INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the 2016 CUSU/GU Elections, produced for CUSU Council and the Council Committee for the Supervision of Students’ Unions (CCSSU).

Contained in this report is a breakdown of the events and results of the Elections, some observations on this process, and recommendations from the Returning Officer.

The election period is incredibly intense for both the candidates and the teams at CUSU and the GU who work to ensure a free and fair democratic process. The smooth running of the hustings, debates and voting period is the result of hard work by a large number of people, both staff and volunteers. Particular thanks are owed to:

- All College Returning Officers, who ensured the presence of in-college voting;
- The CUSU/GU Staff Teams;
- The candidates and their campaign teams, who made this election a cross-campus event.

Jemma Stewart
CUSU Returning Officer 2016
The CUSU Elections Committee (EC) is normally elected at the first CUSU Council of Michaelmas term, or at the nearest subsequent Council if positions remain unfulfilled. EC is normally composed of five voting members elected by CUSU Council, with the CUSU President serving ex officio as Returning Officer. For the purposes of a combined CUSU/GU election, the GU President also serves as a member of the Elections Committee ex officio.

With Priscilla Mensah as a member of Elections Committee ex officio, two individuals were elected to the Elections Committee at CUSU Council Michaelmas II (26th October): Jemma Stewart and Charlotte Chorley. Priscilla Mensah stood down from Elections Committee on 24th January. A further individual, Beth Craig-Geen, was elected at CUSU Council Lent I (18th January). The Graduate Union’s Election Rules stated that, in the adoption of the CUSU Election Rules, the GU Elections Committee would comprise the membership of the CUSU Elections Committee with the GU Returning Officer. Mark Driver was therefore appointed to the CUSU Elections Committee as the GU Returning Officer, following the President’s declining of the role.

Through an election within the Elections Committee, it was decided that Jemma Stewart would act as Returning Officer for the year 2015-16.

The Membership of the CUSU/GU Elections Committee was therefore:

- Jemma Stewart: Returning Officer, CUSU Coordinator, Homerton College
- Charlotte Chorley: CUSU Women’s Officer, Pembroke College
- Beth Craig-Geen: Murray Edwards College
- Mark Driver: Graduate Union Returning Officer, Robinson College

With a total of only four members serving on the Elections Committee during the election period at any one time, the workload for members of the EC was very high, with particular constraints being placed on student members.

2015 Recommendation: Increase resource investment in recruitment of Elections Committee candidates. This has not been acted on in 2016, and it seems that improved promotion of the Elections Committee positions will only be feasible with increased resources, which does not seem likely at present.

Recommendation: Look to reorganise the structure and roles of Elections Committee and the Returning Officer so as to redistribute the workload in line with the structures at comparative Students’ Unions. Bring recommendations and Standing Order change suggestions to CUSU Council.

2015 Recommendation: Delegate all operational aspects of elections to permanent staff within CUSU and the GU and create a clear work plan for the remaining duties of the Elections Committee. Staff support provided by CUSU and the GU during the
election period allowed for many operational aspects to be delegated, but matters such as complaints and rules interpretation remained the duty of Elections Committee. Due to resource restrictions and individual capacity, many activities’ operational duties ended up in the responsibility of the Returning Officer and Elections Committee.

**Recommendation:** Create a work plan by the end of the 2015/16 academic year, with staff resource allocated early on.

2015 **Recommendation:** Review GU Schedules to ensure clarity in mechanism for delegating responsibility for GU elections to CUSU. This was enacted, and caused no issues in the 2016 Elections.

### ELECTIONS TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Michaelmas Term</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18th January</td>
<td>Elections Committee elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th February</td>
<td>Election rules and timeline presented at CUSU Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23rd February</td>
<td>Nominations open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th February</td>
<td>Nominations close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25th February</td>
<td>Candidate Briefing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27th – 28th February</td>
<td>Campaigning period open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th February</td>
<td>Online video debates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st March</td>
<td>Hustings at CUSU Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd March</td>
<td>12am: Voting open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting in Colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7pm: Voting close, provisional results announced online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th March</td>
<td>Confirmed election results announced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The positions to be elected, eligibility criteria and number of nominations received were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Candidate Eligibility</th>
<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Maximum Positions to be Elected</th>
<th>Number of Nominations Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUSU President (and, simultaneously, University Councillor)</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSU Access &amp; Funding Officer CUSU Education Officer CUSU Coordinator</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSU Women's Officer</td>
<td>All self-defining women students</td>
<td>All self-defining women students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSU Ethical Affairs Officers</td>
<td>All current students continuing as students for 16/17</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GU President (and, simultaneously, University Councillor and Member of the General Board)</td>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSU/GU Welfare and Rights Officer</td>
<td>Students with shared membership of CUSU and the GU and final-year undergraduates</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Councillor</td>
<td>All current students continuing as students for 16/17</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUS Delegate</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>5 (2 reserved places for self-defining women)</td>
<td>3 (0 self-defining women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ELECTION SYSTEM

2015 Recommendation: Cease the use of paper voting and switch to online-only elections for 2015/16. This was enacted. CUSU ceased paper voting and switched to online-only elections for the 2016 Elections, with limited difficulty. We did not see a drastic decrease in voter turnout, which may also have been related to the number of candidates in the elections.

