



BY-ELECTIONS REPORT

OCTOBER 2020

Nomination Period

The [notice of elections](#) was publicised on Hull University Students' Union's website on 11th September 2020. Nominations were open online between Monday 14th September and Monday 28th September.

In line with the March 2020 President and Part-Time Officer elections, students were invited to submit expressions of interest during the nominations period, and were then offered additional information, training and support by the Student Voice Team before the manifesto deadline. Candidates needed to submit their manifestos by Friday 2nd October.

Throughout the duration of the elections, students were kept informed through all-student email communications, as well as tailored information for prospective candidates who expressed an interest in running for a position, or emailed specific enquiries to the staff team.

The election consisted of a by-election for Part-Time Officer positions that had not been filled in the spring 2020 Part-Time Officer elections.

Nominations were again open for a two week period (weeks 0 and 1) to ensure that both new and returning students had the opportunity to find out about the vacant positions and submit nominations.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were limited opportunities for engaging with students face-to-face by the Student Voice Team and President Team as would usually happen, for example through lecture shout outs, stalls around Student Central and across campus and in casual conversations. Therefore, the majority of election nomination promotion took place through email, a range of social media, the WelcomeFest app, HUSU's website and e-induction content on the MyJourney platform.

The elections section of the website included information for prospective candidates such as detailed role descriptions for each position and the election rules & regulations.

Training was provided for all candidates by the Student Voice Manager and Campaigns and Democracy Coordinator, the Assistant Returning Officer Team. This training covered the elections process, the rules, how to write an effective manifesto and how to plan and deliver an elections campaign which would either be wholly or predominantly digital. Only two out of the seven candidates completed the candidate survey – one respondent rated the training 'very useful' whilst the other rated it 'quite useful'.



A comment about the training was:

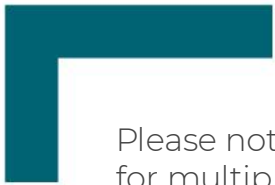
'I thought it was really well prepared, and Elise [Campaigns and Democracy Co-ordinator] was very friendly and helpful!'

Both respondents also rated the information and support offered by the Assistant Returning Officer Team as either 'very' or 'quite' helpful.

Following feedback from the Part-Time Officer candidates in March, the training was changed from asynchronous online training to live training sessions on Microsoft Teams. Engagement in these sessions was positive, and this offered all candidates with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the elections process and their campaign plans.

Table 1. Nominations received for Part-Time Officer positions (17 positions available)

Position	Number of expressions of interest	Number of candidates
2 x Councillors for Scrutiny (Union Development Zone)	6	0
1 x Councillor for Scrutiny (Inclusivity and Diversity Zone)	4	1
Postgraduate Taught Students Officer	3	1
Foundation Students Officer	0	0
Part-Time Students Officer	1	0
HYMS Students Officer	1	0
2 x Councillors for Scrutiny (Education Zone)	6	3
HYMS Society Representative	1	0
2 x Councillors for Scrutiny (Activities Zone)	2	0
Representative for Disabilities in Sport	0	0
Representative for International Students in Sport	0	0
Representative for Women in Sport	2	2
2 x Councillors for Scrutiny (Sport Zone)	0	0



Please note that students were able to submit expressions of interest for multiple roles – in total 12 students expressed an interest in the 2020 by-elections.

Contested Positions: 2

Uncontested Positions: 3

Positions with no nominations: 12

Total nominations received: 7

Academic Representation Roles

There were no academic representation roles available for election this year, due to Course Reps continuing to sign up through a self-nomination process, and Faculty Reps continuing to be appointed through an application and interview process.

Course Rep Leader positions were not advertised in the by-elections due to the system having not worked very well in the 2019/20 academic year, and the current President of Education, Simeon Orduen, having submitted a motion to Union Council to remove the elected Course Rep Leader positions from the academic representation system. This motion passed successfully at Union Council, meaning that Student-Staff Forums are now chaired by Course Reps elected as chairs from within the meetings themselves.

Campaigning and Budgets

Campaigning opened on Friday 2nd October 2020, and candidates were eligible to claim reimbursement of campaign spending up to a maximum of £15 on digital promotional materials only. No candidates claimed campaign expenses.

Candidates were encouraged to predominantly campaign online, and physical materials were prohibited in order to ensure that the elections were as Covid-safe as possible, by avoidance of any materials being passed from hand to hand.

