

10. Guidelines for Elections

What are elections?

In the context of student Clubs, an election is a vote by the members of the Club to decide who will hold a particular position in the Club (mainly Executive Positions such as President, Secretary, Treasurer or Arc Delegate). The election process will differ from Club to Club, depending on factors such as the number of Executive positions and what election requirements are stipulated in the Club's constitution.

How do we ensure our elections are valid?

Arc will consider Executive elections to be valid as long as they meet the requirements set out in the guidelines below. Arc Clubs Staff may make exceptions if the process followed is judged to be democratic.

Guidelines

- Executive elections must be democratic and meet the requirements of the Club's constitution. The results of the election are final. The current Executive or any other individuals or groups may not bias the results of the election in any way, for example they cannot refuse nominations of eligible candidates, have their votes weighted more strongly, or appoint members to an Executive position rather than the members electing the position.
- Any Club member that is eligible to vote in the election must be eligible to be nominated to any Executive position, unless otherwise specified in the Club's constitution.
 - At most, voting rights can be restricted to members that had joined the Club at the time that notice of the election was given, except in the instance of Executive elections where the position represents a specific subset of members such as year representatives. In this case, voting rights can be restricted to the members represented by this position (e.g. the members in the relevant year of study). Allowances for these positions and restrictions are at the discretion of Arc Clubs staff.

- The Club must keep adequate records of members to determine their eligibility to vote in and stand for election;
- Associate members do not have voting rights.

Nominations for Executive positions

- Nominations may be made in advance or on the day of the AGM/IGM/EGM, as specified in the Club's constitution, or otherwise as determined by the Club Executive and/or Returning Officer.
 - If nominations are taken in advance, all eligible members must receive notice of the nominations period before its commencement, as well as details of the nomination process, and nominations must be open for at least 7 days.
- All candidates must have the same opportunity to present themselves and their vision for the position/Club all to the members that are eligible to vote. This could, for example, be the time allotted to make a statement and/or time allotted to taking questions to members.
- If statements are submitted in advance, Clubs may limit the word or character count of these statements, and shorten any longer statements at the predetermined limit, as long as candidates are made aware of the limit before they submit their statement, including what will happen if they exceed it.

If elections are held outside of a General Meeting (including online or in person through another process):

- The Club must provide at least 7 days' notice to Club members and to the Arc Clubs Office and before voting commences. The election notice must include:
 - the date and time that voting will start & end
 - how voting will take place (at a polling booth, online through a link to be released on the day, etc.)
 - details of how and when details about candidates will be released (unless these details are included in the election notice)
 - details of who is eligible to vote, and how they can confirm their eligibility (e.g. *only eligible members that have joined before a specified date is eligible and will receive an email confirming their eligibility within the next 24 hours. If you don't receive this email and believe you are eligible, please contact [designated Club email] by [reasonable deadline].*)

- The Club must hold an AGM or EGM on the next academic day after the voting ends to announce the results of the election. This meeting must adhere to the AGM or EGM requirements (whichever is appropriate) as set out in the Club's Constitution and Arc Clubs Procedures.
 - The election process can be challenged at the AGM/EGM by any member who wishes to. If a vote of the members at the meeting shows that they believe that the process by which the election took place was undemocratic, the election must be re-held. The same requirements apply to the re-held election, except that:
 - Members eligible to vote in the new election must be the same as in the original election;
 - Members at the meeting may pass a motion that nominations do not need to be opened again (i.e. there will be no new candidates standing for election).

For more information about Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Sensitivity, please check out Section 22.1 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Cultural Sensitivity .

Online elections

See above for requirements of all elections held separately to a General Meeting of a Club, including online. In addition, the following requirements apply:

- Elections may only be conducted online if this is stated within the Club's constitution, for example: *The Executive of the Club shall be elected from the full members. Elections shall take place at the Annual General Meeting (and Extraordinary General Meetings, where relevant), or through an online process that satisfies the election requirements set out in this constitution. The results of online elections shall be declared at a General Meeting held on the next academic day after the conclusion of voting.*
- The link for the voting must be emailed to all members that are eligible to vote.
 - A copy of this should be forwarded to clubs@arc.unsw.edu.au, but does not need to include a valid voting link.
- Voting must be open for a minimum of 24 hours.
- The election system must be able to administer voting in a way that adheres to the requirements set out in the Club's constitution and in these guidelines, e.g. only permits votes by members of the Club and allows only one vote per member.

