



Society Elections 2026

Committee Handbook



Welcome to your 2026 Society Elections committee handbook!

This Info Pack outlines all the key information and dates you need to know as election organisers.

If you have any questions about the changes made to this year's Society Elections process and timeline that aren't addressed in this document, please see our Society Elections 2026 Frequently Asked Questions article [linked here](#) (hyperlinked).

We wish you the best of luck in running your society elections!

From

The Activities Team

Matt, Amy & Abi

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Need Support?

Annual elections are exciting, but we also know it can be a stressful and daunting time for society committees organising and managing their election. We know it's easier to get your questions answered by speaking to someone in person, so we're introducing **Elections Drop-ins**.

Elections Drop-ins

When? Every Wednesday from 13:00 - 15:00 from January 21st to March 4th!

Where? The Guild Reception, Upstairs Devonshire House

Who? Ask the team any questions you have relating to society elections, and we'll work with you to resolve them!

If you can't come to our drop-in, just send us an email at activities@exeterguild.com and we will get back to you with support.

Elections Stall Pop-ups

In advance of and during elections, the team will be holding pop up information stalls in the Forum. Check the latest addition of your committee newsletter for dates and times.

What is an Annual Election?

Annual Elections are a compulsory democratic means of society's members deciding, via voting, who is on the society committee for the next academic year.

All members will have the opportunity to nominate themselves and make their case for why they would be the best person for the role. Nominations will take place over a set period.

Following this, there will be a set period for members to vote for their preferred candidates. Voters use a Single Transferable Vote (STV).

It is compulsory for the President and Treasurer to be elected during an annual election, as well as for one other committee position, for a society to remain active in the next academic year. These three positions are referred to as core committee roles. Other committee roles can also be elected during this period. However, for an Annual Election to be considered a success, committees must fulfil their core positions ready for the next academic year.

Committee and Candidate Conduct Policies

The following section outlines the conduct expectations for both committee members in organising an election and candidates running in an election.

If members are found to be breaking either of these policies, then an investigation will take place, and an election may be deemed to be compromised. In this instance, an election would have to be rerun if a society is to remain active.

These policies are also available for committee to view on the Knowledge Base.

Committee Conduct Policy

In running an election, all committee members agree to uphold the following conduct policy:

1. **Annual elections must be run during the allotted time frame provided by the Guild.** Nomination or voting activity must take place in the predetermined timeframes. This includes not releasing election results until the approved date, as decided by the Activities Team.
2. **Nominations and voting must take place via the provided online election system.** Committee members cannot collect nominations or votes outside of this system.
3. **All voters must be free to cast their vote without undue influence or pressure** from candidates, committee members, group members or other external influences. It is the responsibility of the committee to reinforce this rule and report any breach to the Activities Team.
4. Committee members will **conduct themselves in accordance with the Guild's Code of Conduct.** This code outlines the following expectations of members:
 - Behave in a reasonable and responsible manner and avoid actions which could endanger others or bring the Guild or the University into disrepute.
 - Demonstrate mutual respect and understanding for all members of the University and wider communities.
 - Be aware of how your actions may be perceived by others.
 - Attempt to ensure all members feel welcome to participate in discussions, activities, services or events.
 - Conduct yourself in a manner that does not offend others and refrain from using foul and abusive language, either verbally, in writing, online or via social media.
 - Not engage in any form of behaviour that is harassing, discriminatory, threatening, intimidating or anti-social.

- Treat all Guild and University property with respect and do not interfere with other people's enjoyment of Guild facilities or events.
 - Not encourage others to act against the code, and to speak out against behaviour that does.
 - Comply with the reasonable requests of Guild and University staff.
5. **Committee members must not use society resources to endorse or renounce any individual candidates.** Resources include the Student Leaders Portal, society social media, and online platforms (including, but not limited to, WhatsApp groups and Instagram accounts). This includes previous committee members re-running for committee positions for the next academic year.
 6. **Committee members are responsible for reporting any candidate engaging in any negative campaigning** that is factually incorrect and/or causes harm or damage to other candidates or committee members to the Activities Team.
 7. **Committee members are expected to contact the Activities Team in the first instance if they would like to raise a complaint** relating to an election.

