. This is an outdated and an unnecessary barrier to students hoping to stand in our elections
5. There is also confusion on the timeline of elections, the roles that students can stand for as well as what roles they can vote for

Purpose:

1. To clarify the role of the Democratic Standards Committee on how they set and approve election rules
2. To clarify the role of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer to align with current practices
3. To ensure a clear referral to the Appeals on Elections Complaints Procedure

Actions:

1. To change the relevant Byelaw 3 and clauses under Elections to reflect current practices for the Deputy Returning Officer and Returning Officer
 - a. **Byelaw 3, Clause 4 - new proposed wording:** The Returning Officer is the ultimate competent official to adjudicate election decisions except for appeals to their decisions. Their appointed Deputy will help deliberate and operationally deliver election rulings
 - b. **Byelaw 3, Clause 6 - new proposed wording:** The Returning Officer has the power to appoint deputies and other election officials from staff of the Union, Members and appropriate external people. Any external appointments must be

notified to the Board of Trustees. All staff appointments must be authorised by the Chief Executive. The Deputy shall serve as executive decision maker for most of Elections with the Returning Officer approving major decisions such as the disqualification of a candidate.

- c. **Byelaw 3, Clause 8 - new wording:** The Returning Officer is responsible for approving the election or referendum regulations which are set out by the Democratic Standards Committee (as defined in Byelaw 6).
 - d. **Byelaw 3, Clause 11 - new wording:** Notice of elections must be given a minimum of seven days before nominations open. Nominations must be open for at least fourteen days before the opening of polling. Polling must be open for at least one day and no more than ten days. This will be amenable for any relevant by-elections that needs to take place outside of usual election periods.
 - e. **A removal of Byelaw 3, Clause 15** (“Members require at least two and not more than five other Student Members to nominate them for a position.”)
2. To amend **Byelaw 10, Clause 8** to read:
- “In the event that a Student Member is found to have breached elections regulations, the Deputy Returning Officer may instigate sanctions. Should a student wish to appeal these sanctions they may appeal to the Returning Officer.
- a. This specifically refer to appealing of any Election Rulings, rather than appeals of Code of Conduct breaches.
 - b. Should a student wish to appeal a decision regarding a Student Code of Conduct breach they must follow the process laid out in the Union’s Complaints Policy”
3. To clarify in Byelaw 10 regarding Student Appeals that the appeals process for Elections will be outlined in the Election Rules unless relevant to student member conduct (the purpose of the student appeal process)
4. To amend Byelaw 8, clause 4 sections A and B from 6 months to 9 months regarding setting up a by-election for a Full-Time Officer vacancy.