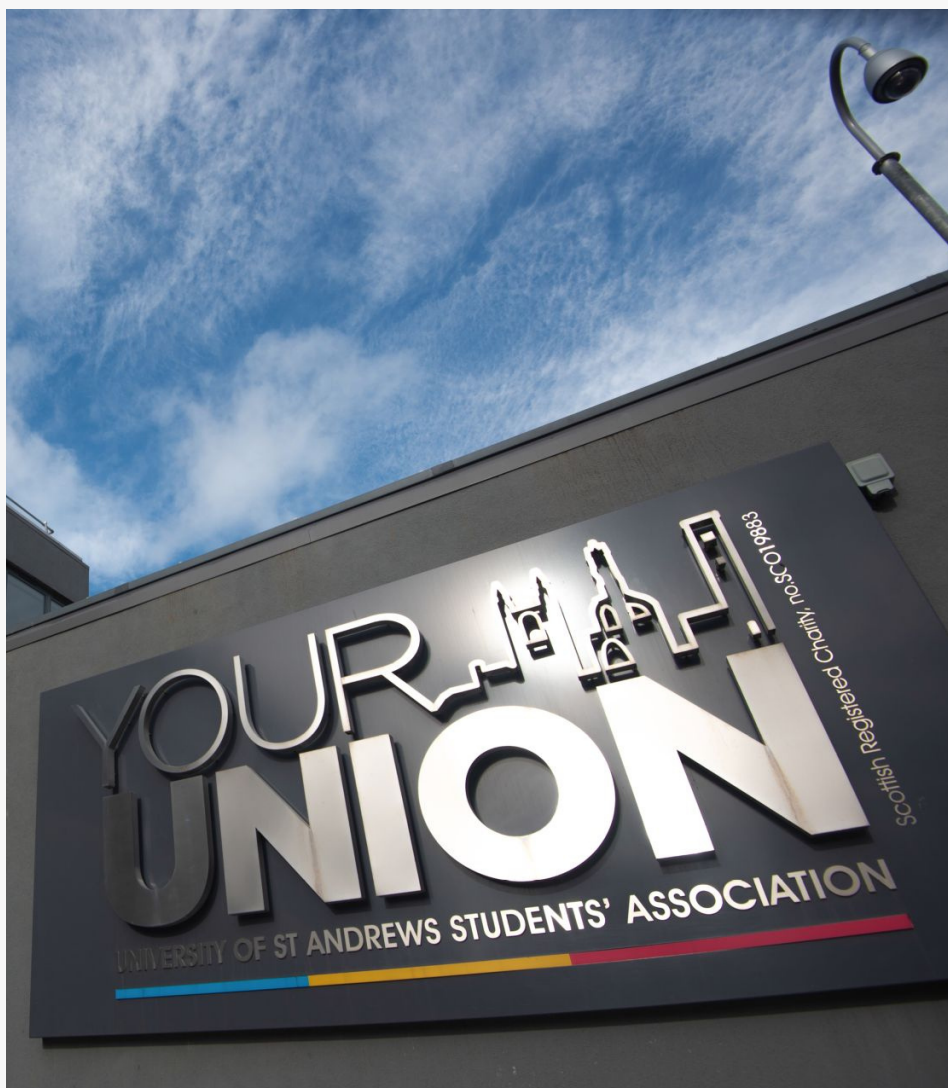


# ELECTIONS REPORT - 2021/22



General Elections, Referendum,  
and By-Election

# Table of Contents

Introduction	..... 3
Statistical Summary	..... 5
<b>General Elections</b>	..... 7
Statistical Summary	..... 8
Overall Turnout	
Statistics	..... 10
Turnout Analysis	..... 12
Future Actions	..... 18
Positions and Candidates	
Statistics	..... 21
Positions and Candidates Analysis	..... 27
Future Actions	..... 32
Breakdown by School	
Statistics	..... 35
Analysis	..... 36
Future Actions	..... 38
Publicity	
Strategies Actioned	..... 39
Strategy Limitations	..... 44
Future Actions	..... 45
<b>Referendum and By-Election</b>	..... 49
Turnout, Candidates, and Campaign Teams	
Statistics	..... 50
Referendum and By-Election Analysis	..... 52
Future Actions	..... 54
Summary of Action Items	..... 55

# Introduction

This year, the Students' Association Elections were substantially restructured. The previous organisation and administration of Elections was overseen by a team of 20+ student volunteers, overseen by the Director of Wellbeing and Equality. This structure was completely abolished via a rewrite of the Association Laws, handing governance of the Elections to an External Returning Officer and general administration and logistical preparation over to a team of staff members within the Students' Association. The central, staff Elections Team consisted of: Academic Representation Co-Ordinator (Lead; Deputy Returning Officer); Human Resources Manager and Education Advocate (Deputy Returning Officer); the Design and Marketing Manager; the Management Accountant/Deputy General Manager; the Design and Marketing Assistant; and the Councils/Elections Intern (student staff). The Returning Officer for 2022, appointed by the Governance, Nominations, and Staffing Committee was Scott Quinn from Edinburgh University Students' Association. Responsibilities of the Elections Team were defined as follows:

- General administration of nominations, campaigning, and voting
- Promoting interest in the Elections
- Creating and enforcing Elections Rules to ensure a fair election
- Dealing with rules infringements and rulings (and sending appeals to the Returning Officer)
- Monitoring and reimbursing election expenses
- Supervising the official SAElect social media and email channels
- Arranging and supervising hustings and other official events
- Providing Elections resources to collaborators and students
- Other duties as deemed necessary to run the Election

The restructuring of the Association Elections saw mixed results; turnout and candidate numbers decreased from the previous year, though currently-elected student officers were able to focus on their elected mandates and priorities rather than spending several months administering the Elections.

This year, the General Elections were followed by a By-Election and Referendum vote on April 1st. The Referendum considered the question of affiliating with the National Union of Students (NUS), and was not passed by SRC in time to be posted on the General Election ballot. The Referendum was scheduled for April 1 in order to encourage awareness of the referendum, organise the teams for 'Yes' and 'No,' and collect the necessary resources for the campaigns from the Association Board as well as the National Union of Students (NUS).

The By-Election was necessary to fill the positions that remained unfilled following the General Election: the Director of Education, and the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer. The by-election also included the repeat of the Classics School President election, following a breach of campaigning rules that may or may not have influenced the outcome of that election. The School President of Classics race was repeated with the same candidates to ensure fairness.

The following report, authored by the Staff Elections Lead and the Elections Intern, details the major achievements, challenges, and outcomes of the 2022 Elections.

# Statistical Summary

In this statistical summary, votes and percentages from the General Elections, National Union of Students (NUS) Referendum, and By-Elections are considered **in the aggregate**.

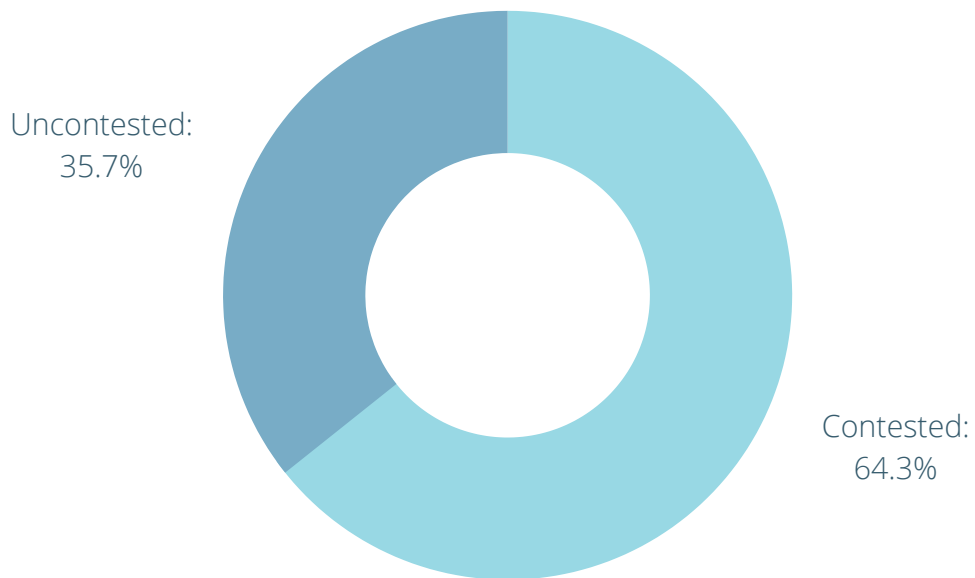
In total, 3,351 students cast a vote in at least one of these elections. Out of a potential 11,485 students, that is a combined turnout of 29.18% across all Semester Two elections in 2022.

OVERALL VOTES (COMBINED)		
General Election	NUS Referendum + By-Elections	Total Unique Voters
3,139	926	3,351

The total number of candidates who stood in either the General Election or a By-Election totalled 116. (Note that the three Classics School President Candidates who stood again in the By-Election are not counted twice.)

TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES			
General Election	DoEd By-Election	Lifelong & Flexible Learners By-Election	Total
113	2	1	116

In a combined analysis of all elections, 36 out of the 56 posts were contested in 2022.



# GENERAL ELECTIONS

*Overall Turnout*

*Positions and Candidates*

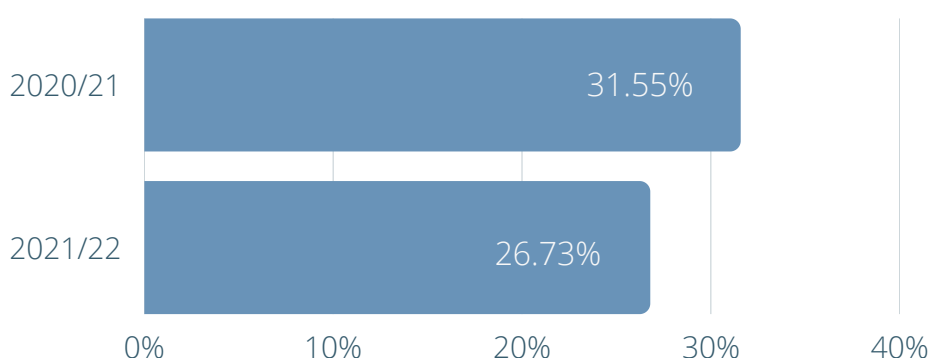
*Breakdown by School*

*Publicity*

# Statistical Summary

The section below covers the highlighted statistics on turnout, candidate numbers, and contested positions for the General Elections.

Overall election turnout decreased by 4.79% from the previous academic year.



The total number of unique voters dropped by 13% between last academic year and 2021/22.

