

## 1. GENERAL

- 1.1. These Election Rules (the Rules) apply for all Rectorial Elections conducted at the University of Aberdeen.
- 1.2. These Rules are in addition to and without prejudice to any other University Policy or Procedure. Where an existing policy exists, it shall take priority in resolving an issue during the course of an election.
- 1.3. All documentation and information relating specifically to the election will be made available on the Rectorial Election Website (the Website) – [www.abdn.ac.uk/rector](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rector) with more information being available by emailing [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk)

## 2. THE ROLE AND ELIGIBILITY OF RECTOR

- 2.1. The successful person will take office as Rector on the first day of the second clear month after their election as per the timeline detailed in Annex A and will hold office for three years from the date on which they take office.
- 2.2. The Rector is an ex officio member of the University Court, with the statutory right to preside over Court meetings, and is therefore a charity trustee. Accordingly, all candidates are required to declare their eligibility to serve as a charity trustee under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) guidelines at the time of nomination. A form for completion by the Candidate confirming their eligibility in this regard is included with the nomination form and must be completed by the Candidate and submitted with the nomination before it can be validated.
- 2.3. The Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, Section 11, states that no person who holds an appointment in the University of Aberdeen shall be eligible for election as Rector. Additionally, no registered student at the University of Aberdeen is eligible to stand for Rector.
- 2.4. The University will meet expenses incurred by the Rector relating to travel and accommodation on official University business throughout their period of office. The Rector receives no salary or payment for the role.

## 3. ELECTION OVERSIGHT

- 3.1. In accordance with Ordinance 115, the Senate has responsibility for making arrangements for the conduct of an election for Rector. This includes approval of the Rules, the appointment of the Returning Officer and the Elections Committee and confirmation of the Student Elections Committee. The University Court will formally fix the election date following consultation with the Senate and Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) and the timeline for the election is set out in Annex A.
- 3.2. The Senate will confirm the membership of a Student Elections Committee (SEC) composed of four members of the Student Council (appointed by the members of the Student Council) and one Sabbatical Officer (nominated by AUSA) on or before the date specified in the timeline for the election set out in Annex A. The SEC will have the following responsibilities:
- promoting interest in the Rectorial election and ensuring a fair election designed to secure a well-qualified and committed candidate for the post;
  - considering and resolving any actual or alleged minor infringements of these Election Rules which come to or are otherwise brought to its attention;
  - notifying the Returning Officer of actual or alleged serious infringements of these Election Rules which come to or are otherwise brought to its attention (including repeated instances of minor infringements, breaches of undertakings given about future conduct and instances where the SEC has been unable to secure a satisfactory resolution to an actual or alleged breach) and which, if established, may result in the imposition of an appropriate sanction by the Returning Officer; and
  - arranging hustings and ensuring all candidates are offered equal opportunities in such events.

Members of the SEC cannot take any other role in the election process (other than casting their own votes) nor serve as a member of the Elections Committee. The quorum for meetings of the SEC is three members. The Chair of the SEC will be the Sabbatical Officer member (or in their absence, another member of the SEC they appoint). The Chair shall have a casting vote. Business of the SEC can be conducted by any combination of email circulation, video or telephone conference or in-person meeting as long as all decisions taken are "quorate".

- 3.3. The Senate will appoint a Returning Officer on or before the date specified in the timeline for the election set out in Annex A. The Returning Officer will be responsible for overseeing the process of voting and campaigning and ensuring that the fullest range of candidates as possible is available to the electorate. The Returning Officer will have the following responsibilities:
- assessing and determining the eligibility of candidates to stand for and hold the office of Rector and validating nominations;
  - briefing of all candidates and their campaign teams at the nomination meeting in relation to the timetable and conduct of the election and generally providing advice and guidance to candidates and campaign teams to help them understand and comply with these Election Rules;
  - considering and resolving any actual or alleged infringements of these Election Rules which come to or are otherwise brought to its attention;
  - considering and dealing with any dissatisfaction raised regarding the decisions of the SEC in dealing with minor infringements;
  - overseeing the count of the votes and announcing the result of voting.

