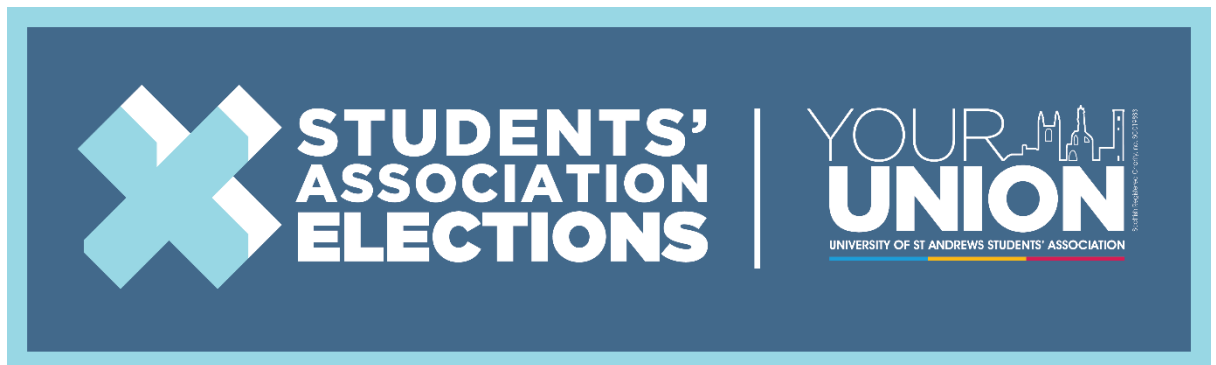




# General Elections Report 2024



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## Introduction

For the second year in a row, and for only the third time in ten years, the Students' Association Elections have seen an increase in voter turnout. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of the three Election Organisers, the Marketing & Design Team, as well as the Staff Elections Lead, we were able to see a substantial uptick in student participation, which we hope is an indicator in a renewed interest in student democracy among the student body.

Unlike 2023, many of our other metrics also improved this year, including candidate numbers, the percentage of contested races, and engagement with events. All elected positions were filled during the first round, an achievement that we have not seen in an Election in many years.

The most significant changes made included the addition of a third part-time, student Election Organiser, dedicated leadership on events, the creation of a new Elections Instagram, outreach to volunteers, and of course, the addition of an extra voting incentive in free pizza. Removing the "Question Time" or Hustings or Town Hall events, we instead focused on highlighting every candidate on our social media. An expanded Election budget and resourcing underpinned all of our strategic action and enabled our growth in our key metrics.

The 2024 Elections were scheduled later in the Semester than normal, and we were once again impacted by the repairs to the building in 601 (due to RAAC). This year, we adhered to the following timeline:

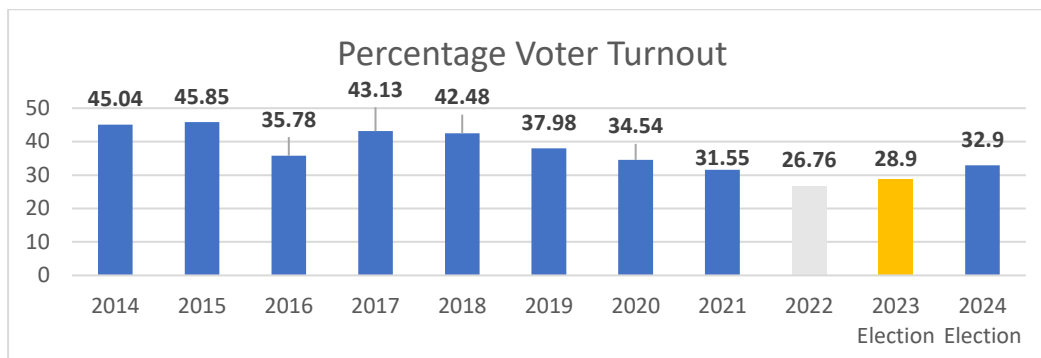
- 11 March to 20 March: Nominations Open
- 26 March: Sabbatical Debate
- 27 and 28 March: Voting Open

The following report, prepared by the Staff Elections Lead and the Elections Organisers, details the major achievements, challenges, and outcomes of the 2024 Elections. We are proud to deliver these historic returns on the investments that have been made in the Elections, both by the Students' Association and our members, and look forward to building on our momentum in 2025.

## Statistical Summary

The section below covers the highlighted statistics on turnout, candidate numbers, and contested positions for the General Elections.

Overall election turnout increased by 4.0% from the previous academic year.



The total number of unique voters fell by 1% between last academic year and the 2024 Election. (The increase in turnout can be attributed, in part, to lower student enrolment numbers in 2024).

### Number of Unique Voters

2023 Election	2024 Election	Numerical Difference
3409	3373	-36

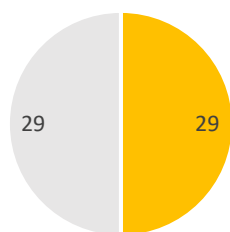
The total number of candidates rose slightly from the 2023 Election, with a 4% increase in nominations overall.

### Overall Candidates

2023 Election	2024 Election	Numerical Difference
100	104	+4

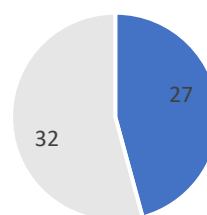
The percentage of contested posts increased slightly compared to the previous Election, going from 46% in 2023 to 50% in 2024.