OVERALL VOTES		
2022 Election	2021 Election	Numerical Difference
3,139	3,623	- 484

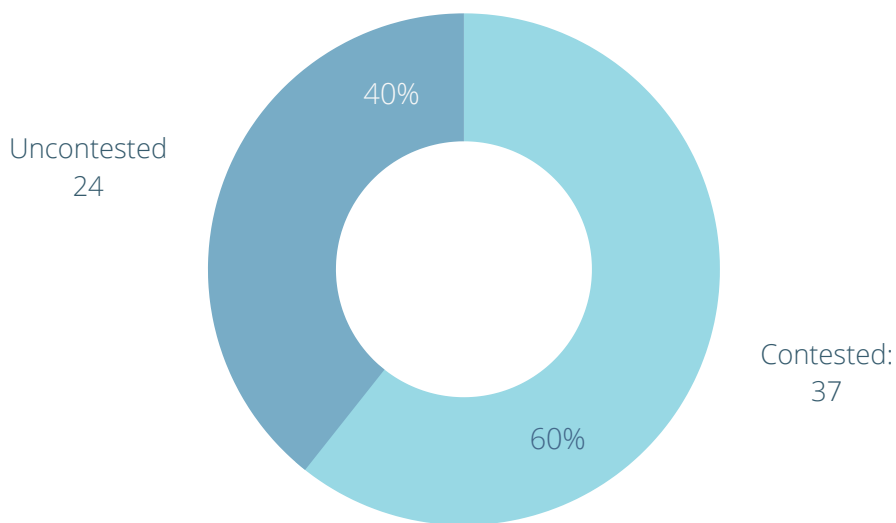
The total number of candidates remained relatively flat between academic years, with just two fewer candidates standing in 2022 than in 2021.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES (ALL POSTS)			
2022 Election	2021 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
113	115	- 2	- 2%

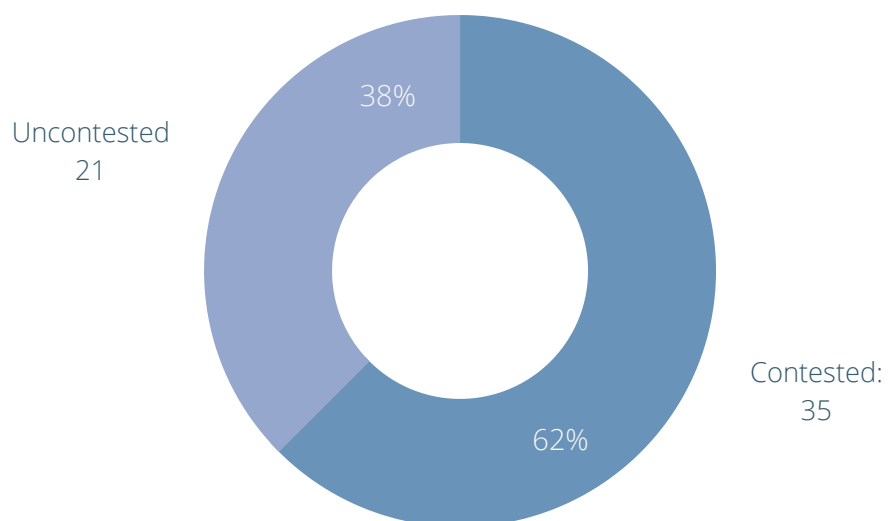


The percentage of contested posts increased slightly over the previous academic year, though the number of contested posts dropped by 2.

### CONTESTED POSTS (2021)



### CONTESTED POSTS (2022)



# Overall Turnout

## STATISTICS

---

Elections on the Portal were separated by content area, with the following **numbers of total (nonunique) votes** cast:

PARTICIPATION PER SECTION				
Sabbs + SRC	School Presidents	Trustees	Charities	Total Non-unique Votes
1906	2299	784	989	5,978

As a reminder, the total number of unique student voters was 3,139. Due to limitations such as credit weighted voting and the combination of certain sections of the ballot, comparison data from 2021 is not available.

The average number of votes per post dropped by roughly three (3) votes. While this is only a marginal drop, this number may be the most accurate way of gauging participation between academic years, given that the metric accounts for structural changes to Students' Association positions.

AVERAGE VOTES PER POST			
2022 Election	2021 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
56.05	59.39	- 3.34	- 0.06%

A comparison of voting in Sabbatical Races between 2022 and 2021 also shows a sharp slide in engagement.

VOTING IN SABBATICAL RACES						
	Association President	AU President	DoEd	DoES	DoSDA	DoWell
2022 Election	1393	1156	0	1211	1006	1206
2021 Election	2129	1853	1677	2183	1681	1837
Difference	- 736	- 687	- 1677	- 972	- 675	- 631

## TURNOUT ANALYSIS

---

### ***Corrected Election Statistics***

When counting our Election Stats for this year, the Deputy Returning Officer discovered that we have been using the wrong numbers for both total votes cast and total potential voters in our turnout percentages.

Using the corrected figures of unique votes cast and headcount students, our turnout numbers would be:

- 2022: 26.76%, or 3,139 votes out of a potential 11,732
- 2021: 31.55%, or 3,623 votes out of a potential 11,485
- 2020: 34.54%, or 3,639 votes out of a potential 10,535
- 2019: 37.98%, or 4,015 votes out of a potential 10,570
- 2018: 42.48%, or 4,560 votes out of a potential 10,735
- 2017: 43.13%, or 4,455 votes out of a potential 10,330
- 2016: 35.78% or 3,845 votes out of a potential 10,745
- 2015: 45.85% or 4,888 votes out of a potential 10,660
- 2014: 45.04% or 3,867 votes out of a potential 8,585

Below, we have included a brief summary of the inaccuracy of the previous statistics:

For **total votes cast**, we previously were using the highest number of individual votes in an election (e.g. highest votes in 2021 was the SRC + Sabbs Election, at 2830 votes.) This does not count the number of unique voters who voted in any election held at the same time (for example, if someone voted only for School President, their vote would not be captured in that total).

For **total possible votes**, we were previously using full-time equivalent students (FTE) rather than headcount. In brief, we have been counting the number of students who are at full-time status (with part time students being rolled into one full time equivalent). Headcount measures the number of currently matriculated students (and includes people like study abroad students, current Sabbs, and part-time students), which is a much better measure of our membership. For a brief comparison, FTE numbers in 2021 were 10119 whereas headcount numbers were 11,485 students.

## ***Staff-Led Elections***

The complete restructuring of Elections Administration may be one of the larger factors that contributes to the overall decline in turnout statistics. In previous years, Elections have been run by student committees with 20 or more members. This year, Elections were administered by half-a-dozen Students' Association staff members (including one student employee) who split their time between Elections and other duties. The reach of the staff-led committee was undoubtedly lower than that of 20+ student volunteers. While staff-led Elections reduce the perception of bias, staff-led elections appear to reach fewer student voters compared to the student volunteer structure. Engagement, even among already-elected Councillors, was difficult to solicit this year for both Staff and Sabbatical Officers alike. The staff elections team may also miss certain pockets or demographics of students based on the differences in outreach methods. Many methods of campaigning (such as hosting in-person voting booths) requires more volunteers than the number of current staff involved in Elections.

## ***Split Schedule of Elections***

The separation of the By-Elections and NUS Referendum from the General Elections greatly impacted turnout. Combining the 1 April By-Election + Referendum vote with the General Elections, the total number of unique voters who cast at least one ballot totalled 3351 student voters. A combined, unified election may have brought turnout to roughly up to 28.56%. While this is still lower than last year, split elections may have had a compounding effect on decreased turnout. Students who would have otherwise participated were burnt out and General Elections candidates were unable to meaningfully engage with the Referendum question, resulting in general apathy about the vote.

## ***Fewer Sabbatical Officer Candidates***

There were fewer Sabbatical Officer candidates in the 2022 General Election than any other Students' Association Election on record. Engagement in the number of votes cast in Sabb races had a sharp decline between this year and last year. Taking the Association President role, for example, 1,393 votes were cast in this year's

Election, 736 fewer than in 2021 (where there were 2,129 votes cast). Another crucial race, the Athletic Union President, went uncontested, which may have given Sports Clubs less of an incentive to vote compared to previous, contested years. It appears that having numerous, highly engaged Sabbatical Candidates is crucial to ensuring an increase in Election turnout.

### ***Less Visible Campaigning***

Despite the return of in-person campaigning, very little Elections activity appeared to happen on voting days. The Elections Committee hosted tables to hand out cupcakes (which proved highly successful), but very few candidates were out campaigning in-person. This may be explained by a shift in culture toward online methods of campaigning, or by the loss of historical knowledge that people used to campaign much more actively in central University locations (e.g. the Library). Candidates may also have been wary of covid risks of campaigning in-person or may have been isolating due to contracting the virus.

Student Officers have suggested that students may have had a difficult time recruiting volunteers to serve on campaign teams, which led to less overall engagement. It is also possible that students have started to see Students' Association Roles more as "jobs" and less as political, elected positions that one has to run for.

With social media, the removal of Facebook cover-photo filters was mentioned by more than one candidate as limiting engagement. (Historically, candidates used to ask their friends to update their profile and cover photos with a filter with their campaign materials on it). This may have resulted in less of an online presence around Elections. Similarly, student demographics may be moving toward other platforms where the Union/University is less active (such as Tik Tok), making the visibility of the posted social media advertising less effective.

## ***Lower Number of Positions***

There were five fewer posts available in this year's elections compared to 2021; considering that the average number of votes per post averaged at 56, this equates to roughly 280 votes that may have contributed to turnout.

Looking at the data from 2021, the removed Student Activities Forum (SAF) positions include:

- Broadcasting Officer (1 candidate; 1776 votes cast in race)
- Debates Officer (2 candidates; 1489 votes cast)
- Music Officer (2 candidates; 1344 votes cast)
- Performing Arts Officer, Mermaids (1 candidate; 1355 votes cast)
- Volunteering Officer (2 candidates; 1397 votes cast)
- Secretary to SAF (2 candidates; 1149 votes cast)

This ranges from 59% of voters casting a vote on the broadcasting officer position down to a low of 32% of voters casting a ballot for the Secretary to the SAF role.

Two other positions, the Postgraduate Activities Officer and Postgraduate Development Officer, we moved from the General Election to be elected in October of 2022 during the regularly scheduled Postgraduate Elections.

Other data, such as the overall number of votes per posts (down by nearly 3 votes per post, or -0.06%), do point to an overall decline in engagement this academic year. This decrease suggests that the removal of certain elected positions (specifically in the activities/events areas of the Students' Association) has had a negative impact on turnout.

## ***Other Factors***

Other, less tangible factors were often cited by students and Student Representatives for decreased interest in the election. These included: apathy, burnout, lower student engagement in general, less willingness to volunteer, and the expectations that Students' Associations place on representatives. While these factors are difficult to measure and combat, it is probable that these factors had an impact on individual decisions on whether or not to stand or vote.

## ***Enthusiasm for School President Races***

For the first recorded time, participation in the School President races (2,299 individual votes) outpaced participation in the combined Student Representative Council and Sabbatical Races (1,906 votes). Several potential factors may have contributed to this discrepancy: fewer overall Sabbatical and SRC Officer candidates than in previous years; the second highest number of School President candidates in recorded elections history; and the voting incentives. To receive a cupcake, students only had to show that they voted in a single race. Most students voted for their School President, as that took only a few minutes to read over one singular position's candidates, whereas the Sabbatical and SRC races entailed reading through 26 posts and their respective candidates.

This strong rise in participation on the School President races is also largely due to the herculean efforts that the outgoing School Presidents put into publicising their positions. This shift toward more local engagement (rather than Union-wide races) should continue to be monitored and observed in future years.

## ***Positive Factors***

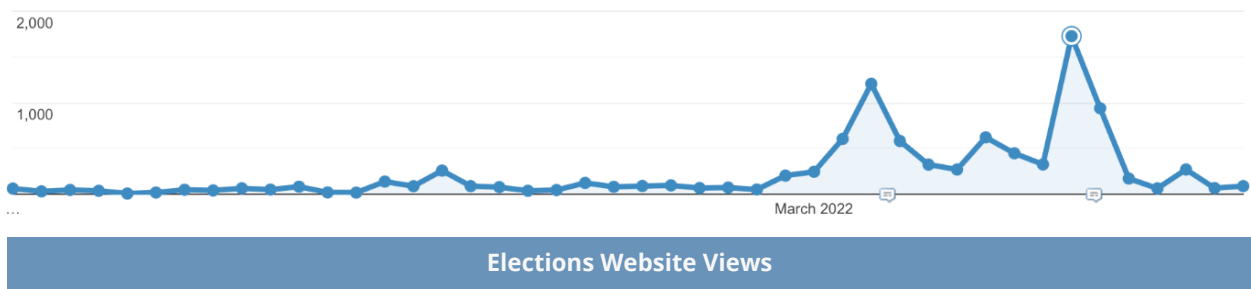
Though turnout decreased by roughly 5%, several factors contributed positively to increasing turnout. Many of these efforts will be evaluated in the "Promotion" section, but some are worth mentioning twice.

