

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION

LEADERSHIP RACE

#LEADTHECHANGE

YOUR ELECTION HANDBOOK

2025

WHAT'S IN THE PACK?

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Welcome to your one-stop shop for all things Leadership Race! Your Student Voice team pulled together this document to make both voting and running in the Leadership Race as easy as possible!

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ELECTION CALENDAR · When do nominations open? How about voting? Okay, can I have a calendar of all that written down, please? (Yes!)

CANDIDATE GUIDE · How do I nominate myself? What's involved in running? Can you help me with campaigning? Are there rules?

ELECTION GLOSSARY · What do all these words and acronyms mean? I need a refresher! (We got you!)

WHAT'S THE LEADERSHIP RACE?

INTRO TO ELECTIONS



The Leadership Race is our annual election, where *you* get to elect students to represent your student group, subject, and just you as a student body!

There are three types of roles that are elected during the Leadership Race:

- Student Group Committees (these are the volunteers that run our clubs and societies)
- Subject Reps (this voluntary role is an integral part of our representative structure, connecting Course Reps and peers to both the Union *and* University)
- Full-Time Officer (a full-time, paid role where you take a year out of your studies to champion student voice and make change at Staffs)

Each of these positions is elected in the very same way:

- A student will nominate themselves for a role they feel they would be good at
- The student has the opportunity to submit a manifesto (mandatory for Full-Time Officer candidates), outlining what they would do if elected
- The candidate may then run a campaign to get eyes (and votes!) on them
- Voting opens for three days on our website, where all members are eligible to vote
- The votes are then counted, and the winners are announced in a live streamed ceremony!

WHAT'S THE LEADERSHIP RACE?

INTRO TO ELECTIONS



“Okay, okay! But why do all this each year?”

As a Students' Union, we are run for students, by students. This means we need to be sure everything we're doing is in the student body's best interest. Electing the students who best represent you and your needs ensures that we're working to the right priorities and supporting you the best we can each year. (Also, we technically do '*all this*' twice a year - we have a smaller by-election in the autumn!)

“And how does this voting process work?”

We use a voting process called 'single transferable vote', which is just a fancy way of saying that you can vote for as many candidates as you like, in order of preference. If your top-choice candidate does not receive enough votes (or has already secured a position!), your vote will pass down to your second preference, and so on. This way your vote is never wasted, and everyone has the opportunity to impact change on campus.

“How do we know this is fair?”

The Leadership Race has a small list of rules to keep everything fair and running smoothly. The election is also overseen by an external Returning Officer from the NUS and a Deputy Returning Officer from our lovely Student Voice team, who collect any complaints and investigate any potential issues or rule breaks.

WHAT'S THE LEADERSHIP RACE?

INTRO TO ELECTIONS



“This all sounds awesome! When can I vote?”

This year, our voting period runs from the 29th of April to the 1st of May. But there's a lot that goes into an election, so check out the calendar on the next page for all the important dates!

“Where can I find out more about the roles?”

There is more information about all available posts (including full role descriptors) on the Leadership Race webpage (staffsunion.com/vote), or you can get in touch with our Student Voice team by emailing studentvoice@staffs.ac.uk or dropping into the Students' Union building (above Ember Lounge on the Stoke campus), Mon-Fri 10am-4pm.

“Where can I vote/nominate myself?”

Everything you need to get involved with the Leadership Race is hosted on our Leadership Race webpage - staffsunion.com/vote!

“How can I check I'm eligible?”

To be eligible to vote/stand in this election, you need to be a current student and you need to have shared your data with us. If you're not sure if you tick this box, head to staffsunion.com/canivote and type in your student number. Feel free to contact us if you're having any issues!

“I want to run in the Leadership Race!”

Amazing! Check out our Candidate Guide section for lots of helpful info!

YOUR CALENDAR

IMPORTANT DATES



YOUR LEADERSHIP SCHEDULE
Apr

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 10am NOMINATIONS OPEN	2 1:45pm THINKING OF RUNNING SESSION*	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 1:45pm THINKING OF RUNNING SESSION*	10	11	12
13 11:59pm NOMINATIONS CLOSE	14 4pm NOMINEE BRIEFING*	15	16	17	18 BANK HOLIDAY FRIDAY	19
20	21 BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY	22 10am POSTER AND MANIFESTO DEADLINE*	23	24	25	26
27	28 10am POSTER DASH*	29 10am VOTING OPENS!	30 VOTING: DAY 2!	1 11:59pm VOTING CLOSES!	2 6pm LIVE RESULTS SHOW!	