Contested Posts 2024



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

Contested Posts 2023



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

## Overall Turnout

### Statistics

In total there were 3,373 votes cast (out of an eligible pool of 10,251 student voters). This resulted in a turnout of 32.90%, the highest voter turnout since 2020. For the second year in a row, turnout and other key metrics have continued to rise.

The average number of **votes per post** rose very slightly by 0.38 votes. While this is only a marginal increase, this number may be the most accurate way of gauging participation between academic years, given that the metric accounts for structural changes to Students' Association positions (i.e. changes to which/how many posts are elected each year). This year, additional activities posts were added to the Election (such as the Performing Arts Officer and the Music Officer), which may have helped to reach student interest groups that otherwise might not have voted.

**Average Votes Per Post**

2023 Election	2024 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
57.78	58.16	+0.38	+0.01

There were 58 positions in 2024 Election (one fewer than 2023, due to the removal of some SRC posts).

A comparison of **voting in Sabbatical Races** between 2024 and 2023 shows an overall increase in engagement (with the exception of the Association President Race).

**Voting in Sabbatical Races**

	Assoc. Pres	AU Pres	DoEd	DoES	DoSDA	DoWell
2023 Election	2295	1766	1441	1403	1367	1510
2024 Election	2090	1781	1699	1648	1575	1545
Difference	-205	+15	+258	+245	+208	+35

The average increase was an additional 93 votes per Sabbatical Position from the last Election.

See **Appendix A** for a full breakdown of the voting and candidate numbers in the School President and Language Convenor races.

## Turnout Analysis

### ***Pledge to Vote Campaign***

The 2024 Pledge to Vote campaign consisted of tabling primarily outside the Union building and occasionally outside the library entrance, where we offered Mentos gum packages, voting stickers, and a prize draw to incentivise students to register their pledge. Unlike last year where a QR code to the online pledge to vote form was the primary method of soliciting pledges, we focused on clipboard pledges, where students wrote down their name, university email address, and optionally checked whether they wished to volunteer on voting days. Offering the clipboard paper sign-up proved a convenient alternative option to the QR code for students, who could sign up immediately without needing to access the online form; however, an issue with the paper sign-up was that student handwriting could often be illegible to staff members entering their data from the form. While we tried to ensure handwriting was legible before students left the table, a number of pledges could not be registered due to indiscernible names and emails.

The variety of incentives appeared successful in capturing student attention towards pledge to vote tables. Offering free Mentos gum packages proved successful at capturing student interest, but it is unclear whether the Mentos incentive will be available for future pledge to vote campaigns as they were a gift from a brand representative to the Students' Association. As for the voting stickers, there were three different designs each with a slogan calling students to vote, designed by Election Organiser Tori Geehrens. As the designs were finalised later into the pre-nominations period, the stickers arrived around the middle of the pledge to vote campaign, which may have limited their reach as an incentive. Lastly, the pledge to vote prize draw had three prizes: Old Course tea for two, a £50 Amazon gift card, and £50 worth of Rector's Café vouchers. The prize draw proved successful in capturing student attention when advertised during tabling.

As for the focus on outdoor tabling over class and society raps, the drop in attending the latter (we scheduled no class raps and only tabled during Glitterball wristband collection) was largely due to time constraints and the perception last year that class raps did not capture enough student interest to warrant attention. We had great success in tabling at the Glitterball wristband collection and recommend tabling at more larger events such as other wristband collections and Sinners. Although one of the Elections Organisers spoke to one society, in the future, attending more society meetings to solicit pledges could certainly use more attention, as campaigners can focus on issue areas relevant to society interests and propose the incentives (such as micro grants) available for societies who volunteer on voting days or encourage members to nominate themselves for positions. We also found the messaging switched from Pledge to Vote to Nominations quite quickly, so starting the Pledge to Vote campaign earlier in the Pre-Nomination period may help boost engagement with the campaign before messaging switches focus to nominations.

## ***Candidate Videos***

Instead of putting on the traditional Hustings and Town Hall events for SRC candidates, we decided to utilize our social media reach to highlight SRC and other candidates running for Sabbatical, School President, and Student Trustee positions. We asked all candidates to submit one-minute-long candidate videos after the close of nominations. The videos submitted introduced the candidate and highlighted key campaign ideas. Most candidates submitted videos as we had over 70 submissions. We posted these videos as a 'grid post' on the sa.elect Instagram page from March 22-March 28 with specific days dedicated to School President, SRC, Student Trustee, and Sabbatical Officer candidates. Overall, the candidate videos had quite a large reach as each individual post reached over 500 accounts. However, in the future, it would be much easier for the candidates to allot more time to submit videos. This year, candidates and Elections staff both felt that turnaround was too quick and resulted in candidates scrambling to film their videos and the Elections staff rushing to sort through and post the videos.

## ***Election Volunteers***

The addition of a dedicated "volunteer recruitment" elections staff member increased volunteer participation in Get Out to Vote efforts. Elections volunteers significantly helped with tabling outside the library, the Union, Physics building, and Athletic Union. Volunteers were provided with brief training and talking points to address voter concerns and increase engagement. Volunteers came from those who indicated interest on pledge to vote (PTV) online forms, in-person PTV tabling, and mass-address to societies and society presidents. However, while around 30 people expressed interest initially, this reduced to a total of 10 individual volunteers and 1 society (Singapore Soc).