The Elections Intern was essential to the administration of the Election. Without the Intern, several crucial Elections Events (such as the Candidate Mixer, the Hustings, and the Debate) would not have happened at all. Further, her efforts on social media (both hosting takeovers and sending out share requests) and during tabling were irreplaceable contributions to the voter turnout we did achieve.

A new, updated Elections website also was very well-received, with over 9900 views (during 1 Feb to 17 March 2022), with an average time spent on page of 3 min 47s.



## Overall Turnout



The two major spikes in usage occurred right after nominations closed and when voting opened.

Several new partnerships with School Administrators, Directors of Teaching, Halls of Residence, and the Sports Centre expanded our avenues of reaching students. Fostering and further developing a wide culture of ownership in the Elections will be essential to increasing turnout in the future.

Tabling in high-traffic areas (with incentives) created a strong physical presence on Election Days. Having a tile on My-Saint, as well as an all-student email to direct voters to on the voting days proved to be highly effective to get students onto the voting platform.

The budget was well-utilized, including longer-term promotional purchases like roller-banners and short-term incentives like cupcakes for voters. The latter had a tremendous impact; over 500 cupcakes were given out over the two days of voting. These were far more popular with students than previous incentives (like stickers).

### FUTURE ACTIONS

---

There are a number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future elections in an effort to increase the overall turnout, detailed below:

- Review the current staff structure of the elections team. By headcount, the staff-led elections committee involves 15 fewer participants than the previous student-led elections team. Several proposals for action points fall under this heading, such as:
  - Hire more Elections Interns (ideally a team of 3-5) and hire them in December so that work can begin on an earlier and more strategic timescale.
  - If means are limited, consider activating and engaging other casual staff, re-orienting their remits for paid work around elections
  - Involve more members of the Union's permanent staff in Elections activity; while operations cannot cease during elections periods, the whole staff team can be involved in drumming up interest and encouraging participation.
- Increase the overall Election budget; create separate budgets for: (1) interns/staffing; (2) candidate/campaign reimbursements; (3) promotion, events, and administration expenditures.
- Block off time in all Students' Association Staff members', Sabbaticals', Student Officers', Subcommittees' and Societies' calendars during the week of election (or at least voting days) to participate or do something Elections-related.
  - While the overall (months-long) administration of the Election should continue to be run by a small team of staff, all student leadership needs to continue to be actively engaged and invested during at least the voting days.
- Encourage more candidate interaction with voters outside of Hustings. Instead of hosting one long, central event, consider hosting more localized Hustings where stakeholder groups could be engaged effectively.

- e.g. an “Equalities Hustings” where the candidates for DoWell, BAME, LGBT+, Gender Equality, Widening Access & Participation, and Lifelong & Flexible Learners’ Officers positions are present. Subcommittees would invite their members and advertise these events during the week of Elections.
- Continue and expand Voting Tables (with incentives) on Election Days. Expand to have a table at the Library, North Haugh, and in other student accommodation settings – staffed by Election Interns and Union volunteers.
  - Expand the incentives and number of items given out to 1,000 over two days.
- Work with IT Services to continue work being done to streamline and update the Elections Portal, reducing the number of clicks to vote and improving the visual interface to be more student-friendly.
- Collaborate with IT Services to improve the visibility of the tile on MySaint for mobile users.
- Consider employing students who have a high number of followers on social media as consultants or influencers who will advertise the Elections.
- Encourage more high-profile statements or endorsements of voting from high-profile University figures (like the Principal, Rector, or Sabbs) leading up to Election Week.
- Encourage in-person campaigning from candidates by providing more direct examples of successful practice; develop and host an optional workshop or session on running a successful campaign.
- Begin advertising the positions and actions of the Student Representative Council earlier (November or December) and encourage students to consider running for these positions year-round. (Continue weekly Sabb social media takeovers throughout Semester One to highlight role responsibilities).
- Staff leads on Elections should meet with Councils in November and December to encourage current leadership to begin talking to their Committees and peers about finding candidates to run for their positions. Provide training that explains how one element of student leadership is ensuring one has a replacement.

- Better promote the Sabbatical Officer roles and encourage Sabbs to inspire future leaders to run for their positions throughout their term.
- Better utilise Students' Association venues during the week of Elections. Regular announcements that play in Main Bar, Rectors Café, and the Old Union Coffee Shop, and/or events and visible promotion efforts in those spaces would help encourage voters.
- Before removing any further positions from the Election, add impact on turnout as a factor to consider. When positions are no longer elected or are removed, consider mitigation methods to engage with that demographic of students during Election time.
- Ensure that all Referenda are able to be incorporated into the regularly scheduled election. Avoid hosting a separate election, and instead defer voting on the referendum until the General Elections, the Class Rep Elections, or the PG Elections.
- Continue to build active links within Schools through School Presidents and Directors of Teaching. Redraft voting template emails, social media posts, and other support resources to make it easy for Schools to share the word about elections.
- Maintain and update the upgraded **[www.yourunion.net/elections](http://www.yourunion.net/elections)** page and continue to allow the Web Intern to brainstorm engagement ideas.

# Positions and Candidates

## STATISTICS

---

The total number of candidates across all posts/positions dropped by a very slim margin between this year's and last year's Elections.

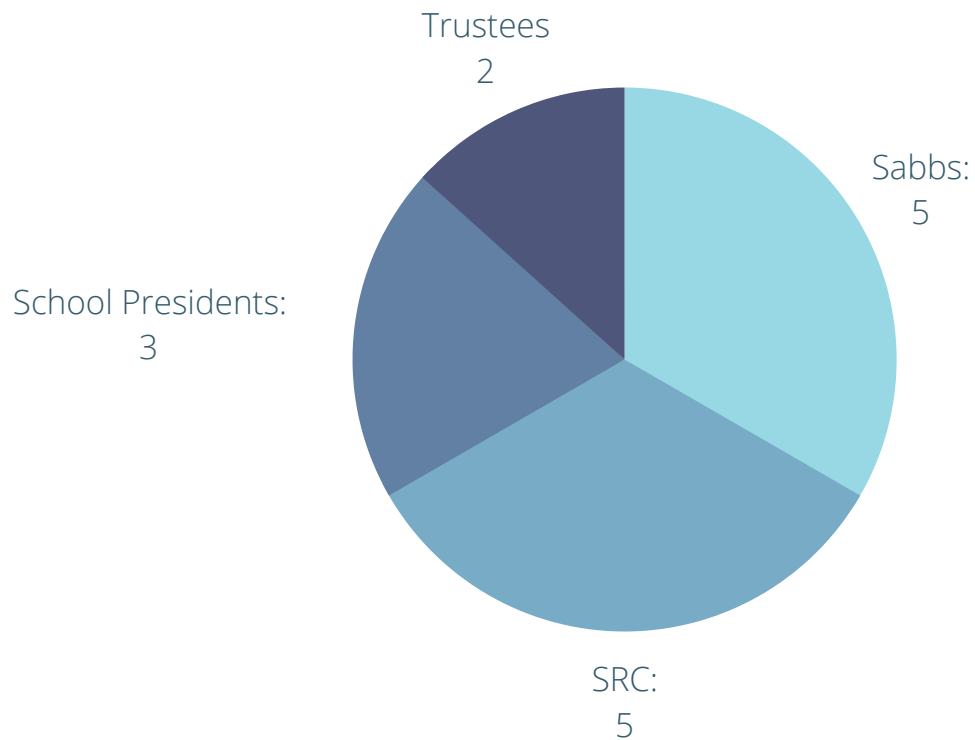
TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES (ALL POSTS)			
2022 Election	2021 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
113	115	- 2	- 2%

However, the number of candidates per post available increased by a very slight margin from the previous academic year. (There were 56 posts available in 2022 compared to 61 posts available in 2021.)

CANDIDATES PER POST			
2022 Election	2021 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
2.02	1.89	0.13	7%

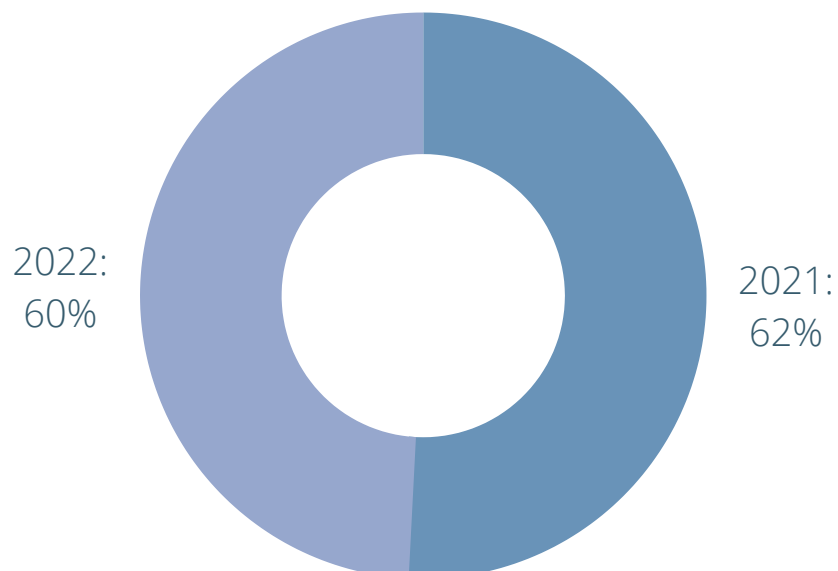
This year, we saw a high number of withdrawals: 15 in total, including 5 Sabbatical candidate withdrawals. This was slightly better than the 2021 Elections, where we had 19 withdrawals. One candidate was deemed ineligible to serve after a failed good standing check.

### 2022 Withdrawals



On the whole, our percentage of contested races increased slightly compared to last year's elections.

### Percentage of Roles Contested

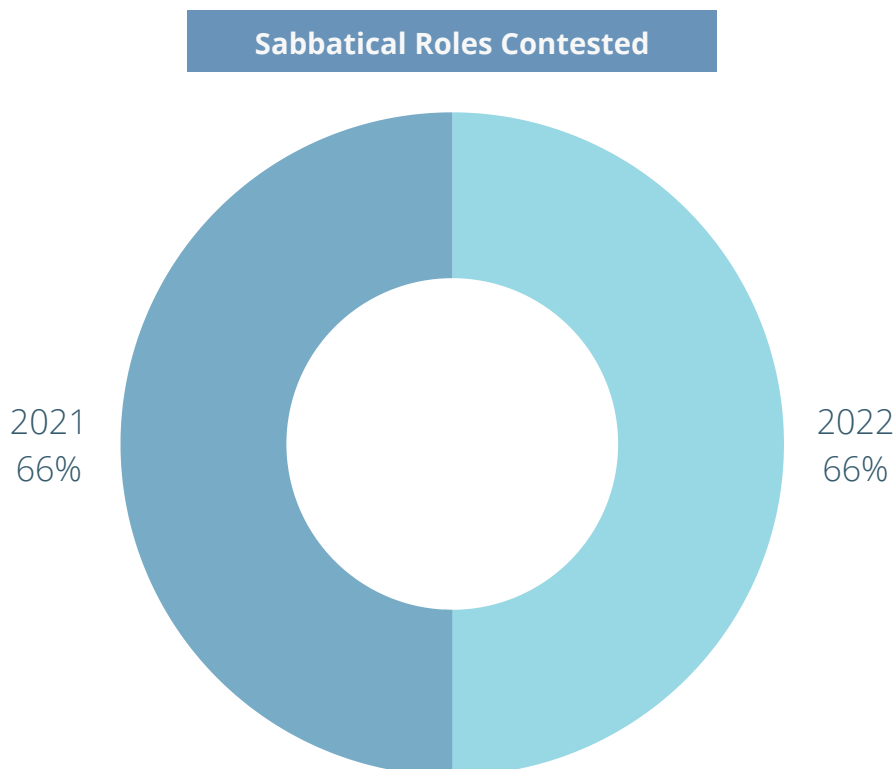


## Sabbatical Officer Races

The total number of Sabbatical Candidates dropped from 16 in 2021 to just 9 in this year's elections (a 44% drop).

