

HUU Elections Report 2016

Nomination Period

The notice of election was publicized on the HUU website on Monday, 28 January 2016. Nominations were open online from 10-17 February 2016. Throughout the entire duration of the elections, students were kept informed through all-student emails, Social Media posts and posters around campus.

Information meetings were held before nominations opened on Monday, 8 February and Tuesday, 9 February to inform interested candidates about the available roles, their duties and what campaigning would entail.

All interested students and candidates were provided with a candidate handbook comprising more information about the roles, tips on how to run a successful campaign, and ideas about what previous Officers have achieved. The HUU elections website included a hub for candidates with detailed role descriptions for each position, the handbook, the election rules & regulations and links to the Candidate Academy on Facebook with useful tips around campaigning and elections.

Table 1. Nominations Received (31 positions available)

Position	Number of nomination(s)
President	1
VP Education	2
VP Welfare & Community	1
VP Activities	2
VP Sport	6
VP Scarborough	2
Campaigns & Democracy Officer	1
Environment & Ethics Officer	1
BAME Officer	1
LGBT+ Officer	1
Women's Officer	2
Disabled Students Officer	0
Mature Students Officer	1
Part-time Students Officer	0
Chair ISA	0
Chair RAG	3
Chair Media	0

Chair SEC	1
Councillors for Scrutiny	2
AU Events & Varsity Officer	1
AU BUCS Officer	1
AU Secretary & Communications Officer	1
AU Kit & Equipment Officer	1
AU Tour Officer	1
AU Participation & Inclusivity Officer	1
Scarborough Education Officer	1
Scarborough Welfare Officer	1
Scarborough Sport Officer	0
Scarborough Equality & Diversity Officer	1
Scarborough Community Officer	1
Scarborough Campaigns Officer	0

Contested Positions: 6

Uncontested Positions: 18

Positions with no nominations: 7

Nominations for Sabbatical positions: 14

Nominations withdrawn: 0

Total nominations received: 37

Gender ratio: 15:22 (female/male)

Campaigning and Budgets

Campaigning opened after the All Candidates Meeting on Wednesday, 17 February and ended with the close of voting on Friday, 4 March 2016 at 5pm.

All Sabbatical candidates were entitled to a budget of £100 of which £30 were reimbursed by HUU. All other candidates were entitled to a budget of £50 with no reimbursement claims.

The daily report by the Returning Officer Team detailing the submitted complaints is available [online](#).

Support for Candidates

All candidates were invited to the All Candidates Meeting on Wednesday, 17 February where they were briefed on the election rules and essential campaign tips. They also received information from previous candidates, the Health & Wellbeing Advisor and the HUU Marketing Team. This meeting was mandatory for all Sabbatical candidates and optional for all other candidates.

All candidates were also offered one-on-one meetings with the Assistant Returning Officer to discuss their campaigns and invited to drop by the Membership Services Area with any queries at any time during office hours.

During voting week, a Candidate breakfast meeting was arranged to offer Sabbatical candidates the chance to catch up and receive the latest information on voting statistics and answer any queries.

Candidates were satisfied with the support they received during elections from the Returning Officer Team with regard to the clarity of election rules and regulations as well as campaign support. However, a number of candidates noted that the long campaigning period felt draining and that they would have appreciated more involvement by HUU to engage students in the elections before and during the voting process.¹

Voting and Turnout

The voting period was shortened in comparison to previous years following research carried out by the NUS that the length of the voting period does not significantly influence the turnout. Voting opened online on Monday, 29 February at 9am and closed on Friday, 4 March at 5pm. All candidates had to stand against Re-Open Nominations (R.O.N.) and Single Transferable Vote (STV) was used to determine the winner.

In addition to the general elections marketing campaign, HUU engaged students in the importance of the elections by encouraging them to vote at voting booths specifically set up for this purpose in the Library and HUU from 10am-2pm every day during voting week.

Table 2. Voter turnout

Year	Voting period	Turnout ² (%)	Number of unique votes	Number of total votes cast
2016	29/2-4/3 (5 days)	15.6	2,808	31,965
2015	24/2 – 5/3 (10 days)	19.7	3,559	20,901
2014	28/2 – 6/3 (7 days)	20.9	3,771	63,870

¹ This feedback was collected informally in communication with the ARO and through a Candidate survey sent out to all candidates after voting had closed.

² Based on a student population of 18,040.

