

  
**nus**  
**NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**

# Chief Returning Officer Report

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# Key information

## Purpose of this document

This document reports on the activity of the Chief Returning Officer and their Deputy Returning Officers.

### The Chief Returning Officer and Deputies

*Jules Mason – Chief Returning Officer*

Jules was appointed Chief Returning Officer at National Conference 2015, prior to that he was a Deputy Returning Officer (2014-2015). He is Europe Operations Director at the ONE Campaign, a campaigning and advocacy organisation. 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 and a former NUS Wales and UK Women's Officer. Alongside her work, Estelle is an active member of Unite the Union, acting as a local branch secretary and as a member of the regional LGBT and political committees.

*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 been a member of Democratic Procedures Committee. Kathy is an officer at Wirral Metropolitan College Students' Union.



# Introduction from the Chief Returning Officer

Dear National Conference 2017,

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. It provides an overview of the work undertaken by me and my deputies since National Conference 2016 in fulfilling my three priorities.

I would like to thank and pay credit to the work of my Deputy Returning Officers (DROs), as well as Democratic Procedures Committee, members of the NUS National Executive and staff (in the Nations and UK), that I have had the pleasure to work with over the last year.



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 unions you are here to represent.

I commend my report to you and look forward to answering any questions you may have. Most importantly, I look forward to overseeing the elections at National Conference.

Best wishes and happy elections

Jules Mason, NUS 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:

- Developed role profiles to support elections for NUS Services and NUS Charity
- Organised a phone-in for anyone interested in standing in NUS elections
- Via Project 100, supported proposals calling for the introduction of online voting for NUS elections
- Agreed the trial of online voting for the 2016 Union Development Zone Committee elections
- Promoted 5 key tips for those considering standing and campaigning in NUS elections
- Production of a National Conference Candidate briefing document placing key information all in one place
- Issued a blog calling out online shaming, threats, and abuse, and encouraging everyone to play their part in ensuring that everyone involved in NUS elections is treated with respect online and offline.



## **Ensuring contested elections**

I have taken the following steps to ensure contested elections:

- Ensured articles on NUS Connect encouraging students and officers to stand in elections
- Extended the deadline for certain NUS Scotland positions (see *election rulings* below)
- Promoted election opportunities that resulted in more than 120 candidates (more than 100 last year) at the 2016 UK Zone Conference elections
- Promoted NUS elections, resulting in, at the time of writing, 35 FTO candidates (compared to 31 last year), 29 Block of 15 candidates (compared to 34 last year) and 5 Student Trustee candidates (compared to 4 last year).

## **Ensuring an effective elections committee**

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

- Recruited Rhodri Roberts to join the team as the third principal DRO
- Ensured improvements in the support arrangements for DROs to be effective in their role, including training on conducting election counts
- In addition to Annual Conference, ensured that I or my principal DROs oversaw elections at the following conferences: UK Zones, UCMC/NUS Wales Sections, UCMC/NUS Wales, Disabled Students; LGBT+; NUS Scotland and Women's
- 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 and accessible campaigns.

## **Election Rulings**

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

- Ability for job-shares to vote in Liberation Campaign elections when both job-shares are not at the conference
- Determined the National Ballot question, as well as ruled on arrangements and queries concerning the National Ballot
- Eligibility of NUS NEC to be able to vote in Liberation and Sections campaign elections
- Extending the deadline for NUS Scotland VP Communities and ruled on the eligibility to fill a by-election on the NUS Scotland Executive
- Eligibility of NUS Committee members to nominate candidates for NUS election
- Candidates' attendance at NUS conferences where they are neither a registered delegate or observer.

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

## **Engagement in NUS' democratic arrangements**

I have been involved in the following aspects of NUS' democratic arrangements:

- Oversaw NUS' first National Ballot; the National Ballot was concerned with whether NUS should conduct and publish a risk assessment and equality impact assessment before finalising the NSS boycott/sabotage action
  - Played an active role as a member of Project 100.
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