9–11 April 2019 | Glasgow

Chief Returning Officer report

If you need this document in another format contact NUS on 0845 5210 262 or email events@nus.org.uk

Key information

Purpose of this document

This document reports on the activity of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) and their Deputy Returning Officers (DROs).

The Chief Returning Officer and Deputies

Jules Mason – Chief Returning Officer

Jules was appointed Chief Returning Officer at National Conference 2015 and reappointed after National Conference 2017. Prior to that he was a Deputy Returning Officer (2014-2015). He is Europe Operations Director at The ONE Campaign, a campaigning and advocacy non-for-profit organisation focused on ending extreme poverty and preventable diseases in Africa. He has held senior paid and volunteer roles in the voluntary sector: he is a former Vice-Chair of NCVO, and former Director of Strategy (interim) at the British Red Cross. Jules is a former student union activist – a former President of Southampton Solent University Students' Union, member of the NUS NEC and former external trustee at London South Bank University Students' Union.

Deputy Returning Officers

The principal Deputy Returning Officers are listed below. The Chief Returning Officer may, at times, appoint additional Deputy Returning Officers to oversee the administration of NUS elections.

Estelle Hart

Estelle is the Head of Student Experience at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David where she oversees student communication and induction amongst other projects. She's a former NUS Wales and UK Women's Officer.

Rhodri Roberts

Rhodri works at the London School of Economics & Political Sciences Students' Union supporting and overseeing the Union's democratic processes. He is a former NUS Wales LGBT Officer and in his spare time volunteers to support peer-led youth programmes across the country.

Kathy Wylde

Kathy is a long-standing supporter of the student movement and former student activist. She has served on and been chair of Disabled Students and Women's Steering Committees as well as past chair of National Steering/Democratic Procedures Committee. Kathy is a volunteer staff member at Wirral Metropolitan College Students' Union.

Introduction from the Chief Returning Officer (CRO)

Dear National Conference 2019,

During my tenure as your Chief Returning Officer, my priorities are to ensure:

- Accessible elections;
- Contested elections, and
- An effective elections committee.

This is my latest report as your Chief Returning Officer. My report provides an overview of the work undertaken by me and my deputies since National Conference 2018 in fulfilling my three priorities.

Thanks as always to my band of fellow volunteers on #TeamElections, my Deputy Returning Officers - Estelle Hart, Rhodri Roberts and Kathy Wylde. It continues to be my pleasure to work with you all, as well as receive your advice and support. Thanks also to members of Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC), members of the NUS National Executive and staff (in the Nations and UK), that I have had the pleasure to work with.

If you are a candidate, remember that voters react well to informed, responsive and accessible campaigns. Also, remember that you and your supporters must be respectful of other candidates. If you are a delegate, then please use your vote wisely and remember the students from your associations, guilds and unions that you are here to represent.

I hope that as a movement, activists and officers ensure that they walk the walk not just talk to talk when it comes to treating everyone with respect, including their treatment of DROs and DPC, who are all volunteers. Sadly, there have been occasions when passionate words have not always been matched with actions.

I look forward, supported by my DROs, to overseeing the elections at National Conference 2019. I commend my report to you and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Finally, good luck to everyone standing in elections.

Best wishes and happy elections

'Jules the Rules' out!

Jules Mason, NUS UK Chief Returning Officer

Deputy Returning Officers

Estelle Hart

Rhodri Roberts

Kathy Wylde

Ensuring accessible elections

I have taken the following steps to ensure accessible elections:

- Worked with DPC and NUS staff to develop appropriate arrangements for all future NUS UK elections so that should a similar incident as what happened at National Conference 2018 occur, it has as minimal disruption as possible to the elections, and
- Worked with the Nations and UK staff to update candidate information, election timetables and rules.

Ensuring contested elections

I have taken the following steps to ensure contested elections:

- Tweets, promoted on NUS campaign twitter handles, encouraging students and officers to stand in elections, as well as reminders of impending nominations deadlines, and
- Promoted election opportunities that resulted in 83 candidates (compared to 104 candidates last year) at the 2018 UK Zone Conference elections. Due to this year's deadlines for Full Time Officer (FTO) nominations and accountability reports, I am unable to include details on the number of FTO nominations receive. I will update National Conference on this during my accountability report session.

Ensuring an effective elections committee

I have taken the following steps to ensure an effective elections committee:

- In addition to Annual Conference, ensured that I or one of my principal DROs oversaw elections at the following conferences: UK Zones, Trans, Sections, LGBT+, Black Students, NUS Scotland and UCMC/NUS Wales, and
- Held a briefing session, supported by my DROs, at Annual Conference with all candidates whose nomination closed before National Conference to inform them of election arrangements and reinforce their responsibility to conduct responsible, safe, fair and accessible election campaigns.

Election Rulings

At the time of writing I have been called upon to make the following Election Rulings:

- The outcome of last year's VP Welfare and Society & Citizenship elections following the stage occupation;
- Having a deadline for submitting complaints before election counts in all election timetables;
- The outcome of reserved FE places in the UD and Welfare Zones Committee elections, following an appeal;
- Paused all NUS elections until the joint NUS Boards decided which FTO roles would be funded for 2019/20;
- Re-opened all NUS elections and agreed the nominations process for individuals who submitted nominations for defunded FTO roles that closed before the joint NUS Boards' decision;
- The ability for NUS Scotland members to nominate up to the number of positions available in NUS Scotland Executive Representative and Scottish Procedures Committee elections, and
- Required NEC candidates seeking re-election to set up new social media election accounts.

I will report on other rulings at National Conference during my accountability report session.

National Union of Students

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