A guide to running club elections

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Introduction

Are your club executive members finishing up their term? Has a member left their position due to graduation or other reasons? You may need to run an election!

Club elections are run to ensure members are democratically voted into the positions required to operate the club. Running an election correctly allows the membership to vote in the members they believe are best suited to the role, which can result in the club operating more professionally and remaining active and engaging on campus.

Running elections can seem a little confusing, but they don't have to be! This guide is provided to help you run an election successfully and correctly for your FUSA-affiliated club. This guide should be considered in conjunction with the FUSA Club Regulations (accessible via the [FUSA Manage Your Club page](#)), your club's constitution and any other internal policies and procedures your club may have in place.

Definitions

Member: A member is a patron of the club who is recorded in the club's membership register with at least their full name, email address, and student ID (if applicable). Members of a club's Facebook group or other social media services are not considered members of the club for the purposes of the FUSA Club Regulations. The club members are collectively referred to as the 'membership'.

Executive: The elected members who handle the day-to-day operations of the club and are ultimately responsible for the activities of the club. At minimum, the executive must be composed of the President (must be a current Flinders University student), the Secretary and Treasurer. Many clubs also include a Vice President as a member of their executive.

Committee: The club's executive and/or membership (depending on the club's constitution) may elect club members into committee positions in charge of particular portfolios (such as marketing, events, sponsorship, etc.) to assist them in the operation of the club. The committee typically operates under the direction and supervision of the executive.

Club Regulations: The regulations governing all FUSA affiliated clubs, societies and school associations as determined by the Student Council of the Flinders University Student Association. As a condition of affiliation with FUSA, the Club Regulations take precedence over any regulations or procedures decided on by the club (such as their constitution).

General Meeting: A General Meeting is a meeting called by the Executive (typically the Secretary) that is open to all club members to update members on the club's progress and make formal decisions (such as electing executive members). The yearly General Meeting to elect new executive members is called the "Annual" General Meeting, and the club's first ever Annual General Meeting is also commonly referred to as the "Inaugural" General Meeting. General Meetings called by the Executive or Membership for unexpected circumstances (such as member misconduct) are commonly referred to as "Special" General Meetings.

A meeting of the Executive Members and/or Committee Members is not considered to be a General

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Meeting for the purposes of the FUSA Club Regulations, and it is very important to know the difference, as there is a set process in the Regulations (and often in your Club's Constitution) for how every General Meeting must be called.

Chairperson: The Chairperson runs the General Meeting with the exception of Elections (which are run by the Returning Officer). Typically the President will chair the meeting, or the Vice President will chair the meeting in their absence. Check your Constitution to determine the correct process for your club.

Returning Officer: The Returning Officer is nominated by the club's membership to run elections for club executive and (if required) committee positions. To ensure the process is conducted fairly, the Returning Officer must not be nominated for a position in the election

Agenda: The agenda for the General Meeting. Club members may submit items to the agenda prior to the meeting. The agenda should be sent to club members prior to the meeting, and this may be required according to your constitution. The agenda of a General Meeting will typically include items such as reporting from executive and committee members, elections (if required), proposed motions and general business.

One Vote System: A system where club members select one candidate for a position on the ballot form.

Ranked Voting System: A system where club members rank their preference numerically (e.g: '1' for first preference) for each candidate on the ballot form.

Things to consider when running an election

Alright, so your executive needs to elect members to a position (or several positions) in the club. To do this, you'll need to ask yourselves a few questions first.

1. Why are we holding an election?

If your executive is coming to the end of their term, the club will need to hold an *Annual General Meeting*. If an executive has resigned or been removed, the club will need to hold a *General Meeting*, which can be an *Annual General Meeting* or another meeting open to the membership that is called prior to the end of the end of the executive's term of appointment (whichever is sooner).

If a committee member needs to be replaced, consult your club constitution. Follow any instructions within the constitution if available. If there are no instructions regarding the replacement of committee members, the executive may be able to replace the committee member without the need for an election. It is advisable to follow any precedents of the club in these circumstances.

2. How will we elect the new members?

The voting system the club uses is at the club's discretion, provided the office bearers are 'fairly and democratically' elected (as required by the Club Regulations). The voting system may be defined in your club's constitution, so be sure to check that first.

