

## **J-20-05 Motion For An Elections Consultation and Working Group**

**Owner:** Anna-Ruth Cockerham, Flora Smith

**In effect from:** Immediately

**Review date:** 14 September 2020

### **Proposed:**

Anna-Ruth Cockerham - *SRC Member for Students with Disabilities*

### **Seconded:**

Flora Smith - *Association Director of Wellbeing*

Zaine Mansuralli - *SSC Debates Officer*

Toni Valencia - *SSC Member Without Portfolio*

Elise Lenzi - *SRC Member for Gender Equality*

Maitreyi Tusharika - *SRC Member for First Years*

### **It is noted that:**

1. Elections are held in semester two of each academic year.
2. In the 2020 elections, voter turnout was down compared to previous years (28.25% in 2020 compared to 32.55% in 2019 and 37.40% in 2018). This reflects a trend in decreasing turnout.
3. In the 2020 elections, 18 of the positions on Joint Councils were unopposed (including two sabbatical positions) and two positions had no candidates.
4. It is common practice that the Elections Rules are approved by the Joint Councils in semester two.

### **It is believed that:**

1. There is a need to allow previous unelected candidates and voters the opportunity to highlight difficulties they experienced with the way the elections are run and a consultation with students would allow for this.
2. A consultation on elections with the wider student body will help us to update the Elections Rules in a way that is fair and considerate of all students.
3. Given the changing nature of campaigning with the rising importance of online techniques like Facebook ads, it is necessary to re-examine the Elections Rules and other aspects of the running of the elections in this context.
4. The previous elections diet featured significant discussion about the efficacy or fairness of some elements of the Elections Rules and so it would be useful to collect and examine these opinions more formally through a consultation.
5. The current system of approving the Elections Rules gives an unequal opportunity to members of the Joint Councils (who won their respective elections) to amend or voice dissent to the rules. A consultation of all students and a working group including students not in the Joint Councils would provide a greater voice to other students.

### **It is resolved to:**

1. To conduct surveys of the 2020 elections candidates and their campaign teams (*Appendix 1*) and other students (*Appendix 2*) on their thoughts on the elections.
2. To form a working group in semester one of the 2020-21 academic year to examine the responses to this survey, research any proposed changes, and propose changes to

the Elections Rules or other elements of the running of the elections to the Joint Councils before the 2021 elections.

- a. Such a working group should be formed of a majority of students who are not members of the SRC or SSC.
- b. Such a working group should ideally represent students in elected positions, campaign teams, voters, and students who did not vote, where possible.

## **Appendix 1: Survey for candidates and campaign teams**

*This survey will use a Google form, but the questions are included here.*

Following the Students' Association elections earlier this semester, we're looking for feedback on candidates' and their campaign teams' thoughts and experiences of the elections. Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will address every problem raised in this consultation, we hope to be able to use your feedback to inform changes to the way the elections work in the future. We welcome your feedback whether you are a candidate or part of a campaign team, whether you were elected or not, and whatever race you were in!

1. Were you a candidate yourself, or part of a campaign team for someone else?
  - a. Candidate
  - b. Campaign Team
2. Did you win your respective election?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to say

### **Experience of Campaigning**

1. Please rate your overall experience of campaigning. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
2. What do you think were the most or least beneficial or successful elements of your campaign?  
For example, campaigning outside the library, using social media, running events, etc.
3. Please rate your opinion of the elections rules. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
4. Please expand on your opinion of the elections rules.  
Please let us know of any difficulties you had with them including, but not limited to, clarity, fairness, effect on campaigning, or effect on your wellbeing. If possible, include any details of changes you would recommend, although we encourage you to tell us about any difficulties you had even if you do not have any proposed solutions. Please also let us know about any rules you think are particularly positive or helpful and why.
5. Please rate your experience of any events you had to attend as part of the elections (e.g. hustings or debates). (Candidates Only) (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
6. Please expand on your opinion of the elections events. (Candidates Only)  
Please let us know of any difficulties you had with them or whether you thought they were a positive opportunity and experience!
7. Please rate how you feel your experience of campaigning affected your general wellbeing. (1 = Very Negative, 5 = Very Positive)
8. Please expand on the effect of campaigning on your general wellbeing.  
Please let us know if any parts of the elections caused you particular stress or upset, or any parts of the elections that you found particularly enjoyable and helpful. Please also let us know if you think there is anything that future elections committees can do to support the wellbeing of candidates and campaign teams.
9. Please let us know any other thoughts you have on your experience of campaigning.

### **Communications About Elections**

1. Please rate your opinion on the information that was available to candidates and campaign teams about the elections. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
2. Please expand on your opinion about the information available to candidates and campaign teams.  
Please let us know if you felt anything was unclear, if not enough or too much information was provided, or if you think important information was easily accessible or not.
3. Please rate your experience of communicating with the Elections Committee. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent) (Candidates Only)
4. Please expand on your experience of communicating with the Elections Committee. Including, but not limited to, the clarity of their communications, the time-scale of their responses, or anything else you can think of. (Candidates Only)

### **Experience of Voting**

1. Please rate what you think of the information available to voters about the elections. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
2. Please expand on your opinion on the information available to voters about the elections.  
Please let us know any thoughts you have on the general understanding of elections, the positions being elected, or the voting system. Please also let us know if there is anything that you would like a future Elections Committee to change about how they communicate with voters.
3. Please rate your opinion of the elections portal. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
4. Please expand on your opinion of the elections portal.

### **Other Information**

1. Please let us know anything else you would like to add about your thoughts on elections.
2. Can we contact you about your feedback? If so, please provide your St Andrews email address. Otherwise, your answers will remain anonymous.

## **Appendix 2: Survey for the wider student body**

*This survey will use a Google form, but the questions are included here.*

Following the Students' Association elections earlier this semester, we're looking for feedback on students' thoughts and experiences of the elections. Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will address every problem raised in this consultation, we hope to be able to use your feedback to inform changes to the way the elections work in the future. We'd appreciate it if you gave as much feedback as possible!

1. Were you aware the elections were taking place this year?
  - a. Yes (in advance)
  - b. Yes (only during campaigning/voting)
  - c. No
2. If you knew the elections were taking place, how did you find out?
3. What do you think the Students' Association could do in the future to raise awareness of the elections, if anything?
4. Please rate your understanding of the positions available during the elections. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
5. What do you think the Students' Association could do in the future to improve understanding of the elected positions, if anything?

### **Thoughts On Campaigning**

1. Overall, please rate how useful you found candidates' campaigning to be to helping you decide to vote/who to vote for. (1 = Very Unhelpful, 5 = Very Helpful)
2. What methods of campaigning did you find effective, if any?
3. Did you feel that you had enough information about the candidates to adequately compare them and decide who to vote for?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
4. What do you think the Elections Committee or candidates could do in future campaign weeks to help you compare and understand candidates, if anything?
5. Do you have any other thoughts on candidates' campaigning you would like to add?

### **Voting**

1. Did you vote in this year's elections?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Prefer not to say
2. Please expand on why you chose, or chose not to, vote (if you feel comfortable).
3. Please rate your understanding of the voting process (i.e. how to vote and our voting system). (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
4. How could the Students' Association improve your awareness and understanding of our voting process, if anything?
5. Please rate your thoughts on the Elections Portal (web-voting). (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)
6. What do you think could be done to improve the Elections Portal, if anything?

**Other Information**

1. Please let us know anything else you would like to add on your thoughts about elections.
2. Can we contact you about your feedback? If so, please provide your St Andrews email address. Otherwise, your answers will remain anonymous.