SABBATICAL CANDIDATES BY POSITION (2022)						
	Association President	AU President	DoEd	DoES	DoSDA	DoWell
2022 Election	2	1	0	2	2	2

The total percentage of Sabbatical races that were contested remained flat again this year, with 66% of posts being contested.



## Student Representative Council Races

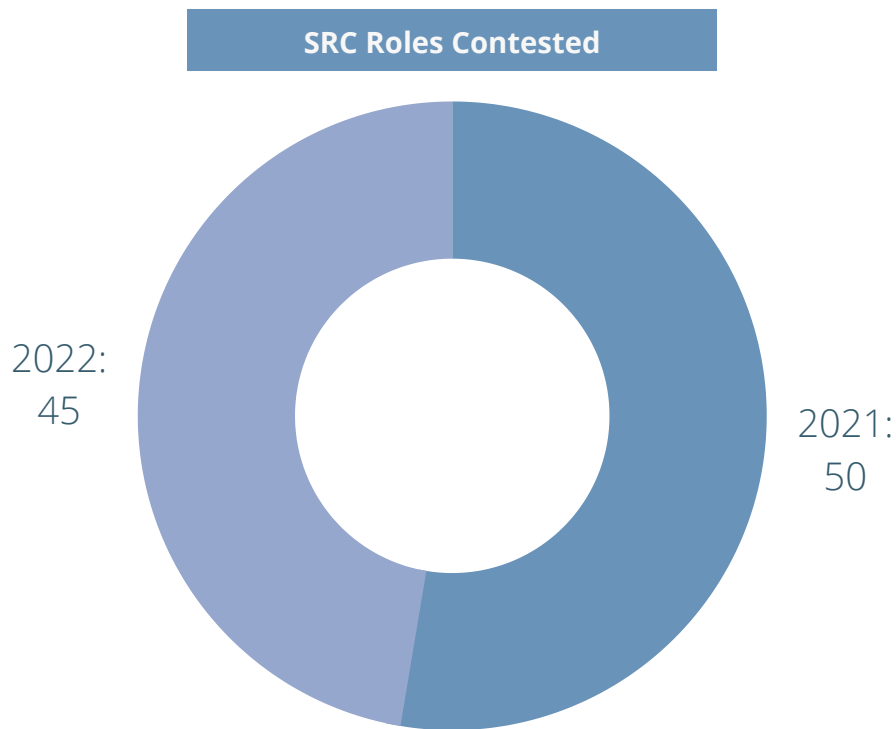
Role	Number of Candidates
Accommodation Officer	4
Alumni Officer	2
Arts & Divinity Faculty President	2
Association Chair	1
BAME Officer	1
Charities Officer	1
Community Relations Officer	1
Disability Officer	1
Employability Officer	3
Environment Officer	2
Gender Equality Officer	2
International Students Officer	3
LGBT+ Officer	1

The total number of SRC Candidates dropped this year. Compared to 45 candidates in the 2021 Elections, there were only 33 candidates in this year's Elections, a 27% drop. (It is worth noting that the 2021 Elections did include the former Student Activities Forum positions, which are no longer directly elected.)

Role	Number of Candidates
Lifelong & Flexible Learners Officer	0
Postgraduate Academic Officer	2
Science & Medicine Faculty President	2
Secretary to the SRC	1
Societies Officer	1
Student Health Officer	1
Widening Access & Participation Officer	1



Nine (9) out of these 20 posts were contested in the 2022 Elections, for a total of 45%. This is down 5% from the previous year's elections.

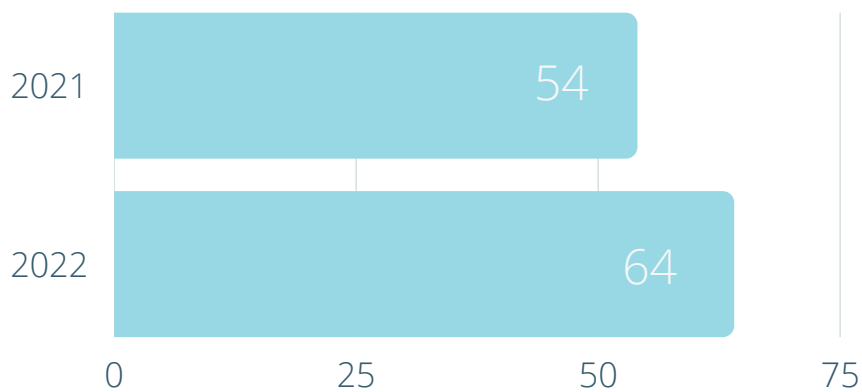


### ***Student Trustee Races***

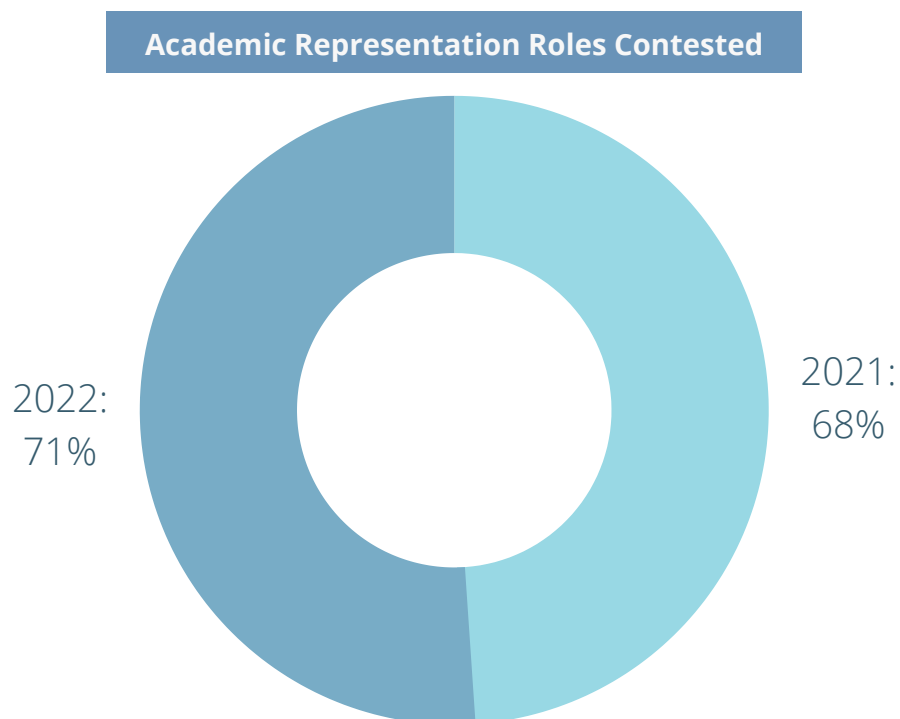
Seven candidates stood for election as a Student Trustee, for which there were two posts. In previous years, student trustees were co-opted internally from the Student Representatives Council and Student Activities Forum membership.

## Academic Representation Races

In total 64 candidates stood for School President or Language Convenor positions. This is an increase of 19% from the previous year's elections (where 54 candidates stood for election).



71% (20) of the 28 Academic Representation posts were contested, up by 3% from 2021.



## POSITIONS AND CANDIDATES ANALYSIS

---

### ***Unfilled Positions***

Two positions went unfilled in General Election: the Director of Education and the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer. Two candidates stood and withdrew for the Director of Education position during the general election, while none stood for the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer role.

The students who withdrew from the DoEd race did so because they did not know the post required them to take a year off from their studies or because they had other commitments in the upcoming academic year that prevented them from taking on the full-time role.

The current Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer was on a leave of absence at the time of the Election, and the few committee members involved in Lifers opted not to stand. Students who are most likely to be affected by this role are also often the least likely to have time to be able to run for it (as they have caring responsibilities or are commuting to St Andrews).

Three posts went unfilled in the 2021 Elections, though none of these were Sabbatical positions. This suggests a trend that a small number of positions is likely to go unfilled during each general election.

The School President of Classics Race was also restarted during the by-election, and only the three candidates who stood in the General Election were permitted to stand.

### ***Low Number of Sabbatical Candidates***

This year, we had the second lowest number of Sabbatical Candidates on electronic record. Compared to 2021, only the Director of Student Development and Activities (DoSDA) post had an increase in candidates. Several factors may have influenced this drop in interest for our highest-level posts.

Some students expressed concerns about workload for Sabbatical positions. There is some perception among the student leadership that these are high-stress roles with low support. This is especially true of the Director of Education role, where no one stood for election. Many current officers opted not to run for Sabbatical Roles, due to burnout or concerns about workload or lack of staff support in their current roles. Student leadership roles may be perceived more as “jobs” and less as opportunities to make changes to benefit their peers.

Other prospective candidates were deterred by the prospect of delaying their graduation or studies. Many graduating students were waiting to hear back their offers for postgraduate studies or employment, decreasing the pool of engaged students who might otherwise have stood for election. Leniency with deferring postgraduate studies at many Scottish Universities has now decreased with the end of covid, making it difficult for graduating students to elect to do a Sabb year without declining a PGT/PGR offer.

More nudges (228) were submitted to encourage Sabbatical Candidates than any other kind of role, but it is possible that the anonymous Nudge tool discouraged some students from directly talking to potential candidates for their positions.

The flat percentage of contested Sabb posts from 2021 to 2022, combined with the lower turnout statistics may imply that simply having a contested race is not sufficient to drive turnout. The overall number of candidates and their level of activity or engagement in the election also drive our other statistics.

A drop in Sabbatical candidates is consistent with anecdotal reports across the sector. Unmeasurable factors, such as being a Sabbatical during a difficult economic and political climate, may affect interest in the roles. Other intangible effects, such as perception of how easy the roles are to get and how satisfied students are/were with the outgoing elected leadership may have also impacted engagement in these posts.

### ***High Number of Academic Representation Candidates***

This year, we had the second highest number of School President & Language Convenor Candidates on electronic record. Interestingly, the highest year for Academic Representatives on record was also the same year we had the lowest number of Sabbatical Candidates on record (2015-2016).

This was largely due to the incredible efforts of the outgoing School Presidents and Language Convenors, whose advertising among their student cohorts drove interest in their positions. The prepared, pre-written templates for School Presidents were well-utilized, and nearly all of the Schools sent information to their students about the position and how to get involved.

The Academic Representation Coordinator was able to help prepare and inform the School Presidents, provide template resources, and crucially remind/reach out to individual Schools with lower candidate numbers. In previous years, only the DoEd and Faculty Presidents have taken on these responsibilities. The existing support made it easier for School Presidents to spread the word, though their individual contributions (such as hosting hustings, creating social media posts, and their communications with their Reps) made a far larger impact on recruiting candidates for their roles.

### ***Postgraduate Representation***

Although two of the postgraduate posts (Development Officer & Activities Officer) were moved to the October Elections, this year marked a significant record in postgraduate participation: the Postgraduate Academic Convenor post was contested for the first time!

Efforts to restructure and better support postgraduates had a direct influence on recruiting candidates to stand for this position. More direct, target marketing materials and advertising, as well as significant personal efforts from the current role holder drew interest to this position.

Additionally, one of this year's Sabbatical Officer candidates was also a Postgraduate Research student, indicating that efforts to include and specifically reach out to postgraduates were effective in drawing candidates.

### ***Last Minute Nominations***

Almost all of the nominations (easily 70% or more of the total candidates) declared on the portal in the last 48 hours before the deadline. This suggests that many of the candidates were waiting to nominate themselves, either strategically or because they weren't aware of the deadline.