NOMINATIONS | PREP | VOTING | RESULTS

*locations and additional info available on our website or via email

📷 filming slot for Q&A sessions for Full-Time Officer candidates



THE BASICS

CANDIDATE GUIDE



“Okay! I’ve read the introduction and found a role I think would fit me! What now?”

Now it’s time to make sure you’ve nominated yourself for this role at staffsunion.com/vote! You should get an email confirming this, so contact your Student Voice team if you haven’t heard anything within a few hours. Feeling unsure? Got some questions? Your Student Voice team are happy to chat to you about any worries/questions!

“How do I write a manifesto?”

Don’t promise too much! Focus on three to five points that will have a genuine impact on student life at Staffs! Talk to students in your course, accommodation, student groups and beyond to get an idea of what the student experience is outside of your friends, but don’t forget that your own experience is also valuable - you’re a student too!

“How do I build a campaign?”

Think outside the box! What makes you and your manifesto stand out - can you lean into that in a fun and engaging way? Don’t blow your budget on posters (everyone has those!), spend it wisely on something that’ll set you apart from other candidates. Still struggling? Maxie from the Student Voice team is running marketing drop-ins midday Mon-Thurs throughout Easter!

WHAT TO EXPECT

CANDIDATE GUIDE



Candidate Support

We want you to feel prepared and excited to run in the Leadership Race and are here to support you!

Whether you want to check in to clarify something about rules, or ask what the hell a manifesto is and why you should write one – don't hesitate to contact us via studentvoice@staffs.ac.uk or via the Leadership Race Team channels.

Deadlines

There are two key deadlines you have to meet - a nomination deadline and a manifesto deadline. We don't do this because we just love making you jump through hoops, but because we need enough time to check that your manifesto fits with the election principles. We also want to provide as much promotion for you as possible!

Voting

Enjoy it, be creative and pace yourself – it'll be amazing! Yes, you can vote for yourself (and preferences for other candidates if you'd like to), and no, you can't just get someone to log into a device and then vote for them.

Results

Once voting has closed, Officer candidates must collect evidence of their campaign budget spending to the Union by midday the next day. Once this is checked to make sure everything is above board, the count is done via an online system, and results are announced on our livestream.

RULES (1 OF 4)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



These rules ensure our elections are free and fair. Any breach of them may result in disqualification.

Principles

- **Fair** – It is important that we elect people in a free and fair manner. It is fair that each candidate has the right to promote themselves; it would be unfair to hinder anyone else's campaign. The rules are not here to give everyone an equal chance of winning, just a fair one.
- **Safe** - Do not cause any danger with your campaign materials or campaigning and avoid endangering yourself and others. Be sensible and check with the Union if you think an idea is risky.
- **Legal** - The Students' Union and the University cannot tolerate any behaviour which may constitute breaking University or Union regulations during an election counts as a break in election rules.
- **Constructive** - Being positive about what you would bring to a role will get you more votes than being negative about others, so rather than outlining the failures of others, highlight your strengths and experience. If you do wish to debate other candidate's ideas, this must be done in a constructive manner.

RULES (2 OF 4)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



Conduct

- Candidates that are asked to complete a disclosure form relevant to their role must do so before the close of the nominations period.
- Campaigners should not undertake campaign activity which others could not also reasonably do.
- Candidates must take reasonable steps to ensure that their supporters' actions always comply with election rules and must be able to demonstrate this in the event of a complaint against them.
- Campaigners may only alter, move or remove their own campaign materials.
- Campaigners may only use mailing lists where lawful to do so. In most cases this will require the consent of the members on the list to use their details.
- Campaigners must allow students to cast their vote freely and must not communicate with voters in any way once they have begun to complete their ballot.

RULES (3 OF 4)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



Budget

- Full-Time Officer candidates receive £25 which must not be exceeded, or they may be disqualified from the election. Candidates must submit a written list of all campaign costs with corresponding receipts to the Deputy Returning Officer no later than 12 hours after polls close. If candidates do not spend any money during their campaign, this must be made clear on their submission.
- Items freely and readily available to all campaigners can be used without needing to be recorded as part of campaign spending (e.g. cardboard). Candidates can source these appropriately from where they see fit.
- Preowned items that were not bought for the purpose of the election can be used without being recorded (e.g. a bedsheet). A candidate may be challenged on this and will be expected to provide reasonable evidence.

