

**Imperial College Union  
Governance & Membership Committee**

**Statement Regarding Leadership Elections 2022**

Author(s): Dr Phil Power (External Trustee & Chair)  
Ryan Bird (Returning Officer)

## **1. Context**

Imperial College Union is a democratic organisation with a charitable purpose to advance the education (and wider student experience) of all registered students at Imperial College London. It is a registered charity in its own right, and an unincorporated association.

The Union runs a number of elections over the course of each academic year, to ensure various roles are filled by student leaders, and that students themselves have the opportunity to choose who represents them.

Section 22 of the Education Act 1994 sets out the following requirements that all students' unions are bound by related to elections:

(d) appointment to major union offices should be by election in a secret ballot in which all members are entitled to vote

(e) the governing body should satisfy themselves that the elections are fairly and properly conducted

(f) a person should not hold sabbatical union office, or paid elected union office, for more than two years in total at the establishment

Imperial College Union's elections are **governed** by the Board of Trustees and the rules set out in our Constitution, the governing document of the organisation that is approved democratically by students, as well as the Union's Board of Trustees and the College's governing body – College Council.

The Union's elections are **administered** by a professional team of staff who remain entirely impartial throughout the process. This team is led by the Deputy Returning Officer, who is appointed by the Board of Trustees.

The Union's elections are **overseen** by an independent external Returning Officer, who is empowered by the constitution and the Board of Trustees to ensure candidates are complying with the rules. These rules are explained in substantial detail during the candidate training process. This individual is appointed by the Board of Trustees and is someone with significant experience of students' union elections in other organisations.

## **2. Decisions Regarding Disqualifications**

The decision to disqualify a candidate is the most serious sanction available to the Union and is reserved for candidates where there is evidence of significant rule-breaking that calls into question the legitimacy of the election result.

Because of the severity of the sanction, Bye-Law J (Major Elections) specifically reserves this power for a subcommittee of the Union's Board of Trustees – Governance & Membership Committee:

4. The following powers shall be reserved by the Governance & Membership Committee having taken advice from the Returning Officer:

- 4.1. Disqualifying a candidate,
- 4.2. Ordering a re-run, and
- 4.3. Setting aside ballot papers.

The Union's Governance & Membership Committee is set out in section 41 of Bye-Law B (Trustees) and is chaired by an External Trustee.

### **3. Leadership Elections 2022**

On 18 March 2022 the Governance & Membership Committee met to consider the report provided by the Returning Officer, setting out a summary of the Leadership Elections 2022.

The Returning Officer's report contained a recommendation to disqualify two candidates on the basis of conduct related to voter coercion. Members of the committee discussed the evidence and considered it against the rules and the Education Act 1994. The committee also heard statements from the candidates involved.

In order to ensure the election result meets the threshold of being a *secret ballot* and *fair*, the following candidates were disqualified from the election:

Zixiao Wang  
Chuzhi Zhao

Any further questions related to this matter should be sent to the [elections@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:elections@imperial.ac.uk)

Dr Phil Power (Chair of Governance & Membership Committee)  
Ryan Bird (Returning Officer)