Table 3. Number of total votes for contested and Sabbatical races

Position	Number of total votes	
	2016	2015
President	2116	2997
VP Education	1980	2147
VP Welfare & Community	1866	1973
VP Activities	1954 ↑	1844
VP Sport	2341	2382
VP Scarborough	1834 ↑	1572
Chair RAG	1603 ↑	248
Women's Officer	654 ↑	620

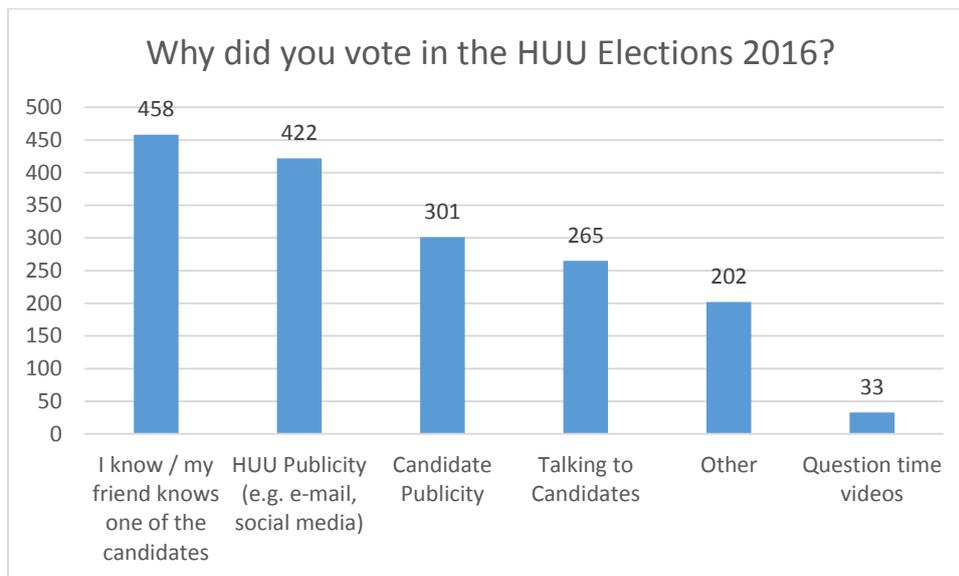
The significant drop in voter turnout may be attributed to various reasons including but not limited to the low number of nominations, a generally decreasing engagement of students with HUU throughout the year, or the marketing of elections. While decreasing turnout is a sector-wide trend, HUU is working to address these challenges as part of our ongoing Governance Review to ensure that HUU's representational structures are effective, transparent and accessible to all students.

Results and Feedback

The full results are available [online](#).

After submitting their vote students had the opportunity to take part in an exit poll asking why they had voted in the election. They were able to choose as many answers as they wished (as detailed in Table 4) as well as leaving free text comments. 1190 individual responses were recorded. 39% of respondents indicated that they voted in the election because they or their friend knew one of the candidates. 36% responded that they voted in the election because they received information about it through HUU publicity via emails, Social Media or posters. On the other hand, many free text comments noted that students did not feel informed enough about the elections and criticized the content of the Marketing campaign. Candidate publicity was rated lower than HUU publicity in encouraging turnout. Only 3% of the respondents noted that the HUU candidate question time videos made them vote in the elections whilst a number of free text comments mentioned the desire to have an opportunity to directly compare candidates and their policies. Finally, a recurring reason to vote in the free text comments was that it is everyone's democratic right to participate in elections.

Table 4. Exit poll: Why did you vote in the HUU Elections 2016?



Recommendations for 2017

- The budget of Sabbatical candidates should be reduced to £75 each with 100% of this budget being reimbursed to ensure that all Sabbatical candidates can spend the same amount on their campaign regardless of their personal financial circumstances.
- The period for nominations, campaigning and voting should be reduced to two weeks total to reduce the stress on candidates campaigning for an extended period of time.
- Advertising and marketing of the elections should start in semester 1 with a teaser about the timeline and available positions. At least one information meeting should be held before the Christmas break.
- More information about RON campaigns should be included in the Election Rules & Regulations.
- Students have indicated that they would like to have a Forum where they can compare all candidates and their policies at once. However, only 3% used the HUU Sabbatical candidate question time videos to do so. Alternative formats of achieving this (e.g. hustings) should be reviewed.
- It is recommended to include the Lawns and other halls of residences in the marketing campaign, especially when driving voter turnout.

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11 April 2016