RULES (4 OF 4)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



Three Things to Remember

- Our election rules are there for a reason, and action is always taken if they are broken. Remember to ask before you try something you think might break or “bend” the rules.
- It doesn't matter whether a candidate has knowingly done something that contradicts the rules of the election, or whether they were unaware that their actions would be a rule break.
- The timeline of an election makes a difference in how certain complaints or rule-breaks can be handled. Don't “sit” on any issues you have, as everything takes time to investigate, and if you leave it too late, the outcome may be different if you'd have spoken to the DRO earlier.

What Action Can the Deputy Returning Officer Take When a Rule is Broken?

According to the Elections Bye Law, the DRO only has three options when it comes to acting in relation to a candidate's conduct. “[...] If he or she finds that there has been an infringement, they may:

- *warn the candidate that any future infringement will result in a fine or disqualification; or*
- *fine the candidate from and up to the maximum of their publicity budget;*
- *disqualify the candidate only with the approval of the Returning Officer”*

ANY ISSUES? (1 OF 2)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



What Do I Do If Something Happens During an Election That I'm Not Happy About?

The following explains how issues or complaints relating to people running in an election or the election process are handled. It clarifies the four stages of what you can do if you've seen something that I think isn't Fair, Safe, Legal or Positive - which is what the election rules are all about.

Deal with the Issue Informally

If something happens that you're not happy about, try bringing the issue up with the candidate or a member of their campaign team to see if it can be resolved by a simple chat. This is normally the best way to nip something in the bud, as long as you feel comfortable having that discussion and don't think it will make a situation worse. You'd also be surprised how often people have done something unintentionally.

Don't think this will work? Then...

Get Advice on What to Do

During an election, the Student Voice Team act as "Election Officials" and can usually resolve issues quickly. As impartial staff, they can give sensible advice and interpret election rules to solve most initial problems. They can also make immediate decisions on behaviour that needs to stop or change, if they feel it's really clear that the election rules explicitly support that decision.

ANY ISSUES? (2 OF 2)

CANDIDATE GUIDE



If you don't think what the Voice Team have suggested is the best thing to happen next, or if they couldn't help you with the query you've raised, as it's a more complicated issue, then you can...

Talk to the Deputy Returning Officer

The Deputy Returning Officer has experience and knowledge of Students' Union elections and ensures they run per the election rules, relevant Union and University policies and the Education Act. They'll decide what needs to change because of what you've raised.

If you're still not happy with the response from the DRO...

Talk to the Returning Officer

The Returning Officer has the final say on any decision relating to an election issue. They're external to the Union, to make sure they're impartial, and have extensive experience and knowledge of Students' Union elections.

What they say, goes – their decision is final.

Remember...

Due to elections taking place over a short period of time, everyone you contact in relation to an issue will get back to you as soon as possible. Please remember, however, that elections are a busy and exciting period with lots of activity and staff time committed to delivering one of the Union's biggest projects of the year, so you may have to wait on a decision for a short while.

WHAT'S *THAT* MEAN?

ELECTION GLOSSARY



As with any official process, sometimes things can get wordy! Here's a short list of terms you might need to know to run/vote in the Race! We try to avoid using acronyms where possible, but we've included these just in case!

BALLOT	The screen voters see when they vote
CANDIDATE	Once someone who has nominated themselves gets approved, they become an official candidate
DECLARATION	A form that nominees need to fill out to state that they are a suitable candidate and are fit to run in the election
MANIFESTO	A public statement of what you would hope to achieve if you got elected
NOMINATION	The act of putting yourself forward for a role (you can do this on the Union website)
POLLING	Polling is just an alternative word for voting 'Polling period' is the time voting is open
POST	A post is any role that someone can be elected into during an election - committee, rep, officer!
RUNNING	Running in an election is just the act of being an electable candidate for any of the available posts

WHAT'S *THAT* MEAN?

ELECTION GLOSSARY



BHL

Blackheath Lane - the name of our Stafford Campus!

ELIGIBLE

This just means you meet the requirements to vote/run in the election - you're a student & have shared your data!

**PG/PGR
/PGT**

Postgraduate (any course above degree-level)/postgraduate taught/postgraduate research

SABBATICAL

A sabbatical officer/sab (another name for a Full-Time Officer) - this is used a lot at other Unions. Sabbatical just means you take a year out of studies!

SMT

Our senior management team - comprising of a CEO and two deputy CEOs (they're lovely, we promise!)

SU

Students' Union (that's us!)

SUL

Sometimes used to refer to our London Campus

UG

Undergraduate (degree-level or below)

**WE ARE
STAFFS**

Our annual awards ceremony to celebrate our student volunteers - this is also where we announce our Leadership Race winners!