Please note! **Current committee members remain in their roles until the end of Term 3, 2026.** You must continue fulfilling all responsibilities during this period, including:

- Conducting a thorough handover with newly elected members
- Completing the group's 26/27 Annual Risk Assessment

Please note that newly elected committee will informally join the existing academic years committee from April 27th, 2026, and officially start on August 1st, 2026.

Candidate Conduct Policy

Your election candidates are expected to uphold the following conduct policy when running for office. As a society committee, you are also expected to hold candidates to this policy and to report any candidates in breach of this policy to the Activities Team.

By nominating themselves as an election candidate, candidates have agreed to uphold the following Candidate Conduct Policy:

1. Candidates will **not engage in negative campaigning** that is factually incorrect and/or causes harm or damage to other candidates or committee members. If candidates are proven to be engaging in negative campaigning, they will be removed from the election.
2. Candidates will **conduct themselves in accordance with the Guild's Code of Conduct.** This is listed in full on the Knowledge Base.

3. Candidates are **responsible for staying informed and up-to-date** with notifications from the Guild concerning society elections and are required to read all communications from the Guild or Societies concerning elections.
4. Candidates **will contact the Activities Team in the first instance if they would like to raise a complaint** relating to an election.
5. In nominating themselves for a committee position, candidates **understand the commitments and responsibilities associated with the role** they are running for and agree to fulfil these requirements to the best of their abilities if successful.

Annual Elections Timeline 2026

Society Elections have distinct stages, and this year those stages vary slightly from previous years in their timings. The following timeline outlines what to expect and the information we need from you at each stage.

This year, unlike previous years, each society will hold its annual elections simultaneously. This change standardises the process across all groups.

Dates for Your Diary

- **Election Set-Up:** Ends on 31st January
- **Nominations Window:** 9 am Monday 16th February – 5 pm Friday 20th February (5 days)
- **Voting:** 9 am Monday 23rd February - 5 pm Friday 27th February (5 days)
- *Results held for 7 working days*
- **Results Release** - Wednesday 11th March (between 9 am – 5 pm)

What does “results held” mean?

Results held essentially means that voting will close, but the results won't be released to committees or members until the results release date.

This 7-working-day window will allow us to address any election complaints raised before the results are released.

This time also enable us to assess which societies will need to hold a by-election before the end of the academic year because they haven't been successful in filling essential committee roles, and to prepare to contact them with support.

The Activities Team is running an Elections Forum stall for information before nominations start, and Elections Drop-ins during prior and during elections

If your society doesn't fill its core committee positions during your annual election, you will then be supported in running a **by-election** (aka a second election) from this point. The Activities Team will contact you if this is required.

Committee Positions Confirmed

- The Committee completes a form indicating which committee roles they want included in their election. **The deadline to complete this is 31st January 2026.**
- The committee can inform members of the nomination/voting opening date.

Voting

- Voting is open for 5 days from **23rd to 27th February!**
- Candidates use this time to campaign
- This is a popular time for groups to hold their Annual General Meetings (AGMs), so candidates can address voters during 'hustings', which are short speeches.

Results are Released! Wednesday 11th March

- The Activities Team release election results.
- Committees can now inform the successful candidates!

26/27 Committee now in place!

January

5 days

7 days

March - June

July

Candidate Nominations

- Students have 5 days from **16th to 20th February** to nominate themselves for roles.
- Committees should be advertising their election.