Volunteers were informed and provided with incentives for participation. For 1 hour of volunteering, they received a Union water bottle and stickers. For three hours, they received £5 Rector's Vouchers. For 5+ hours, volunteers received £10 Rector's Vouchers and free Union BOP tickets. Providing additional incentives (such as a dedicated space they can access coffee and snacks in) on the voting days would be especially helpful.

In future, the Election Team should focus on volunteer recruitment earlier in the Election cycle and should make these a crucial talking point in all Class/Society/Hall Raps and other announcements. This year, there was also a significant gap (two weeks or more) between when a student signed up to volunteer and the voting day; in future, the Election Team should follow up with volunteers the day after they sign up and have earlier calls to action to get students involved earlier.

## ***Voting Tables***

Over the two voting days, the Elections Team hosted tables outside the Union and the Library, as well as the Physics Building and the Athletic Union. Staff and volunteers handed out free cupcakes to encourage voting, giving out roughly 960 by the close of the election. Our Design & Marketing Manager secured a partnership

with Papa Johns, and every hour from 12pm-5pm on both days, the Election Team gave out free pizza at the main Union table. The free food incentives were once again highly effective.

The Election Team partnered with the Saint to print their Sabbatical Manifesto Analysis (in A5 booklet format); in exchange for paying for printing, the Saint had volunteers help to distribute nearly 300 of these guides to help students make their voting choices. The Manifesto Analysis booklets were very popular and helped students to find out more about the candidates if they were previously unfamiliar. In future, the Design Team would like to collaborate more with the Saint to publish these guides. @

The main challenge with voting tables this year was poor weather on both voting days. The first day was especially bad with nearly constant rain forcing us to move away from the street-side of the Union into a gazebo near the main entrance. Heavy wind on both days meant that many of the promotional materials on the table could not be displayed. Turnout may have been slightly diminished by the weather.

### ***Candidates Campaigning***

This year, there was very little in the way of in-person campaigning from the candidates, which was a huge decrease from the last election. In the usual campaigning spots (the Library and the Union Building), there were only two Sabbatical candidates campaigning on voting days, and no visible SRC candidates. (School Presidents and others may have campaigned in-person in School buildings, but this was not visible to the Election Team). Candidates and students expressed that the timeline of the election fell too close to peak deadline season, and poor weather on both voting days (especially day one) might have pushed candidates to stay home.

Candidates also expressed a lot of concern about the Election Rules at the mandatory candidate meeting, and this may contribute to an overall misconception that campaigning isn't allowed or generates a risk that you might receive a penalty. The short turnaround time between nominations closing and voting opening may also make it challenging to build a campaign team. Additional guidance (workshops, guides, videos) may help address this in future.

### **Future Actions**

There are a number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future elections in an effort to increase the overall turnout, detailed below:

- Extend the period between the close of nominations to the opening of voting to be at least 7 business days. This will allow for more time to run campaign guidance sessions, to allow candidates to build their campaign teams and strategies, and to provide support to candidates.



- Continue a clip-board based Pledge to Vote campaign, and secure signups at major events like Glitterball and Sinners.
- Extend the Pledge to Vote campaign to visit societies, lectures/classes, and halls (as has been done in the past).
- Extend timeline of volunteer recruitment, recruiting volunteers from the start of Semester Two. Get volunteers onboarded and active within a week of expressing interest, rather than waiting until the two voting days.
- Provide additional incentives for volunteers (such as a dedicated room/space where they can access snacks and take breaks on voting days).
- Expand guidance on how to campaign and run a campaign team; run workshops and produce video content and host 1:1 guidance sessions to encourage more active participation from candidates. Consider bringing in alumni guests to talk about their previous campaign strategies.
- Refocus the Mandatory Candidate Meeting to be less about the rules and more visual, including “do” and “don’t” graphics on the slides, particularly regarding social media campaigning and what constitutes an endorsement or negative campaigning, where there were numerous questions asked this year.
- Pursue sponsorship from Papa Johns and other pizza companies to expand food-based incentives for voting during the Election. (Relatedly, have two options for sweets at the table, such as cupcakes or cookies).
- Continue to partner with the Saint to distribute candidate guides or manifesto analyses that help students decide whom to support. Loop in the Design Team to help with the creation of the final document.
- Invest in weather-resistant materials to make the voting tables more easily identifiable (such as tablecloths that can be zip-tied down and paperweights to hold paper materials).

## Positions and Candidates

### Statistics

The total number of candidates across all posts/positions expanded slightly in the 2024 Election from the previous year.

**Total Number of Candidates (All Posts)**

2023 Election	2024 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
100	104	+4	+4%

This year, we saw the same number of withdrawn nominations as the previous year (with 9 withdrawn candidates each in 2024 and 2023; there were 15 withdrawals in 2022.) There was one Sabbatical Officer withdrawal during the 2024 Election and one School President Candidate was disqualified due to rule violations.

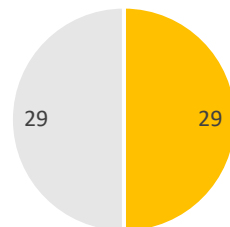
Similarly, the number of candidates per post available increased very slightly from the previous year. (There were 58 posts available in 2024 compared to 59 posts available in 2023).

**Candidates Per Post**

2023 Election	2024 Election	Numerical Difference	% Difference
1.69	1.79	+0.10	+6%

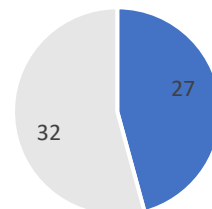
The percentage of contested races increased slightly compared to last year's elections going from 46% in 2023 up to 50% in 2024.