- Where the online election system records the votes of each individual voter, this information must not be disclosed to any individuals other than those administering the election process (Executive and/or Returning Officer) and Arc. Any Executives that are standing for election should also be restricted from accessing the voting records.

Proxy Votes

A proxy vote can be used when a member of the Club that is eligible to vote at the General Meeting is unable to attend the meeting but has signed a proxy form allowing their vote to be cast by someone else. Arc requires that any Clubs holding a General Meeting on a non-academic day must allow proxy votes at that meeting. This means that if your Club's constitution specifies that your Club can only hold General Meetings on an academic day, then you don't need to allow proxy votes at all.

Arc has an example proxy form that you can use. At minimum, Club members who want to vote by proxy must write their full name, student number, sign and date the form and write the full name and student number of their proxy. Club members may choose to specifically state how they intend to vote on a particular motion on the form or they may leave it up to the discretion of their proxy holder. The proxy holder must bring all proxy forms to the meeting and show them to the returning officer before they can cast those votes.

Quorum for the meeting (the minimum number of voting members that must be at the meeting in order for it to be valid) is calculated on the number of voting members in attendance at the meeting (so proxy votes don't count). On the other hand, proxy votes are included when calculating the number of votes needed for a motion to pass.

The importance of Returning Officers

Impartial Returning Officers are a good way to ensure that elections are run fairly. The role of a Returning Officer is to oversee the election process (including receiving nominations, determining eligibility to vote and stand for election, distributing voting forms, collecting and counting votes).

Unless prescribed in the Club's constitution, there aren't requirements for how and when Returning Officer/s are appointed, however you should keep the following in mind:

- The process of appointing a Returning Officer should be clear and available to members

- It is important that members (especially candidates) feel that they can trust the Returning Officer to be unbiased in how they administer the elections
 - The Returning Officer should be impartial, i.e. they don't have any stake in the outcome of the election (e.g. they aren't a candidate for a position themselves, aren't campaigning on behalf of a candidate, and don't have close ties with candidates)
- The Returning Officer doesn't necessarily need to be a member of the Club

Read the next section for information about requesting that an Arc representative to be the Returning Officer for Club elections.

Arc's role in elections

See Clubs Handbook Section 9 for information on Arc's role in General Meetings. Clubs can request that an Arc representative be the Returning Officer for their elections, especially if there are contentious disagreements within the Club that would be reasonably expected to affect the election. Whether Arc can provide this will depend on factors including the availability of staff members, so if you think this will be required for your election, please let the Arc Clubs team know as early as possible!

FAQs

Can members vote at elections even if they aren't physically present?

Members can only vote if they are not physically present if the constitution either allows for it, e.g. proxy votes or online voting.

Can the same member be re-elected for the same position more than once?

Yes, the same member can be re-elected in the same position by a vote of the members at the meeting, as long as they are still eligible to hold the position.

Where can I find out more information?

Chairing a meeting

<http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/chairing-a-meeting/>

Taking Minutes

<http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/taking-minutes/>

Related Documents

Clubs Handbook (www.arc.unsw.edu.au/clubs/clubshandbook)

Section 3 – Starting a Club

Section 4 – Existing Clubs Applying for Reaffiliation

Section 7 – Club Constitutions

Section 8 – Club Membership

Section 9 – Holding a General Meeting of Your Club

Section 22.1 – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Cultural Sensitivity

Section 23 – Location and Equipment Bookings

Forms & Files (www.arc.unsw.edu.au/clubs/club-admin/club-forms)

Arc Clubs Example Proxy Form

Clubs Executive Details Form

Affiliation Agreement

Help!

Visit Us

Drop in and talk to us. The Clubs Space is located on Level 2, Basser College, just off the Basser steps past the Quadrangle.

Call Us

Call us at 9385 9840 during office hours

Email Us

clubs@arc.unsw.edu.au

Office Hours

During Term: 8:30am-6pm Mon-Fri

Outside Term: 9am-5pm Mon-Fri (access to the Clubs Space by appointment only)