

# Elections Campaign Materials

## Detailed Rules

### Equity and Fairness in Democracy

Democracy is built on the principle that every voice deserves to be heard equally, regardless of background, wealth, or circumstance. A truly democratic election is not simply one where everyone is permitted to participate, but one where everyone has a genuine and meaningful opportunity to do so.

When candidates with greater financial resources or social advantages are able to outspend or out-platform their peers, the result is not a contest of ideas but a contest of privilege, and the outcome may reflect those advantages rather than the will of the voters.

These rules exist to protect the integrity of the election by ensuring that every candidate competes on as level a playing field as possible, so that voters can make their choice based on policies, character, and engagement rather than on who had the loudest megaphone.

Fair rules do not hold capable candidates back; they create the conditions in which all candidates can show what they are truly made of.

### Levelling the Playing Field

To ensure genuine equality of opportunity, the following measures are in place for all candidates:

- Every candidate receives the same basic allocation, including; a poster slot, a candidate profile on the website, and equal speaking time at elections events
- Candidate spending caps are in place to ensure financial inequality cannot determine the outcome of the election
- All elections rules are published on the DSU website so all students can hold candidates accountable to them

## Campaign Resources

### What You Can Use

The following resources are permitted for all candidates:

#### Time and Personal Effort

- Canvassing, attending events, and talking to voters in person
- Voluntary support from friends (must be registered as campaign team members with the DSU Voice team)

- Personal skills such as graphic design, video editing, or writing that you already possess

### **Free Digital Tools**

- Personal or campaign-specific social media accounts
- Free design tools such as Canva, Google Docs, or similar platforms
- Manifesto documents, campaign pages, and other digital content created at no cost

### **Officially Provided Materials**

- Any materials or platforms provided equally to all candidates by DSU
- Allocated notice board space, official candidate profile pages, and hustings appearances as organised by DSU

### **Sustainable Upcycled Materials**

Candidates are encouraged to campaign in an environmentally responsible way. In recognition of this, upcycled and repurposed materials are exempt from the spending cap, provided they meet the qualifying criteria below.

#### Qualifying Criteria for Exemption

- The item was already owned by the candidate or a volunteer before the campaign began, and was not purchased for campaign purposes.
- The item has been meaningfully repurposed or creatively reused (e.g. repainting an old sign, turning scrap fabric into a banner, reusing packaging as display material)
- No additional money was spent to make the item campaign-ready, unless these items were purchased and declared as part of the campaign budget e.g. buying pens to upcycle a cardboard box into a campaign sign

#### Examples That Do Not Qualify for Exemption

- Buying second-hand materials specifically for the campaign - this still counts as spending
- Paying someone to upcycle items on your behalf

#### Declaration Requirement

Candidates using upcycled materials should email the Voice Team to notify them before upcycled resources are used to campaign, so that the elections officials can confirm the exemption applies.

## **What Must Be Declared or Restricted**

The following require declaration or are subject to restrictions:

### **Spending Caps**

All candidates have a spending cap in place, based on the role they are applying for:

- Student Voice Leaders (full-time, paid roles): £40
- Part-Time, voluntary roles: £20

All campaign resources must be declared and deducted from your spending cap.

### **In-Kind Contributions**

- If a friend or family member provides professional services (design, printing, videography, etc.) free of charge, this must be declared as an in-kind contribution and counted toward the spending cap
- The assessed value should reflect what the service would cost if purchased by a non-friend or relative of the service

### **External Resources**

- Candidates may not use resources belonging to clubs, societies, employers, or other organisations (e.g. mailing lists, printing budgets, venues) unless that resource is made equally available to all candidates.
- Personal social media accounts with large followings are generally acceptable, but paid promotion through any channel is subject to the spending cap.

### **What is Not Permitted**

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Spending above the agreed cap
- Use of any shared or institutional resource unless equally available to all candidates
- Campaigning in restricted spaces that are not accessible to all candidates

**If you are unsure whether a resource or approach is permitted, always contact the Voice Team first to check.**

**Do not risk any campaign methods you're unsure of.**

**Email: [voice@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:voice@dmu.ac.uk)**