- 3.4. The Senate will also appoint an Elections Committee. The Elections Committee will comprise: three staff members of Senate (at least two of whom shall be elected Senators); three student members of Senate (elected by AUSA and normally including the Education Officer); and the University Secretary (or deputy confirmed by Senate). Senate will appoint a Chairperson from the Committee. The student members of the Elections Committee will not be permitted to take any other role in the election process (other than casting their own votes) nor serve as members of the SEC. The Elections Committee has overall responsibility, on behalf of Senate, for overseeing the interpretation of these Election Rules and the proper conduct of the election in accordance with these Rules and for considering any appeals against the decisions of the Returning Officer (including decisions to impose or not to impose sanctions and any decision to annul or not to annul the election). The quorum for meetings of the Elections Committee is five members. The Chair shall have a casting vote. Business of the Committee can be conducted by any combination of email circulation, video or telephone conference or in-person meeting as long as all decisions taken are “quorate”.
- 3.5. Where a member of the Elections Committee or SEC stands down from their post after their confirmation, the Chair of the respective committee shall have the power to seek a replacement. Any replacement committee member must meet the initial criteria for selection and will require co-option by a majority vote of the respective committee.
- 3.6. The Returning Officer will have the power to appoint a deputy to undertake all their duties in these Rules.
- 3.7. The Academic Registrar has responsibility for the administration of the Election. The Academic Registrar (together with any deputies selected by them) will be the first point of contact for all matters in relation to the Election and they will liaise, as appropriate, with candidates, the campaign teams, the SEC, the Returning Officer and the Elections Committee in managing the election. The Website will display details of any deputies. Deputies can act on behalf of the Academic Registrar for all issues referred to in these Rules.
- 3.8. Details of the relative responsibilities of the SEC, the Returning Officer and the Elections Committee in dealing with allegations of infringement of election rules and of appeals and complaints are in section 10 of these rules.

#### **4. NOMINATIONS**

- 4.1. Nominations will open and close in line with the timeline for this election detailed in Annex A. No nominations will be accepted after nomination period ends.
- 4.2. Nomination forms will be available to download from the Website together with details of how they can be submitted.
- 4.3. Each nomination must be signed by the Candidate, supported by two Proposers and further signed by fifty Sponsors. Proposers and Sponsors must be registered students of the University at the time they sign the nomination form. In signing the nomination form, the Candidate and their Proposers will confirm that they understand and agree to abide by the Election Rules.

- 4.4. Nomination forms must be accompanied by (i) a photo of the Candidate (ii) a Manifesto Statement not exceeding 500 words in length, including any links to campaign websites/social media platforms, (iii) a short biography of the candidate for publicity purposes not exceeding 150 words in length, and (iv) the signed form of eligibility as a charity trustee (provided as part of the nomination form) signed by the Candidate.
- 4.5. No student may propose or sponsor more than one candidate. Proposers of a candidate cannot also act as a Sponsor for their nominee. If they do, their sponsorship will be deducted from the total number of sponsors on that form. Should this leave less than 50 sponsors the nomination will be unsuccessful.
- 4.6. Where a Proposer or Sponsor signs more than one form, their signature will be deducted from the total number of sponsors on both sponsor forms. Should this leave less than fifty sponsors the nomination will be unsuccessful.
- 4.7. No sabbatical officer of AUSA is permitted to nominate or propose a candidate.
- 4.8. The two Proposers agree to be the main points of contact for all communications related to the election. The Candidate and their proposers will be responsible for managing their election campaign and ensuring adherence to these Rules.
- 4.9. Nominations will be validated by the Returning Officer. Any nominations determined to be invalid or incomplete at or after the close of nominations will not be accepted. No exceptions or re-submissions will be permitted.
- 4.10. Proposers or Seconders may remove their support of a Candidate at any time before the close of nominations by emailing [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk) from their University email account.
- 4.10. By submitting a nomination, the Candidate and their Proposers agree to abide by the Election Rules.
- 4.11. By submitting a nomination, the Candidate acknowledges the protocol established by the University Court for the distinction of roles between Rector and the Senior Governor provided on the Website.
- 4.12. The Candidate (subject to availability) and the two Proposers for each candidate must attend a nomination meeting with the Returning Officer, the Chair of the SEC, the University Secretary and the Academic Registrar as a condition of their nomination form being validated. These individuals may send a deputy where required. Opportunity for Candidates to participate by video conference will be provided if requested at the time the nomination form is submitted. This meeting will enable the Proposers and Candidates to be briefed on the roles and responsibilities of the post of Rector, the election Rules and campaign conduct. This briefing will take place at the date and time detailed in Annex A. The validity of nominations will be confirmed at this meeting and followed-up in writing to Candidates and their Proposers following the meeting.