Candidates were also instructed both through training and in the election rules to ensure that any physical (face-to-face) campaigning took place in groups of students no larger than six, and at a social distance of at least 2m between one another, or 1m+ where face coverings were worn, in line with the government guidance at the time.

The Returning Officer for this election was Stephen Dowson, External Consultant. No formal complaints were received.

Voting and Turnout

Voting opened online on Monday 5th October at 9am and closed on Friday 9th October at 12pm. All candidates had to stand against Re-Open Nominations (RON) and Single Transferable Vote (STV) was used to determine the winner.

A total of 791 votes were cast by 348 unique voters in comparison with 1159 votes cast by 425 unique voters in October 2019. Whilst it is disappointing that this was a decrease from the previous year, due to the circumstances of holding a digital-only elections, the Student Voice Team were unable to promote voting face-to-face across campus with voting booths and promotional literature as would usually have been the case. It is heartening that with the circumstances, the turnout this year was higher than in 2018 (984 votes cast by 284 unique voters)

This year the voting functions on the website worked seamlessly with no technical hitches other than a small number of students who were unable to vote due to not having yet completed their enrolment with the university, and therefore not yet having a University username to be able to log into the HUSU website and vote, or due to anomalies with the University data feed. Whenever a student reported difficulties with voting, it was fully investigated by HUSU's Web Developer and rectified to ensure that students' votes were included in the final results.

