



*Trinity College JCR
JCR Returning Officer's Guidelines
Electoral Handbook 2015*

Foreword:

This handbook is not a set of rules that govern the JCR elections. The JCR constitution gives discretionary power to the Returning Officer (RO) in electoral matters. This handbook is an outline of the procedures and guidelines that the RO and his appointed officers can refer to in running JCR elections. It is intended that this handbook will lead to greater transparency in the electoral procedure and therefore help those wishing to stand as candidates preparing their campaign and ensuring that they do not participate in electoral malpractice. In this way, it is hoped that the JCR will receive a fully representative and competent committee, elected in the fairest possible climate.

Finally, the best of luck to all candidates standing the forthcoming elections!

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Last revised by Ruben Drayton, JCR Returning Officer, on 12/11/2019

Available positions:

The following positions will be contested in the JCR elections:

President

Treasurer

Secretary

2 Entertainments Representatives

External Affairs Representative

Four Welfare Officers (of which there can be no more than two of the same gender)

Academic Affairs Representative

Two Access and Bursaries Representatives

Environment and Ethics Representative

Equalities Representative

Careers Representative

The Communications Representative

The Women's Officer
The International Officer
The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Officer
The Spectrum (LGBTQ+) Officer
The Disabilities Officer
The First-Generation Officer

Please note:

Candidates for the positions of Environment and Ethics Representative may stand either on their own or in a pair. Any pairs standing shall be treated as a single candidate and the election for the post will be conducted along the normal lines under the AV system.

Following a vote in the 7th Week JCR Meeting of TT13, men and women may vote for both the male welfare candidates and the female welfare candidates.

Election Timetable:

Due to the successful implementation of online voting using Weblearn for the Trinity Term 2007 MCR elections and the Michaelmas Term 2007 JCR elections, it is recommended that this system continue for future elections and referendum. Further details can be found in the “Online Elections Suite” section of this handbook. The election events this year will take place, provisionally, at the following times:

4th/5th week TT15 JCR Executive Committee Elections

Sunday 4th week: Post-General meeting (approx 21:30) Election Briefing for all prospective candidates

Tuesday 4th week: 08:00 to 20:00 Presidential Nominations

Wednesday 4th week: before 14:30 Candidates submit five copies of their manifesto to RO

Wednesday 4th week: 20:30 Presidential Hustings

Thursday 4th week: 07:00 to 19:00 Presidential Election

Tuesday 5th week: 08:00 to 20:00 Treasurer and Secretary Nominations

Wednesday 5th week: before 14:30 Candidates submit five copies of their manifesto to RO

Wednesday 5th week: 20:30 Treasurer and Secretary Hustings

Thursday 5th week: 07:00 to 19:00 Treasurer and Secretary Elections

MT15 JCR Committee Elections

Sunday 4th week: 20:30 Election Briefing for all prospective candidates

Monday 5th week: 08:00 to 20:00 JCR Committee Nominations

Tuesday 5th week: before 14:30 Candidates submit five copies of their manifesto to RO

Tuesday 5th week: 20:30 Candidate Hustings

Wednesday 5th week: 07:00 to 19:00 Committee Elections

Please note:

The dates referenced are for the next standard elections cycle i.e. Trinity Term 2015; however in the event of a by-election, the format should be followed with revised dates. Recommendations included in the “JCR Returning Officer’s Report for 2008_2009 Elections” include a revised election timetable; therefore if the changes are implemented, care must be taken to ensure that the Electoral Handbook is updated accordingly.

Nominations:

In order for a member to stand for any JCR position, he or she must be a full member of the JCR. A definition of “a full member of the JCR” according to the constitution is: “All members of Trinity College reading for a first degree shall be deemed Full Members of the JCR upon entering the College. Members reading for subsequent degrees shall be deemed Full Members upon application to the JCR President and subject to the assent of the JCR Committee.”

