



## **Procedural Guidelines for Elections to Council and Senate**

The University of Exeter's Procedural Guidelines for elections to Council and Senate outlines the process for the nomination, candidacy and election of eligible candidates to the Senate, the Council and their sub-committees (where they have elected positions according to the statutes and ordinances or as specified in their individual terms of reference) including but not limited to those listed as follows:

- Council Members in Class (III) appointed by the Senate from those elected by and from the Senate;
- The Council Member in Class (IV) appointed by the Council from those elected by and from the Professional Staff;
- Senate members in the Academic, Teaching, and Research Staff of the University elected by and from that population in each of the Faculties;
- Academic Senate members appointed as representatives on sub-committees.

### **Eligibility**

The eligibility to stand/be nominated/to vote in any given election will be clearly stated in the request for nominations. For elections in which eligibility is determined by the specified staff category (e.g. academic or professional services), the electorate itself is solely comprised of those who are eligible to stand in the election. Therefore, to be eligible to stand or vote the candidate must be in post in the relevant staff category as at the closing date for receipt of nominations.

All nominees must hold a substantive contract with the University and have at least one year, from the date of the start of the term, remaining on said contract. Details of the contracts and status of the job family are determined via consultation with relevant HR representatives based on existing HR contracts.

#### *i. Senate Elected Memberships*

Senate's focus is on academic matters so the majority of its membership is drawn from the University's academic staff. As specified in [Ordinance 20](#), Senate will consist of the following elected members:

- Eight representatives of the academic staff elected from each Faculty by such Staff in such manner and upon such terms and conditions to tenure of office as may be prescribed by Ordinance.

All nominees must be part of the academic job family in order to stand for election to Senate.

As specified in Ordinance 22.2:

All members of academic staff (meaning 'all persons holding appointments in the Education and Research, Education and Scholarship and Research Job Families' as defined in Statutes, Section 1) shall be entitled to vote and eligible to stand for election to Senate.

*ii. Council Elected Memberships*

Professional Services staff across the University are eligible to stand and vote in elections for the Professional Services Representative on Council. Candidates must have a minimum of one year of service at the University before submitting their nomination.

## **Nominations**

Eligibility by category and/or Faculty/role is determined by an individual's status on the HR record as at the closing date for receipt of nominations.

Nominations can be received from the nominee or from the nominee's Head of Department, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean, or Departmental Director, providing the nominee agrees with the nomination. Completed nomination forms should be sent to the University Committee Secretariat at the email address specified in the announcement. It is the nominee's responsibility to return their nomination form.

The University encourages nominations for Senate from all campuses in accordance with [Ordinance 22.4](#):

- Members of Senate elected by the Faculty shall be elected in such a way that there will be at least one representative from each of the non-Streatham campuses (Penryn, St Luke's and Truro).

It also encourages nominations across governing bodies from groups currently underrepresented within our senior leadership and other leadership roles. We are committed to creating an inclusive culture where all members of our community are supported to thrive; where diverse voices are heard through our engagement with evidence-based charter frameworks for gender (Athena SWAN and Project Juno for Physics), race equality (Race Equality Charter Mark), LGBTQ+ inclusion (Stonewall Diversity Champion) and as a Disability Confident employer.

A nomination will be invalid in the following non-exhaustive examples:

- the eligibility criteria as specified above are not met,
- the nomination does not arrive in time at the specified email by the closing date for nominations,

- or there is a valid objection to a nomination which has been upheld by the Senior Vice-President and Registrar and Secretary, as the Returning Officer.

In the case of nominations received after the specified closing date, the Returning Officer shall have discretion to consider whether to accept the nomination, by exception, if the proposed nominee can demonstrate that it was not reasonably practicable to have submitted their nomination by the specified deadline.

A nominee can withdraw from an election by submitting a notice of withdrawal. This must be delivered in writing to the Returning Officer at the same email address as for the delivery of nomination forms. Any withdrawals must be received before the ballot opens for voting. If a nominee withdraws the election will proceed with the remaining candidates.

### **Announcing the Candidates**

The University Committee Secretariat will announce the candidates nominated for each election before the opening of the ballot. Any member of the electorate may challenge the validity of a nomination, or the electoral category, within 2 days following the publication of nominations, on the grounds that it does not comply with the rules or the composition of Senate or Council. The Returning Officer shall rule on the challenge and their decision shall be final.

### **Information about the Candidates**

Colleagues are invited to vote based principally on the statements provided by candidates on their nomination form (as detailed above), which is included as part of the online ballot. Details of how to vote, candidate information and the closing date of the election will be circulated by the Committee Secretariat's Office to all members of staff eligible to stand and vote in advance of the election. The University will provide through the voting system a copy of the candidates' supporting statements to every member eligible to vote along with their ballot.