Contested Posts 2024



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

Contested Posts 2023



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

### ***Sabbatical Officer Races***

The total number of Sabbatical Candidates was flat from the previous Election (with 11 total Sabb candidates).

<b>Sabb Candidates by Position (2022)</b>						
	<b>Assoc. Pres</b>	<b>AU Pres</b>	<b>DoEd</b>	<b>DoES</b>	<b>DoSDA</b>	<b>DoWell</b>
2023 Election	2	1	1	1	4	2

The total percentage of Sabbatical races that were contested remained flat at 50%.

***Student Representative Council Races***

The total number of SRC Candidates was also flat from the previous election, with 35 candidates for SRC positions in both the 2024 and 2023 Elections. (It is worth noting that two additional positions were on the ballot in 2023 compared to 2022, making our engagement more-or-less flat).

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Candidates</b>
Accommodation Officer	2
Alumni Officer	2
Arts and Divinity Faculty President	1
Association Chair	2
BAME Officer	1
Charities Officer	2
Community Relations Officer	2
Disability Officer	2
Employability Officer	1
Environment Officer	2
Gender Equality Officer	1
International Students' Officer	3
LGBT+ Officer	1
Carers, Commuters, Mature, and Flexible Learns Officer	2
Science and Medicine Faculty President	1
Secretary to the SRC	3
Societies Officer	1
Student Health Officer	2
Widening Access and Participation Officer	1
Performing Arts Officer	2
Music Officer	1
Accommodation Officer	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

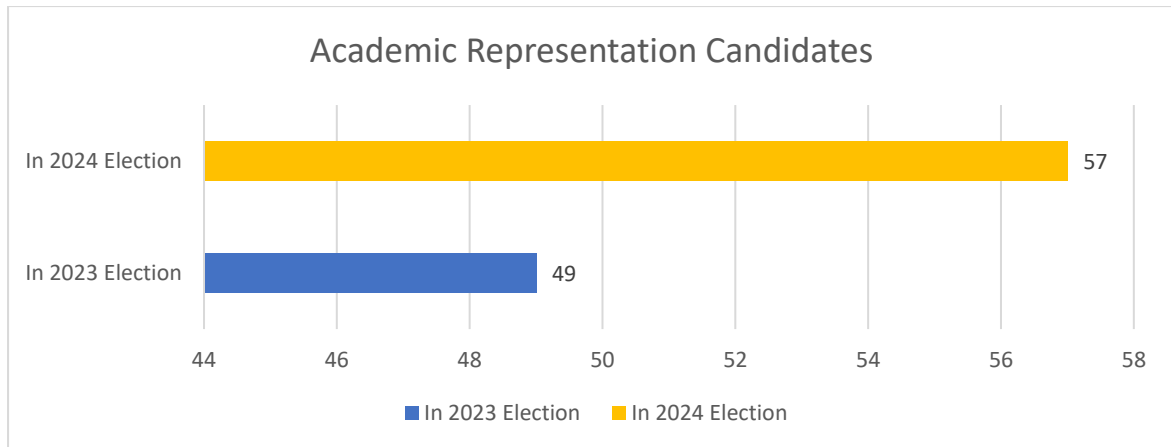
13 of these posts were contested in the 2024 Elections, for a total of 61%. This is up 20% from the previous year's election.

### Student Trustee Races

Four (4) candidates stood for election as a Student Trustee, for which there were two posts. This is a slight decrease from the five (5) candidates who stood in the previous academic year's election.

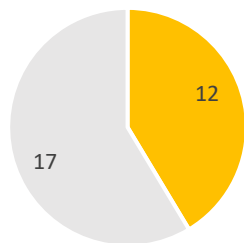
### Academic Representation Races

In total 57 candidates stood for School President or Language Convenor positions. This is an increase of 14% from the previous year's elections (where 49 candidates stood for election).



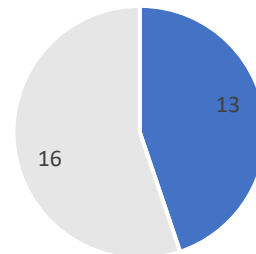
Just 41% (12) of the 29 Academic Representation posts were contested, down by 3% from the 2023 Election.

Contested Academic Rep Posts  
2024



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

Contested Academic Rep Posts  
2023



■ Contested ■ Uncontested

## Positions and Candidates Analysis

### ***Check-ins with Subcommittees and School Presidents***

In an effort to ensure that all roles had at least one nominee, the Election Organisers scheduled meetings with a School Presidents/Convenors, SRC officers, and Sabbatical Officers. These roles helped onboard the Organisers (with regard to the structure of the Union and specific roles and accomplishments of elected officers) but also gave the Election Team a sense of how much student interest we could expect in the Nominations phase of Elections. The Team specifically asked elected officers and presidents how many students had talked to them about their roles and how many people they expected to run and tracked these estimates centrally.

The Election Team used projected number of nominees to advertise and make specific roles (with less interest) more visible to the student body. While this was helpful to ensure that there was at least one nominee for every role, it may have had an impact on contested races (as the Election Team did not prioritise advertising positions where there was at least one person with declared interest). In future, the Election Team can instead focus on ensuring that there are two or more expected nominees for every position.

