

NUS Elections Report 2015

Headline elections statistics from 2015 sabbatical elections

Introduction

In this 2015 edition of the NUS Elections Report we compare this years' sabbatical elections headline statistics with those from 2014 and 2013.

Whilst we can make comparisons on UK wide figures for previous years, we cannot make comparisons of data by level of union resource i.e. block grants. This is because 2015 is the first year we have analysed data on these terms, after feedback from members that this was preferable to using institutional mission groups as a comparison (as done in previous years).

This report is concluded with some recommendations regarding rules and regulations for the 2015/16 elections season.

Having released initial findings in July 2015, we asked more students' unions to submit data to provide a more accurate sample, therefore the final data and averages may differ slightly.

Headline Statistics

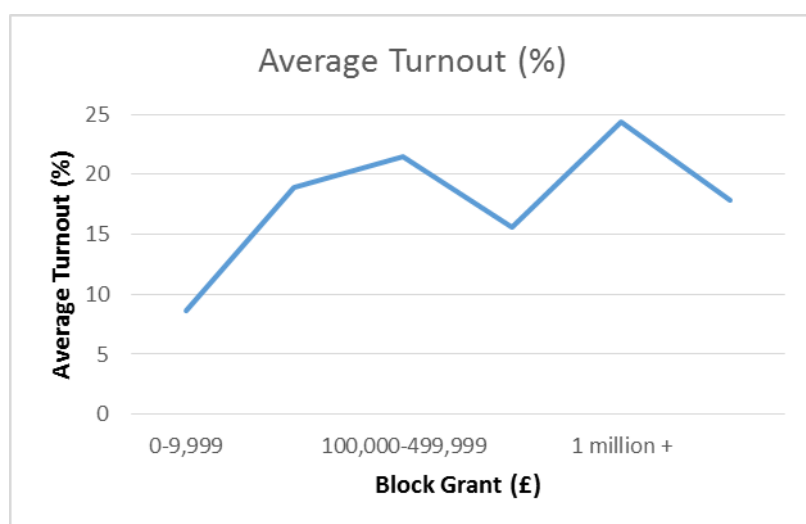


Figure 1. Students' Union turnout by level of funding

As you can see from this graph, overall percentage turnout figures are broadly consistent with previous year's figures, showing a 1% drop on 2014's average of 19% (18.3% in 2013) Although within these figures there are notable exceptions in terms of individual unions with some increasing by over 50% year on year.