Information provided by the candidate for election will be provided to those who are eligible to vote by the Committee Secretariat's Office. Candidates should ensure that the supporting statements provide clear information about themselves, as relevant to the position for which they are nominating themselves, to enable the electorate to cast an informed ballot. Staff who are eligible to vote will usually receive the ballot by email, with the exception of colleagues in roles without routine access to or use of email, for whom alternative arrangements will be made by the Committee Secretariat's Office. Those eligible to vote will be sent a reminder closer to the deadline and information on the election and the candidates will be provided via the staff website and weekly bulletin.

## Promotion of Elections

The Committee Secretariat will provide equal support for candidates in terms of coverage in University communications, including online communication channels. To encourage a greater number of candidates to put themselves forward, Departments and Faculties will also be asked to promote awareness of elections to the Senate through relevant newsletters and via College and Departmental meetings. Targeted promotion of the elections will also be facilitated via relevant staff networks to raise awareness of elections and to ensure a proactive focus and effort is made to encourage nominations from underrepresented groups.

In the course of the Senate elections, candidates may also choose to communicate with the electorate through reasonable and proportionate means and pre-existing channels in Departments and Faculties, including Departmental meetings.

However, in order to ensure an equitable process for all candidates, no voters should be contacted directly by candidates or third parties acting on their behalf in an effort to canvass for votes (eg use of flyers and posters) and colleagues should be expected to vote principally on the supporting election statements provided by the candidates. No additional individuals or groups are permitted to stand in support or representation of other candidates.

Candidates are not permitted at any stage to use the branding, identity or endorsement of any representative or membership group, society, political party or other body, including recognised trade unions. Similarly, candidates are not allowed to imply that they are standing for election on behalf of any such group, society, party or body.

The Returning Officer reserves the right to withdraw or amend any election statements or materials in the course of the election which constitutes a breach of the above.

Candidates must act in a professional, responsible and respectful manner at all times during the election and prohibited from making any reference to other candidates as part of the course of the election which may be considered to discredit or undermine the credibility of other candidates.

Any perceived or actual breaches of the election procedural guidelines, or those reasonably judged to be acting on a candidate's behalf during the voting and campaign period, should be brought to the attention of the Returning Officer sufficiently ahead of the conclusion of the election period. The Returning Officer will investigate and in order to satisfactorily resolve a known, potential or perceived breach of the regulations.

A breach of the procedural election guidelines may result in a sanction for a candidate, including in extreme cases disqualification from the election for wilful breaching of the regulations in a manner reasonably judged by the Returning Officer to undermine the integrity of the election process, including giving undue advantage to their own candidacy or undermining that of others.

A disqualification decision would be made on the recommendation of the Returning Officer.

## **Supporting Statements**

Supporting statements must not exceed 300 words. All supporting statements will be checked upon receipt. As part of our commitment to equality and diversity, the Committee Secretariat will review submitted statements and biographical information for any obvious errors (e.g spelling mistakes / typographical errors) for reference back to the candidate for agreement prior to circulation. Supporting statements are published at the Returning Officer's discretion, and the Returning Officer will not publish any statement, or part of a statement, which they understand to contain inaccurate or untruthful information; which they believe to be potentially libellous; or which they believe could subject the University to any form of legal action, regulatory intervention or reputational damage.

If the text exceeds the word limit, the candidate will be asked to delete or change a sufficient number of words, or a sentence, to put the statement within the required word limit before the statement is filed. In the absence of the Committee Secretariat receiving a revised statement only the first 300 words will be used to avoid any unfair advantage.

Supporting statements will subsequently be made available as part of the election process to inform the decision of potential voters.

## **Election Rules and Procedures**

Those eligible to vote in a specific election will be invited to vote via email, both from the University Committee Secretariat and from the online voting platform. Those eligible to vote will be sent a reminder closer to the deadline and information will also be advertised via the staff website and weekly bulletin.

Those eligible to participate are invited to vote based on the information provided by candidates in their supporting statement, which is included as part of the online ballot. All votes are expected to be cast based solely on the information provided in the ballot.

The same rules, procedures and principle of independence applies whether an election is being held in respect of membership of the Council, Senate or any of their sub-committees (where they have elected positions according to the statutes and ordinances or as specified in their individual terms of reference)

If a person receives an invitation to vote or casts a vote, and reasonable cause exists to believe that the person is not entitled to vote, the Returning Officer may, at their discretion, not count an ineligible vote.

Candidates may use their own vote to vote for themselves.