- 4.13 In the event of only one nomination being submitted, the election will be held with an alternative option of reopening nominations being provided to voters.
- 4.14 Candidates may withdraw their nominations by submitting notification in writing to the Returning Officer by emailing [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk).

## 5. CAMPAIGNING

- 5.1. Campaigning is regarded as any activity by a Candidate or campaign team member which is designed to encourage a member of the electorate to vote one way or another with regard to the election. The timeline for campaigning is detailed in Annex A. Electronic campaigning is permitted before the start of physical campaigning and may involve the use of social media and websites. Physical campaigning encompasses all campaigning activities and communications other than electronic communications and the use of social media.
- 5.2. Candidates and their Proposers shall be responsible for their election campaign and the conduct of their campaign team members.
- 5.3. Candidates and their campaign teams are expected to run responsible campaigns which respect the rights of other candidates and others in the University and the local community.
- There will be no restrictions on the location and media that may be employed for publicity, but candidates and their campaign teams should not put posters on any scaffolding or on any construction site on campus or otherwise where it is illegal or unsafe to do so. Additionally, campaign teams are reminded that they must be aware of the Conservation Zone around the University and that any posters put up out with campus (including the High Street which is Council property) may be considered fly-posting. Campaigns should seek appropriate permission when placing posters out with campus. All campaign materials must be capable of easy removal and must not cause damage to the item on which they are attached;
  - Candidates may utilise social media platforms as part of their Campaign (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat) and websites. Any costs associated with the use of such presences constitute election expenses and must be included in any claim of election expenses.
  - Active campaigning on campus is permitted within publically accessible areas in University-owned or managed buildings but must not take place during any formal teaching event or within private spaces (such as offices or bedrooms in Halls of Residence);
  - Items of clothing or accessories that indicate an individuals' affiliation to a specific campaign (provided they are included within the expenditure limit) are permitted but wearing of such items is classified as active campaigning under these Rules;

- Candidates and their campaign teams are responsible for attention to health and safety considerations. They must not place themselves or others in jeopardy;
- Candidates and their campaign teams must not break the law or bring the University into disrepute;
- Spoiling or removal of other campaigns' materials (such as posters) is not permitted by another campaign or team;
- All campaign materials (e.g. posters) must be taken down within 24 hours of the close of voting. If this is not done, they will be removed by Estates and charged as a campaign expense;
- Nothing in these Rules prevents a member of University staff or external body from removing or prohibiting activity on campus during the course of the election.

5.5 The Academic Registrar will arrange for one email to be sent to all students containing a link to the Rectorial Election Website where Manifesto Statements will be placed. This email will be sent during the period of electronic campaigning.

5.6 The SEC will make arrangements for and oversee the conduct of the Rectorial Election Hustings to take place during campaigning. The Hustings will be chaired by the chair of the SEC (or nominee) who will ensure these are operated fairly. All questions must be submitted in advance or via the chair. It is expected that the same format used in AUSA elections will be used for the Rectorial Election Hustings.

5.7 AUSA Sabbatical Officers are not permitted to endorse or campaign for a candidate both in their capacity as an AUSA Sabbatical and on a personal basis.

5.8 AUSA Societies and Sports Clubs may endorse candidates but only if a majority of their committee members are in support.

5.9 Campaigns may not use any AUSA Society, AUSA Sports Club or School mailing list or affiliated social media platforms to harvest email addresses, phone numbers, or any other data for campaign purposes.

5.10 Campaign teams are not permitted to use any AUSA resources to assist with campaigning, this includes social media platforms and other websites.

5.11 University and AUSA staff cannot support or endorse specific candidates or assist with campaigning.

## **6 EXPENSES**

- 6.1 Each campaign team is limited to spending £300 in connection with promoting their own campaign. This includes, but is not limited to, expenditure on items such as posters, leaflets, advertisements and websites. The University will reimburse permitted expenditure of up to £300. Candidates may not personally supplement their campaign expenditure or obtain additional sponsorship.
- 6.2 The University will not refund any expenses relating to travel, legal costs, accommodation or subsistence of the campaign team or Candidate.
- 6.3 Evidence of all expenditure, in the form of original receipts and invoices must be submitted within five working days of the close of voting.
- 6.4 Where reimbursement of expenses is requested, a single payment of up to £300 will be made to one individual from each campaign team relating to all expenses. To make a claim for expenses the individual will be asked to complete any necessary forms and provide full details of each item they wish to claim for up to the limit outlined in 6.1. Payments will be made by bank transfer only. Full details on the claim process will be made available at the Nominations Meeting.