This may in part be explained by the elimination of “proposers” and “seconders”, as candidates no longer depended on external students to validate their nominations.

### ***Councillors and Subcommittee Participation***

Student Representative Council candidate numbers (33) hit an all time low this year. With the restructuring of staff-run elections the removal of the SAF, and the general lack of engagement (due to increased role responsibilities, covid, and other factors) Councils participation in the election was particularly low this year. Template emails and social media share requests were rarely followed through on, and little visible promotional effort went out about the Elections from these groups.

Much like the Sabbatical Officers, there may be perceptions of high workload and lower support for student volunteers within the Association, which would have an effect on candidate participation. There is some perception that roles have been turned into “administrative burdens” rather than “fun” learning experiences or opportunities.

Comparably few Nudges for SRC roles were submitted, and only a small percentage of the promotional material went toward advertising the Councillor roles specifically.

### ***Student Trustees***

Student Trustee positions proved to be of high interest to the student body, with 7 candidates standing for two positions. The high profile and the low time commitment of the role may have made it appealing. Additionally, students were permitted to stand both as a Trustee and as a candidate for another (non-Sabbatical) position, which encouraged some additional participation. Curiously, only one of the Trustee Candidates opted to also stand in another election.

.

### ***Nudge Tool***

481 Nudges were submitted during this Election Cycle, to a varying degree of inspiring nominations.

.

At the Sabbatical level, there was no correlation between the number of Nudges submitted and the number of candidates for each position. For instance, the DoEd role received the most nudges (52) of the Sabbatical positions but had the fewest number of candidates (0). DoSDA, which received the fewest nudges (19), was tied for the greatest number of candidates (2).

The story is largely the same at the SRC level, although when there were few or no candidates, there also tended to be few nudges submitted. For example, there were only two nudges submitted for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer, which received no candidates.

For the School President positions, some of the Schools with the highest number of candidates also had high nudge counts, such as Art History (4 candidates; 24 nudges) and Chemistry (4 candidates; 19 nudges). Other Schools, such as Classics, bucked the correlation (3 candidates; 1 nudge).

Approximately 38% of candidates who stood in the Election received a Nudge prior to or during the nominations period. This means that roughly 60% of candidates were not previously identified via the Nudge Tool. Only 14% of students who received a Nudge ran in the Election (i.e. 84% of students who were nudged never stood as a candidate). While these statistics are low, the Nudge Tool has other auxiliary benefits, such as providing valuable information about the Election to students and creating an actionable “buzz” around campus prior to nominations opening.

### ***Change to Semester Dates***

As the nominations period mainly occurred over the spring break, it is possible that the university's restructuring of the semester dates this year affected the number of nominations. Many students have noted that the reduction of the spring break to one week negatively affected their experience of the semester – limiting their time to catch up on work, or rest from their workload. Students may then have had less time to take a break from their university work and consider the possibility of standing in the election. There would have been less of a break where students could confidently research and write their manifestoes – which would arguably affect the sabbatical roles most of all, due to the larger remit and range of responsibilities.

## FUTURE ACTIONS

---

There are a number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future elections in an effort to increase the overall number of candidates, detailed below:

- Clarify with all elected Officers that while staff run the months-long administration of elections, student officers are still responsible for ensuring candidates step forward during the nominations period.
- Consider extending nominations for select, unfilled positions. (For example, the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer this year). This would reduce voter apathy by having to run a by-election.
- Better advertise the Sabbatical Officer Role Descriptions throughout the academic year; emphasise the kinds of campaigns and changes students in these roles have made and how these roles are responsive to students.
- Raise the profile of Sabbatical Officer support and resources to internal and external audiences; clarify the pay, staff support structure, and resources that empower students to take these positions on. More explicitly state that second years and study abroad students and postgraduates can take on these roles.
- Consider increasing support, resources, and incentives to encourage students to stand for positions. Several excellent student leaders are not compelled to stay for a Sabbatical Officer term due to competing offers and interests.
- Work with the University to build a specific deferral policy for students applying to PGT/PGR programmes who want to take on Sabbatical roles.
- Numbers for paid and voluntary roles alike may continue to slide if the Association does not improve on the perceived and actual value of taking on these roles.
  - Review the workload and balance of Student Representative Council and other voluntary positions to address student concerns.



- Regularly update all current Councillors, Sabbatical Officers, and Academic Representatives about the current candidate numbers during nominations; remind them of the tools they have available to them (such as template messaging and Elections promotional material).
- Expand advertising to Postgrads; continue PG-specific messaging, but inform them that they are able to run for Sabbatical Positions and SRC Roles as well as for Postgraduate Academic Convenor.
- Host multiple candidate Mixers – one for prospective Sabbatical/SRC candidates and one for School President Candidates. Schedule these earlier and advertise them more directly to external audiences and to Subcommittees/Schools.
- Create a plan to ensure targeting of special population groups for the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer role; ensure that postgrads, distance learners, carers, and mature students are all communicated with specifically about this role.
- Design training for all elected student officers about the importance of ensuring you have a successor; elevate the importance and responsibility of ensuring that someone is there to fill every position.
- Remind School Presidents and Councillors during the last three days before nominations close to send out information about unfilled roles and uncontested roles.
- Consider creating a prize or incentive for all role-holders who have at least one person running for their position (and a bigger prize if their position is contested?)
- Create a more active check-in mechanism for Schools and Councils regarding the sharing of social media posts and sending of template emails/messages.
- Intentionally promote the Trustee positions internally over the course of the academic year; consider having student Trustees give regular reports to SRC to ensure visibility remains high for these roles and that students know that they can run for these positions.

- Continue to run the automated Nudge form, and consider opening the form in Semester One. Work with SRC and Subcommittees to increase number of nudges in each area.
- Continue to provide email templates, social media graphics, share request timelines, and other resources to School Presidents, Councillors, and other constituencies.
- Review the elections timeline, including the length of time allotted to each stage of the election; engage with students to understand the best time in the semester for nominations – bearing in mind general coursework deadlines/examinations, and when graduating students determine their plans for the next year. Talk about Elections during Semester One.

# Breakdown by School

## STATISTICS

Undergraduate Positions Breakdown by School 2021/22			
School	# Candidates	Votes Cast	Votes Per Candidate
Art History	4	115	28.75
Biology	2	216	108.00
Chemistry	4	213	53.25
Classics	3	135	45.00
Computer Science	4	177	44.25
Divinity	2	55	27.50
Earth and Environmental Sciences	2	77	38.50
Economics and Finance	1	162	162.00
English	1	145	145.00
Film Studies	1	61	61.00
Geography and Sustainable Development	1	168	168.00
History	2	194	97.00
International Relations	3	285	95.00
Management	3	167	55.67
Math and Stats	4	367	91.75
Medicine	1	108	108.00
Modern Languages	3	219	73.00
Modern Languages Arabic & Persian	2	60	30.00
Modern Languages Comparative Literature	2	56	28.00
Modern Languages French	1	65	65.00
Modern Languages German	3	42	14.00
Modern Languages Italian	1	21	21.00
Modern Languages Russian	5	38	7.60
Modern Languages Spanish	2	47	23.50
Philosophy	1	140	140.00
Physics and Astronomy	2	178	89.00
Psychology and Neuroscience	2	228	114.00
Social Anthropology	2	128	64.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3867</b>	
<b>Averages</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>138.11</b>	<b>71.35</b>

## ANALYSIS

---

### ***Top Votes by School***

The Schools with the highest number of individual votes cast are: Mathematics & Statistics (367); International Relations (285); Psychology & Neuroscience (228); Modern Languages (219); Biology (216); and Chemistry (213).

Four out of six of these Schools are in the Science and Medicine Faculty, which correlates with overall voting trends. All six of these Schools had contested School President races.

Curiously, one of these Schools (Chemistry) had a lower votes per candidate statistic than the average for all schools (53 compared to the average of 71). This indicates that other factors, such as School size or traditions, may have a larger impact than just the number of candidates running.

### ***Votes per Candidate***

In a similar vein, the Schools with the highest number of votes per candidate were in Schools with only one candidate (Geography & Sustainable Development; Economics and Finance; English).

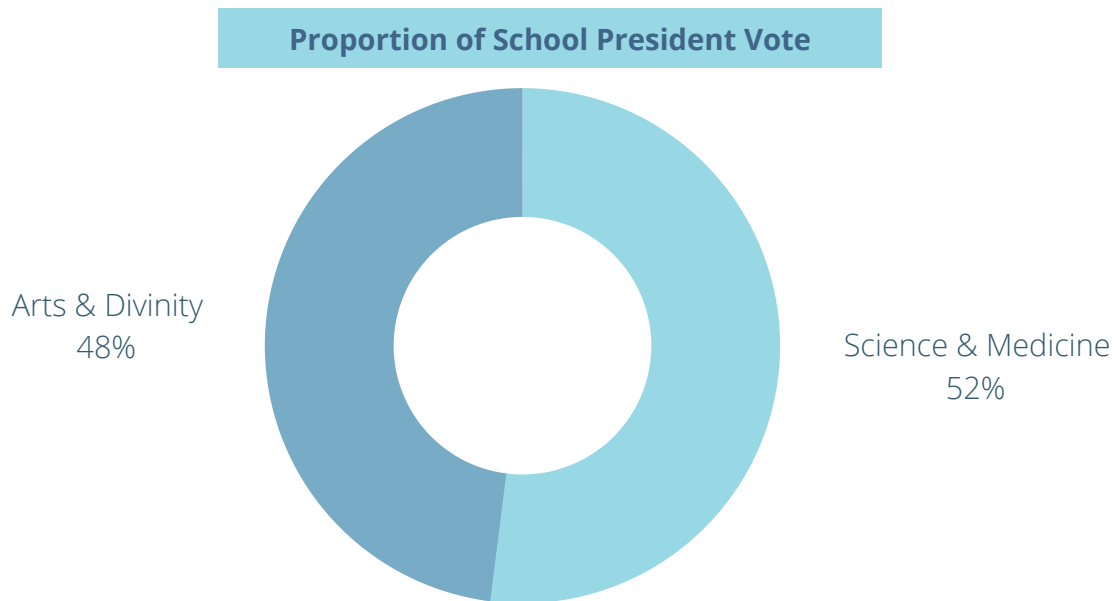
Some Schools with contested races received relatively few votes, such as: Divinity; Earth & Environmental Sciences; Art History. These deviations in expectations indicate that other factors besides simply the number of candidates and whether or not a race is contested have an effect on raw voter turnout.

### ***School of Modern Languages***

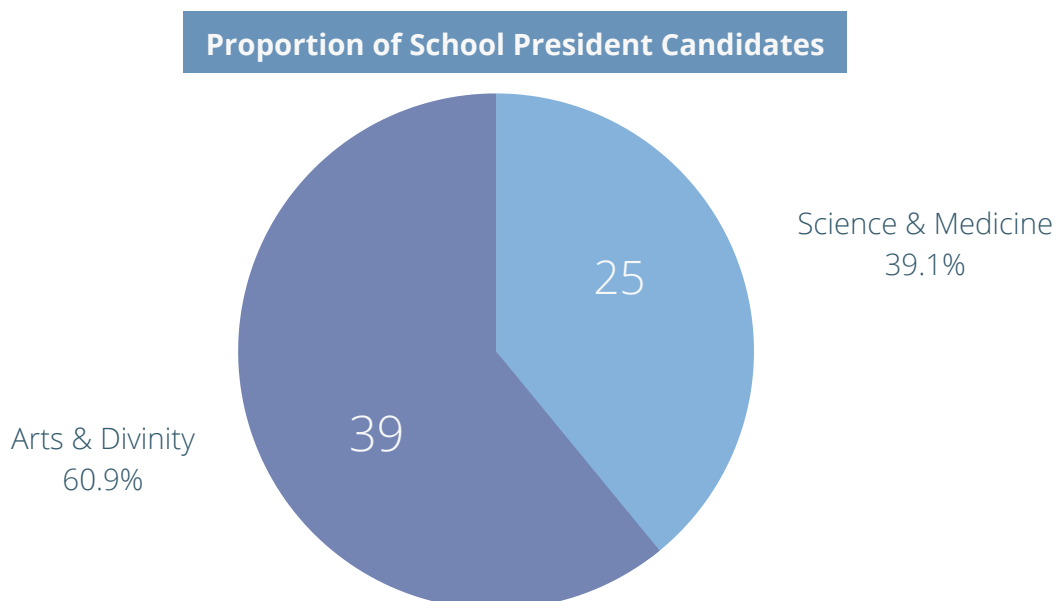
The School of Modern Languages was a special anomaly this election cycle. The School boasted with the high number of candidates (19) and votes (548) when combining all departments, but had the lowest number of votes per candidate (28.84), even combining department figures. This suggests that some students may not know they can vote in multiple departments, or that students are less inclined to vote in multiple races even at the local/School level.

