

Additional Support During Elections For Candidates With A Disability

Introduction

The purpose of this process is to make elections at the Guild more accessible (suitable) for disabled students. This is done by offering the practical support of a student-staff member to assist in elections activities. This will help to ensure that during campaigning periods, no candidate, as far as is reasonably possible, is disadvantaged during the campaigning process because of their disability.

Use of Policy

This policy is for elections at the Guild, including, but not limited to: Officer Team Elections, Autumn Elections, and any other election that is seen as appropriate by the President or Nominee of the Returning Officer.

Request Process

If a candidate with a disability feels that they need additional support during the campaigning period, they must tell us about this as soon as it's reasonably possible, after they apply. This will give the Elections Team enough time to make sure arrangements can be made.

Please note that any requests for support made after the applications deadline may not be accepted. However, the Elections Team will ensure that every effort is made to put in place the relevant and reasonable arrangements, once a request has been submitted by a candidate. Candidates can ask for support in writing by emailing elections@guild.bham.ac.uk.

If a candidate finds it difficult to use a computer because of a disability, then candidates can do one of the following:

1. If the Guild of Students building is open, the candidate can ask for support in person at Guild Reception. The staff or student-staff member at Reception can pass the query, the candidate's contact details and preferred method of contact to the Elections Team on the candidate's behalf
2. If the Guild of Students building is not open and/or the candidate cannot access campus, the candidate may contact (either in person or via their preferred method) their Welfare Tutor, personal tutor, support staff member or other appropriate person to pass their query, contact details and preferred method of contact to the Guild Elections Team on their behalf

When asking for support, candidates will be asked to provide information to the Guild Elections Team about their disability, and how they might use the support to campaign in the election. Candidates may also be asked what support they receive from the University, if they receive additional support for their disability (e.g. assistive technology or software, use of inclusive features on online platforms), and if this would help their use of a computer, or for their campaign in general.

We will keep in contact with the candidate via their preferred method of communication wherever possible. For all communication, notes for the meeting will be kept in the candidate's preferred method of format, wherever possible, with a record provided to the candidate. All information provided to us will be kept confidential and stored in accordance with the Guild of Students' data protection policy.

The Elections Team will contact the candidate to agree what support is required and confirm the exact details of the work to be carried out. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the information is provided by the agreed deadline. In cases where information is provided after the deadline, we will aim to meet requests, but this is not guaranteed.

Student-Staff Support Process

The candidate will be contacted by the Elections Team to arrange preferred dates/times for the student-staff support, as well as to confirm the duties which will be carried out remain the same as those confirmed in the initial request. This will then form a rota which will be emailed to all student-staff.

The support may not be offered as one period of time, but may be various times depending on the candidate's needs and/or student-staff availability. Support will be offered in no less than 1 hour time slots.

To ensure candidates gain the maximum benefit from the support offered, a detailed schedule of tasks shall be agreed with the candidate and student-staff member before any work starting via a rota.

Student-Staff Training

Student Staff shall receive training from the Guild of Students before any work starts.

This will involve:

- An overview of the Guild of Students
- An overview of Guild Elections (including Elections Rules & Regulations)
- Equality Act
- Diversity training
- Briefing on how to complete a time sheet, and what duties the student-staff members may be asked to complete

Student-Staff Support – Responsibilities

Student Staff will have the following responsibilities:

- Student-Staff may campaign on the candidates' behalf by carrying out pre-agreed duties such as putting up posters (if applicable) and giving lecture shout outs (in-person or online), where they will be delivering the candidates' campaign message.
- Student-Staff are not active supporters.
- Student-Staff will provide neutral, practical support.
- Student-Staff will not carry out any additional tasks which were not agreed before the work starting.
- If a candidate requires assistance with the use of a computer as a result of a disability, this support will match the support that they already get from the university. The candidate will need to provide confirmation of this support from their Welfare Tutor.
- If a candidate requires support which involves a computer this will be made available within the Guild of Students' building. Student Staff are not permitted to visit a candidate's home.
- If the candidate is in Birmingham or on campus, and the Guild of Students building is open, a computer within the Guild building can be used, in line with relevant COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions.
- If the candidate is unable to visit the Guild of Students building, support will be provided remotely where possible. This may be delivered by Zoom, Microsoft Teams, mobile phone call or other appropriate method, depending on the candidate's access to a device and / or preferred communications method. - The Elections Team may ask if the candidate has a device and/or assistive technology/software provided by the University as part of a support plan.
- If accessible for the candidate, online platforms that include free inclusive features (e.g. Microsoft Teams) can be used
- Candidates are asked to consider the responsibilities of student-staff members, when pre-agreeing the campaigning duties required

Scope of Support

In cases where it is not possible to recruit Student-Staff (for reasons such as time for example), the support can be provided by Core Staff members from the Guild of Students but only in line with the strict parameters above.

Candidate Feedback

Candidates may be contacted by the Guild of Students after the election has ended for their feedback.

Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed before each election by the Elections Team.