In the absence of defined procedures in the club's constitution, the club would typically use one of two voting systems:

The **'One Vote'** system: Where club members will select only one candidate for each position up for election. The elected candidate for each position will be the candidate with the most votes.

The **'Ranked Voting'** system: Otherwise known as the 'Preferential Voting' system, the club members rank each candidate numerically in order of their preference (e.g: '1' for their first preference). The elected candidate is the member with the most first preference (i.e: '1') votes. In the case of a tie, the second preference votes are counted and checked for a majority, and so on. The candidate with the majority of the highest ranked untied preferences will be elected.

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Should we run an online election or in meeting?

The club is welcome to run their election either online or in meeting, provided the process is fair and democratic, and sufficient notice of the candidates is provided to the club's membership to make an informed decision.

An online service like [BallotBin](#) will handle your election needs. Alternatively, you can run an in-person meeting by using the resources provided in the Secretary Toolkit, which can be found in the [Manage Your Club section](#) of the FUSA website, where you can quickly print out Ballot Papers, agendas and election instructions.

How will the members compare the candidates?

Members will need a *Candidate Statement* from each candidate to ensure they can make a well-considered decision. Candidate Statements are simply statements from the candidate regarding why they feel they should get the job. It is important that these all statements are provided to the membership at the same time, or else you will risk providing candidates at a disadvantage. Statements can be gathered and emailed to the members in a document, or posted online via your social media page. Alternatively, candidates can each provide a statement verbally in meeting.

You should also consider how members will ask candidates questions to get a better understanding of each candidate's suitability for the job. Will you allow members to ask questions online? Will there be a time for questions in meeting? Can members contact candidates directly? Whichever method is fine, but be sure to decide on this before preparing your election.

The 'One Vote' System

The 'One Vote' System is a simple election system that can be conducted quickly with very little preparation. This system is ideal for elections with two candidates, however is less representative of the preferences of the membership in elections with more than two members.

The process for a 'One Vote' election is as follows:

1. Members vote for ONE candidate only
2. The candidate with the most votes is wins the election.
3. In the event of a tie, a non-voting, nominated person (typically the Returning Officer) casts a deciding vote. Alternatively, a nominated person (such as the Chairperson) will receive a second vote.

Benefits of using a One Vote System

1. Very easy to set up and run
2. Votes can be quickly counted
3. Ideal for positions with two candidates

Complications with using a One Vote System

1. More prone to ties than the 'Ranked Voting' system.
2. Not ideal for elections with more than two candidates (as preferences are not considered).
3. The elected candidate can be chosen by a single member (typically Returning Officer or Chairperson) in the event of a tie.

The 'Ranked Voting' System

The 'Ranked Voting' System (sometimes known as a 'Preferential Voting' System) is a more accurate voting system than the 'One Vote' system, as members rank the candidates in order of preference. Consequently, the elected member is more likely to be the candidate preferred by the club's membership.

The process for a 'Ranked Voting' election is as follows:

1. Members rank candidates in their order of preference numberically (e.g: '1' for first preference, '2' for second preference, etc.)
2. The first preferences are counted.
3. If a candidate has a clear majority of first preferences, they win the election.
4. If there is a tie for first preference, the second preferences of the tied candidates are then counted separately and checked for a majority.
5. If there is a tie for second preference, third preferences are then counted, and so on until there is a majority of the highest untied preferences.
6. If there is a tie in all preferences, a nominated person (typically the Returning Officer) will make a final vote between the tied candidates.

Benefits of using a Ranked Voting System

1. Ideal for elections with more than three candidates
2. Ties are very unlikely
3. More representative of member preferences
4. Reduces possibility of 'spoiler effect'; where two similar candidates divide the votes of a group, allowing a third (less popular) candidate to gain the majority.

Complications with using a Ranked Voting System

1. Voting is a longer process
2. Counting votes takes longer than 'One Vote' system in the event of ties
3. More prone to error (not numbering all candidates, missing numbers, etc.)
4. Prompts members to provide preferences for candidates they may not wish to support.

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Preparing for an Election

Whether online or in-meeting, the results of your election will need to be confirmed in a General Meeting. This may be your Annual General Meeting, or may be another General Meeting as required by your Club Constitution. To prepare for either election, follow the steps below.