Table 2. Voter turnout

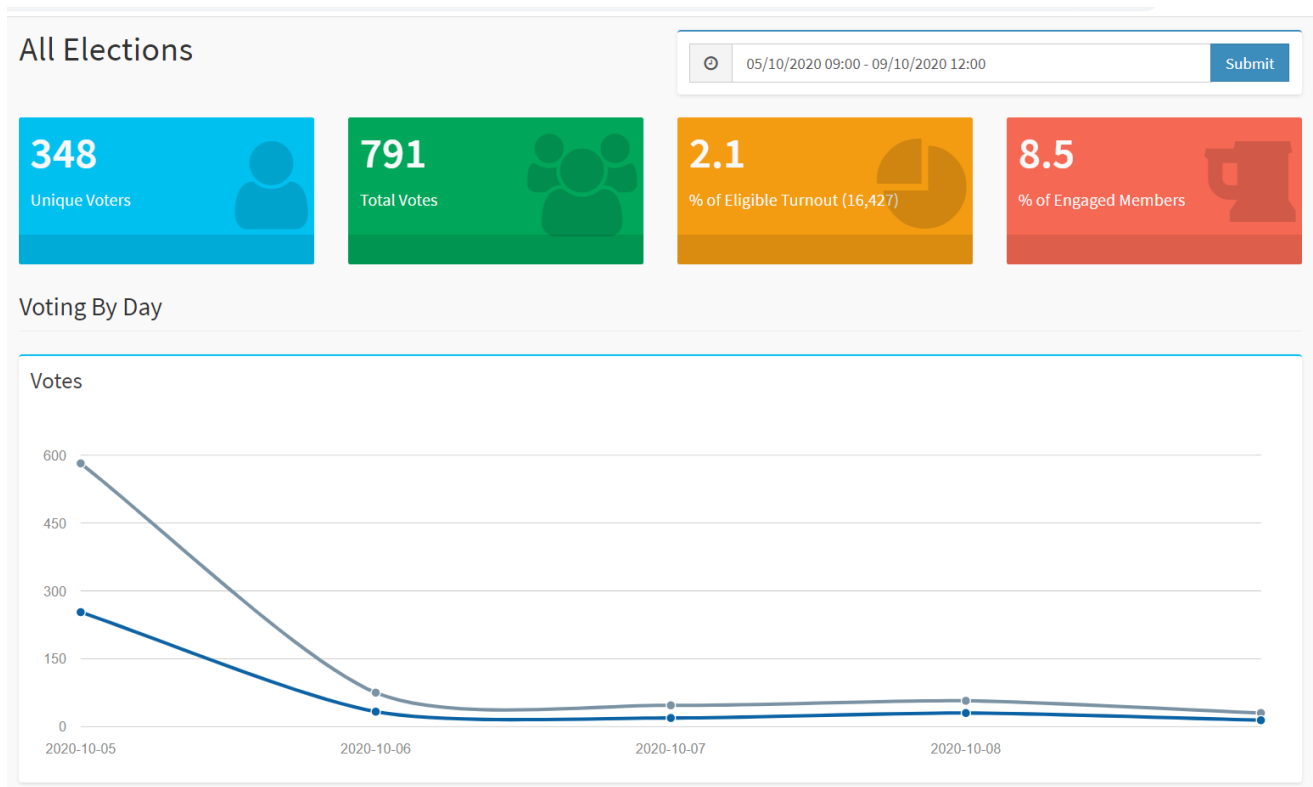


Table 3. Turnout by Faculty



Whilst the first chart above which displays unique votes indicates that the number of individual voters across all Faculties was fairly similar, with slightly more students in Health Sciences having voted, the second chart showing turnout clearly demonstrates that the highest proportion of students in Business, Law and Politics have voted.

