

Rules for the UMSU NUS UK Affiliation Referendum

My name is Morven Proctor and I am the Returning Officer for this referendum for University of Manchester Students' Union (UMSU). In line with the byelaws, I set and enforce the rules for the referendum. I can be contacted via email at suelections@manchester.ac.uk.

The Deputy Returning Officer for the referendum is David Ruiz, Head of Student Mobilisation. The following staff will be involved in the administration of the referendum:

- Gary Richardson, Senior Democracy Coordinator
- Georgia Green, Head of Policy
- Emma Bramwell, Education Manager
- Thomas Weller, Senior Groups Coordinator

The Referendum Question will be:

“Should the University of Manchester Students' Union (UMSU) disaffiliate as a member of the National Union of Students UK (NUS UK)?”

The ballot options shall be:

- Yes - UMSU should disaffiliate from NUS UK
- No - UMSU should remain affiliated with NUS UK
- Abstain - I choose not to vote either Yes or No

Timings

All members of UMSU shall be able to vote in this referendum between 10am on Monday 23rd March and 3pm on Thursday 26th March.

Campaigning shall begin at 12 noon on Wednesday 18th March and continue until 3pm on Thursday 26th March.

Voting shall be by secret ballot, and each voter shall have only one vote.

Complaints that a campaigning team or a member of a campaigning team has acted in contravention of these rules will be accepted up until 4pm on Thursday 26th March. Complaints must be submitted in writing in a format decided upon by the Returning Officer.

The count shall take place once any complaints have been resolved but no sooner than 4pm on Thursday 26th March after voting closes. Votes will not be counted while there are outstanding complaints awaiting the decision of the Returning Officer. Results will only be considered valid once the Returning Officer has certified that the referendum has been conducted freely and fairly.

Campaigning Teams

There will be a maximum of one team campaigning for each side of the referendum question. All members of the team must be members of UMSU.

Members wishing to be a member of a campaigning team must complete the designated web form no later than 12 noon on Friday 6th March. The Returning Officer may extend this deadline. You will need to supply your name, student number, email and indicate which team you wish to be part of as well as consenting for your email information to be shared among other members of your team.

Each campaigning team will have a maximum of 50 members, but the Returning Officer may reduce this number to create an equitable balance if they choose to.

At 5pm on Monday 9th March there will be a meeting chaired by the Deputy Returning Officer and the Elections Manager at which each campaigning team will elect a leader of the campaigning team and confirm the final members for that team.

Campaigning undertaken by anyone who is not a registered campaigning team member may be considered a breach of the rules.

Campaigning Team Leader

The campaigning team leader is responsible for the conduct of their team and will be the point of contact with the Returning Officer.

Campaigning teams may wish to appoint a deputy team leader who can be in a supporting role for the referendum activity. This person must be named and identified to the Deputy Returning Officer.

Campaigning teams remain responsible for the conduct of their members and must take all practicable steps to ensure that members act in compliance with these rules. Breaches committed by members of a campaigning team will be treated as if the campaigning team leader themselves breached these rules.

Campaigning Rules

Conduct

Throughout the referendum, all campaigning teams must adhere to the following principles of acceptable conduct:

- a. Do only what the other campaigning team has an equal opportunity to do
- b. Treat all students, campaigners and staff members with respect

The Deputy Returning Officer will provide to Campaigning Team Leaders guidelines on acceptable conduct and campaigning teams must act in accordance with these guidelines.

Unacceptable conduct during a referendum includes but is not limited to any of the following practices (including attempts):

- a. The use of University or Students' Union resources to further the campaign of one team (except where explicitly permitted by the Returning Officer)
- b. The defacement of or interference with a campaigning team's publicity
- c. Bribery of voters or officials
- d. Threatening behaviour or harassment of voters or officials
- e. Producing offensive or defamatory publicity
- f. Preventing the free and confidential exercise of a vote by voters, including the improper use of mobile devices
- g. Compromising or interfering with the integrity of the referendum

The Returning Officer may disqualify or penalise campaigning teams, give directions during the referendum, order recounts, or annul the referendum and order a new one in its place where they determine that these rules have been breached.

Expenditure

Expenditure during the referendum shall be subject to the following rules:

- a. No campaigning team may spend more than £200 on publicity
- b. All publicity used by a campaigning team during the referendum must be declared and given a monetary value
- c. All receipts must be submitted by the campaigning team leader to the Deputy Returning Officer by 4pm on Thursday 23rd March. An overspend or inability to present receipts may lead to the disqualification of the campaign
- d. The campaigning team leader or the deputy team leader will be the only ones able to authorise payment through a signature

Publicity

Any publicity for either side of the referendum must be aimed at improving the knowledge of the issue for voters. Any claims made in publicity must be accompanied by citable evidence submitted to the Returning Officer in advance.

The Deputy Returning Officer will ensure that opportunities are organised and advertised to inform students of the referendum issue, and both campaigning teams will be able to present a student or team of students to speak, all of whom must be student members of UMSU.

Sanctions

The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer will be able to sanction campaigning teams based on noncompliance with these rules.

Sanctions will include but not limited to:

- a. Disqualification of the team from the referendum
- b. Disqualification from campaigning for a specified time or in a specified manner
- c. Removal of one or more members from a campaigning team
- d. Removal of publicity material

An appeal against a decision of the Returning Officer may be made on the grounds that the interpretation of these rules is unreasonable, that the correct procedure has not been followed, that the Returning Officer has been prejudiced or biased, or that the Returning Officer has failed to fully take into account the available evidence.

Appeals must be made no later than 12 noon on the day after the decision of the Deputy Returning Officer is communicated. An appeals panel will be convened in line with UMSU procedure, and its decision shall be final.

Result

The result shall be determined by a simple majority of votes cast.

If the majority of votes cast are “Yes”, UMSU will end our NUS UK membership at the earliest opportunity in line with affiliation years.

If the majority of votes cast are “No”, UMSU shall remain a member of NUS UK for the next 3 years unless a petition of students triggers an early referendum.

The decision shall be binding in line with UMSU governance.