Results held by Guild

- The Activities Team will hold election results for 7 working days
- Complaints are addressed and investigated
- The Activities Team assess which societies will need to go to by-elections

Handover Period & New Committee Training

- Handover between the old and the new elected committee begins.
- The old committee is still in post until July, but is helping the 26/27 committee to understand their responsibilities.
- New committee training and support in writing the group's 26/27 Annual Risk Assessment is provided by the Activities Team

Setting Up Your Election

We appreciate that previous election setups have been time-consuming and complicated for committee members.

To simplify this process, the Activities Team will be setting up your elections for you this year.

You need to complete the following form so we know which committee positions you would like included in your 2026 Annual Elections: [Society Elections 2026 Set-Up – Fill out form](#)

You can find a copy of this form on the Knowledge Base or on the Term 2 Week 1 addition of your Committee Newsletter.

When? Please ensure 1 committee member completes this information by Friday 31st January. Please submit only 1 form per society.

Why? We need this information by this deadline; otherwise, we will not be able to set up your election in time for the nomination window.

Annual General Meetings (AGMs)

All groups are required to hold an AGM in the academic year.

Usually, groups use these spaces to review their achievements so far this year and their plans for the next academic year, and to give election candidates a key opportunity to present their cases for why they should be elected.

When a society group decides to hold their AGAs is up to them. However, it may be beneficial to hold your AGM during the voting period to allow nominees the opportunity to speak directly to members.

You can find out more information about AGMs and how to plan them via the Knowledge Base, linked here: <https://my.exeterguild.com/articles/62-agms>

Nominations Window

This year the nominations will be open from **16th February - 20th February** for 5 days.

During this time, members can nominate themselves for different roles. Nominations occur via the Guild website and only society members can nominate themselves to run for a committee position.

The Activities Team will be notifying all society members of when the nomination window is opening and closing and how members can nominate themselves.

As a society committee, it is also your responsibility to advertise this window to your members and create an environment wherein all members feel comfortable nominating themselves for roles if this is something they would like to do.

Candidate Pairs Guidance

Sometimes, two individuals want to run as a pair to fulfil one committee position. This can only happen if the society has agreed that they are happy for two individuals to share a single committee role.

Prior to an election, you need to communicate to your members whether you are happy for individuals to share committee roles prior to nominations opening.

How candidates can nominate themselves as a candidate pair...

1. Candidates should decide which person will create the profile: only one needs to do this
2. Once decided, that person should nominate themselves for the role as an individual
3. When invited to complete their 'Candidate profile', they should include a photo and a manifesto. In the 'Candidate name' field, they should enter both of their names (e.g., "Abi & Amy").

Once the election is complete, if a candidate pair has been elected, only the student who set up the profile will be automatically added to their new committee position. You need to email the Activities Team to ask us to manually add the other student to their new role. This email should contain the following information:

- The society name
- The election name
- The position the students were elected to
- The names of the students who have been elected

In some instances, you will have a committee position where both pairs of candidates and individual candidates are running for the same position(s). In this instance, the committee needs to be clear on whether the candidate pairs are:

- a) Running to share a single role
- b) Running to take on multiple roles

In the first instance, the election outcome can be taken at face value, with the society emailing the Guild to request the addition of the second candidate to the committee.

If a candidate pair runs for multiple roles and comes second, neither candidate is elected, and the roles must be allocated to the next-placed single candidate.

Voting

Voting will be open from **23rd February - 27th February** for 5 days.

During this time, all members, including committee members, can cast their votes via the Guild website. All voting is done via a single transferable vote (STV).

The Activities Team will be notifying all society members of when the voting window is opening and closing as well as how they can vote.

As a society committee, it is also your responsibility to advertise this voting window to your members and encourage them to participate in the election.

Remember! **All voters must be free to cast their vote without undue influence or pressure** from candidates, committee members, group members or other external influences. It is the responsibility of the committee to reinforce this rule and report any breach to the Activities Team.

What is a Single Transferable Vote (STV)?

Instead of choosing one candidate, voters are asked to rank as many candidates as they'd like in order of preference.

The number "1" goes next to the name of the first-choice candidate.