Table 4. Turnout by Year of Study

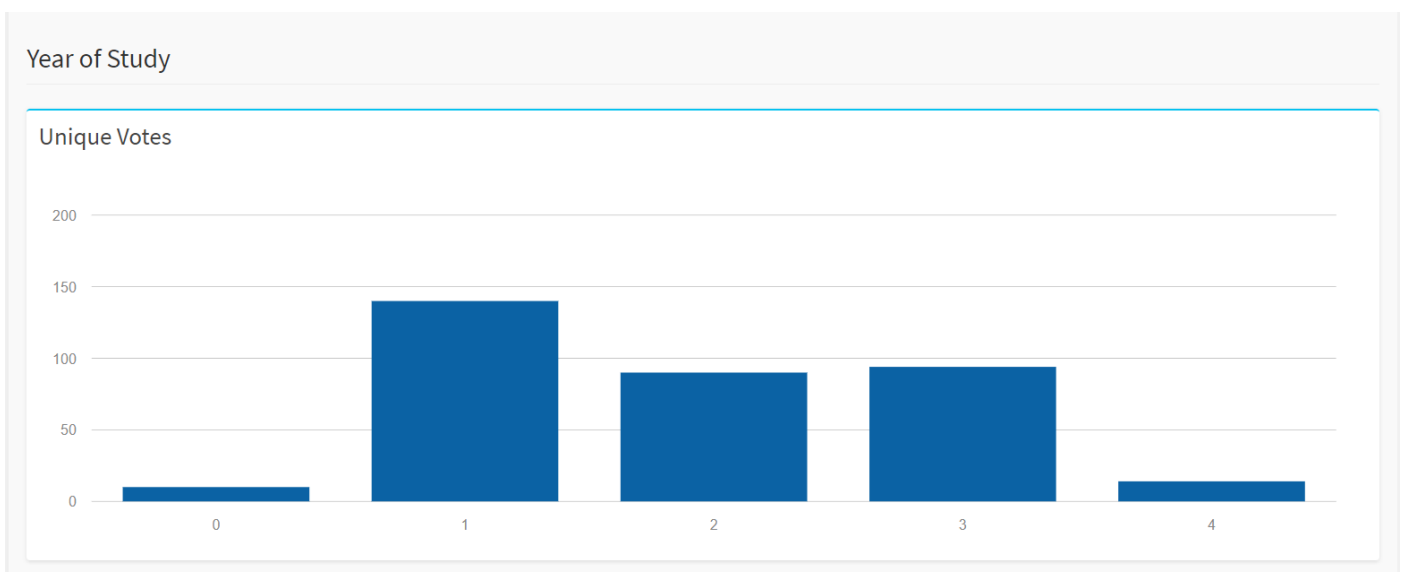


Table 5. Turnout by Level of Study

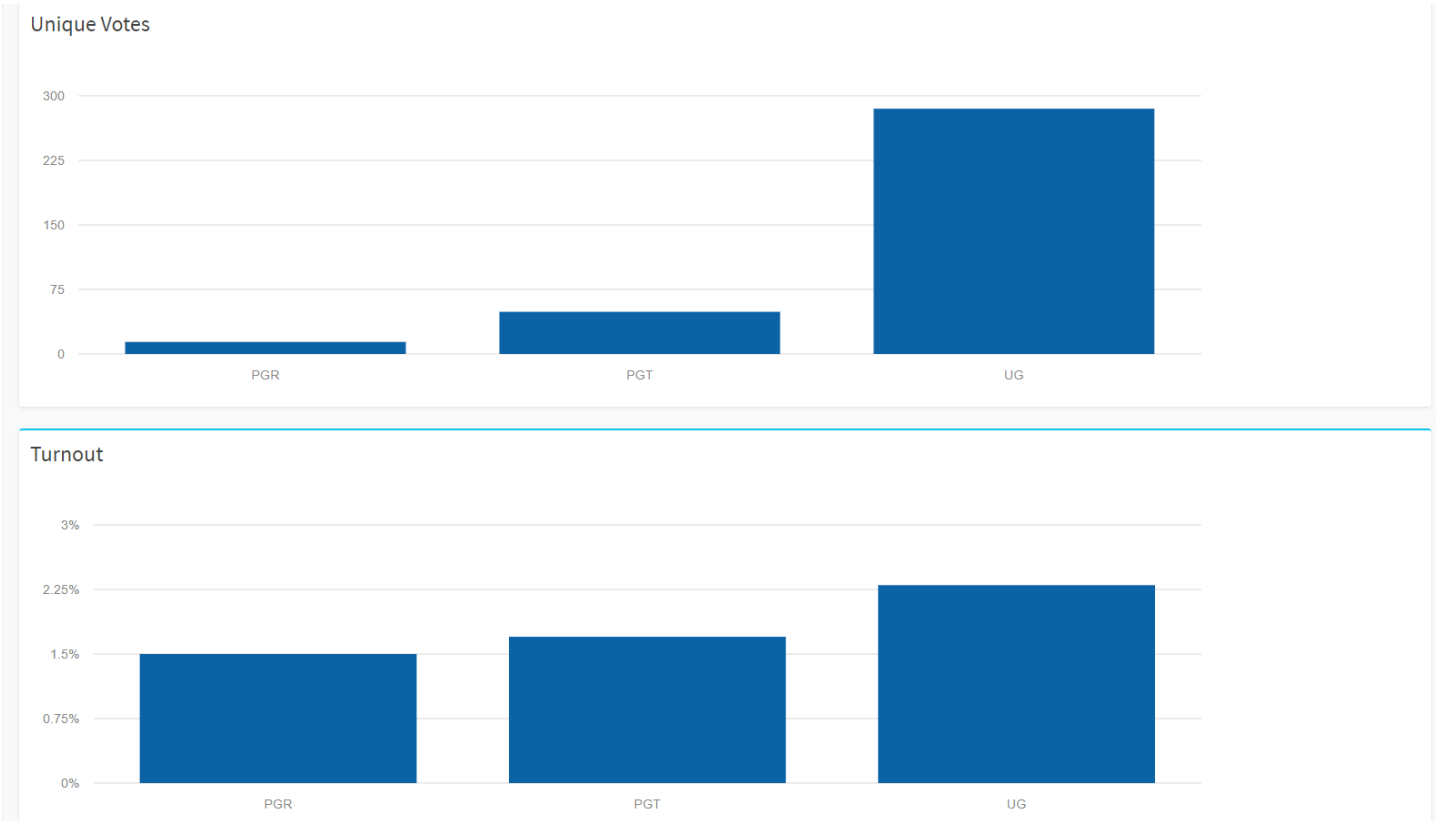
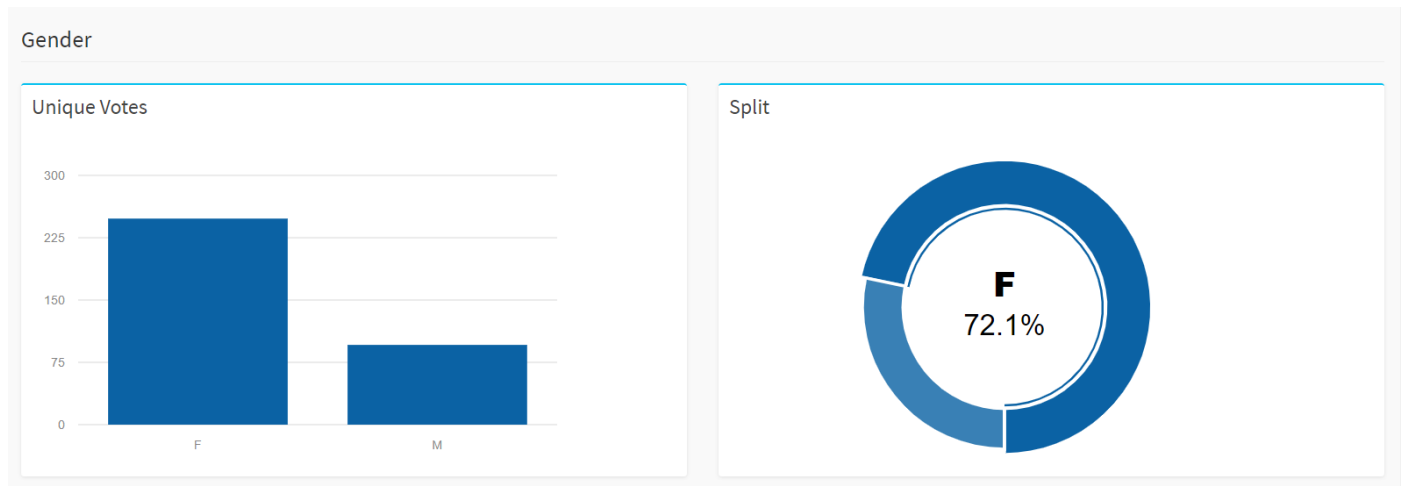


