

ELECTION REGULATIONS

Common provisions for all elections

1. These regulations set out procedures for the election by all members of the federal party of the Leader, President, Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, federal committee and Federal Council posts which are filled by ballots of all party members; and where a decision has been taken to use them for other elections. References in these regulations to “federal committee(s)” shall also be taken to include the Federal Council. Paragraphs 2-25 apply to all such elections; subsequent sections apply as identified to specific individual elections

Organisation of elections

2. The Federal Board shall appoint a Returning Officer to oversee all party elections conducted under these election regulations for a period of three years, or until their resignation, incapacity or death if any of these occur sooner. The Returning Officer shall be responsible for the efficient and timely conduct of these elections. The appointment shall be made at least three months before the Returning Officer’s term of office begins.

3. The Chief Executive shall be the Deputy Returning Officer. The Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer may jointly appoint Deputy Acting Returning Officers from party members or staff with relevant experience.

4. The Returning Officer may delegate any of the responsibilities set out in these regulations to the Deputy Returning Officer or any Deputy Acting Returning Officer. In any cases of dispute within the Returning Officer team, the decision of the Returning Officer shall be final.

5. The Returning Officer shall ensure that comprehensive written guides and procedures for the use of the Returning Officer team, candidates and voters, are in place for each election at least one month before the opening of nominations in an election. These shall not, thereafter, be amended without good cause.

Timetables

6. The Federal Board shall agree and publicise a timetable for each election, including the publication of the notice of elections, the deadlines to be used for the opening and closing of nominations, submission of candidates’ manifestos, despatch and return of ballot papers, and the date for the counting of votes. Once publicised, these shall not, thereafter, be amended without good cause.

- a. For elections for the Leader, the Federal Board shall agree and publicise the timetable as soon as possible after the vacancy or impending vacancy is announced; and
- b. For all other elections conducted under these regulations, the Federal Board shall where practicable agree and publicise the timetable no later than the spring conference before the elections are due.

7. Once the timetable for any election has been announced but before the opening of nominations, the Federal Board may postpone the election if the timetable conflicts with a general election or a referendum covering England Scotland Wales or any combination thereof, or any other significant event that in the Board's view would unduly hinder the conduct of the election.

8. After the opening of nominations for any election, the Returning Officer may postpone or suspend the election if it would conflict with a general election or a referendum covering England Scotland Wales or any combination thereof, or any other significant event, that in the Returning Officer's view would unduly hinder the conduct of the election. If any votes have been cast, the Returning Officer has the power to cancel them and restart the election as soon as the Returning Officer considers practicable.

Conduct of elections

9. The electorate for the purpose of these elections shall be those members with paid-up membership of the Liberal Democrats on the closing date for nominations. Members who, at the closing date for nominations, are in the grace period following their membership subscription due date can be added to the electorate if they renew their membership at least three days prior to the close of voting.

10. All elections will be conducted electronically; this includes the submission of nominations, display of candidates' manifestos and casting of votes. The online voting system shall prompt voters to look at candidates' manifestos prior to voting and provide for the randomisation of the names on the ballot paper.

11. The Returning Officer shall make provision for voters who cannot vote electronically to vote by post upon a request in writing. Any such request shall only be valid for the specific election(s) being conducted at the time of the request.

12. Any official party publication whether in paper or electronic form shall give, as far as possible, equal coverage and a fair balance to all candidates. Coverage of activity by any candidate that is not related to the election may continue in a normal way.

13. Federal Party employees shall maintain strict neutrality from the opening date for declaration of candidacy. It is recommended that employees of state parties, Affiliated Organisations and any other relevant employing bodies shall also maintain such neutrality.

14. Party Officers, acting in their capacity as officers at federal, state, regional and local level, are expected, as far as possible, to give equal opportunities and fair balance to all candidates

Manifestos and publicity material

15. Each candidate shall be entitled to a personal manifesto to be displayed electronically, in a format to be determined by the Returning Officer. Each candidate shall be responsible for verifying, to the satisfaction of the Returning Officer, any statement in their manifesto claiming that they are endorsed by any individual or organisation. Such material must accompany the candidate's manifesto.

16. In addition to candidates' manifestos, the Returning Officer may decide to require each candidate to provide answers to common questions about their suitability for the position(s) for which they are standing. The Returning Officer shall draw up these questions in consultation with relevant party staff, party officers or officers of federal committees.

17. No candidate or persons acting on behalf of a candidate will use their own material or access to publicity to disparage any members of staff. All candidates and members acting on their behalf are governed by the Code of Conduct for Members and Registered Supporters and shall in particular follow its provisions when making any reference by name or implication to other candidates.

Counting of elections

18. All contested elections shall be conducted by secret ballot and the single transferable vote. Counts shall be conducted in accordance with the current edition of the Electoral Reform Society's publication How to Conduct an Election by the Single Transferable Vote, subject to the application of paragraph 53 below for federal committee elections. On completion of the count, the election result will be published on the Party website giving details of all stages of the count.