## **7 VOTING**

- 7.1 Voting will take place for this election in line with the timeline detailed in Annex A.
- 7.2 Voting will take place electronically through an external provider as detailed on the Website.
- 7.3 Registered students will be eligible to vote other than those who have been given temporary registration.
- 7.4 In addition to the Candidates, an alternative option of Reopen Nominations will be provided to voters.
- 7.5 Provision will be made for those students unable to vote electronically. Procedures for requesting an alternative voting method will be displayed on the Website or can be requested from the Academic Registrar.
- 7.6 The electoral roll will be compiled as of noon one week before the day voting opens.
- 7.7 At the close of the voting period the result will be determined electronically using software provided by ERS.
- 7.8 Each voter will be allowed an alternative transferable vote and may indicate the order of preference in which they wished to place the candidates. At the end of the first counting of votes, if a candidate has received 50 per cent plus one of the total votes cast they shall be declared elected. If no candidate has an overall majority then the candidate with the least votes shall be eliminated and each of their votes will be transferred to whichever candidate has been listed second in order of preference. These transferred votes shall each count as

one full vote. This process shall be repeated until either one candidate has obtained 50 per cent plus one of the total votes cast or there are only two candidates left who have not been eliminated, in which case the candidate of those two with the most votes shall be declared as elected. In the event of an equality of votes for two or more candidates at any stage of the count then the candidate to be excluded shall be decided by the relative placing of the candidates at the most recent stage of the count at which their votes were unequal (or if equal at all stages by the drawing of lots).

- 7.9 Candidates and their campaign teams are not permitted to support students in the act of voting. Any questions on the voting process should be directed to the SEC or to [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk)
- 7.10 Voters are responsible for raising any issues with casting their vote directly with the External Provider of the voting system.

## **8 ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS**

- 8.1 The result of the election will be announced as soon as possible after the close of voting. The result will be announced at a venue and time designated by the Returning Officer as outlined on the Website and detailed in Annex A.
- 8.2 The following people are permitted to be present at the announcement should they wish to attend: the two proposers of each candidate; the Candidates; a representative of AUSA; Chair of the SEC; Chair of the Elections Committee; the University Secretary; and the Academic Registrar. The Returning Officer has the authority to permit additional people to be present at the announcement of the results.
- 8.3 The Returning Officer will declare the result of the election once it has been provided, and verified, by the external provider.
- 8.4 Within a period of 24 hours following the declaration of the result, any person wishing to appeal or complain must do so in writing to the Academic Registrar specifying the ground of complaint. Such appeals or complaints will be referred to the Elections Committee (see 10.6).

## **9 ELECTION CONDUCT**

- 9.1 Campaigns for the position of Rector shall be positive in their nature and should be based on the merits of the candidate and their own qualifications and manifesto.
- 9.2 Information that is provided during the campaign should be factual and accurate.
- 9.3 Campaigns must not cause a nuisance to the University or, wider, local community or engage in any behaviour which may bring the University into disrepute.



## 10 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

- 10.1 Any questions regarding these Rules can be raised in the first instance with the Academic Registrar for clarification or further information by emailing [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk).
- 10.2 Any concerns or allegations of infringement of election rules should be lodged by emailing [rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rectorelection@abdn.ac.uk). Detailed information of the complaint (including which Rule(s) are alleged to have been broken; and details of who is alleged to have broken the rules), must be submitted together with all supporting evidence at the outset of the complaint. Matters received will be referred by the Academic Registrar to the relevant body for attention.
- 10.3 Complaints relating to any alleged breaches of these Election Rules must be submitted within 24 hours of the issue occurring or the complainant becoming first aware of the issue. In any event, all complaints must be received within 24 hours following the official outcome of the election being declared.
- 10.4 The SEC shall have the responsibility for dealing with all first instances of any minor allegation of infringement of election rules, particularly with respect to campaigning. Repeat offences of the same issue will be referred to the Returning Officer. The SEC's approach in dealing with such issues should take the form of working with teams to resolve problems, including but not limited to:-
- obtaining voluntary undertakings from infringing candidates and campaign teams about future conduct;
  - securing the voluntary removal of infringing materials;
  - securing voluntary apologies from candidates and campaign teams for campaign misconduct (which the SEC in its discretion may require to be released publicly or to be given only to individuals or organisations affected by the misconduct).