### ***Unfilled Positions Publicity***

In order to ensure that all positions were filled, the Election Team utilised social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to promote unfilled positions. By posting Instagram stories as well as grid posts, listing specific positions that had zero candidates, the Organisers were able to attract interested students. In collaboration with the Design and Marketing Team, several grid and story posts were put up to highlight unfilled SRC, School President and Sabbatical Officer roles such as BAME Officer, Geography and SD School President, and Director of Student Development and Activities. The Election Team utilised the Elections Instagram account, @sa.elect in addition to the official University account @uniofstandrews and the Students' Association account @standrewsunion, reaching a total audience of over 70,000 followers. By the close of nominations, the Election Team had all but two positions filled and due to our social media outreach, these last two posts were able to be filled due to three late nominations for these empty posts.

### ***Contested Positions***

Feedback from candidates dropping out of contested races has shed light on key areas of concern for encouraging contested positions. Unlike last year's election, which was held closer to the beginning of semester two, the timeline of the 2024 election overlapped with student deadlines and thus may have discouraged students from running due to the pressure of academic deadlines during the nominations and campaigning periods. Further, some candidates who withdrew from contested races indicated they were unable to or uncomfortable devoting enough time to the election to organise a campaign plan, team, and statement/manifesto. The election timeline

conflicting with the university academic calendar may have been exacerbated in part from a lack of knowledge or confidence in how to campaign or what their position entails, making it more difficult and stressful to organise a campaign or argue why they would make a better candidate over their competition. Lack of knowledge or confidence about what a candidate's position entails may be remedied by videos covering the purviews of elected positions, guides for how to campaign, and signposting to candidate wellbeing support.

### ***Candidate Wellbeing and Advice***

Candidate well-being is a highly important consideration during the stressful election period, especially given its overlap with academic deadlines this year. The Elections Team promoted wellbeing support to candidates, but there is certainly room for improvement to the structure of wellbeing support.

While we offered office hours with Election Organisers and Leads, they were listed on yourunion.net without an easy portal for scheduling appointments. Time limitations and a lack of clarity about the use of office hours meant there was a low uptake for appointments. Outside of the Election's Launch Party, the Election Team did not hold many events for candidates to meet one another in a relaxed setting and seek advice from election staff.

To improve wellbeing support for future years, the Election Team should consider including a sign-up portal for wellbeing one-on-one meetings and dedicating a staff member to support candidates' wellbeing. Reaching out to candidates and reminding them to ask for support if needed would also be advisable. Lastly, the Elections Team could potentially host well-being events such as informal candidate meet-ups after the Election's Launch party or a collaboration with the dog walking society to hold a dog walk or cuddling event for candidates.

### **Future Actions**

There are a number of other efforts that the Staff Elections Team (and student officers and others) could implement in future elections in an effort to increase the overall number of candidates, detailed below:

- Work with Students' Association subcommittees to recruit potential candidates
- Work with School Presidents to identify prospective candidates prior to the nominations period
- Consider hosting a Candidate Fayre for voters to meet the students running. This event may assist candidates unsure of how to campaign by providing an organised space for them to table and meet voters and other candidates. Further, candidates campaigning at this event would complement social media coverage of candidates in familiarising voters with who is running.
- Dedicate a staff member to candidate wellbeing. This would help make candidate well-being and advice more of a priority during the busy election

period and provide support for confirmed or potential candidates concerned or stressed about the requirements of the election or the responsibilities of elected positions.

- Create videos for guidance and suggestions for campaigning, explanations of elected positions, and promote candidate advice, well-being support, and Election Team office hours.
- Create an online portal for candidates to easily sign up for wellbeing/advice office hours with Elections Staff.

## Publicity & Events

This year, the Elections Staff heavily focused on increasing publicity efforts through new and improved social media strategies and planned events. With the launch of the new Elections Instagram page, event such as the Election Launch Party and the Sabbatical Debates were highly publicized. Additionally, the Elections Instagram directly engaged with students to publicize important information pertaining to the Elections timeline.

The Design and Marketing Team were also able to allocate one Graphic Designer to work (more or less) solely on Elections during the nominations and voting periods, which was exceptionally helpful and had a major impact on key statistics and engagement. Maintaining this level of staffing support is crucial to Election turnout and the overall Election process.

## **Strategies Actioned**

### ***Election Launch Party***

Our first event was the Elections Launch Party, held in Beacon Bar on March 16. We invited all current officeholders as well as prospective candidates for an Elections mixer. This purpose of this event was to provide prospective candidates with the opportunity to engage with current SRC officers, Sabbatical officers, and School Presidents and ask questions about their roles. We also provided support for candidates by setting up an 'Ask the Elections Staff' booth. During the event, the elections staff also provided information about the upcoming elections such as: the nominations timeline; submit a question for the Sabbatical Debate; and candidate video submissions for the Elections Instagram page. The event was publicised on the Elections Instagram page, as well as the Union's Instagram and Facebook pages. Overall, the event turnout was quite high as 53 people (a mix of prospective candidates and current officeholders) attended.

### ***Sabbatical Debate***

The Sabbatical debate was held in the School 1 lecture theatre due to the closure of Stage 601 for construction. Students could attend in-person or watch the event through the livestream. The moderators were the outgoing Association President and AU President, who were both briefed prior the event on their roles and the structure of the debate. Candidates were emailed prior to the event the first three questions to be posed for their respective sabbatical candidacies and were required to arrive half an hour before the event, where they were briefed on the debate structure and given the chance to ask any questions. During the event, the Election Lead and Organisers filtered through questions submitted to an online form before and during the debate, rewording them if necessary, before feeding them to the moderators via a Microsoft Teams chat. The number of questions submitted before the debate and especially during the debate by audience members was exceptionally high, which is a positive sign for student engagement with the debate. A small change to the



debate structure was to add a closing remarks segment after the final candidates had debated.

