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**Running a ballot box: a rough guide**

Prepared Summer '05  
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For any JCR Committee member running an election.

## Introduction

There is no mention of it in the constitution, but often the Vice-President of the JCR takes on the role of organising the ballots throughout the year. Feel free to alter this according to the dynamics of your own JCR committee however.

The main times throughout the year that ballot will be run by the JCR are:

- JCR Second Round elections (Late Lent)
- CUSU elections (often at the same time as JCR second round in Late Lent)
- CUSU second round elections (Early Easter)
- University Council (Early Easter)
- JCR First round elections (Early Lent)
- Referenda (any time its called)

This is intended as a guide on how to run these ballots, and in particular, what things not to forget. Never forget to read the constitution also for other things to remember when running ballots. (At time of writing Appendix 4 of the constitution was particularly relevant for JCR elections here).

## Gathering Candidates

This is mainly relevant only for JCR elections, but you may have to advertise for other elections also, in which case simply follow advertising instructions as given by CUSU, putting up posters, sending out emails and putting news items on the website.

For JCR elections the deadlines are constitutionally as follows:

**12 days before the ballot:** Ballot date, time and place must be announced

**7 days before the ballot:** First round nominations close

**4 days before the ballot:** Second round nominations close

**1 day before the ballot:** Hustings

It is recommended, therefore, that you advertise nominations two weeks before the scheduled ballot day, with posters, emails and news items on the website. Each JCR committee member should write a short job description about their role to allow any prospective nominees to see what they are letting themselves in for, and these should be widely publicised and easily accessed also.

Nominations themselves must take the form of a piece of paper with the nominees name, plus the names of a proposer and seconder (all three JCR members) placed in the president's pigeon hole, or an email detailing the same.

After each nomination deadline passes, names of nominees and proposers should be published by email and/or on the website, and manifestoes of up to 250 words may be published on or after this time by the same candidates on the website or in the Porter's Lodge.

## Hustings

This is often held in the bar, and is a chance for candidates to give speeches in favour of themselves plus be quizzed by the general public of the college. This should be widely advertised as before.

Each candidate should be allowed to speak for a set time, then allowed questions for up to a certain amount of time. It is recommended that least important positions be husted first, and president last, to gain as much audience for as long as possible.

Recommended speech and questioning times for each position are:

5 minutes per candidate speech, 10 mins total for questions for president

3 mins speech, 5 mins questions for other senior officers

1 min speech, 3 mins questions for other committee officers.

You may also be asked, or ask, to host CUSU hustings. This requires booking a building for an evening, then allowing CUSU to do their own thing, though advertising would be a good idea. The Howard Building is probably a better idea for these (generally more serious) hustings.

## The Ballot Itself

The key things to remember for the day itself are to have the following to hand:

- ✓ A ballot box
- ✓ Ballot papers
- ✓ College stamp
- ✓ List of eligible voters
- ✓ Rota for manning the ballot box

Dealing with each of these in order:

There is a JCR **Ballot Box** (a brown wooden box with two thin slits in the top), which is normally kept in the JCR office. For security, CUSU ask for this to be taped shut, it is up to your discretion whether to do this or not for the JCR. In elections where JCR and CUSU elections are concurrent, a simple sealed cardboard box with a slit in the top will suffice as an alternative.

**Ballot papers** will be provided for CUSU and university council elections. Others will have to be printed by the JCR. These are normally printed at 'Mailboxes' just around the corner from Downing and numbers to be printed vary. For JCR first round elections around 300 papers is recommended, for second round 200 should be enough. Other ballots print as you see fit – remembering there are around 400 undergraduates. All ballot papers should have candidate names for each position plus 'RON' (Re-Open Nominations) as votable options, plus a brief reminder at the top on how the single transferable vote works. Previous committees may have sample ballot papers they can send you also, so feel free to email them for a template.

The **college stamp** must be stamped onto every ballot paper to verify the legitimacy of each paper. This is found in the Porter's Lodge – ask the porters nicely and they should provide you with one plus ink.

A **list of eligible voters** is best obtained from the T&A office. Ask for a list of all members of the JCR. This should then have each member ticked off as they vote, with different colours signifying if they voted for CUSU or JCR or for Women, etc.

The **rota for manning the ballot box** should be set up a few days in advance at least and should comprise JCR committee members. None of those manning the box should be standing, or proposing or seconding in the election being balloted. For CUSU elections, feel free to rope MCR committee members into manning the ballot box also, though they should provide their own list of eligible voters. Note that most ballots, the JCR committee elections included, have minimum lengths of time the ballot should be run for, make sure you adhere to these, paying attention to specific times the box *has* to be open for (CUSU often stipulate that the ballot should run from 12.30-1.30 and 6-7 or similar).

## Counting Votes

Once all votes have been cast, for CUSU or university elections returning the ballot box to where they ask is all you need do here, and they will do the counting themselves. They will ask for help counting, it is up for you whether you do or not. Often you will be asked to keep a box secure overnight, for this either locking it in the JCR office (if you trust all members of the committee) or in your room should suffice. If more strict security is required, the porters may look after the box, if you ask them nicely enough.

For JCR elections or referenda, you need to count the votes yourselves, however. For this, gather all JCR committee members (discounting those running or with obvious interests in the ballot) together as soon after the ballot closes as possible to get as many helpers as possible.

As soon as all votes are collected, an email of the results, a post on the website or an announcement in the bar should be sufficient (or any combination of the three) to publicise the decisions.

## Post Ballot Checklist

Things to remember having completed a ballot:

- ✓ Announce results
- ✓ Return ballot box to JCR office
- ✓ Recycle all used / unused ballot papers and paraphernalia associated with it
- ✓ Return stamp to Porters

*You Ballot should now be complete, have a good democracy!*

## Appendix: The Single Transferable Vote

The Single Transferable Vote (or STV) is the generally preferred voting system in most Cambridge ballots. It is a relatively simple system, but can cause some complications, so this can hopefully serve as a guide for you.

How to vote with STV:

To vote using the STV each voter must write numbers next to each candidate detailing their order of preference, with 1 next to their first choice, 2 next to their second, and so on until they are indifferent.

Example 1:

Derek the voter likes Alfred better than Barbie in an election. He dislikes Superted so much, however, that he would rather nominations re-open than elect that detestable bear. He therefore should vote as follows:

Alfred:	1
Barbie:	2
Superted:	4
Re-open Nominations:	3

Counting STV:

First of all of the first choice votes should be counted up, and the number of first choice votes assigned to each candidate noted. If any one candidate has more than half of the total number of votes in their favour at this stage, they are elected, and you need count no more, if not, carry on reading.

Example 2:

Alfred gets 23 first choice votes

Barbie gets 21 first choice votes

Superted gets 5 first choice votes

Re-open nominations gets 11 first choice votes.

Total votes is 60

No one candidate has more than half the total number of votes, so counting continues.

In the case of indecisive first round votes, the candidate with fewest votes is now eliminated from proceedings. The ballot papers voting for that candidate are then re-examined, their second choice votes noted and redistributed to the remaining candidates according to these second choices, or discarded if there are no further choices on the ballot paper.

Example 3:

Superted is eliminated and his ballot papers re-examined. Three are found to have second choices for Barbie, one for Alfred and one with no further choices. Votes for each candidate now stand as:

Alfred:	24
Barbie:	24
Re-open Nominations:	11
Total votes:	59

There is still no candidate with more than half the total votes, so counting continues.

This process then continues, eliminating the candidate with lowest votes and redistributing these ballot papers according to next highest preference. Then counts are made including first, second and later round votes, until one candidate has more than half of the total remaining votes.