The SEC does **not** have the power to impose sanctions for breaches of these Rules.

- 10.5 Repeat occurrences of the same infringement of election rules or allegations or instances of more serious infringements requiring the imposition of sanctions will be escalated to the Returning Officer for consideration).
- 10.6 The Returning Officer will have discretion as to how best to resolve such allegations and infringements including but not limited to:-
- referring actual or alleged minor infringements to the SEC for consideration and resolution;
  - obtaining voluntary undertakings from infringing candidates and campaign teams about future conduct;
  - securing the voluntary removal of infringing materials;

- securing voluntary apologies from candidates and campaign teams for campaign misconduct (which the Student Election Committee in its discretion may require to be released publicly or to be given only to individuals or organisations affected by the misconduct);
- imposing the following sanctions on candidates and/or their campaign teams:-
  - imposing fines on the candidate;
  - serving a notice (a “**Compliance Notice**”) requiring a candidate and/or campaign that has broken these Election Rules to comply in future. Failure to comply with a Compliance Notice may result in a fine, a Stop Notice or Disqualification;
  - serving a notice (a “**Restoration Notice**”) setting out actions that must be taken by a candidate or a campaign team that has broken these Election Rules to restore the position, as far as possible, to what it would have been if they had not broken these Election Rules. Failure to comply with a Restoration Notice may result in a fine, a Stop Notice or Disqualification;
  - serving a notice (a “**Stop Notice**”) which prohibits a candidate or a campaign team from carrying on or beginning a specified activity (including but not limited to campaigning) until the steps set out in the notice are taken; and
  - serving a notice (a “**Disqualification Notice**”) disqualifying a candidate from the election because of a material breach of the Rules (including but not limited to any failure to pay a fine or comply with a Compliance Notice, a Restoration Notice or a Stop Notice).

When applying sanctions or seeking other means of resolving issues the Returning Officer will act proportionately and fairly at all times.

10.6 If at any time the Returning Office determines that, as a consequence of some event or action (for example, tampering with votes, voters being unable to vote due to a voting system failure or material breaches of these Election Rules), the integrity and/or fairness of the election has been (or will be) seriously undermined and the veracity or fairness of the election result is in doubt, then the Returning Officer may annul the election.

10.6 Any complaints about, or appeals from, the SEC will be referred to the Returning Officer in the first instance. Appeals against a decision of the SEC will only be considered on grounds of procedure, competency or prejudice.

10.7 Appeals against any decision of the Returning Officer will be considered by the Elections Committee. Appeals against a decision of the Returning Officer will only be considered on grounds of procedure, competency or prejudice. Appeals must be submitted to the Academic Registrar within 24 hours of the decision being sent to the party appealing. The Elections Committee may exercise all of the powers available to the Returning Officer including sanctions and annulment when determining the outcome of an appeal. The Elections Committee shall have discretion as to the timing of and the procedures to follow

in any appeal with a view to enabling any party they deem appropriate to engage in the process (including the complainant; respondent; witnesses and the Returning Officer). All decisions of the Elections Committee will be final and there is no further route of appeal.

- 10.8 The Returning Officer and Chair of the Elections Committee shall determine if they believe an appeal to them is competent under these rules as they arise.

## ELECTION TIMELINE

Appointment of Student Election Committee	On or before 9am on Monday 25 October 2021
Appointment of Returning Officer	On or before 9am on Monday 18 October 2021
Appointment of Election Committee	On or before 9am on Monday 25 October 2021
Call for nominations opens	9am on Monday 25 October 2021
Call for nominations closes	1pm on Thursday 4 November 2021
Briefing meeting	2pm on Friday 5 November 2021
Electronic campaigning open	12.01am on Monday 8 November 2021
Physical campaigning open	12.01am on Monday 15 November 2021
Election hustings	TBC by AUSA
Voting opens	9am on Tuesday 16 November 2021
Voting closes	5pm on Thursday 18 November 2021
Results declared	Provisionally at 6pm on Thursday 18 November 2021
New Rector to take up office	1 January 2022
Rector's term of office concludes	31 December 2024

All times listed are GMT.