A major complaint from multiple attendees was the remarks of one candidate during their closing remarks, which included distressing content discussed in detail with no content warning. While organisers cannot control what candidates say in the moment, the Election Team did not explicitly tell candidates in the pre-debate briefing to give content warnings or avoid sensitive subjects. After the distressing remarks, the moderators sign-posted attendees to wellbeing support if they were affected by the content of the debate.

Another point of feedback was that candidates hardly made use of their rebuttal time, which may potentially have been a result of the questions chosen, the candidates feeling unprepared to debate, or simply just the preference of this year's candidates not to engage in debate.

### ***Social Media Posts and Content***

**“Weekly Win” series:** Leading up to the Election, the Students' Association did well to promote the representational wins and achievements of currently-elected officers. By publishing reports and “Weekly Wins” (such as those on the Education Committee Instagram), the Association did well to communicate the value of elected representatives to students, generating investment prior to the Election itself.

**“Did you know?” series:** During the Election period, the Design & Marketing Team posted weekly graphics as part of a fact-sharing series. This included busting myths about the Students' Associations and drawing attention to what can be achieved in representative posts.

**Instagram Reels:** Given our expanded social media outreach, this year we decided to also post short-form content such as reels and other videos on our @sa.elect Instagram page. We felt that this was a good strategy due to platforms algorithm that boosted reels and other short-form content. In total, our elections interns and design team filmed and posted nine reels, each garnering between 1,042-5,465 views. These videos promoted numerous key points such as: candidate nomination deadlines, reminders to vote, election results, and giveaway winners.

### ***Instagram Takeovers***

This year, we held several Instagram takeovers on the official University Instagram account @uniofstandrews on March 12<sup>th</sup> and both voting days March 27 and 28<sup>th</sup>. We also held more frequent takeovers on the Students' Association account @standrewsunion on March 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup>, and 26-29<sup>th</sup>. Both accounts have a combined following of 69,700 users, meaning our stories were reached by a

wide audience, including undergraduate and postgraduate students. Content shared on these pages drove followers to the Election Instagram account and communicated our messages about nominations, events, and voting.

### ***Website***

Once again, the Union Website was used quite effectively to provide information to candidates and voters. Old pages for rules and general information were consolidated into one page, with buttons to make the sections easier to navigate. In future, it would be helpful to implement changes earlier (such as making the page more visually exciting to navigate) and have the website live from the end of Semester One.

## **Strategy Limitations**

### ***Social Media Organisation***

This was the first year that we had an Elections Instagram account. Overall, the increased engagement and publicity from the page made it a very successful strategy. However, managing social media proved to be a difficult task for one person. Handling multiple Instagram takeovers in addition to posting candidate videos, creating Instagram stories, and drafting other content, was a challenging and time-consuming process. Next year, it would be preferable to have multiple people handling the Elections social media. Splitting up the different roles would allow the team to focus more on the quality of the content and expand our outreach strategies.

### ***Tailored Messaging***

This year, we trialled created posters and graphics specific to the Athletic Union. By personalising promotional materials (e.g. "Vote for your AU President" on a poster) to the specific venue and related roles may increase engagement and interest from students. In future, the Election Team and Design & Marketing Team should collaborate to create venue-specific messaging for Halls, Bars, and Subcommittees.

### ***Decline of Facebook Usage***

Evaluating analytics after the Election, it is clear to the Design & Marketing Team that the Elections Facebook account largely reaches alumni rather than current students. Less than 1/3 of the total Facebook audience (~30%) appear to fit St Andrews student demographics (by location and age), as opposed to Instagram, where 85% of engagement matched student demographics. In addition, the Facebook page saw only two new followers (with 13 people unfollowing the account) this year.

The Elections Team and Design & Marketing are considering sunsetting usage of the Election Facebook (and consolidating promotion about Elections onto the main Association Facebook). Some content (such as Facebook Events for each main

element of the Election) can be maintained on the central page rather than on the Election-specific subpage.

### **Instagram Rules**

Some candidates were unclear about the rules regarding the use of personal social media, a source for a high volume of Election Complaints. The Elections Team and Design & Marketing are reviewing the rule and will consider whether use of personal social media is fair. Other suggestions include allowing candidates to make three posts from their personal accounts (at key times such as the close of nominations, voting opening, and voting closing) and/or to send a graphical post that we ask all candidates to put up on their personal pages.

### **Venues**

Venues were particularly limited this year given the closure of the Union's Club 601 stage for construction. While Beacon Bar was an effective venue for the Election's Launch Party, the hosting of the mandatory candidate meeting and the sabbatical debate in School 2 and 1, respectively, caused some confusion for attendees. The Schools of St Salvator's Quad are not particularly well known among students who have not had lectures or tutorials in the building. Some attendees reported confusion about which of the five numbered schools was the event venue, which was further exacerbated by other events simultaneously hosted in the schools. Further, the academic setting of the schools is not ideal for enticing students outside of campaign teams or the SA Officer bubble to attend the Sabbatical Debate. Hosting in a lecture theatre may also potentially encourage the misconception that the Students' Association is a part of the university or that it is only involved in academic activities and representation.