The nomination sheet formalises the candidate’s intention to stand for office and makes sure that he/she has read and understood the conditions of candidacy. The nomination sheet also ensures that appropriate accountability can be held to successful candidates. He/she must fill in a nomination form, signed by him/her, a proposer and a seconder (who must also be Full Members of the JCR). No current or ex-officer of the JCR, candidate, Deputy Returning Officer or Returning Officer may nominate a candidate. No member of the JCR may propose and/or second more than one candidate. In the event of a proposer or seconder becoming invalid, the Returning Officer shall immediately inform the candidate whose nomination is affected, who then has the duty to find another valid proposer or seconder and will be given a reasonable amount of time to do so. The deadline to find another valid proposer or seconder will be at the discretion of the Returning Officer.

In order to stand for election, candidates for President must return their nomination form from 08:00 to 20:00 TT15, Tuesday 4th week and candidates for Treasurer or Secretary must return their nomination form from 08:00 to 20:00, Tuesday 5th week TT15. For Committee positions the form must be returned from 08:00 to 20:00, Tuesday 6th week MT15. A nomination form will only be deemed to have been returned if, between the above hours, a copy has been emailed to the Returning officer, and completed official paper copy of the form is placed directly into the Returning Officer’s pigeonhole. If these conditions are not complied with, then a candidate may be disqualified from standing. Instructions are attached to the form and must be read carefully. Candidates must also have read the JCR constitution, available from the JCR website or from the Returning Officer. It is also advisable that this handbook be read carefully and in full.

Unsuccessful candidates for president may stand for other committee positions following the elections but must start the electoral process again by filling in another nomination form and submitting it in the usual way. They will then have the opportunity to hust and present a manifesto in the same way as the other candidates contesting the chosen post. Candidates wishing to stand as a pair must discuss their intention with the JCR Returning Officer to ensure that the nomination is deemed valid and with just cause for the “joint nomination”.

Pairs should complete and sign one nomination form. A “joint nomination” is allowed when a candidate cannot fulfil the full term in office, i.e., because he or she is on a year abroad. Academic concerns and other commitments do not constitute a valid reason for a “joint nomination”; however, it is requested that all interested candidates discuss their nomination with the JCR Returning Officer in the first instance for clarification. For

those wishing to run for an executive position (President, Treasurer or Secretary) they cannot run as a pair, but must run singularly. A year in office can only be split on a termly basis, i.e., candidate X will hold office for one term, candidate Y for two terms. The exact transition dates need to be decided and included on the nomination form and ballot paper, therefore informing the electorate of the nature of the candidacy.

A candidate's nomination will not be deemed valid until written notice is provided by the Returning Officer to this effect.

Hustings:

Each candidate, once they have been nominated, will have a chance to speak for a short time to JCR members on why they should be voted into their respective posts. Members will then have the opportunity to ask candidates a question, which each candidate will answer in turn. It is at the discretion of the RO as to how long the candidates will be allowed to speak for; depending on the circumstances of the evening (e.g. how long the venue is available for, how many candidates are standing). However, once a time is decided upon, it must be applied uniformly and strictly to each candidate's hust.

For the 2015 JCR elections, candidates for president should prepare a hust lasting 6 minutes and candidates for all other committee positions should prepare a hust lasting 3 minutes.

In the interest of impartiality and fairness, only one member from a "joint nomination" may answer the question asked. For the hustings, they have the same time allocation as a single candidate, i.e. the "joint nomination" is treated as a single candidate. Questions from the floor may not be asked in such a way as to prejudice a candidate. Therefore, no question may be asked directly to individual candidates. Each candidate must have the opportunity of answering the question and each question asked will be answered by the candidates in sequence, though starting with a different candidate each time. Preference will be given to those questions which the RO deems to be "genuine and in good faith". This is at his discretion. However, he is to be guided by the following principles:

- To avoid taking "planted questions" which seem to be a mere extension of a candidate's hust;
- To disallow questions which are defamatory, offensive, unlawful, false or misleading;
- To disallow questions that are expletive or vulgar, including racist, sexist and homophobic language and other language of that nature.

