

RCA SU

General Elections

Overview

Welcome to the Students' Union General Election 2026 guidebook! Here you will find all of the information needed to stand in the election, campaign, vote, and many other useful tips.

If you have any questions, please contact the students union inbox – emailing [students/union@rca.ac.uk](mailto:students@union@rca.ac.uk).

For this election the Students' Union Director, George Blake, is the Deputy Returning Officer – if you need to contact him directly you can do so via email at george.blake@rca.ac.uk but this may take longer to get a response.

Important Dates:

Wednesday 18 February 2026, 5pm - Election called

Monday 23 February 2026, 5pm - Nominations Open

Monday 23 February 202, 5pm - Informal Elections Chat, SU Meeting Room/Zoom

TBC - Q&A with Current Sabb, White City

TBC - Q&A with Current Sabb, Courtyard Cafe

TBC - Q&A with Current Sabb, Battersea Cafe

Friday 6 March 2026, 5pm - Nominations Close

Monday 9 March 2026, 5pm - Campaigning Begins

Monday 9 March 2026, 5.30pm - Candidates Meeting, SU Meeting Room

Monday 9 March 2026, 6pm - Manifesto and Photo Deadline

Monday 16 March 2026, 6pm - Candidates Debate, ArtBar

Monday 23 March 2026, 12pm - Campaigning Ends

Monday 23 March 2026, 14pm - Election starts/Ballot opens

Thursday 26 March 2026, 2pm - Election/Ballot ends

Thursday 26 March 2026, 6pm - Election results announced



Rules & Regulations

Nominations

- Each candidate, the proposer*, must have a seconder*, shall all be members of the Union. Nomination forms are available on the Students' Union website (rcasu.org.uk).
- No member of the Union shall sign more nomination papers than there are vacancies at that election, nor may they sign a nomination paper for any election in which they are not entitled to vote.
- Nominations for all elections shall close at least 10 working days before the ballot is due to take place.
- Any candidate may withdraw their nomination by informing the Deputy Returning Officer (or their nominee) in writing before the commencement of the ballot.
- Under no circumstances shall the Returning Officer/Deputy Returning Officer, prior to the close of nomination, reveal to any person details of any nomination received.
- The forename and surname by which the candidate is commonly known shall be used, alongside a true likeness of the candidate.
- In addition to the successfully nominated candidates, the ballot shall also include 're-open nominations'. 'Re-open nominations' (RON) shall be treated as a candidate for each position.
- Any student banned from the Students' Union for unacceptable conduct, or excluded from the Royal College of Art will not be permitted to run in any election.
- Candidates are encouraged to campaign as individuals, but unified Slates* are permitted. All Slates must be notified at the time of nomination with the Returning officer (or their nominee) and the Electoral Signing Officers.

*A proposer is - someone who submits a formal suggestion. In this case, this would be the candidate who proposes themselves.

**A seconder is - someone who makes a formal show of support for a suggestion made by someone else. In this case, this would be a student who formally approves of your candidacy.

***A slate is - a pair of candidates that run on a common platform. Their manifestos will be similar, and they will campaign together. Running as a slate does not guarantee that both candidates will be elected.



Rules & Regulations

Candidates Debate and Union Media

- Candidate debate is where all candidates are given the opportunity to outline their manifesto and be challenged and asked questions by the electorate, the students.
- Candidates Debate shall be held after the close of nominations.
- The 2026 RCASU Candidates Debate will be held online and in person at Kensington Campus on Monday 16 March 2026 at 6pm. Candidates should be present at 5.30pm to ensure a prompt start.
- The Returning Officer (or their nominee) shall be responsible for the organisation and conduct of the Candidates' Debate and shall ensure that all candidates receive equal opportunity to speak.
- The Returning Officer (or their nominee) shall be responsible for advising the Union's media (specifically the Dodo or any other student media) coverage of the elections, but shall not have editorial control over the media. Union media shall treat coverage of the elections with due balance and fairness.