Table 6. Turnout by Gender



* Please note the above charts do not include those voting members whose gender identity is non-binary/trans/other, due to the number being too small to illustrate on the charts.

Table 7. Number of total votes for Part-time Officers

Position	Votes 2020	Votes 2019	Votes 2018	Votes 2017
Postgraduate Taught Students Officer	37	N/A	11	N/A
Councillors for Scrutiny (Education Zone)	255	N/A	161	N/A
Councillor for Scrutiny (Inclusivity & Diversity Zone)	268	236	167	N/A
Representative for Women in Sport	231	160	N/A (new role 2019)	N/A (new role 2019)

It is encouraging to note that the number of votes for each of these positions in the by-elections is increasing, suggesting that HUSU is becoming more effective at promoting voting to members and supporting candidates to actively campaign and encourage more people to vote for them.

Results

The results for the by-election of part-time Officers are available on the [Hull University Students' Union Website](#).

Candidates were offered the opportunity to celebrate the results being announced at a socially distanced drinks event in Asylum with Presidents and Part-Time Officers, but due to the low levels of interest in this happening, this did not take place. The results were announced across HUSU's website and social media.

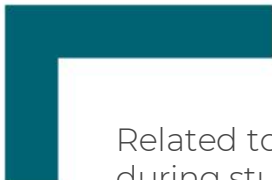
Co-opted Part-Time Officers

It is worth noting that a number of the positions left vacant after the by-elections have subsequently been filled by co-option at Union Council meetings, namely the following positions:

- Foundation Students Officer
- HYMS Students Officer
- 1 x Councillor for Scrutiny (Union Development Zone)
- 1 x Councillor for Scrutiny (Activities Zone)

Reflections and Recommendations

It must be acknowledged that holding the by-elections in 2020 was a challenging experience; as both staff and students were learning how to navigate the campus and activities in Covid-safe ways, and communicate in mostly digital ways, this made it difficult for staff to engage with students at both the nomination and voting stages and to know what to expect in terms of the number of candidates and voter turnout.



Related to this, Presidents and staff did not have the opportunity during students' induction and re-induction lectures this year to introduce HUSU to new and returning students – under normal circumstances, this is an excellent opportunity to be able to promote representation in general and the by-elections specifically to a broader audience than can be captured through solely digital means.

Having held the March Part-Time Officers in a wholly digital manner, the October by-elections were an opportunity to be able to put some of the learnings from that process into practice. Most especially this informed the increased amount of time dedicated to synchronous training and support that staff provided for prospective candidates.

Due to the circumstances this year having been so different from the norm, the number of recommendations in this report are fewer than in previous election reports, but are focused on those issues which most need addressing in future Part-Time Officer elections and by-elections:

- To continue to concentrate more on providing a quality experience for all by-election candidates, so they feel as valued as those who run in the spring elections.
- To liaise with other Students' Unions to identify and adopt good practice for conducting and promoting election nominations and voting using wholly digital means.
- To support the ongoing work on President and Part-Time Officer reform, to ensure that the student representation structure and roles and responsibilities within that structure are fit for purpose in meeting students' needs and priorities.

Nicole Steele
Student Voice Manager
December 2020