Voters then rank candidates according to their preferences, continuing to rank them until they can express no further preferences.

The system is designed to maximise the voters' preferences by reallocating their single vote from your higher-preference candidate – if they are elected or knocked out – towards your lower-preference candidates. This is called the surplus.

Results Release

All society results will be released on the same date: **Wednesday 11th March 2026**.

The Activities Team will be holding the results for 7 working days after voting closes to ensure we have time to process any committee, candidate or member election complaints as well as assessing which societies will need to run a by-election following an unsuccessful Annual Election.

You will be notified by the team between 9 am and 5 pm of your official election results via email.

How committees disseminate this information to your members is up to you! We know that some of our groups like to announce election results at society events. How you choose to announce this information to candidates and members is at the discretion of the committee however, all election results will be released to committees on the identified results release date. Your group's webpages will be updated to reflect the elections results.

By-Elections

If your society does not fill all compulsory committee positions – president, treasurer and an additional role of the societies choosing – then your group will be required to run a by-election before the end of the academic year if your society would like to remain active into the next academic year.

The Activities Team will contact you post the voting period ending to inform you that your election has been unsuccessful in fulfilling some or all these essential committee roles. You will be given the option to either run a by-election or deactivate your society.

You will be provided with all information necessary to run a by-election if this is the option you wish to undertake.

What happens if our by-election is successful?

If your by-election is unsuccessful, then your society will be made inactive. However, you will have the opportunity to reactivate your society in Term 1 of the next academic year.

Deactivating a society is considered a last resort and something our team wants to avoid. Please be reassured that we will support and work with your society in filling its core committee positions before the end of the academic year for societies that want to remain active.

Complaints

If you feel an election was not run fairly or has been compromised, contact the Activities team at activities@exeterguild.com to request an investigation.

Whilst under investigation, any positions elected/appointed during that election may be frozen until after the investigation has taken place. We encourage you to get in touch as soon as possible if you have a complaint, ideally before results are released. This means we can investigate and resolve issues before the election results are released.

Ideally please send your complaint in prior to results release on March 11th, 2026. This will enable us to investigate your complaint and hold elections results as needed.

During the investigation, we will review whether our election policies have been breached. If your complaint is upheld, the society may be required to rerun the election.

Why have Elections changed?

We have decided to implement this new timeline to standardise the process across all our society groups, ensuring it is the same for all and consequently fairer.

We believe that setting a standard timeframe for all groups will make our messaging to you clearer and ensure that committee members and members alike have a stronger understanding of election-related deadlines and what is expected of them at each point of this process.

We have decided to bring society elections forward to mid-term 2 for the following reasons...

Handover: New committee members will have maximum time to onboard and complete compulsory training; the old committee will have more time to hand over to newly elected members and to complete essential documents, such as your Annual Risk Assessment, before the academic year ends and within term time.

Training: Essential training can be completed by newly elected committee members by late term 2, early term 3. By completing training now, new committee members will be better prepared for the start of the new academic year in September and ensure that our team is not chasing students to complete this during the easter or summer breaks.

Avoiding Exams: No elections will be held or prepared during the May exam period, with the aim of reducing stress and competing responsibilities for all committee members.

By-Elections: Groups with unsuccessful elections will be able to hold by-elections earlier, giving more time for the essential handover period.

Term Dates: Term 2 dates are Monday 5 January – Friday 27 March. We are constrained by this timeline, as we need to ensure there is enough time at the end of the term to begin training and onboarding new committees. We also want to avoid elections overlapping with your 4-week Easter break.

What informed these changes?

These changes were informed by:

- Student feedback following last academic year's society elections
- Prior society elections complaints cases
- Our own data on committee training uptake, ARAs completion, and volume of queries from new committees in Term 1
- Consultation with committee members during society elections focus groups during Term 1, which all committee members were invited to apply to attend
- Consultation with Elected Student Officers
- A need to update our processes to make them more manageable