19. The Returning Officer shall have the power to make rulings to facilitate the completion of the count.

Interpretation, complaints and appeals

20. In interpreting and applying these regulations, and in any case where the regulations are silent, the Returning Officer shall have the power to make all necessary decisions concerning the conduct of these elections, following the aims and principles of public election law.

21. The Returning Officer shall have the power to disqualify before declaration of the result, or unseat if declared elected any candidate who:

- a. has brought the party into disrepute during the campaign or where the Returning Officer has clear evidence of this happening in the near future; or
- b. is found to be in breach of any of these regulations,

but shall not exercise such power without first offering any such candidate the right to make representation, and having regard thereto.

22. Any party member may lodge, in writing in a format prescribed by the Returning Officer, a formal complaint of infringement of election regulations upon becoming aware of any alleged infringement and not more than 7 days after the declaration. The written complaint should be addressed to the Returning Officer and specify in detail the nature of the infringement. The Returning Officer shall then decide, in full consultation with the Returning Officer team, whether there is sufficient evidence and grounds to uphold the complaint, but shall not do so without offering any candidate concerned the right to make representations, and having regard thereto. Any party member who makes repeated and vexatious complaints may be referred to the party's disciplinary system.

23. If a complaint is made prior to the declaration of the result, the Returning Officer shall have the power to postpone such declaration until the determination of such complaint or, where an appeal is made against their decision, until the determination of such appeal. The Returning Officer shall have the discretion to use this power to suspend individual candidates from serving on any position they are elected to while any such complaint is investigated and/or subject to appeal.

24. Appeals against decisions of the Returning Officer must be referred to the Federal Appeals Panel within 14 days of the decision.

Review

25. The relevant sections of these regulations will be reviewed by the Federal Board based on a report from the Returning Officer no later than six months after the completion of any election. The report must include a report on any diversity measures taken as a result of any requirement under the federal constitution, potential data protection breaches and

any changes or clarifications required by rulings made by the Returning Officer or the Federal Appeals Panel.

Common provisions for leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections

26. The provisions set out in paragraphs 27–42 are common to the elections for the Leader, President and Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities, except where otherwise specified.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: timetables

27. The timetable for the election shall be no shorter than 7 weeks and no longer than 13 weeks.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: nominations

28. A candidate for office of Leader of the Liberal Democrats must be a Member of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, and must be nominated by not less than 10 percent of other members of the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, not including the candidate themselves, supported by not less than 200 party members in aggregate in not less than 20 Local Parties.

29. A candidate for the office of President must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by not less than 200 party members in not less than 20 Local Parties.

30. A candidate for the office of Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by any Local Party, any Regional Party, any State Party, any Affiliated Organisation, or any 20 party members.

31. Local parties include, for the purposes of paragraphs 28–30, the Affiliated Organisation or Organisations representing youth and/or students.

32. Nominations must be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate.

33. A nominator may not nominate more than one candidate for any one position.

34. After acquiring the necessary nominations for candidacy, each candidate may nominate an agent for their campaign. A candidate who fails to nominate an agent will be deemed their own agent.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: manifestos and publicity material

35. All publicity material produced in paper or electronic form for or on behalf of a candidate shall bear their agent's imprint, including a full postal address.

36. Any email messages sent out for or on behalf of a candidate for the purposes of publicising their candidacy shall also include a standard form of words provided by the Returning Officer specifying how the recipient of the message may opt out of future messages.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: conduct of election

37. The sections of the membership register containing the names, addresses and telephone numbers of members will be released in electronic version to each candidate subject to the candidate signing a data protection statement agreeing to abide by the party's data protection policies and providing evidence to the Returning Officer's satisfaction that they are able to ensure compliance with them. Any candidate or supporter of a candidate facilitating a breach of this clause will be deemed to be in breach of the party's data protection policies. Candidates should also have due regard to their own data protection responsibilities when collecting and using any data of their own in the election.

38. The Returning Officer shall coordinate arrangements for official party member hustings events with a view to balancing the competing demands for media coverage of the campaign, parliamentary and other duties and the desirability of party members to have a chance to attend or watch a hustings. Any of the official hustings may take place partly or wholly online. Other party bodies may only hold hustings-type events if they invite all candidates to attend, but they do not require the agreement of all candidates to attend or send a representative in order to proceed. Events designated as official hustings by the Returning Officer shall take precedence over any other arrangements a candidate may have made.

39. Official party communications channels may only be used to promote hustings designated as official hustings by the Returning Officer. Responsibility for organising and paying for any hustings event shall lie with the hosting organisation, but the Returning Officer will publicise in good time official hustings events via the party's website, social media channels and email communications.