This online voting was handled via CUSU’s online voting platform at www.vote.cusu.cam.ac.uk. While CUSU believes its voting platform provides a robust and secure method of collecting online votes, there is still scope for improved functionality and usability.

Recommendation: Collate the electoral roll from the Student Registry for the Part-Time Executive elections to then run the 2016/17 PTE Elections on the UnionCloud platform as a ‘practice run’ for the 2016/17 Lent Elections.

All CUSU and GU elections are conducted using Single Transferrable Vote, according to Electoral Reform Society rules.

Following the passing of ‘Fair Representation’ policy by NUS’ National Conference, the position of NUS Delegate is subject to quota whereby a minimum of 50% rounded down of delegates must self-define as women – for 2016, this meant that two out of five possible positions were reserved for women candidates. The election did not have to be conducted according to NUS guidance that the election should be run in two parts, as the candidates standing for NUS Delegate positions did not self-define as women. For this reason, only one count was held for three vacant positions. Due to the time constraints of the election results and end of term, it was not possible to prompt a by-election before CUSU Council. Guidance from the NUS Democratic Procedures Committee was therefore to send self-defining women students who had been previously elected in a cross-campus ballot. Due to the unavailability of some of these students, only one self-defining woman who had previously been elected in a cross-campus ballot was able to be sent as an NUS Delegate: Roberta Huldsch, (Education Officer 2016/17-elect).

Recommendation: Consider adjusting the Election Timetable to include the NUS Delegate elections with the Part Time Executive Elections in Michaelmas Term, allowing for by-elections for unfilled positions to be held in Lent Term. Obtain further guidance on how to ensure women run for the role of NUS Delegate (e.g. from the CUSU Women’s Officer).

RULES AND RULINGS

There were no significant changes to the 2016 Election Rules from 2015, and the Elections Committee is in agreement with the 2015 EC with regards to the changes that were made to better support candidate welfare.

However, there were several clarifications of rulings which were made by Elections Committee throughout the 2016 Elections. These were:
• Social media
  o ‘Public declarations of candidacy’ on personal/private social media pages
  o Interaction with social media posts relating to elections posted by public fora (e.g. student press posts)
• Campaign teams
  o Advertising named endorsements from registered campaigners (with potential representative or elected formal positions within societies, JCRs and MCRs, etc)
  o The sharing of ‘testimonials’ from students
  o The interaction of intermitting students, carers and non-Cambridge students in aiding candidates to campaign

Recommendation: Review the Election Rules with the aim of producing a document which does not need to be reproduced year on year, which takes into account the nature of social media in its present form.

VOTER ELIGIBILITY AND THE ONLINE BALLOT

2015 Recommendation: Meet with those generating electoral rolls to establish process, guidance and timeline for generating rolls in the future, to be trialled for Michaelmas elections. There were no issues with the generation of electoral rolls for the 2016 elections, and the Elections Committee is extremely grateful to all those involved in the generation of the rolls in the Student Registry for their patience and efficiency.

2015 Recommendation: Establish cut-off date for inclusion in electoral rolls, as close to election as possible, and include this in election rules. A cut-off date for inclusion in the electoral rolls was established in the 2016 Election Rules, and the roll was advertised as being available for inspection multiple times. This resulted in only one individual establishing that an incorrect CRSid was listed and this was corrected prior to the ballot opening. On the opening of the ballot, it was discovered that a few students trying to vote were not on the roll, but this was mitigated by the advertisement of the ballot checking period.

Recommendation: Continue to publicise the roll checking. Investigate whether this will be necessary with a move to the UnionCloud voting platform, and work with those generating electoral rolls to ensure that a move to UnionCloud voting will be supported by the relevant student data, working with the Student Registry to ensure we have the correct data.

PUBLICITY AND CAMPAIGNS

Following a strong turnout in 2015, the Elections Committee faced some concerns regarding the voter turnout when faced with a move to online-only voting. With a 15.7% voter turnout, this is roughly equivalent to the turnout of 2015 (16.1%). It therefore does not seem that the move to online-only voting had an impact on voter turnout.
Elections Committee made the decision not to reintroduce manifesto booklets due to the burden of distribution and ethical cost of printing. Last year’s distribution seemed to be ineffective, with many bundles remaining in Colleges as opposed to being distributed.

