

## Electoral Register and Party Political Canvassing Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Keele University is seeking to ensure that the student population is sufficiently informed about the political process so that they are enabled to participate in it if they so wish and to engage proactively with political parties and candidates. In developing this policy, the University has had regard to its obligations under the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory framework, and specifically Condition E5: Facilitation of electoral registration.

#### 1.1 Purpose

This Policy sets out how the University will comply with its obligations under the Office for Students regulatory framework to ensure the facilitation of electoral registration.

#### 1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all students, both on and off campus who are eligible to vote in the UK and is designed to allow them to be easily added to the Electoral Register, should they wish to be. The Policy will be applied early in Semester One each academic year.

### 2. POLICY

#### 2.1 Electoral register

2.1.1 Since the introduction of individual electoral registration, all individuals (including students) must register individually in order to appear on the Electoral Register.

2.1.2 In September each year, Keele University will email all students (those whose nationality makes them eligible to vote) to direct them to complete a task on the University's eVision portal which will ask them whether they wish to be registered to vote. The task will remain open until the end of October and reminder emails will be sent to students to prompt them to complete this task.

#### 2.2 *On-campus students*

2.2.1 If the student answers 'Yes', the student will be asked to check/supply the following details:

- a. On-campus address
- b. Full name
- c. Nationality
- d. Date of birth
- e. National Insurance number
- f. Telephone number
- g. Student's Keele email address
- h. Whether or not they wish to be added to the Open Register
- i. How they would like to vote (Polling Station, Postal Vote or Proxy Vote).

2.2.2 Once the deadline has passed for completion of the eVision task, these details will be sent to Newcastle Borough Council (NBC) in a secure file. NBC will then submit these details to the Government website to check they match with the details held by the Department of Work and Pensions (akin to the student registering to vote themselves). Provided that all the information is verified, NBC will add the student to the Electoral Register.

2.2.3 If the student answers 'No', the University will advise NBC accordingly, supplying in the secure file only their on-campus address and name details so that NBC don't need to contact them directly at their campus address to ascertain that they don't wish to register.

2.2.4 If the student does not complete the task, the University will provide to NBC in the secure file the relevant details for the student (on-campus address, name and student's Keele email address) as NBC have an obligation to contact them directly.

2.2.5 **All** students will be strongly encouraged to complete the process by answering either 'Yes' or 'No'. They will be advised that if they do not complete the process, then NBC will have an obligation to contact them directly to make them aware of the electoral registration process.

### **2.3 Off-campus students**

2.3.1 Students who reside in off-campus accommodation will also be contacted and asked to complete the eVision task to indicate whether they wish to register to vote. Those students who answer 'Register to vote now' will be redirected to the Government website where they can complete self-registration.

### **2.4 Exceptions**

2.4.1 On the rare occasions that elections are held during the months September – December, the University may, in consultation with the borough council, decide that it would not be possible to follow this process and meet the deadline for registering to vote. In these cases, the e-vision task will be amended for on-campus students to follow the same process as for off-campus students.

2.4.2 Keele University will provide requested support to NBC to ensure that the legislative requirements are fulfilled for those on-campus students who have not completed the eVision task and therefore have not indicated whether or not they wish to register to vote. This may include visits to individuals in halls of residence, which will be accompanied by a member of University staff.

2.4.3 No political parties will be permitted to enter halls of residence for the purposes of intending to encourage voter registration and/or election canvassing.

### **2.5 Voter Registration Pledge**

2.5.1 In support of the voter registration pledge, Keele has committed to emailing all students with voter registration details as soon as an election or referendum is announced, reminding students a week later and disseminating voter registration information throughout election or referendum campaigns.

## **2.6 Canvassing**

2.6.1 Candidates are free to canvass students in public places in accordance with the University Freedom of Expression Code of Practice, such as on the concourse outside the Students' Union, but will not be given access to halls of residence.

2.6.2 Candidates are asked to inform Campus Safety prior to canvassing on campus and to indicate how many other supporters are accompanying them.

2.6.3 Candidates who wish to canvass at the Students' Union, should ensure that they are aware of, and follow the SU processes, in addition to this policy.

## **Distribution of party-political literature**

### **2.7 Posters**

2.7.1 No poster that contravenes a University policy (including that on equal opportunity) should be displayed. Posters of this nature, will be removed with immediate effect, if displayed on the campus and individuals may be subject to disciplinary action under Regulation 1B.

2.7.2 Posters should not be attached to trees, the outside of buildings, signage and may not be posted under doors or displayed in communal areas of the halls of residence. Posters may only be displayed on designated notice boards in the locations specified in schedule 1 below.

2.7.3 The University has a number of A-frame boards and candidates will be able to make use of these on the day before and the day of an election, subject to their availability.

2.7.4 Candidates are reminded that if a polling station is located on campus then they may not display election material in the polling station, or areas leading to it, on election day.

### **2.8 Postal material**

2.8.1 Space will be made available for literature to be collected from the post room in the week before the election.

2.8.2 If material arrives addressed to individual students then this will be treated as any other mail and placed in pigeon holes, however, given that this may involve large quantities of mail, candidates are requested to bundle post by hall of residence and block to assist in dissemination. Candidates should also allow sufficient time for the post room to distribute this material.

### **2.9 Limitations**

2.9.1 This policy does not seek to make the University responsible for ensuring students will participate in the democratic process. However, the University will provide timely information and support to allow students to do this for themselves.

2.9.2 This policy does not commit the University to arranging debates or hustings for political parties. This does not preclude Schools, Keele University Students' Union, Keele Postgraduate Association or individual members of the University from doing so if they wish.

2.9.3 This policy does not preclude individual members of the University or student societies from participating in the electoral process. However, the University and its officers (whilst acting in an official capacity) must treat parties equally and not seek to favour one party over others.

### 3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 All students (those whose nationality makes them eligible to vote) will be emailed by the University and directed to complete a task on the University’s eVision portal to indicate whether or not they wish to be included on the Electoral Register.

3.2 The Academic Registrar has oversight of the Policy. Any queries regarding this Policy should be emailed to the Chief of Staff in the first instance: [j.a.hallsworth@keele.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.hallsworth@keele.ac.uk) .

### 4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Freedom of Expression Code of Practice
- Data Protection Policy

### 5. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

**5.1 Review** This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if changes are required.

**5.2 Final Approval** This Policy will require final approval from Professional Services Group.

**5.3 Publication** This Policy will be published on the website within the Policy Zone.

### 6. ANNEXES

#### Schedule 1 – permitted poster locations

Chancellor’s Building Reception area

Library refreshment area and top floor balcony

Medical School common room

Keele University Students’ Union. Candidates and supporters must receive permission from KeeleSU before displaying any posters.

Keele Postgraduate Association Clubhouse. Candidates and supporters must receive permission from the KPA Secretary or President before displaying posters.

### 7. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

<b>Document Name</b>	Electoral Register and Party Political Canvassing Policy
<b>Owner</b>	Academic Registrar
<b>Version Number</b>	2.0
<b>Equality Analysis Form Submission Date</b>	n/a
<b>Approval Date</b>	25 January 2024
<b>Approved By</b>	Director (minor edits)
<b>Date of Commencement</b>	01/September/2020
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	07 December 2023



<b>Date for Next Review</b>	07 December 2026
<b>Related University Policy Documents</b>	See Section 4
<i>For Office Use – Keywords for search function</i>	