40. Treating is not allowed but the reasonable provision of food and drink to campaign helpers or event attendees is permissible.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: conduct of election

41. For the elections for the Leader, President and Vice President of the Liberal Democrats:
- a. The Federal Board shall set a spending limit for election expenses, not including travel or subsistence, for each candidate, when they set the timetable for the election. No candidate, or their agent, shall exceed this limit in the production of publicity material and all other expenditures connected with the campaign. This shall include any expenditure (or the relevant proportion of any expenditure) incurred before an individual becomes a candidate if the property, services or facilities are used for the purposes of the candidate's election. All donations above £500 must comply with the provisions of Schedule 7 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
 - b. Each candidate and their agent shall complete and lodge with the Returning Officer an election expenses return form. The form must have attached receipts or invoices for all expenditure and must be lodged with the Returning Officer by midday on the 35th day after the declaration of the election result. The Returning Officer will hold the expenses returns of each candidate on file and these may be examined by any party member. The expenses form shall also contain the necessary information to prove compliance with schedule 7 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
 - c. Any candidate who needs to make a report to the Electoral Commission shall do so in consultation with the Party's Compliance Department in order to ensure they meet the statutory deadlines.

Leadership, presidential and vice presidential elections: election count

42. The election count may be scrutinised by the candidate, their agents and one other personal representative and shall be open to any party member, subject to the capacity of the venue and at least 48 hours notification to the Returning Officer.

Common provisions for Committee Elections

43. The provisions set out in paragraphs 44–53 shall apply to elections which are to be conducted under these election regulations for federal committee and Federal Council posts which are filled by ballots of all party members or where a decision has been taken to use them for other elections.

Committee elections: nominations

44. A candidate for membership of a federal committee must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and must be nominated by any Local Party, any Regional Party, any State Party, any Affiliated Organisation (including the Affiliated Organisation or Organisations representing youth and/or students) or any 20 party members.

45. Nominations must be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate. In order to be covered by one of the minimum representation requirements under Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution, a candidate must submit information with their nomination paper as to which of the protected characteristics apply to themselves. Candidates will be informed on the nomination form that, when the election results are published, it may be possible for someone to infer some information regarding the fact that a candidate made such a submission

Committee elections: manifestos

46. In addition to candidates' personal manifestos and answers to any questions (see paragraphs 15–17), the Returning Officer shall ensure that a committee meeting attendance list, in a common format, is published. The list shall also include a report of the consecutive number of years each candidate has served on that committee, regardless of the route by which they have become a member of the committee.

47. The Returning Officer shall ensure that candidates' manifestos and answers to questions, and the committee attendance lists, shall be available to view online at least seven days before voting opens.

Committee elections: conduct of election

48. No candidate may incur, or directly or indirectly authorise or cause to be incurred any expenses on campaigning at any time before or after the close of nominations. Candidates must not carry out any activities during the election period which may be viewed as treating.

49. The names and addresses of party members are confidential and shall not be released for the purposes of the election. Any candidate or supporter of a candidate facilitating a breach of this clause will be deemed to be in breach of the party's data protection policy. Candidates should have due regard to their data protection responsibilities when collecting and using any data of their own in the election.

50. No official party publication whether in paper or electronic form may accept advertisements in support of or in opposition to candidates.

Committee elections: counting

51. The committees shall be counted in the order they are listed in the constitution. Once a candidate has been elected to a committee, if Article 8.3 of the constitution concerning

candidates being elected for more than one committee applies, they will be withdrawn from all subsequent elections for which they were nominated.

52. If the specified proportions of candidates with protected characteristics in Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution are not elected by the operation of the above rules, the Returning Officer shall conduct such further counts as they consider necessary and declare elected those members of the under-represented characteristics and declare not elected those members of the over-represented characteristics who would or would not have been elected to committees with such larger and smaller numbers of members as would cause the correct number of that characteristic to be elected.

53. Casual vacancies occurring shall be filled by recounting the original ballot papers in the election, passing over any preferences for any candidate causing a vacancy. If necessary, further counts shall be conducted using the principles set out in paragraph 52 to ensure that all candidates originally elected so remain and that the specified 24 proportions of protected characteristics are maintained. On completion of the count, the election result will be published on the Party website giving details of all stages of the count.

Committee elections: principal councillor representatives on Federal Board and Federal Policy Committee

54. The regulations set out in paragraphs 2–25 and 44–53 shall apply to elections for the principal councillor representatives on the Federal Board and the Federal Policy Committee, with the following exceptions:

- a. The electorate is members of the Liberal Democrats who are also councillors on principal local authorities, directly elected Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners; and
- b. Candidates for any such position must be a member of the Liberal Democrats and a councillor on a principal local authority, directly elected Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner, and must be nominated by any other two principal councillors, directly elected Mayors or Police and Crime Commissioners with valid membership of the party.

Other elections: Liberal Democrat members of the Council of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

55. Following the resolution of the Federal Conference, the regulations set out in paragraphs 2–25 and 45–53 shall apply to elections for the Liberal Democrat members of the Council of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) with the following exceptions:

- a. The requirements for the elections of the minimum proportions of candidates with protected characteristics in Articles 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 of the constitution are replaced by the requirement that those elected shall include a minimum of one person from each state party and one person under the age of 26 at the time of the election.

Ratified by Conference March 2025