



Election Rules

10/2024

A nominee of the National Union of Students (NUS) is the appointed Returning Officer (RO) for Aston Students' Union.

Aston Students' Union has a nominated Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) to oversee the administration of the Election Rules on site at Aston Students' Union.

DRO Steering Committee

The DRO will appoint DRO Steering Committee consisting of 3 members of staff from Aston Students' Union. The DRO will consult the Steering Committee daily throughout the period of the election. The Steering Committee will be informed of all decisions made by the DRO.

Decisions of the DRO can be appealed to the RO within the framework of these rules.

Decisions of RO are final and cannot be appealed to any other body.

Complaints must be submitted to union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk, by the date and time published on the Aston Students' Union website.

Decision Making

Decisions made by the Returning Officer (and the Deputy Returning Officer) are based on:

- Election Rules
- Complainant submissions.
- Strength of evidence
- Proportionality
- The material impact of any decisions made.

The RO, DRO and DRO Steering Committee will consider:

1. Who has complained and what is it about?
2. Which election rule may have been breached?
3. What is the quality of the complaint and the strength of the evidence?
4. Is the decision proportionate?
5. What is the wider material impact of this decision?

Records are kept of the decision and the reason for the decision.

Ignorance of the rules will not ordinarily be considered a defence in the event of a breach of an Election Rule.

Budget

Candidates shall each have a budget of **£50**.

Candidates standing on a Slate/Team are permitted to combine their budget allowance.

1. **No coercion.** This means candidates cannot pressurise or force students to vote for them. Standing over a student and watching them vote will be seen as coercion. Candidates must not give electronic devices to voters when asking them to vote. Candidates cannot take someone's phone and cast their vote for them. All students should be given a free and fair choice at the point of voting.
2. **No bribery (financial or otherwise).** This means that candidates and campaign teams cannot pay students to vote for you or offer to do something for them to get them to vote for you. Candidates must not bribe other candidates to participate in any not approved slate(s) or to be part of an existing slate(s).
3. **No illegal discrimination.** Candidates should not do anything that could be discriminatory against protected characteristics (Gender Identification, Race, Religion, Disability, and Sexual Orientation).
4. **Candidates must be open and honest in their campaigning.** Online spamming and trolling types of behaviour and physical intimidation may be a breach of this rule. Vexatious (deliberately untrue) complaints by a candidate may be a breach of this rule. Deliberately untrue complaints by other students may be considered a breach of the SU Code of Conduct.

5. **Local rules apply within the University.** All current Aston University and Aston SU rules must be complied with. For example, no campaigning is allowed in the University library. This includes printed materials. Candidates should also not create campaign content in the University library.
6. **Pre-campaigning is not allowed.** This means campaigning before campaigning has been permitted by the SU.
7. **All candidates must keep to the fixed budget.** Overspending of the budget will result in disqualification. Candidates may use their budget for printing materials. Candidates may use the free printing facilities available to them via the University. For each free A4 item printed will reduce your campaign budget by 10p and for A3 by 20p. In addition there will be a further 10p sustainability surcharge for each A4 and 20p for each A3. This surcharge applies whether or not the printing is from free printing. The charges must be paid for within the budget. Candidates must declare the amount of printing they have used.
8. **All campaign materials should be approved in principle by the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO).** This does not include every social media post but core materials such as manifestos, posters and flyers/leaflets must be submitted in advance to be approved.
9. **Candidates must submit a written manifesto by the appropriate deadline.** Failure to do so may result in being removed from the Elections as a candidate.
10. **Current officers or students in a position within the union/university must not use facilities or information available in their official capacity to them to advantage themselves.** For example, SU Course Reps using email lists/social media that they have as a result of being a Rep to contact voters. This does not include social media accounts that are owned by that student within a personal capacity or access to individuals through your own private networks. Current officers should not use social media accounts that they use for their officer position in order to campaign.
11. **Union clubs and societies can endorse or support a particular candidate.** Club and society committees must vote to endorse a candidate and the Student Voice team should be informed. Individual members of a particular club or society can state using their personal social media for example, "I am the Secretary of Aston Coffee

Drinkers Society and I say vote for Candidate X". The group can also say "Aston Coffee Drinkers Society supports Candidate X and vote for Candidate X...."

11.1 Candidates must not canvas or seek the support of Aston University or SU staff.

12. Campaigning must be done by students at Aston to students at Aston. Campaign teams can only be formed with Aston University Students

12.1 Candidates must inform the Union Voice team who their campaign teams are before the voting opens. The DRO reserves the discretion to decide that person belongs to a candidate campaign team.

12.2 Candidates will be held responsible for their campaign team members' behaviour.

13. Candidates are not allowed to have endorsement of any kind for the purpose of campaigning from external companies, organisations, business, and/or people.

14. Candidate teams/slates are permitted. The DRO should be informed when a slate/team exists. If the DRO is not informed that a group of candidates are standing on a slate/team the DRO will look to the facts and the reality of the situation to decide whether candidates are standing as part of a slate/team.

14.1 A slate/team are a group of candidates (2 or more) running together. Candidates who run as a slate are able to combine their budget to produce joint campaigning materials such as leaflets, posters etc.

15. Complaints should be submitted to the DRO (union.returningofficer@aston.ac.uk) in a timely manner and at the latest, 2 hours after voting has closed. Please note, in order for the DRO to make a valid decision, evidence is required. If you witness a breach of campaigning rules please indicate the specific time, date, and location, to assist with the investigation.