### Top Votes by School

Overall, the faculty of Science & Medicine took home 52% of the vote in this election, with (a very appropriate) 2,022 combined votes across all Schools. (The Arts & Divinity Faculty cast 1,845 votes).



Curiously, the Faculty of Arts & Divinity had approximately 61% of the candidates (39 out of 64), compared to Science & Medicine. These statistics may suggest that Arts students are more likely to run, but that Science students are more likely to vote.



## FUTURE ACTIONS

---

There are a number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future elections in an effort to increase participation from Schools, detailed below:

- Ensure that students (especially in Modern Languages) are aware that they can cast a vote in each School they are enrolled in.
- Create a “Returning Officer’s Prize” awarded to the School with the highest number of unique voters each year.
  - Create a similar award for Councils (~£100 voucher each?)
- Encourage and incentivise campaigning from School President Candidates to increase the votes per candidate averages in all Schools.
  - Consider increasing the spending budget for volunteer races up to £50.
- Encourage a stronger push during nominations to Science & Medicine Schools; encourage a stronger get-out-the-vote push during election days to Arts & Divinity Schools.
- Reach out to Schools with lowest participation numbers (in terms of votes and votes per candidate) to encourage School Staff to get out the word.
- Create a friendly competition between School Presidents and Schools Staff by sharing these statistics and encouraging them to outdo each other in terms of participation.

# Publicity

## STRATEGIES ACTIONED

---

Advertising and increasing awareness of the election was essential for generating interest – and subsequent votes – from the student body; this was actioned through the Elections Team’s various forms of publicity, across media and through events. There was a significant change from the previous election – where Covid-19 forced all content online – as in-person events and publicity could return; this allowed for more direct encouragement of nominations and voting from the Elections Team through strategies actioned in-person.

In collaboration with the Staff Elections Lead, the Design and Marketing Team created a series of documents, which outlined the various promotional pieces that would be required on a week-by-week basis. This structure, combined with regularly scheduled catch-up calls, proved to be an effective way of tracking which publicity materials needed to be created and on what timeline.

### **Events**

The Elections Team administered multiple events in order to generate interest about the elections, and provide information for prospective candidates and eventually voters. As Covid-19 restrictions were increasingly lifted, these events could be held in-person – though some were also livestreamed on the Association’s social media, so as to not exclude students isolating, or who were studying remotely.

The Elections Events for 2022 included:

- A Candidate Mixer prior to the (close of nominations)
- The mandatory Candidate Meeting (before campaigning opened)
- A Hustings for members of the SRC + Student Trustees (during campaigning)
- A Sabbatical Debate (during campaigning)
- A Results Show (following the close of voting)
- A Referendum and By-Election Debate (during the by-election campaigning period)

Further details about each event are included in the subheadings below.

## ***Candidate and Councillor Mixer***

With the help of catering and the bar at the Union, the Elections Team organised a mixer for current sabbatical officers, councillors and prospective candidates before the nominations period closed. The event allowed prospective candidates to ask questions about the roles they were interested in, with the HR Manager in attendance as well to answer more general questions. Free wine and light refreshments were served as an incentive, and all current Sabbatical Officers and SRC members were invited to attend the event to answer questions from potential candidates. Few of the currently-elected SRC Officers were able to attend this event. Approximately 25 prospective-candidates attended this event, many of whom did end up standing as candidates.

## ***Debate and Hustings***

The Elections Team hosted two major events in the campaigning period: the Sabbatical Candidate Debate, and the Hustings for SRC and Trustee Candidates. For both, a combination of questions from the Team and the audience were asked following short introductory statements; this ensured a variety of questions for each candidate, which were monitored by the Elections Intern. Attendance varied at both of these events, as the audience was largely populated by associates of the candidates (e.g. sports clubs for AU President); it is worth strategizing how to encourage more of the student body to attend. Both of these events were livestreamed, which allowed students to watch from home during or after the event itself; these attracted a lot of views (as of May 2022, the debate had over 500 and the Hustings over 600 – but it is hard to tell whether these are all students viewings. The Debate peaked at 32 people watching the livestream, and had an average view time of 6min and 13 seconds. (For contrast, the 2021 Sabbatical debate peaked at 89 live viewers and has an average view time of 2 minutes and 59 seconds).

The two events were slightly impeded by numerous absences of the candidates – largely on account of Covid isolations. This restricted the possibility for debate and variety. It is worth noting, though, not all candidates were affected negatively by their absence: the successful Alumni Officer and Postgraduate Academic Convenor



candidates were not able to attend the hustings. The successful Sabbatical Candidates, however, all attended the Debate.

An additional Hustings for the sabbatical candidates was held at a Hall of Residence, where cupcakes were provided as an incentive for attendance. Unfortunately, planning of the event met many obstacles, including the lack of availability of the original location, and a fire at the hall ten minutes before the event was due to start; as a result, attendance was notably low. This event was partially organised by the Elections Team and the Senior Students in Halls. The efforts of the St Salvator's Hall Senior Student are especially commended.

## ***Social Media***

An aspect of the Elections publicity included reaching out to University and Union affiliated pages on Facebook and Instagram, to share key information published on the Union's accounts. A 'share request' list was drawn up of various contacts, many of whom responded quickly and were happy to share the publicity content. Though not all shared the requested posts, it meant that the material reached a variety of groups in the student population – from individual schools to sub-committees. The Elections Intern also posted content in the various 'Class of 20xx' Facebook groups, which reached a large number of students, but did not generate much engagement.

## ***Social Media – Takeovers***

Instagram takeovers were actioned regularly over the course of the elections, on both the Union's account (@standrewsunion) and the main university page (@uniofstandrews) – both reaching out to large portions of the student body. Various volunteers and student representatives contributed to these takeovers (with particular help from the Sabbatical Officers), which helped to advertise the key stages of the election. The takeovers were largely effective in reaching out to the student population but going forward it would be worth strategizing the content published; one issue identified was the oversaturation of content on the takeovers, as students generally only engaged with the initial 1 or 2 Instagram stories posted, and were less likely to engage with longer videos. Additionally, the takeovers were often embedded in other content from these pages, and therefore sometimes struggled to stand out.

## ***Tabling***

The Elections Team hosted a table outside of the Union to advertise the key stages of the elections process: the initial 'nudge' campaign, the nomination period, and the two voting days. Initially, fruit was provided as an incentive for student engagement which proved effective in garnering interest in the elections. On voting days, these tables were expanded to other locations. Tables at the Union, the Old Union Coffee Shop, the Sports Centre, St Salvator's Hall, and Andrew Melville Hall distributed approximately 600 cupcakes (vegan and gluten-free) to students in exchange for proof of voting; this was the most successful incentive. The in-person encouragement of voting over two days allowed volunteers and the Elections Team to talk to large portions of the student body, some of whom were not aware of the elections.

## ***Publicity Materials***

The Design and Marketing Team produced an array of posters and graphics for the election, which were published online and on the Association's social media, as well as broadcasted on screens around the Union and university buildings; the Team's designs were also printed on flyers, which were distributed during tabling. The use of QR codes on these materials proved useful, as they made accessing election content and voting a quicker process. Students approached during tabling were often on their way to class, so QR codes allowed for a quick engagement (whether such students then voted is hard to gauge, though). Students were generally more likely to scan the relevant QR code with their phone, than to take a flyer and look at the information separately; some students also mentioned paper waste in response to the offer of a flyer.

## ***Email Templates***

The Staff Lead for Elections designed a variety of template emails for stakeholder groups to send out during the Election. These were a part of a comprehensive "Elections Toolkit" which provided other graphics, timelines, and resources to anyone who was willing to spread the word about the Election. An Elections Toolkit was designed for each of the following stakeholder groups: SRC + Sabbatical Officers; School Presidents; Societies; Hall Committees; University Staff; Postgraduate

Officers; and the Sports Centre. Engagement and distribution of these templates varied substantially; some stakeholder groups (such as the School Presidents) utilised these resources quite effectively, while others ignored them in their entirety.

## ***Press***

The Saint newspaper covered the Students' Association Elections, including a featured edition of the print newspaper. The Editors and reporters of the Newspaper were keen collaborators, interested in not only access to manifestos but also in increasing turnout in the Election overall. The Elections segments on their online news section received high numbers for the paper in comparison to other publications; the most-read elections headlines included their editorial surrounding the "State of the Union" and the announcement of the Association President race.

Meeting with the Editors and interviewing with the reporters proved to be an excellent collaboration, which should be maintained in future years. The Saint did not livestream Elections events this year and it is recommended that livestreams continue to be owned by the ENTs Crew in future years.

## STRATEGY LIMITATIONS

---

### ***Time***

Despite the good planning of the promotion timeline, time still proved limiting to both student candidates and the elections team. With only one week for campaigning, the possibilities of holding multiple promotional events was limited; although, having a single week for campaigning reduces the potential for 'burn-out' for staff and campaigners, as well as the possibility of fatiguing student voters with too much content.

Additionally, as the majority of the nominations period occurred over the spring break, in-person encouragement was somewhat limited. Actively talking to as many students as possible is essential to securing nominations, especially as doing so allowed interested students to ask questions about the positions and the process of elections. As stated, the Elections Team administered strategies around this (the candidate and councillor mixer, and tabling) but these were scheduled towards the end of the nominations period; otherwise, nominations publicity was actioned online, and therefore less actively engaging students.

### ***Resources***

At several points during the Elections cycle, concerns about the budget were expressed, resulting in downsizing publicity and using cheaper alternatives. A more dedicated pool of resources should be provided to Elections publicity, so that concerns about, say, candidate reimbursements do not inhibit promotional efforts.

### ***Reaching the Student Body as a Whole***

One of the hardest challenges of publicity faced by the Elections Team was engaging students who are not already connected to student politics, or are not interested in the election process. Sabbatical officers and SRC members sent information about the elections to their mail lists, but this would not reach students who are not already engaged with sub-committees and student representation. Additionally, though the Association President's weekly emails included information about the elections and reached the whole student body, it is hard to ascertain the effect this had on nominations and voting.