In accordance with recent constitutional changes both the RO and current JCR President possess a veto on questions they deem inappropriate; excessive consumption of alcohol will also be banned from Hustings (this shall be at the Returning Officer's discretion). At Presidential hustings the current JCR Secretary will take minutes, which will then be published alongside manifestos. At the Secretary and Treasurer's hustings the Secretaries shall hust first (minuted by the current JCR Secretary) then the candidates shall each minute the treasurers' hustings. These minutes will be published alongside manifestoes.

Manifestos:

Candidates have the opportunity of submitting five copies of one side of A4 outlining their policies, encouraging people to vote for them. These must be delivered into the hands of the Returning Officer, or placed in his pigeon hole, no less than six hours before the start of hustings. The candidate's proposer and seconder should be named on the manifesto. Candidates should include their signature on the manifesto to signify their acceptance of any campaign policies / promises included in the manifesto. Candidates must include a photograph of true likeness on their manifesto. A plain-text version of the manifesto must be emailed to the Returning Officer at the same time. After hustings these manifestos will be placed in the JCR and outside the dining hall. The Returning Officer reserves the right to edit these manifestos should he/she think them inappropriate. The Returning Officer will seek to ensure that the candidate has a reasonable amount of time to alter the offending literature. The deadline to alter the manifesto will be at the discretion of the Returning Officer.

Advertising:

Apart from hustings and manifestos, **no other form of advertising a candidate is permitted**, whether by that candidate or others speaking for him/her. Hustings and manifestos are the time to speak to the JCR about policy issues. This way, the Returning Officer knows what has actually been said should a complaint be made against a candidate and can ensure that members of the JCR receive a balanced and well informed view of everyone's policies.

Deputy Returning Officers:

The Returning Officer shall appoint three or four Deputy Returning Officers (DROs), who by reasons of this office, shall be disqualified from standing in the election. He shall post a list of the DROs on the Chapel Arch notice board 48 hours before nominations open. Any member may object to a DRO's appointment. For such an objection to be carried, 67% of the JCR Committee must be in agreement with the objection. An objection to a DRO's appointment must be reported to the Returning Officer in the first instance stating reasons for the objection and thus the RO will inform the JCR committee and a decision made whether to withdraw the appointment.

Elections:

It will be at the JCR Returning Officer's discretion on whether the election process will be conducted by paper ballot or online voting. In the case of a paper ballot, elections will take place in the Beer Cellar and at 106 Woodstock Road (Stav) in order to allow as many people as possible to vote. For the purposes of elections, their regulations, and this handbook, both the Beer Cellar and the ground floor public area of 106 Woodstock Road shall be deemed to be the "polling area".

The Returning Officer shall appoint, at his discretion, scrutinisers who, together with the DROs, will aid in running the ballot. Scrutinisers will be typically comprised of, but not limited to, the current JCR committee. The Returning Officer will provide for a secret ballot for 12 consecutive hours, between 07:00 and 22:00, with the start of polling at his/her discretion. The Returning Officer will ensure that copies of the constitution,

manifestos and minutes of husts are available in any polling areas. Before the start of polling the Returning Officer will seal all ballot boxes with labels, attaching the lid to the ballot box. He/she will then sign the labels, impressing their signature upon both the label and the box. He/she will also number the ballot boxes.

Voting Procedure

Proxy Votes:

Proxy votes shall be accepted only in the circumstance that the voter is unavoidably absent from Oxford on the day of election or in the case of an electronic voting system if the voter unavoidably has no access to the voting system, and on the following terms:

- The voter shall inform the Returning Officer, in writing and in person, of his or her absence and decision to cast a proxy vote at least one week in advance of the election.
- The voter shall then personally contact the Returning Officer by telephone on the day of the election, and specify his or her choice of candidate. This decision shall be seen as binding thereafter.
- The Returning Officer shall then personally cast the voter's vote (or add it in to the list of votes returned by an electronic voting system) in his or her stead, and retain a list of those who have voted in such a way.