Rules & Regulations

Campaigning

Candidates are permitted to campaign as individuals, or with prior announcement as a unified Slate. All Slates must be registered with the Returning Officer at the time of nomination; each slate must have an equal number of candidates for vacancies within that election.

All candidates must use the RCASU Election banner on all campaign material.

All candidates **MUST** attend the candidates briefing to clarify rules and procedures for the election campaign. The candidates' briefing will be held online and in person on Monday 9 March 2026 at 5.30pm.

All candidates must produce a Manifesto of no more than 400 words, explaining the key points of their campaign and why students should vote for them. This will be published on the Students' Union website, along with their true likeness. The Manifesto and photo must be sent via email to the students union inbox students.union@rca.ac.uk by Wednesday 9 March 2026 at 5pm. While candidates can submit them later we can't guarantee that they will be put on the website at the same time as other candidates if this is the case.

All candidates must email a photo of themselves (true likeness) to the students union inbox students.union@rca.ac.uk by Monday 9 March at 6pm.

Campaigning materials are not to be distributed before Monday 9 March.

No campaign material should be removed or defaced by any candidate or their nominee.



Campaign material should be honest and in no way disparaging of any other candidate. Materials should not make false claims of support or endorsement.

Campaign material **MUST** contain the RCASU Election Logo, **BUT** may not contain any RCA logos or other RCASU branding.

All printed material must show the candidate's name clearly, and state how students can vote in the ballot (website or QR code)

Candidates may not campaign in such a way as to cause inconvenience to RCA students, staff or local residents; and if requested by the Returning Officer or their nominee remove campaign material or cease campaigning altogether.

Campaign material used in the promotion of an identified 'Slate' must feature the names of ALL members of the slate and the positions that they are standing for.

The Returning Officer or their nominee will ensure that the Union sends one 'all student' email notification directing the electorate to the Election pages on the Students' Union website; where all candidate manifestos will be published. No other emails will be sent pertaining to the Election by any other individual or organisation. This email will be sent on a date agreed at the Candidates meeting, and administered by the Deputy Returning Officer.

Campaign spending is capped at up to £138.00 for each election candidate, which equates to £0.06 per each student at the College. Spending this amount is not compulsory, but all spending must be recorded in an individual cost spreadsheet, and all figures must be accurate. Costs included could be printed materials, such as posters or badges, or social media adverts. If you omit your costs it could result in disqualification, and you are not permitted to spend over £138.00. These funds do not come from the Students' Union and we cannot reimburse you, and you should not feel obliged to spend up to £138.00 as it comes from your own pocket. *

No inducements are permitted throughout the campaigning period or the duration of the ballot, any breach of this rule will result in expulsion from the election process.

*The Students' Union is not responsible for your costs and will not reimburse election costs.

Rules & Regulations

Re Open Nominations (RON) Campaign

4.1. Any full member of the Union wishing to run a 'Re-open Nominations' campaign against any post should be registered with the returning Officer within three days from the publication of the nominations. Only one RON campaign will be allowed for each post. If more than one full member registers to run a RON campaign against a post, the Returning Officer will call a meeting and instruct all these members to form a group to run the campaign.

4.2 RON will be treated like any other candidate and as such will have a campaign budget equal to the other candidates, and will fall under the same disciplinary



actions as the other candidates.

Voting

- The ballot will be carried out electronically through the RCASU website, and via electronic voting booths.
- Any student who is unable to access the online ballot will be entitled to register a postal vote. They should contact students.union@rca.ac.uk for further information.
- All votes will count per candidate only. Candidates running as a slate will not combine votes. Each candidate will receive their own individual votes and if one candidate wins the Election from a slate, this does not mean that the other candidate from the slate will win the other position.

Counting Procedures

- Counting shall be by Single Transferable Vote.

Rules & Regulations

Complaints

- Any complaint on the conduct of the election or of any violation of the bye-laws shall be made in writing to the deputy Returning Officer by close of ballot. Any violation that comes to light after the close of the ballot will be dealt with in accordance with the election rules and regulations.
- If a complainant wishes to appeal a ruling made by the Deputy Returning Officer, this may be made in writing to the Returning Officer within 2 working days of receiving the Deputy Returning Officer's ruling.
- Any candidate who is declared elected and against whom a complaint is lodged shall be deemed elected until a decision is made on the complaint.