Floor space in School 1 was a limitation for the Sabbatical Debate, as the limited floor space meant cycling through candidates took longer as candidates shuffled past the tables. This was particularly problematic for the closing remarks. The lack of stage lighting meant the audience was fully lit throughout, which may have contributed to candidate stress more so than a darkened audience would have. Lastly, while not necessarily the fault of the venue, we had little decorations to transform the look of the lecture theatre, and the writing 'Sabbatical Debate 2024' on the whiteboard may have projected an atmosphere more akin to an informal academic or society presentation rather than a professional Students' Association presentation.

Until the 601 stage reopens, the Election Team may anticipate some less-than-optimal venues available for events, especially for the Sabbatical Debate.

### **Future Actions**

There are a number of possible actions the Elections Team, as well as student representatives, could include in future elections planning. Overall, these ideas focus

on generating greater interest from students, which should then positively impact the number of nominations as well as overall voter turnout:

- Expand the number of team members working on social media to support takeovers, postings, and content creation.
- Until the Union's Stage 601 reopens, the Elections Team should consider reaching out to the Byre Theatre in the pre-nomination period to potentially reserve its stage for the Sabbatical Debate.
- If the overall timeline between the close of nominations and the opening of voting is extended, hold the mandatory candidate meeting on the day after the close of nominations.
- Begin advertising the Election's Launch Party sooner, potentially at society or Union social functions.
- Ensure a member of staff dedicated to one-on-one wellbeing chats with students is able to attend the Elections Launch Party
- Host more informal social events for candidates to socialise, de-stress, and potentially meet constituents. Such events could include social mixers, a collaboration with the Dog Walking Society to host a candidate-centred dog cuddling session.
- Based on participant feedback, trial holding a 'mock' sabbatical debate with candidates for practical training on debate rules and expectations. The suggester recommended framing the mock debate around a whimsical, non-serious topic that candidates are likely to an opinion on (for example, 'do you eat or drink soup?') so candidates can become comfortable with the format and especially practice rebutting one another's points. As the 2024 sabbatical debate featured almost no use of the rebuttal period by candidates, having them attend a less high-pressure mock debate beforehand that encourages practicing giving rebuttals may encourage more debate between candidates during the actual live event.
- Another suggestion prompted by the lack of rebuttals during this year's sabbatical debate entails requiring candidates to make at least one rebuttal each. While this method indeed result in more rebuttals, obligating them may encourage 'low substance/quality' rebuttals and may increase candidates' stress before and during the debate.
- Review the Election Facebook page and consider consolidating postings to be on just the main Union Facebook page.
- Review the rules regarding use of personal social media accounts and consider lifting restrictions or otherwise widening access.
- Capitalise on the high volume of clicks for the "Nominees Announced" post by having a call to action (such as "visit the website to read more about the candidates").
- Post the Candidate Videos as Reels (as well as grid posts) and have a stronger organisation system and calendar to sort through them.
- Host a short meeting between the Election Team and the Operations Planning Team within the Union to ensure that commercial services are contributing to the advertising of Elections.

- Add some slight diversity to the graphics produced so that content appears new and fresh throughout the whole election cycle (for example, different colour-schemes between nominations versus voting).
- Have photoshoots of the Student Representative Council and Education Committee (in Semester One) to ensure there is a good supply of stock photos ahead of the Election.
- Ensure that the Election webpage is live from the end of Semester One.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Statistical Breakdown by School

The following table breaks down candidates and voting data in the School President and Language Convenor races for the 2024 Election.

<b>Academic Representation Positions Breakdown by School 2023 Election</b>					
School Position	# Candidates	Votes Cast	Eligible Voters	Voter Turnout	Votes Per Candidate
Art History	1	109	711	15.33%	109.00
Biology	1	227	874	25.97%	227.00
Chemistry	4	234	626	37.38%	58.50
Classics	3	150	630	23.81%	50.00
Computer Science	1	157	754	20.82%	157.00
Divinity	1	75	272	27.57%	75.00
Earth and Environmental Sciences	1	84	256	32.81%	84.00
Economics and Finance	3	286	1218	23.48%	95.33
English	3	169	737	22.93%	56.33
Film Studies	1	62	388	15.98%	62.00
Geography and Sustainable Development	3	63	898	7.02%	21.00
History	3	273	1090	25.05%	91.00
International Relations	4	383	1247	30.71%	95.75
Management	1	134	967	13.86%	134.00
Math and Stats	1	280	1271	22.03%	280.00
Medicine	7	260	751	34.62%	37.14
Modern Languages	1	260	1057	24.60%	260.00
Modern Languages Arabic & Persian	1	49	82	59.76%	0.00
Modern Languages Chinese	3	40	57	70.18%	13.33
Modern Languages Comparative Literature	1	55	95	57.89%	55.00
Modern Languages French	1	57	213	26.76%	57.00
Modern Languages German	1	57	110	51.82%	57.00
Modern Languages Italian	1	26	64	40.63%	26.00
Modern Languages Russian	1	45	82	54.88%	0.00
Modern Languages Spanish	1	56	214	26.17%	56.00
Philosophy	2	184	896	20.54%	0.00
Physics and Astronomy	3	194	512	37.89%	64.67
Psychology and Neuroscience	2	234	1013	23.10%	117.00
Social Anthropology	1	121	555	21.80%	121.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>4324</b>			
<b>Averages</b>	<b>1.97</b>	<b>149.10</b>		<b>30.9%</b>	<b>84.83</b>