1. Decide on a date, time and location for a General Meeting

2. Book a room for the meeting via the FUSA Event Registration Form. Tip: The FUSA Club Space offers a central location and is ideal for running meetings!

3. Once the room is booked, email the club membership with the details of the General Meeting at least one week prior to the meeting. In the email, advise the membership of the upcoming vacancies and ask them to submit their nominations for the position by a specified deadline prior to the meeting (this may be dictated by your constitution, or you can set a date yourself). You should also request submissions for Agenda items for the meeting.

4. Email the General Secretary of Student Council via general.secretary@flinders.edu.au with the details of the General Meeting at least one week before the meeting date.

5. Ensure an item for elections is included in agenda (if the elections are held in-meeting), and a motion to accept the elected members is included in the agenda (whether in-meeting or online).

6. After the deadline for nominations, gather the nominations and announce the candidates to the membership via email, also providing the members with the updated agenda.

7. Print ballot forms (if an in-meeting election) or set up online voting system with candidates and bring a stash of pens.

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Running an In-Meeting Election

Running an in-meeting election is easy to organise; however voting is generally less representative of the club membership than an online election, as voting is limited to those who attend the meeting. To run an in-meeting election, simply follow the steps below.

Step 1: Candidate statements

1. Note: This will only apply if candidate statements were not provided prior to the meeting
2. Announce candidates for each position to the membership
3. Advise members that before voting begins, each candidate will have X minutes to provide their statement for why they should be elected, followed by X minutes to answer questions
4. Ask other candidates for the position to leave the room while a candidate provides their statement and answers questions.
5. Time the candidates' statements and question time, reminding them when 30 seconds remain. Move the candidate on if they do not finish by the allotted time.
6. Continue until all candidates have spoken.

Step 2: Voting

1. Hand ballot papers out for each position to members, ensuring they receive one for each position only.
2. [For 'One Vote' System]
   a. Explain to members that they must select one candidate on the ballot paper only, with an X, tick, or '1'.
   b. Advise members that other preferences will not be counted.
   c. Advise members that the candidate with the most nominations will win.
   d. Advise members that if there is a tie, the Returning Officer will submit a vote.
2. [For Ranked Voting System]
   a. Explain to members that they must rank their preferences in order, with '1' being their first preference, '2' being their second preference, and so on.
   b. Explain that if sheets are marked with an 'X' or tick will be treated as the preference '1' for a candidate if marked, and if there is a tie for first preference, their vote will not count for second and subsequent preferences.

c. Explain that if there is a majority of first preference votes for any candidate, the candidate will win. If there is a tie, then the second and subsequent preferences will be counted and checked until there is a majority in the highest untied preference.

3. Ask members to vote and submit their ballot sheets to the Returning Officer.

Step 3: Counting the Vote

1. [For 'One Vote' System]

    a. Separate the ballot papers into each position.

    b. For each position, record the number of votes for each candidate.

    c. Check for a majority of votes.

    d. In the event of a tie, have the Returning Officer include their vote for one of the tied candidates.

2. Record the names of the elected candidates for each position.

3. [For 'Ranked Voting' System]

    a. Separate the ballot papers into each position.

    b. For each position, record the number of votes marked '1' for each candidate.

    c. Check to see if a candidate has the majority of '1' votes.

    d. If there is a tie for the majority of '1' votes, count the votes for each of the tied candidates marked '2'. If there is a tie for the majority of '2' votes, count the votes for each of the candidates marked '3'. Continue to do so until there is a majority.

    e. If there is still no majority after all preferences have been counted, have the Returning Officer vote for one of the tied candidates.

4. Ensure the Minute-Taker records the names of the elected candidates for each position.

Step 3: Announcement and motion to accept newly elected members

1. Announce the elected members and their respective positions

2. Motion to accept the elected members as members of the association.

3. Ensure the Minute-Taker records the name of the carrier of the motion, and the name of the member who seconds the motion.

Running an Online Election

Running an Online Election requires more preparation in advance, however is more representative of the preferences of the club membership than an in-meeting election as members do not need to attend a meeting to vote. These instructions use [Ballotbin](#) in its examples as a free online election service, however you are welcome to use others. Services such as SurveyMonkey can also be used to run elections, and instructions for how to do so can be found [HERE](#).