## FUTURE ACTIONS

---

There are a number of possible actions the Elections Team, as well as student representatives, could include in future elections planning. Overall, these ideas focus on generating greater interest from students, which should then positively impact the number of nominations and voter turnout:

- Encourage interest in student representation itself – ideally over the course of the academic year, rather than just during the elections cycle.
  - Better publicise the work of the elected students, and their positive impact, so that students are better aware of the importance of student representatives.
  - The Sabbatical Officers were of particular help advertising the available positions on social media, so this could be expanded to other student representatives.
- To increase attendance at debates and hustings, the Elections Team should consider different strategies for organising and publicising the events.
  - One possibility includes adding incentives to the events, such as an offer for hot and soft drinks upon entry.
  - It would be worth encouraging the candidates to advertise the event as a part of their campaigns.
  - Consider having the option for students to prepare multimedia (e.g. video or PowerPoint) content in lieu of introductory/opening statements.
  - The questions collection method through Microsoft Forms was effective and should be continued.
- Consider breaking the Debate and Hustings into smaller, constituency-based events. For example, hosting a “Wellbeing and Equalities” Hustings, where speakers would be limited to candidates for the following positions: DoWell; BAME Officer; LGBT+ Officer; Disability Officer; Gender Equality Officer; and Student Health Officer. Similar events could be held for Academic Representatives, Widening Access Officers, Events/Activities Officers, Sports, and so on.

- This would allow for subcommittees and relevant students to get involved and hear from the candidates most pertinent to their areas, as students are not inclined to watch a Hustings Event covering every Officer.
- Expand and increase attendance for the Candidate and Councillor Mixer. Host multiple events, and encourage broader participation from Subcommittees, Societies, and students at large.
  - Consider more ways to engage with students during the nominations period, such as current role-holders hosting 'coffee and a chat' kind of informal events.
  - Mandate attendance from the current SRC Officers and Sabbaticals, encouraging them to invite and bring along prospective candidates for an evening with refreshments and beverages.
- Block off time in all the Sabbatical Officers' calendars close to the end of nominations and on voting days to ensure that current officers can answer queries and meet with prospective/declared candidates about their ideas.
- Continue with and expand the 'share requests' list. Going forward, it is worth identifying the pages most likely to respond, for efficiency.
  - More templates could be provided for sub-committees to share on their social media, rather than exclusively asking for the pages to share existing material.
- The promotion timeline was an effective tool for managing and strategizing the elections publicity, and should be continued – perhaps with a greater focus on outreach to more students.
  - Equally, the elections timeline itself should be considered in the future. If more time is allocated to campaigning, then the promotion timeline should reflect this.
  - More events could be introduced, such as informal gatherings of the candidates around the Union – rather than strictly debates or hustings. (Though, it is important to ensure the wellbeing of staff and student candidates is maintained, and not overburdened with events and publicity.)

- The difficulties of the Halls Husting should not deter similar events in the future, but there should be greater planning so that the event can be advertised more strongly. In the future, if additional Elections Interns are hired, one could more collaborate with Halls to co-host this event (or series of events).
- Consider the efficacy of flyers; ceasing the use of flyers in the future could allow the budget to be focused elsewhere, such as on voting incentives or other promotional material – but this should not be done at the expense of reaching out to students.
- Develop a more focused approach to Instagram takeovers and social media posts, so that content is delivered more efficiently and effectively.
  - Rather than long videos of volunteers explaining facets of the elections, content should be briefer in order to be more digestible (especially for students who are likely to engage less actively in Union publicity).
  - Plan takeovers so that they do not clash with Association events or other takeovers so that the elections content stands out better.
- Though students no longer administer the election, the current sabbatical and SRC role holders should still be involved in the early stages of encouraging prospective candidates and advertising the election.
- Continue tabling throughout the elections period, perhaps expanding to more locations or administering more frequently.
  - Consider more ‘decoration’ to be more eye-catching – but bear in mind the windiness of St Andrews.
  - Continue with the incentives (fruit, cupcakes), and consider more ways to attract attention
- Provide more email templates for current role-holders for encouraging nominations and voting.
  - Potentially action earlier in the academic year to give students more time to consider standing in the election.

- Request that The Saint cover other, non-Presidential positions/candidates, or base an article around the “key issues” that the candidates for various Sabbatical positions are engaging with (e.g. the Academic Calendar, mental health, etc.) rather than just covering the President race.
- Create a friendly competition between Societies and Sports Clubs by sharing statistics and encouraging them to outdo each other in terms of participation. Add an incentive to encourage participation.
- Incentivise students to vote at existing events. (For example, "before joining the badminton session, everyone take 5 minutes to vote.")
- Host a Councillor/Sabbatical Introduction during Fresher’s Week events to get keen, new students information about who is currently in the roles.
- Consider giving Sabbatical Candidates a slot of time on the University or Union Instagram pages to extend the reach of their campaigns. (This would have to be regulated for fairness).



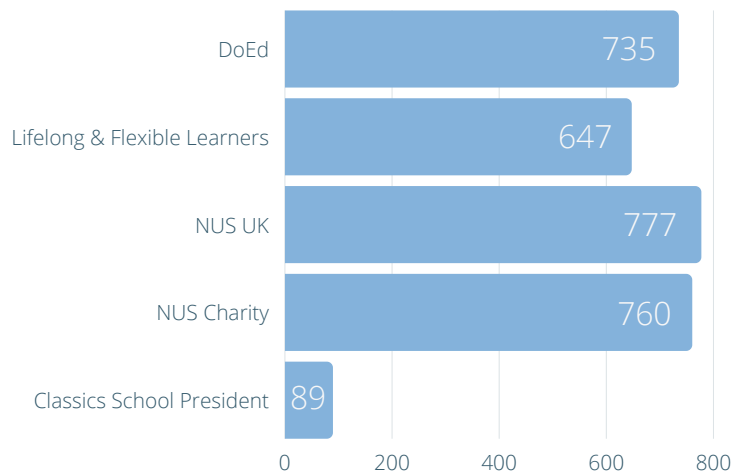
# REFERENDUM AND BY-ELECTION

*Turnout,  
Candidates,  
and Campaign  
Teams*

## STATISTICS

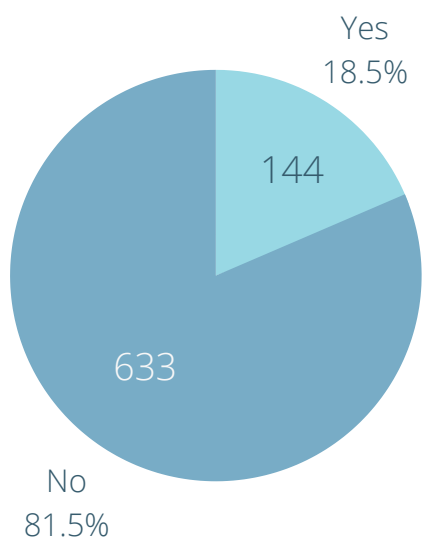
Overall, 926 unique voters participated across the five races, for a total turnout of 7.89%.

The turnout in the two NUS Referendum Questions was 6.8% for NUS UK; 6.6% on NUS Charity, respectively.

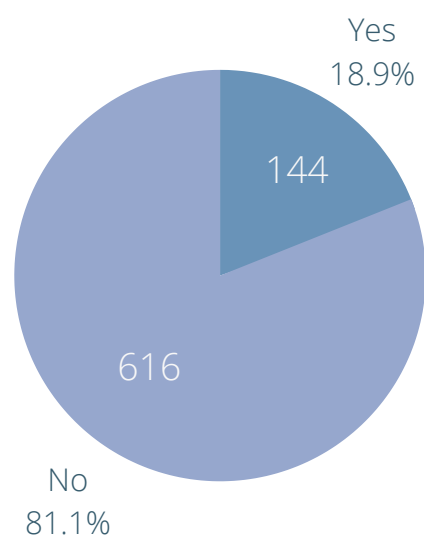


Both the NUS UK and the NUS Charity Questions were defeated by an 81% majority.

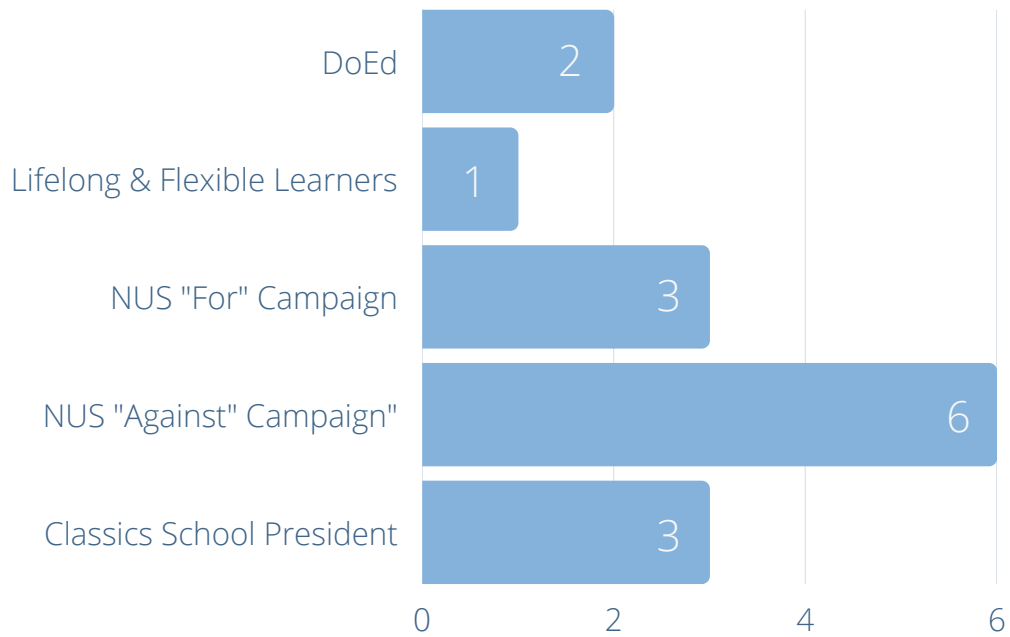
**'Should the University of St Andrews Students' Association join NUS UK?'**



**'Should the University of St Andrews Students' Association join the NUS Charity?'**



The number of candidates for each position and the number of team members for each campaign were:



## REFERENDUM AND BY-ELECTION ANALYSIS

---

### ***Turnout***

Turnout in the Referendum and By-Election was incredibly low, with only a small fraction of students opting to cast a second ballot. The low turnout can be explained by a large number of factors, including: apathy and confusion about a second vote; lower numbers of candidates; a lack of clarity about the NUS Referendum or a widespread knowledge of the issue; less overall advertising; and a condensed timeline for campaigning and voting. The referendum itself did not originate from general student discourse about the NUS; the low turnout could reflect the lack of interest students had in the question of the referendum.

Students' Association resources for campaigning and advertising these secondary elections was much lower. Most notably, staff time was especially constricted, after having run another major election just weeks before. While all positions were fairly and transparently advertised, there wasn't financial backing or the prep time to build the same level of enthusiasm and engagement in the By-Elections as the General Elections.

### ***NUS Referendum Comparison***

In 2012, the last time an NUS Referendum went to a vote, "Yes" (or "For" Affiliation) won 25.07% of the vote. This year, the gap has widened, with a further 6% of students rejecting affiliation than a decade ago.

While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for the drop in support, some possible explanations include a perception of less value for money, stronger "No" campaigning, and general student disinterest in the National Union of Students.

### ***Classics School President***

The School President of Classics race was run again with the same three candidates who participated in the General Election. Only 89 students voted a second time, compared to 135 who voted in the General Election – a 34% drop in participation. This indicates that students are significantly less likely to participate in a second election.

### ***Roles Filled***

While turnout was extraordinarily low, the number of candidates was relatively strong. The Sabbatical race was contested, and none of the candidates from the Classics School President race dropped out. Only one Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer stood, but this is rarely a contested position.

With the completion of the By-Election, All roles were able to be filled before the official handover of representatives. This outpaced the 2021 elections, where vacant posts were co-opted much later in semester one of the following academic year.

### ***Publicity***

The Students' Association Election Team ran a tightened promotions schedule for the NUS Referendum and By-Elections. The most effective methods again included the cupcake voting incentives, social media share requests, and the Students' Association Website.