Online Elections Suite:

An Online Election Suite developed by the JCR Returning Officer was successfully trialed during the Trinity Term 2007

elections. The JCR elections suite is based in the Weblearn interface provided by Oxford University Computing Service (OUCS) and requires "Webauth" authentication (the security system invoked for Herald Webmail), thus providing sufficient security for the ballot process and a system to accurately identify the voter.

JCR Ballot Website: <http://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/colleges/trinity/elections/jcr/>

Electronic versions of the election documentation and relevant manifestoes can be found in the online election suite as well as the ballot papers. Counting of the votes will be electronic and double-checked by the Returning Officer and DROs. Due to the improved nature of online voting, it is deemed that only two DROs need to attend the count. An appointment to the role of scrutiniser is at the Returning Officer's discretion. Online voting eliminates the need for proxy voting as the suite can be accessed through a typical internet connection. However, proxy votes can be cast under the above guidelines in the event that the voter can indicate that they are absent from Oxford and are unable to vote using the Online Elections Suite.

Electoral Malpractice & Offences:

The Returning Officer and his Deputies work to ensure that the JCR Elections are free and fair. It shall be, generally, an electoral offence to impede any person from voting freely and secretly in particular.

It is an electoral offence:

- To canvass or attempt to influence voters
- To tamper with any ballot box
- To tamper with the online voting suite
- To disrupt polling
- To disrupt the proper conduct of any validation and subsequent count
- To claim falsely to be any other person for purposes of voting
- To vote more than once

ELECTORAL MALPRACTICE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED

Electoral Malpractice includes (but is not limited to) the following activities:

- Drawing attention to the election in a public place
- Canvassing for votes in a public place
- Bribery
- Intimidation
- Providing written or verbal lists of other candidates
- Making defamatory statements about a candidate(s), either explicitly or implicitly
- Writing election material. No advertising is permitted apart from the manifestos
- Systematic campaigning in college rooms
- Using a vehicle to convey members to the poll
- Campaigning by telephone (including text or SMS messaging)
- Campaigning online, including on Facebook and other social networking sites
- Claiming to represent or be supported by any political, racial or religious groups
- Marking and/or defacing election manifestoes
- Hindering the Returning Officer or his deputies in their duties
- Any other activities that are deemed inappropriate and/or constitute electoral malpractice at the discretion of the Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer has the right to disqualify any candidate who breaches the above rules.

Any reports of electoral malpractice or complaints shall be referred to the Returning Officer in the first instance, and from there to an election tribunal.

Validation:

Before counting commences, each ballot box should be validated. This means that:

- The number of ballot papers issued must be compared to the number of votes cast
- Papers should be checked to ensure that ballot paper numbers do not recur
- JCR members' lists should be checked to ensure that signatures do not recur

The Returning Officer may declare as invalid (or recommend that a re-election take place) all ballot boxes where the number of ballot papers exceeds the number of signatures by 5 or 7%, whichever is larger, of the total ballot. The Returning Officer may further declare as invalid all ballot papers in a certain ballot box, where he/she considers that there is a strong possibility of material interference with the ballot box or its contents at any stage of the ballot.

No counting will commence until validation has occurred. No ballot paper deemed invalid at validation shall be included in any count.

Counting:

Counters will be appointed by the Returning Officer at his discretion, though will usually comprise of himself, the Deputy Returning Officers and current JCR committee members. A room will be booked by the RO in which to make the count. He must do his reasonable best to ensure the integrity of the room before counting commences.

Invalidity of an illegible vote:

A vote shall be deemed invalidly cast and will consequently not be included in the count at the discretion of the Returning Officer. However, he shall have reference to an objective standard to be applied uniformly. In other words, he shall have reference to the standard of the reasonable person and whether such a person can make intelligible sense of the voting paper. If it is decided that the reasonable person would not make sense of merely one of the choices of preference on the ballot paper, then that paper is invalidated. A ballot paper will also be invalidated if it is issued at one ballot box and cast at another.