## [Appendix B: Link to Social Media Analytics Report](#)

For a full report of Social Media Analytics related to the Election, see the attached PDF online:

<https://www.yourunion.net/pageassets/representation/elections/statistics/Social-Media-Insights-Elections-2024-compressed.pdf>



## Appendix C: Table of Future Action Items

<b>Recommended Action</b>	<b>Page #</b>
Extend the period between the close of nominations to the opening of voting to be at least 7 business days. This will allow for more time to run campaign guidance sessions, to allow candidates to build their campaign teams and strategies, and to provide support to candidates.	8
Continue a clip-board based Pledge to Vote campaign, and secure signups at major events like Glitterball and Sinners.	8
Extend the Pledge to Vote campaign to visit societies, lectures/classes, and halls (as has been done in the past).	9
Extend timeline of volunteer recruitment, recruiting volunteers from the start of Semester Two. Get volunteers onboarded and active within a week of expressing interest, rather than waiting until the two voting days.	9
Provide additional incentives for volunteers (such as a dedicated room/space where they can access snacks and take breaks on voting days).	9
Expand guidance on how to campaign and run a campaign team; run workshops and produce video content and host 1:1 guidance sessions to encourage more active participation from candidates. Consider bringing in alumni guests to talk about their previous campaign strategies.	9
Refocus the Mandatory Candidate Meeting to be less about the rules and more visual, including “do” and “don’t” graphics on the slides, particularly regarding social media campaigning and what constitutes an endorsement or negative campaigning, where there were there were numerous questions asked this year.	9
Pursue sponsorship from Papa Johns and other pizza companies to expand food-based incentives for voting during the Election. (Relatedly, have two options for sweets at the table, such as cupcakes or cookies).	9
Continue to partner with the Saint to distribute candidate guides or manifesto analyses that help students decide whom to support. Loop in the Design Team to help with the creation of the final document.	9
Invest in weather-resistant materials to make the voting tables more easily identifiable (such as tablecloths that can be zip-tied down and paperweights to hold paper materials).	9
Work with Students’ Association subcommittees to recruit potential candidates	14
Work with School Presidents to identify prospective candidates prior to the nominations period	14
Consider hosting a Candidate Fayre for voters to meet the students running. This event may assist candidates unsure of how to campaign by providing an organised space for them to table and meet voters and other candidates. Further, candidates campaigning at this event would complement social media coverage of candidates in familiarising voters with who is running.	15

Dedicate a staff member to candidate wellbeing. This would help make candidate well-being and advice more of a priority during the busy election period and provide support for confirmed or potential candidates concerned or stressed about the requirements of the election or the responsibilities of elected positions.	15
Create videos for guidance and suggestions for campaigning, explanations of elected positions, and promote candidate advice, well-being support, and Election Team office hours.	15
Create an online portal for candidates to easily sign up for wellbeing/advice office hours with Elections Staff.	15
Expand the number of team members working on social media to support takeovers, postings, and content creation.	20
Until the Union's Stage 601 reopens, the Elections Team should consider reaching out to the Byre Theatre in the pre-nomination period to potentially reserve its stage for the Sabbatical Debate.	20
If the overall timeline between the close of nominations and the opening of voting is extended, hold the mandatory candidate meeting on the day after the close of nominations.	20
Begin advertising the Election's Launch Party sooner, potentially at society or Union social functions.	20
Ensure a member of staff dedicated to one-on-one wellbeing chats with students is able to attend the Elections Launch Party	20
Host more informal social events for candidates to socialise, de-stress, and potentially meet constituents. Such events could include social mixers, a collaboration with the Dog Walking Society to host a candidate-centred dog cuddling session.	20
Based on participant feedback, trial holding a 'mock' sabbatical debate with candidates for practical training on debate rules and expectations. The suggester recommended framing the mock debate around a whimsical, non-serious topic that candidates are likely to an opinion on (for example, 'do you eat or drink soup?') so candidates can become comfortable with the format and especially practice rebutting one another's points. As the 2024 sabbatical debate featured almost no use of the rebuttal period by candidates, having them attend a less high-pressure mock debate beforehand that encourages practicing giving rebuttals may encourage more debate between candidates during the actual live event.	20
Another suggestion prompted by the lack of rebuttals during this year's sabbatical debate entails requiring candidates to make at least one rebuttal each. While this method indeed result in more rebuttals, obligating them may encourage 'low substance/quality' rebuttals and may increase candidates' stress before and during the debate.	20
Review the Election Facebook page and consider consolidating postings to be on just the main Union Facebook page.	20
Review the rules regarding use of personal social media accounts and consider lifting restrictions or otherwise widening access.	20

Capitalise on the high volume of clicks for the “Nominees Announced” post by having a call to action (such as “visit the website to read more about the candidates”).	20
Post the Candidate Videos as Reels (as well as grid posts) and have a stronger organisation system and calendar to sort through them.	20
Host a short meeting between the Election Team and the Operations Planning Team within the Union to ensure that commercial services are contributing to the advertising of Elections.	20
Add some slight diversity to the graphics produced so that content appears new and fresh throughout the whole election cycle (for example, different colour-schemes between nominations versus voting).	21
Have photoshoots of the Student Representative Council and Education Committee (in Semester One) to ensure there is a good supply of stock photos ahead of the Election.	21
Ensure that the Election webpage is live from the end of Semester One.	21