Number of Candidates

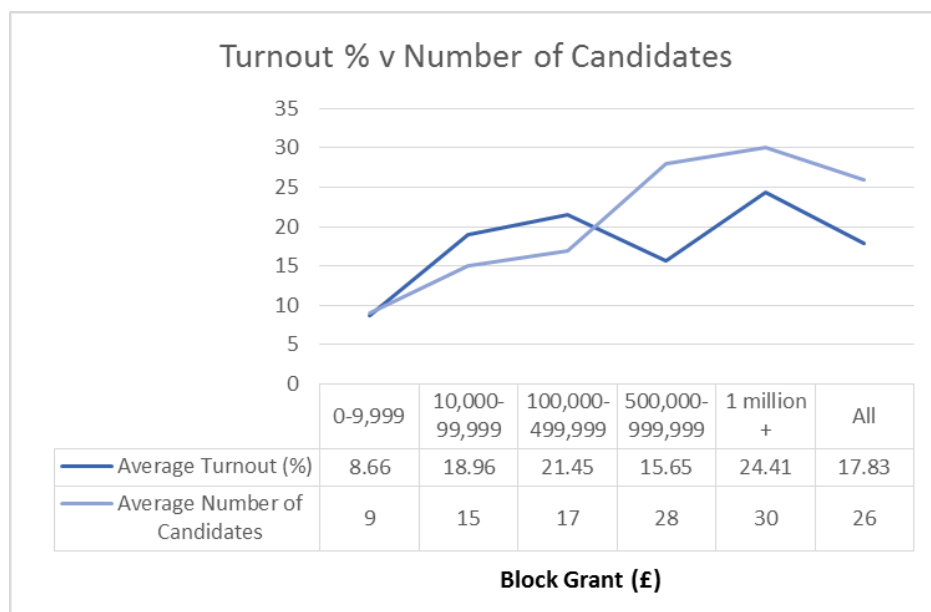


Figure 2. Students' Union turnout v number of candidates

As it did in 2014, the data consistently shows a strong trend between overall turnout percentage and the number of candidates standing in an election. We also know that whilst candidate volume is important in increasing engagement, so is candidate mix. Candidates from a broad range of constituencies, whether faculty based, demographic or otherwise, usually lead to increased engagement in elections. The average number of candidates overall decreased marginally from 27 to 26.

Average Spend

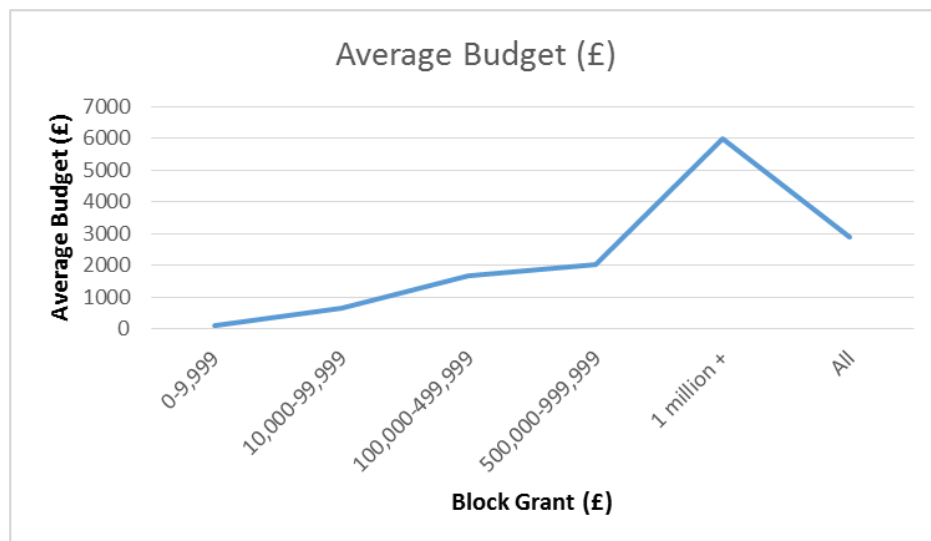


Figure 3. Average spend on students' union elections (£)

As you'd expect, students' unions with greater resources tend to spend larger amounts promoting their elections. The average spend dropped slightly from 2014 (£3,311) to 2015 (£2,896).

