

Big Elections Timetabling

BDA style version

February 2018 *

This paper concerns the changes to the timetable for the 2018 “Big Elections” recently made by the Governance Committee of the Trustee Board.

*Proposed by Peter Bridgman (AEB). Seconded by Ansh Bhatnagar (OM PG Science) and Abhijay Sood (RCSU VP Education)

The Union Notes

1. The Big Elections in recent years have occurred over the period of a fortnight, with one week of campaigning followed by a week of voting.
2. The Union President has previously cited anecdotal concerns regarding the length and arduousness of the elections process as a deleterious factor in persuading Members to run for office.

3. Any form of information regarding a candidate's campaign is embargoed until the opening of the campaigning period.
4. The Union strongly encourages Members to vote as soon as voting is opened, and there has historically always been a deluge of voters casting their votes as soon as the voting is opened (see figure 1).
5. For the "Big Elections" 2018, changes to the election timetable have been decided upon by the Governance Committee of the Trustee Board, without any formal consultation of Council or the wider student body.
6. These changes reduce the length of the election period overall by causing campaigning and voting to occur at the same time.
7. Marketing psychology studies have shown that increased repetition of a brand linearly increases recall of that brand ¹, and that foreknowledge of a brand before knowledge of the details are known benefits retention of the brand details ².

¹ Susanne Schmidt and Martin Eisend. Advertising repetition: A meta-analysis on effective frequency in advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 44(4):415–428, 2015

² William E. Baker. Does brand name imprinting in memory increase brand information retention? *Psychology and Marketing*, 20(12):1119–1135, 2003

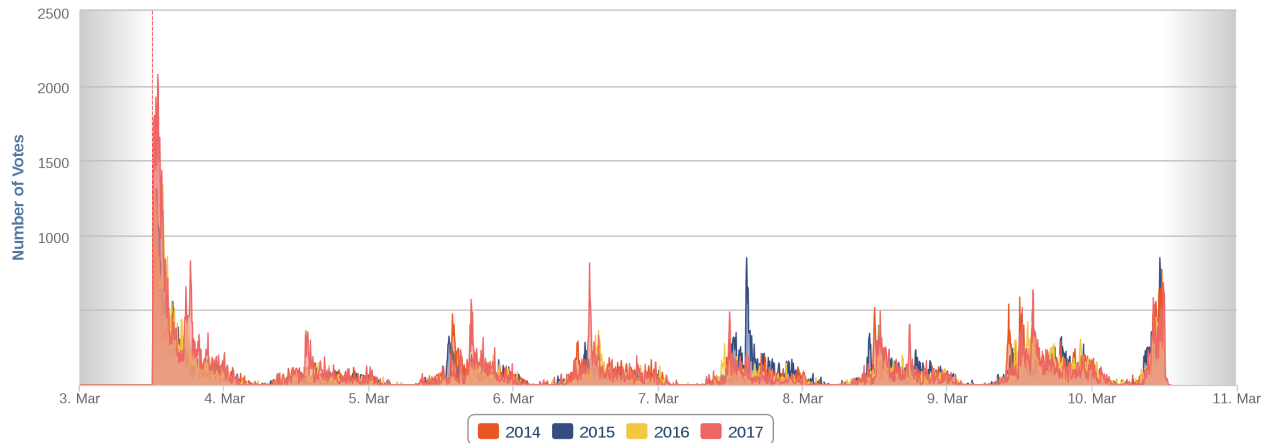


Figure 1: Votes cast against time for the 2014 – 2017 Big Elections

The Union Believes

1. It is a laudable aim to make candidacy as attractive as possible, and therefore efforts to reduce the burden of the election period as far as reasonably possible, without affecting its legitimacy, are to be welcomed.³
2. This notwithstanding, in order for a democracy to be meaningful, the electorate should have a reasonable opportunity to be well-informed as to the choices available to them before they are expected and encouraged to vote.
3. Opening voting at the same time as the campaigning period significantly reduces the extent to which the

³ One such option, previously proposed at Council, would allow a weekend of informative campaigning prior to a week of voting.

opportunity to be reasonably informed is available to Members.⁴

4. Opening voting at the same time as campaigning disproportionately advantages candidates whose names are already familiar to the electorate (for example, by already having been elected as an Officer Trustee), and therefore unfairly disadvantages candidates whose names, policies, strengths and weaknesses are not already known.^{5 6}

Council Regrets

1. That the election timetable for 2018 does not make allowance for a period of informative campaigning before voting.
2. That Council, the principal democratic organ of the Union, was not consulted on this important change to the Union's democratic processes before it was implemented.
3. That the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee at which the change was decided are not

⁴ This follows logically from [Notes 3](#) and [6](#) and is exacerbated by the fact that many Members historically vote immediately after voting opens ([Notes 4](#)).

⁵ This follows logically from [Notes 7](#).

⁶ If any of the current Officer Trustees involved in this decision are running for re-election, it could therefore be considered that there was a conflict of interest. **However, as the minutes of the relevant meeting of Governance Committee are currently inexplicably unavailable, it is not possible to determine who proposed the paper in question, or who was involved in the decision making process.**

presently available to be viewed by Members.

The Union Resolves

1. Council shall approve the timetable for all future “Big Elections” before it is confirmed.