Counting system:

All elections shall take place using the "Alternative Vote" system, with the exception of the Entertainments Officers, Men's Welfare Officers and Women's Welfare Officers, who shall be elected under the "Single Transferable Vote" system. The interpretation of these systems is outlined in the Appendix of this Handbook (to be updated by the Returning Officer when required). From when validation begins to when counting ends, the only people allowed in the counting room are those authorised by the Returning Officer. Within this time period, no other person is allowed to touch a ballot paper and no one enters or leaves the counting room.

Re-Open Nominations (RON):

During the first two rounds of elections, there will be a "re-open nominations" option on the ballot. No such facility will exist in the event of a subsequent round. RON shall be treated like any other candidate for the purposes of counting. There shall be no campaigning whatsoever for RON, except for official publicity produced by the RO and his team. In the case of elections for the JCR President, if the "re-open nominations"

option receives a majority vote, the second round of nominations, hustings and voting for the JCR President will run in conjunction with those of the other positions.

Results:

The results will be announced by the RO as soon as is reasonably possible after the elections close. Customarily the JCR Presidential Election result is announced at JCR Dinner if the two events coincide. The RO will then publish the results online.

Complaints:

If any JCR Member is dissatisfied with any stage of the election process, they may lodge a complaint in accordance with the following procedure:

- i. The complaint must be lodged in writing to the Returning Officer within one week of the publication of election results. Any complaints received after this deadline will not be accepted and dismissed.
- ii. In the first instance, the Returning Officer will determine the validity of the complaint and respond in writing within one week. The Returning Officer may seek the advice of the Deputy Returning Officers in resolving this complaint.
- iii. If this does not resolve the complaint satisfactorily, an appeal may be presented to an Electoral Tribunal.
- iv. The Electoral Tribunal shall consist of the Returning Officer and four randomly selected Full JCR members, one from each year group. These randomly selected members must not be past or current Committee members, candidates, proposers, seconders, DROs, or the President- Elect.
- v. The tribunal shall meet not more than 48 hours after the Returning Officer has convened the tribunal. The tribunal shall refer to the JCR Constitution, JCR Electoral Handbook and the Proctor's guidelines on electoral protocol. A two- thirds majority vote is required to uphold the complaint by the plaintiff.
- vi. The Returning Officer must publicise these guidelines before the opening of nominations by ensuring the Electoral Handbook is freely available to the JCR.

APPENDIX – JCR Returning Officer’s Interpretation

STV (Single Transferable Vote):

- Each Voter ranks all candidates in order of preference unless they have exhausted their preference.
- After all votes cast, the Droop Quota $[\text{votes} / (\text{seats} + 1) + 1]$ determines the winning majority required.
- Top preference votes are tallied.
- If one or more candidates has reached at least as many votes as the quota, he or she are declared elected.
- 1st Process: the excess votes for the winning candidate are reallocated according to the distribution of next highest ranked candidates on the ballots for the elected candidate – possibly fractionally. This process is completed until there are no more candidates who have reached the quota.
- 2nd Process: The candidate with the least support is eliminated and their votes reallocated according to the distribution of next highest ranked candidates on the eliminated ballots. After a candidate is eliminated he or she may not receive any more votes. After each iteration of the 2nd process is completed, the 1st process starts again until all candidates have been elected or eliminated.
- Surplus votes of elected candidates are redistributed according to the next preferences on the ballot papers. The entire candidate’s ballot papers are redistributed, but each a fractional percentage of one vote, so that the total redistributed vote equals the candidate’s surplus, e.g. if a candidate has 100 votes and his or her surplus was ten votes, then each ballot paper would be redistributed at the value of 1/10 a vote.
- This process continues until all seats are filled.

AV (Alternative Vote):

- Each voter ranks candidates in order of preference until they have exhausted their preference.
- A candidate who has won an absolute majority of votes (50% +1) is immediately elected.
- If no candidate has an absolute majority, the candidate with the lowest number of first preferences is eliminated from the count, and his or her ballots examined for the second preferences.
- These are then assigned to the remaining candidates in the order as marked on the ballot.
- This process is repeated until one candidate has an absolute majority or there are only two candidates left, when the leading one is duly elected.