Staff Hours Allocated

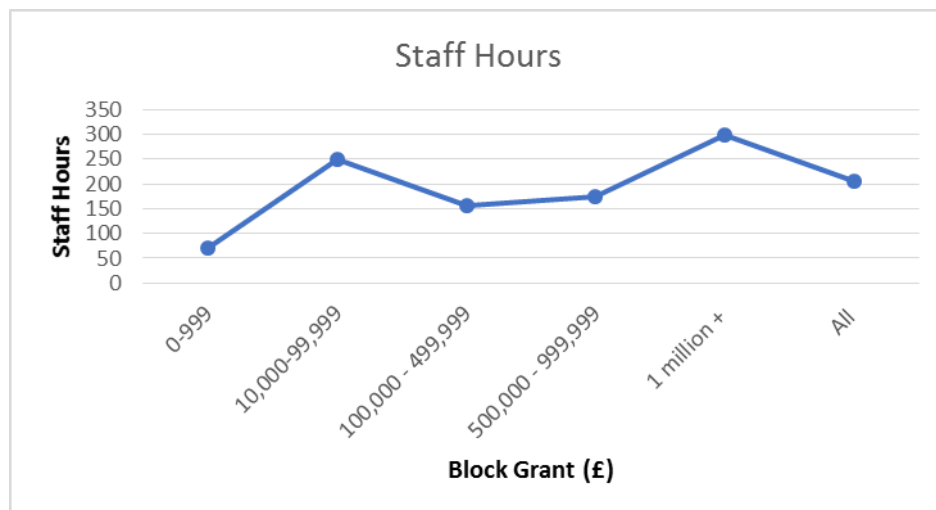
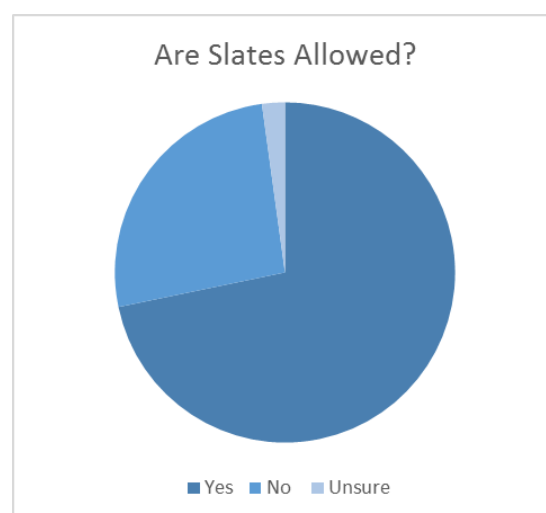


Figure 4. Combined staff hours allocated to elections

Based on feedback from 2014, we've collected data on the time allocated to elections in terms of staff hours. Whilst there is no data to compare this too, it shows an average allocation of just over 200 staff hours per students' union.

Slates

One of the areas with the most statistical difference to 2014 was on the issue of slates. In 2014, we asked whether or not unions allowed candidates to collaborate with each other in the form of a slate, with 58% allowing them to. This year however, the number allowing slates jumped to 72% as the figure illustrates.



Rules and Regulations

In recent years members have repeatedly asked for a model set of rules and regulations to inform conversations locally. Whilst not an exhaustive list, we have attempted to compile a list of basic election regulations. Special thanks to Leeds University Union for working with us to compile the list.

Principles

- We are aiming to elect people in a free and fair manner
 - We are not here to give everyone an equal chance of winning, just a fair one
 - We should help candidates to engage better where we can
 - Don't tear up your rules every year
 - If you can't police or sanction against it (or has no impact) get rid of it
- A. Core Rules** (any breach of these rules will result in disqualification) These rules should be considered as fundamental in ensuring the elections as free and fair. The text below should be treated as indicative rather than copied wholesale.

Conduct

1. Campaigners should not undertake campaigns activity which others could not also reasonably do.
2. Campaigners must take reasonable steps to ensure that their supporter's actions comply with the campaign rules at all times and must be able to demonstrate this in the event of a complaint against them.
3. Campaigners may only alter, move or remove their own campaign materials.
4. Campaigners may only use mailing lists where lawful to do so. In most cases this will require the consent of the members on the list to use their details.
5. Campaigners must allow voters to cast their ballot freely and must not communicate with voters in any way once they have begun to complete their ballot.

Budget

6. Campaigners must not exceed their budget limits.
7. All campaigners must submit a written list of all campaign costs with corresponding receipts to the Deputy Returning Officer (or equivalent) no later than 1 hour after polls close. If candidates do not spend any money during the course of their campaign this must be made clear on the submission.
8. Items freely and readily available to all campaigners can be used without itemisation.

The Returning Officer will take sole responsibility for interpretation of these rules and union bye-laws.

These rules are in addition to general Union and University/College rules and regulations.

B. Guidance

In addition to the core rules, students' unions will need to provide guidance to candidates to ensure the smooth running of the election and to boost engagement. These might include attending briefings/meetings or avoiding certain places on campus such as the library when campaigning. It should be made clear that whilst important, they are not equal to the core rules when it comes to immediate exclusion.