Elections take place using the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) method. The Single Transferable Vote (STV) is a form of proportional representation created in Britain by which a candidate needs a set amount of votes, known as the quota, to get elected. The quota is based on the number of vacancies and the number of votes cast. Voters are requested to

select their first and second preference to ensure a fair and just vote. Once the counting has finished, any candidate who has more first choices than the quota is elected. But, rather than ignore extra votes a candidate received after the amount they need to win, these votes move to each voter's second favourite candidate. If no one reaches the quota, then the least popular candidate is removed. Those who voted for them have their votes moved to their second favourite candidate. This process continues until every vacancy is filled. The period of voting may be extended by the Returning Officer and then communicated in the events that issues emerge outside of the Secretariat's control that may limit participation in elections such as IT issues or pandemics.

Voters will be given warning of the closure of an election, throughout the election period, in the invitation to vote, in the reminder to vote email and in an email on the last day of voting.

### **Uncontested Elections**

If insufficient nominations have been received to fill all vacancies at the close of nominations, a decision will be made by the Returning Officer either to extend the period for nominations if there are reasonable grounds to believe that further nominations are likely or to appoint members from those nominated as elected if unopposed.

If an election is uncontested (i.e. the number of candidates is equal to or fewer than the number of vacancies) the candidates' details will be circulated to the relevant constituency. For elections to the Senate and committees, the candidates shall be declared elected unopposed no more than seven days later (provided no objections have been lodged and upheld by the Returning Officer). For elections to the Council, the candidates shall be declared elected unopposed no more than seven days after the deadline for nominations.

In the event that vacancies exist in the same constituency but the positions have a different length of tenure, and the election is otherwise uncontested, the candidates will be asked to give their preference for the tenure. If there is no clear preference, tenure will be allocated by the drawing of lots as set out below regarding tied elections.

### **Results**

The Committee Secretariat will announce the results of the election no more than seven days after the close of the ballot.

The announcement of election results may include the total number of votes cast, including by constituency, but not the numbers of votes cast for individual candidates. However, the number of votes cast will be shared with the candidates.

Once elected each member of the Senate, Council or their sub-committees has equal status with all other members of the body to which they are elected and shares collective responsibility for carrying out its functions.

In the event of a casual vacancy occurring, there shall be a bye-election:

(i) if the member is elected to fill a casual vacancy which has less than one year to run, the appointment shall be made for the unexpired term plus the three years of a further term;

(ii) if the member is elected to fill a casual vacancy which has more than one year to run, there shall be a further election in the usual manner at the end of the unexpired term of office.

**Terms of Office**

Successful candidates will usually be elected and appointed in accordance with the applicable University Statutes and Regulations, exceptions to this occur in cases of casual vacancies as specified below.

Senate Elected Member	Four Years
Senate Representative on Council	Three Years
Professional Services Representative on Council	Three Years
Senate appointment on sub-committees	Two Years

Senate and Professional Services Representatives on Council are required to have at least one full year between terms.

Any election of Senate members to fill a casual vacancy will serve for the unexpired term of the person who is replaced as specified in Ordinance 22.7.

In the event of a casual vacancy occurring in the elected Member of Professional Services Staff on Council there shall be a bye-election as per Ordinance 39.5.

**Election Timeframes**

Elections typically take place between April and July in any given year, but the Committee Secretariat retain the right to hold elections as and when necessary in the event of a casual vacancy and to maintain the membership of Senate and the Council as specified in the Statues and Ordinances. No nominations will be accepted before the formal call for nominations is issued.

Where possible, the elections will take place in time to communicate the results to Senate before its final meeting of the academic year and to provide sufficient time for new members of Senate to be provided with a formal induction session.

**Voting Arrangements / Counting**

The elections will be conducted by means of the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) (see page 5).

## Returning Officer

The Senior Vice-President and Registrar and Secretary is the University's Returning Officer for elections to Council, Senate and their respective sub-committees. As the Returning Officer, they have responsibility for upholding the procedural election guidelines and ensuring that elections run fairly and democratically and in compliance with the Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations.

## Appointment to Senate Sub-Committees

The academic sub-committees of Senate do not have elected positions. The Registrar and Secretary will invite expressions of interest for Senate representatives. Any member of Senate may nominate themselves for appointment as a representative of Senate on any one of its sub-committees or senior University committees with Senate representation.

Senate Sub-Committees:

- **Education Board** – *three Senate representatives*
- **Postgraduate Research Board** – *three Senate representative*

Senior University Sub-Committees with Senate Representation:

- **Health and Safety Committee** – *two Senate representatives*

In the event that there are more nominees than vacancies, appointments will be determined by the sub-committee chair according to suitability to the post and current membership of the sub-committee.

## Procedural Guidelines – Reviewed and Endorsed 2024

Document endorsement / approval	Endorsement
Nominations Committee	28 February 2024
Senate	13 March 2024
Council	18 April 2024