

Online elections guide Welsh medical students committee 2020



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Introduction to online elections

The online elections system has been introduced to ensure our elections process is open, transparent and accessible to our members.

Nearly all committees conduct an election of some kind, ranging from the election of a chair to seats for committees and conferences. The system will standardise many of the processes without removing the flexibility needed to support the variations in requirements elections demand.

This guide will provide you with the necessary information for this particular election and will guide you through the online election process. For specific help as to how to nominate, vote and view results, please refer to the demonstration and quick guides found at bma.co.uk/elections

Memorandum of understanding

The development of rules and guidance on the conduct of elections are essential. They ensure a consistent and transparent approach to democratic processes. Following this, the memorandum of understanding consists of principles that you **consent** to uphold when nominating yourself in an election.

Please read before submitting your nomination

The BMA can only function with the contributions of those members who seek election as representatives. Thank you for making the commitment to help represent your colleagues. In order that elected BMA representatives can work together effectively the following principles are important.

- When you are speaking to or communicating in the broadcast, print or social media as an elected BMA representative, or are identified as such, you should honestly represent the views of the BMA.
- When speaking in a personal capacity you should explicitly ask not to be identified as an elected BMA representative.
- Committee officers should coordinate media engagements with the press office.
- You should declare conflicts of interest to your committee chair/committee secretary as appropriate.
- You should uphold the confidentiality of your committee when requested. If in doubt, ask the committee chair.
- As a member of the medical profession and as an elected representative, you should behave in a professional manner at all times. Robust debate is sometimes essential in forming policy, but you should always treat patients, colleagues and staff with respect.
- You agree not to take part in any canvassing during the nomination or voting period. Canvassing could include either contact with delegates at a conference where voting is taking place or via social media/list servers or email.
- In standing for election you agree to uphold these principles.

Candidate statement guidelines

Don't write in All CAPITALS

If you write in all-capital letters it may come across as if you are shouting, as will the use of exclamation marks. Don't be trigger happy with punctuation; it can prompt an unintended response. Consider other ways to get your message across while conveying its importance.

Abbreviations

Save abbreviations like LOL (laugh out loud) or IDK (I don't know) for text messages among friends. Some may not understand your abbreviations. It's better to spell it out and write what you mean.

Be concise

Do not make a candidate statement longer than it needs to be. Text online is harder to read than printed communications. A long statement can be discouraging and be abandoned before the recipient gets to your final point all the way down at the bottom.

Jokes and banter

There is a time and place for satire – the therapeutic value of humour has long been recognised. However, whether or not you find a joke funny, one person's sense of humour can be taken as insulting by another.

An ironic tone is humorous if it is understood. When the recipient of your message can see you, or when they know you well, this usually works. Because it is so difficult to convey online that something was meant ironically, misunderstandings are common and can lead to offence being taken.

Discriminatory, unpleasant or negative comments could constitute harassment and are not acceptable. If these are found within your statement, you will be asked to remove them.

External links

No hyperlinks are permitted within an individual's candidate statement, including links to websites, YouTube accounts or any other electronic media. Depending on the election you may be able to upload a photo.

Take another look before you save.

Although you can go in and edit your statement up to the time when nominations close, once the deadline has passed you cannot change it. You should therefore treat a nomination form like any other official association document. Read it before you save it. Errors are just as unfortunate in candidate statements as anywhere else in your corporate correspondence. Look out for potential misunderstandings, and check for tone, and inappropriate comments.

Allow plenty of time to complete your statement and revisit it before the close of nominations. When you return to it, read it through from the recipient's perspective. This can help you avoid any unintended consequences.

Wording information

The online elections project aims to standardise the way elections are run across the BMA. This is achievable by removing the non-uniform rules regarding what counts as a word, acronyms and the length of candidate statements. With the universal approach of increasing and standardising the candidate statement limits, the rules and restrictions regarding acronyms are no longer needed. Any wording rules from previous elections are no longer relevant from this point forward.

The online elections system uses the most common unspecific word counting instrument, which considers everything between two spaces a word, be it a number or a symbol. Members are free to use acronyms but should note that some voting members may not recognise what they are referring to.

What is STV

The STV (Single Transferable Vote) is a form of proportional representation where you rank the candidates.

Candidates don't need a majority of votes to be elected, just a known 'quota', or share of the votes, determined by the size of the electorate and the number of positions to be filled.

Each voter gets one vote, which can transfer from their first-preference to their second-preference, so if your preferred candidate has no chance of being elected, or has enough votes already, your vote is transferred to another candidate in accordance with your instructions. STV thus ensures that very few votes are wasted, unlike other systems, especially First Past the Post, where only a small number of votes actually contribute to the result.

Why do we use STV?

STV gives voters more choice than any other system. This in turn puts most power in the hands of the voters.

Fewer votes are 'wasted' (i.e. cast for losing candidates or unnecessarily cast for the winner) under STV. This means that most voters can identify a representative that they personally helped to elect. Such a link in turn increases a representative's accountability.

Contacts

For any questions on eligibility to nominate or vote or about the election process please contact Danielle Maidment on dmaidment@BMA.org.uk

To check or update your membership details please go to bma.org.uk/membership/membership-faqs