Step 1: Candidate statements and voting system preparation

1. Collect written Candidate Statements from each Candidate.
2. Sign up for a [Ballotbin](#) account and log in
3. New Bin Section
   a. Click "new" under the "Your Bins" section on the right hand side of the page.
   b. Enter a name for the election in the "New Bin Name" field (e.g: "Flinders University Fake Society Election")
   c. Select "Basic" in the "Survey Questions" section
   d. In the Election Questions section, select "Basic Plurality Election" for an election using the 'One Vote' system, or select "Advanced (Ranked-Pairs) Election" to use a 'Ranked Voting' system.
   e. Press the 'OK' button

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4. Properties section

a. Select the "Properties" tab at the top of the window

b. Select the Timezone in the 'Timezone' section. This should be GMT+9:30 hours or GMT+10:30 hours during Daylight Saving Time. If the Timezone is not available, select the closest Timezone and note the time difference (e.g: GMT+9 is half an hour behind GMT+9:30, so you may need to compensate for this).

c. Enter the Start and End dates in the "Start Date" and "End Date" fields. Note that this should be entered in YYYY-MM-DD format in Ballotbin.

d. Enter the Start Time and End Times. If there is a difference in Timezone be sure to compensate for this (e.g: If the selected timezone is "GMT+9" and you want the election to start at 12:00pm, enter "11:30am" or "10:30am" during Daylight Saving Time.

e. In the Publish Results field, select "To Admin During and Voters After Election/Survey" to allow the Returning Officer to view results during the election, and voters will be advised after

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the election.

If you would not like the Admin to see the results until after the election is complete, select "To Admin and Voters only after Election/Survey".

f. In the Section Order, select "Survey Then Election Questions"

g. In the Security Method, select "Ballotbin sends registration codes to voters by email" to send the registration codes through Ballotbin (most secure method).

h. Click "Save Changes"

5. Election Questions section

a. Select the "Ballot" tab at the top of the window

b. The 'Survey Questions' section is not required

c. In the Election Questions section, enter the name of the position under the Heading field

d. [One Vote System] Select "Plurality" in the 'Type of Vote' field and "1" in the "votes(s) in group per voter" field.

c. [Ranked Voting System] Select "Ranked Pairs" in the 'Type of Vote' field.

d. Click "OK". Repeat steps (b) and (c) for each position up for election.

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e. Under the position heading (e.g: President), click "Add a New Candidate/Option" and enter the candidate details for each candidate for that position, by entering the candidate's name in the "Candidate/Option" field, and the candidate's statement in the "Biography" section. Hit OK.

f. Repeat (e) for all candidates under each position heading (e.g: President, Secretary and Treasurer).

6. Voters section

    a. Select "Voters"

    b. In the "Add New Voters" section, copy your list of member email addresses into the field, making sure each email address is on a separate line. Click "Add Voters".

7. Notices section

    a. Select the 'Notices' tab at the top of the window

    b. Select "Registration Latter (registers new voters and tells them how to vote)" in the 'Send a Letter' section.

    c. Enter a message in the "Your Message to Voters" field, explaining what the election is for.

d. Click "Send" to send the notice of the Election to your membership

Step Two: Voting and Counting the Vote

1. Each member will receive an email from Ballotbin allowing them to vote. Advise your members to look out for this email from Ballotbin (checking their junk email if necessary), and click the link to vote for candidates.

2. Select "Reminder Letter (sent to those who have not voted yet)" and add a message in the "Your Message to Voters" to send a reminder nearby the deadline letting your members know that the election deadline is near.

3. Once the election has ended, members will be notified of the results. You can also log in and click the "Results" tab to find the results of the election.

Step Three: Motion to confirm at General Meeting

1. At the General Meeting, announce the results of the online election

2. Raise a motion to confirm the elected candidates in the online election in their positions for the club (i.e: "MOTION: That the Flinders University Fake Society accepts the elected candidates as the President, Secretary and Treasurer of the club")

3. Ensure the minute-taker records the carrier and seconders' names of the motion in the official minutes.

Queries and Contacts

For queries about running club elections, feel free to either the Clubs Officer of FUSA or the General Secretary of Student Council via the details below.

Adam Rau

Clubs and Events Officer

Flinders University Student Association

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General Secretary

FUSA Student Council

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