Tips & FAQs

Publicity

Set out your goals: ensure they are realistic & achievable – if successful you will ultimately be answerable to the student body who might decide to ask you why you've not achieved what you said you would

Be relevant: what skills and experience can you bring to the role you are standing for? For example, you might have examples of situations in which you have shown leadership, which could indicate to voters that you're the candidate to represent them.

Be concise and use clear language: Avoid long, complicated words as they are likely to just alienate important voters

Don't discredit your opponents: your manifesto is only about you and what you will do. Discrediting and disrespecting others could lead to a libel lawsuit and is against the rules!



A well-written and interestingly designed manifesto can make a significant difference in influencing people to vote for you.

A survey carried out by NUS into voter attitudes revealed that many people did not vote in Union elections because it was often unclear what the candidates stood for. They wanted to know who the candidate was, what they believed in and what they would do if they got into office. Think about what would influence you to vote for someone. What do you believe? The student rep system could be better? There should be better sports facilities? Whatever it is, make a list of your beliefs. You need to select the ones that you think would be popular with students, but are also achievable. There are many candidates in Union elections who have announced that they will make the beer cheaper, only to be given a lesson in economics by other candidates in the election.

Select 3 beliefs. Write down the issue, how it affects students and what you would do if you get elected. Make it concise and to the point. Think of snappy titles that you can give to your three beliefs. Voters tend to skim read the election material, so it is crucial to draw them in with a headline.

Who are you? It is amazing how many candidates forget to tell the voters about themselves. Students will often vote for candidates who have something in common with them. So briefly tell them:

1. What course you are on
2. Where you are from
3. Membership of clubs and societies
4. Ask the voters for their vote and finally thank the voters for voting for you.

Tips & FAQs

Campaign Techniques

Getting elected is all about being seen and remembered (preferably in a good light!). Talk to students as much as possible - about yourself, your views and your manifesto. This not only benefits them but also enables you to polish up and perfect your pitch.

Students are more likely to vote for you if they can put a face to the name.

Use online platforms to promote your manifesto. Students do discuss elections and whom they are going to vote for, so make sure you are well represented.

Be friendly and genuine, listen and respond to your electorate.



Tips & FAQs

Common Forms of Publicity

- Flyers to hand out and A4 posters on notice boards
- T-shirts or other clothing with your name or campaign slogan
- Badges
- Campaign content on Twitter / Facebook / Instagram
- RCASU website

Tips & FAQs

Experience

You do not need to have prior experience, however, it would be helpful if you are a good communicator, work well in a team and have some knowledge of the Students' Union and how it operates. Basic meeting and organisational skills would be a great asset, and it may help if you've had past experience/involvement in the Union but this is by no means essential.

Tips & FAQs

Reporting

You will be accountable to your colleagues, committee members in your work areas and ultimately to all students via the RCASU constitution. You will also be expected to keep yourself accountable by producing reports for student meetings, college meetings and the trustee board.

Tips & FAQs

Activities

As a Trustee of the Union you will have legal responsibilities. When taking up the Officer position you become a member of a team who is collectively responsible for running the entire organisation. This includes making short-term decisions and devising and promoting long term plans for the whole Union. In practice, this will include depending on others to deliver, but also you'll become involved in discussions and projects, which do not appear to be relevant to your specific work area. Officers take part in representing students on the College boards. You will be expected to attend and report to various meetings and committees. All Officers are expected to manage the budgets associated with their activities.



Tips & FAQs

Support

During the first month in office, the newly elected Officer receives training and advice from a number of sources. These may include (depending on the year and needs of the officers):

1. In-house training
2. Out-going Officers
3. NUS training
4. Other regional/national events
5. College Staff

Thank you for your interest in the 2026 RCA SU Elections. Good luck!



The Royal College of Art
STUDENTS' UNION