Recommendation: Revisit the idea of manifesto booklets in the future, with fewer print numbers. Use these in the promotion of the Election (e.g. at Elections Roadshows), rather than distributing one per individual.

2015 Recommendation: Open discussions about equal arrangements for distribution of election materials in all colleges during the Lent Term election period, to improve fairness of democratic process.

2015 Recommendation: Ask candidates to complete an end-of-election survey regarding the different ways they chose to promote their campaigns and how effective they felt each one was.

2015 Recommendation: Invest in resources to support candidates in generating their own video content or other campaign promotion which might have implicit equipment costs.

These recommendations were not taken up in 2016, but are recommended to continue being worked on for the next round of elections.

2016 has seen an increased amount of campaigning take place over the internet and social media. It is therefore recommended that a review of the restrictions currently placed on social media publicity takes place, so as to ensure candidates feel they are not being prohibitively restricted in their campaigning tactics.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT – CANDIDATES AND VOTER TURNOUT

2016 saw the continuation of a healthy election turnout from 2015, with a total of 22 candidates, however Elections Committee continues to hold the view that work is needed to ensure that students are made more aware of the full range of roles available for election, with signposting between different ballot pages. This feature is integrated within the UnionCloud voting platform, but it will require the efforts of CUSU to ensure that students are properly registered on the website and do not encounter any difficulty in voting on the new site.

Recommendation: Map out a complete communications and publicity plan to ensure students are aware of the move to the new voting platform and are able to vote with ease.

The number of withdrawals from candidacy continues to be a concern, with three withdrawals occurring right through the election process (before the publication of candidates and during the campaigning period).

2015 Recommendation: Track and establish cause for candidate withdrawals. The withdrawal of candidates is down to a range of issues, from personal statements, to fears of comparisons with other candidates in a public platform.
2015 Recommendation: Improve communication about the full range of roles which students are eligible to vote for, perhaps by engaging more with student press beyond the CUSU President candidates. Thanks are owed to the student press for the level of engagement with the CUSU President candidates, along with the election period as a whole.

Recommendation: Continue to meet and plan with student press prior to the elections period, ensuring the timeline for the elections are clear.

2015 Recommendation: Increase investment in targeted promotion for graduate students to improve graduate turnout in all elections. This was not done this year, however the presence of a dedicated representative from the Graduate Union was effective.

Recommendation: Continue to liaise with the Graduate Union to improve graduate turnout in all elections.

COMPLAINTS

2015 Recommendation: Consider introducing rules to deal with spurious or vexatious complaints.

There were no formal complaints registered with the CUSU Elections Committee in the 2016 Elections. Informal complaints registered with the Elections Committee typically centred on the interpretation of the Election Rules by Elections Committee, and specified the need for clearer rules prior to the opening of nominations for the elections period.

Recommendation: Ensure that the rules developed are clear and not open to debate, so as to ensure candidates are not overwhelmed by interpretations of rules.
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Look to reorganise the structure and roles of Elections Committee and the Returning Officer so as to redistribute the workload in line with the structures at comparative Students' Unions. Bring recommendations and Standing Order change suggestions to CUSU Council.

2. Create a work plan by the end of the 2015/16 academic year, with staff resource allocated early on.

3. Collate the electoral roll from the Student Registry for the Part-Time Executive elections to then run the 2016/17 PTE Elections on the UnionCloud platform as a ‘practice run’ for the 2016/17 Lent Elections.

4. Consider adjusting the Election Timetable to include the NUS Delegate elections with the Part Time Executive Elections in Michaelmas Term, allowing for by-elections for unfilled positions to be held in Lent Term. Obtain further guidance on how to ensure women run for the role of NUS Delegate (e.g. from the CUSU Women’s Officer).

5. Review the Election Rules with the aim of producing a document which does not need to be reproduced year on year, that takes into account the nature of social media in its present form.

6. Continue to publicise the roll checking. Investigate whether this will be necessary with a move to the UnionCloud voting platform, and work with those generating electoral rolls to ensure that a move to UnionCloud voting will be supported by the relevant student data, working with the Student Registry to ensure we have the correct data.

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8. Open discussions about equal arrangements for distribution of election materials in all colleges during the Lent Term election period, to improve fairness of democratic process.

9. Ask candidates to complete an end-of-election survey regarding the different ways they chose to promote their campaigns and how effective they felt each one was.

10. Invest in resources to support candidates in generating their own video content or other campaign promotion which might have implicit equipment costs.

11. Map out a complete communications and publicity plan to ensure students are aware of the move to the new voting platform and are able to vote with ease.

12. Continue to meet and plan with student press prior to the elections period, ensuring the timeline for the elections are clear.

13. Continue to liaise with the Graduate Union to improve graduate turnout in all elections.

14. Ensure that the rules developed are clear and not open to debate, so as to ensure candidates are not overwhelmed by interpretations of rules.