The Candidate & Referendum Debate was not very widely attended (approximately 20 people or fewer) and could not be livestreamed. Posts on social media received far less coverage than the General Election (generally about 25% to 50% fewer views and engagements). Voting incentives were only distributed in two locations, and not all of the 200 purchased cupcakes were given out throughout the course of the voting day. Little in-person promotion occurred outside of Union-owned venues due to time and budgetary constraints.

## FUTURE ACTIONS

---

There are a small number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future By-Elections and Referenda, detailed below:

- Advertise and post the Information Pack about Referendum far earlier in order to recruit larger campaign teams.
- Defer any future referenda until the next previously-scheduled election (either until the Class Rep Elections in September; the PG Elections in October; or General Elections in Semester Two). This will serve to maximize engagement and centralise promotion efforts rather than splitting them.
- For prominent unfilled positions (i.e. non-Sabbatical Officer races), consider putting a referendum question during the General Election, asking students whether they prefer the vacancy be filled by By-Election or Co-Option.
  - This would allow the Association to skip hosting a By-Election if the student body was not inclined to vote on the position.
- If future By-Elections or independent Referendum Elections are deemed to be essential, host them at least a month after the last scheduled Election, such that staff and volunteers can build a stronger promotional strategy and promote the Election events (nominations, debate, and voting) in time.
- Consider hosting focus groups to gauge student opinions on a topic prior to hosting a Referendum.

# Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Review the current staff structure of the elections team; hire and train more Elections Interns or temporary support staff	Preparation	18	Management Team	Nov-22
Increase the Elections Budget and create separate budgets for: (1) interns/staffing; (2) candidate/campaign reimbursements; (3) Promotions; (4) administration	Preparation	18	Governance, Nominations, and Staffing	Aug-22
Block off time in all SA Staff, Sabbatical, and Elected Officer Calendars during Elections time to help promote the election	Preparation	18	Elections Lead	Oct-22
Reorganise Hustings to be more localised to different stakeholder groups	Events	18	Elections Lead	Feb-23
Expand Voting Tables and incentives on Election Days (from 600 to 1000)	Promotion	19	Whole Elections Committee	Feb-23
Continue work with IT Services to make improvements and updates to the Elections Portal	Preparation	19	Elections Lead	Aug-22
Collaborate with IT Services to improve the visibility of the tile on <u>MySaint</u> for mobile users	Preparation	19	Elections Lead	Aug-22
Consider employing students who have a high number of followers on social media as consultants or influencers who will advertise the Elections.	Promotion	19	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22
Encourage more high-profile statements or endorsements of voting from high-profile University figures (like the Principal, Rector, or <u>Sabbs</u> ) leading up to Election Week.	Promotion	19	Elections Lead	Feb-23
Encourage in-person campaigning from candidates by providing more direct examples of successful practice; develop and host an optional workshop or session on running a successful campaign	Preparation	19	Elections Lead	Jan-23

## Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Begin advertising the positions and actions of the Student Representative Council earlier (November or December) and encourage students to consider running for these positions year-round	Promotion	19	Marketing and Design Team	Oct-22
Meet with Councils in November and December to encourage current leadership to begin talking to their Committees and peers about finding candidates to run for their positions	Preparation	19	Elections Lead	Nov-22
Better utilise Students' Association venues during the week of Elections. (e.g. Regular announcements that play in Main Bar, Rectors Café, and the Old Union Coffee Shop, and/or events and visible promotion efforts in those spaces)	Promotion	20	Management Team	Feb-23
When positions are no longer elected or are removed, consider mitigation methods to engage with that demographic of students during Election time	Preparation	20	Student Representative Council	Ongoing
Ensure that all Referenda are able to be incorporated into the regularly scheduled election. Avoid hosting a separate election, and instead defer voting on the referendum until the General Elections, the Class Rep Elections, or the PG Elections.	Preparation	20	Whole Elections Committee	Ongoing
Redraft voting template emails, social media posts, and other support resources to make it easy for Schools to share the word about elections.	Promotion	20	Elections Lead	Dec-22
Maintain and update the upgraded <a href="http://www.yourunion.net/elections">www.yourunion.net/elections</a> page and continue to allow the Web Intern to brainstorm engagement ideas	Promotion	20	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22
Clarify with all elected Officers that while staff run the months-long administration of elections, student officers are still responsible for ensuring candidates step forward during the nominations period	Preparation	32	Elections Lead	Ongoing



Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Consider extending nominations for select, unfilled positions to avoid by-elections. (For example, the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer this year).	During Election	32	Whole Elections Committee	Ongoing
Better advertise the Sabbatical Officer Role Descriptions throughout the academic year; emphasise the kinds of campaigns and changes students in these roles have made and how these roles are responsive to students	Promotion	32	Marketing and Design Team	Whole Academic Year
Raise the profile of Sabbatical Officer support and resources to internal and external audiences; clarify the pay, staff support structure, and resources that empower students to take these positions on. More explicitly state that second years and study abroad students and postgraduates can take on these roles	Promotion	32	Management Team	Whole Academic Year
Consider increasing support, resources, and incentives to encourage highly-engaged students to continue to stand for positions	Preparation	32	Governance, Nominations, and Staffing	Ongoing
Work with the University to build a specific deferral policy for students applying to PGT/PGR programmes who want to take on Sabbatical roles	Preparation	32	Elections Lead	Dec-22
Review the workload and balance of Student Representative Council and other voluntary positions to address student concerns	Preparation	32	Governance, Nominations, and Staffing	Dec-22
Regularly update all current Councillors, Sabbatical Officers, and Academic Representatives about the current candidate numbers during nominations; remind them of the tools they have available to them	During Election	33	Elections Lead	Feb-23
Expand advertising to Postgrads; continue PG-specific messaging, but inform them that they are able to run for Sabbatical Positions and SRC Roles as well as for Postgraduate Academic Convenor	Promotion	33	Marketing and Design Team	Jan-23

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Host multiple candidate Mixers – one for prospective Sabbatical/SRC candidates and one for School President Candidates. Schedule these earlier and advertise them more directly to external audiences and to Subcommittees/Schools.	Events	33	Whole Elections Committee	Jan-23
Create a plan to ensure targeting of special population groups for the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer role; ensure that postgrads, distance learners, carers, and mature students are all communicated with specifically about this role.	Promotion	33	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22
Design training for all elected student officers about the importance of ensuring you have a successor; elevate the importance and responsibility of ensuring that someone is there to fill every position	Preparation	33	Elections Lead	Dec-22
Remind School Presidents and Councillors during the last three days before nominations close to send out information about unfilled roles and uncontested roles.	Promotion	33	Elections Lead	Feb-23
Consider creating a prize or incentive for all role-holders who have at least one person running for their position (and a bigger prize if their position is contested).	Preparation	33	Whole Elections Committee	Feb-23
Create a more active check-in mechanism for Schools and Councils regarding the sharing of social media posts and sending of template emails/messages	Promotion	33	Marketing and Design Team	Jan-23
Intentionally promote the Trustee positions internally over the course of the academic year; consider having student Trustees give regular reports to SRC to ensure visibility remains high for these roles and that students know that they can run for these positions	Promotion	33	Student Representative Council	Ongoing

## Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Continue to run the automated Nudge form, and consider opening the form in Semester One. Work with SRC and Subcommittees to increase number of nudges in each area.	Preparation	34	Elections Lead	Whole Academic Year
Continue to provide email templates, social media graphics, share request timelines, and other resources to School Presidents, Councillors, and other constituencies.	Promotion	34	Elections Lead	Dec-22
Review the elections timeline, including the length of time allotted to each stage of the election; engage with students to understand the best time in the semester for nominations	Preparation	34	Whole Elections Committee	Aug-22
Ensure that students (especially in Modern Languages) are aware that they can cast a vote in each School they are enrolled in.	Promotion	38	Whole Elections Committee	Feb-23
Create a "Returning Officer's Prize" awarded to the School with the highest number of unique voters each year; create a similar award for Councils	Promotion	38	Whole Elections Committee	Dec-22
Consider increasing the spending budget for volunteer races up to £50.	During Election	38	Whole Elections Committee	Feb-23
Encourage a stronger push during nominations to Science & Medicine Schools; encourage a stronger get-out-and-vote push during election days to Arts & Divinity Schools.	During Election	38	Whole Elections Committee	Feb-23
Reach out to Schools with lowest participation numbers (in terms of votes and votes per candidate) to encourage School Staff to get out the word.	During Election	38	Elections Lead	Feb-23
Create a friendly competition between School Presidents and Schools Staff by sharing these statistics and encouraging them to outdo each other in terms of participation.	Promotion	38	Elections Lead	Dec-22
Consider adding incentives to Debate and Hustings events (such as soft drinks on entry)	Events	45	Whole Elections Committee	Jan-23

## Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Encourage participation in Hustings by having candidates promote it as part of their campaigns, allowing students to use multimedia, and maintaining Question-collection method for students	Events	45	Whole Elections Committee	Jan-23
Consider more ways to engage with students during the nominations period, such as current role-holders hosting 'coffee and a chat' kind of informal events.	Events	46	Whole Elections Committee	Dec-22
Block off time in all the Sabbatical Officers' calendars close to the end of nominations and on voting days to ensure that current officers can answer queries and meet with prospective/declared candidates about their ideas	Preparation	46	Whole Elections Committee	Nov-22
Continue with and expand the social media 'share requests' list. Going forward, it is worth identifying the pages most likely to respond, for efficiency	Promotion	46	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22
Create more templates for sub-committees to share on their social media, rather than exclusively asking for the pages to share existing material.	Promotion	46	Marketing and Design Team	Jan-23
The promotion timeline was an effective tool for managing and strategizing the elections publicity, and should be continued – perhaps with a greater focus on outreach to more students.	Promotion	46	Whole Elections Committee	Nov-22
Ensure greater collaboration and planning with Halls Hustings so that the event can be advertised more strongly	Promotion	47	Whole Elections Committee	Dec-22
Consider the efficacy of flyers; ceasing the use of flyers in the future could allow the budget to be focused elsewhere, such as on voting incentives or other promotional material	Promotion	47	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22



## Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
Encourage participation in Hustings by having candidates promote it as part of their campaigns, allowing students to use multimedia, and maintaining Question-collection method for students	Events	45	Whole Elections Committee	Jan-23
Consider more ways to engage with students during the nominations period, such as current role-holders hosting 'coffee and a chat' kind of informal events.	Events	46	Whole Elections Committee	Dec-22
Block off time in all the Sabbatical Officers' calendars close to the end of nominations and on voting days to ensure that current officers can answer queries and meet with prospective/declared candidates about their ideas	Preparation	46	Whole Elections Committee	Nov-22
Continue with and expand the social media 'share requests' list. Going forward, it is worth identifying the pages most likely to respond, for efficiency	Promotion	46	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22
Create more templates for sub-committees to share on their social media, rather than exclusively asking for the pages to share existing material.	Promotion	46	Marketing and Design Team	Jan-23
The promotion timeline was an effective tool for managing and strategizing the elections publicity, and should be continued – perhaps with a greater focus on outreach to more students.	Promotion	46	Whole Elections Committee	Nov-22
Ensure greater collaboration and planning with Halls Hustings so that the event can be advertised more strongly	Promotion	47	Whole Elections Committee	Dec-22
Consider the efficacy of flyers; ceasing the use of flyers in the future could allow the budget to be focused elsewhere, such as on voting incentives or other promotional material	Promotion	47	Marketing and Design Team	Dec-22

## Summary of Action Items

Recommended Action	Category	Page #	Lead	Achieve By
If future By-Elections or independent Referendum Elections are deemed to be essential, host them at least a month after the last scheduled Election, such that staff and volunteers can build a stronger promotional strategy and promote the Election events in sufficient time	Preparation	54	Whole Elections Committee	Ongoing
Consider hosting focus groups to gauge student opinions on a topic prior to hosting a Referendum.	Preparation	54	Sabbatical Officers	Ongoing