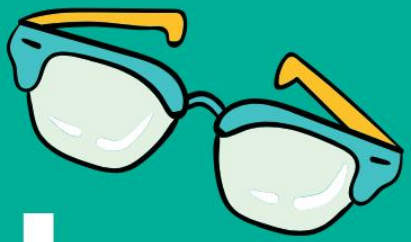
QUT GUILD

2026 Student Election Handbook



Everything you need to know about standing for election, campaigning ethically, and representing students.

Election Period

13 Jul 2026 - 9 Nov 2026

Welcome Message

A Message from the President / Returning Officer

Welcome from the President

Welcome to the QUT Guild Election Handbook.

Whether you're thinking about running for office for the first time or returning for another election, thank you for considering how you can contribute to the QUT community. Student representatives play an important role in shaping the university experience by advocating for students, influencing decision-making, and helping create a more inclusive, engaging and supportive campus.

The QUT Guild exists to represent the interests of all students, and our elections are at the heart of that mission. They provide every student with the opportunity to choose the people who will represent their voice and make decisions on their behalf. A fair, transparent and respectful election is essential to maintaining a strong and effective student democracy.

This handbook has been developed to guide you through the election process. It explains the key rules, timelines, responsibilities and expectations of candidates, while providing practical information to help you participate with confidence.

No matter your background or experience, I encourage you to get involved. Leadership begins with a willingness to step forward, listen to others and work towards positive change. By putting yourself forward, you're helping strengthen student representation and the future of our Guild.

On behalf of the QUT Guild, I wish you the very best throughout the election process, and I look forward to seeing the passion, ideas and commitment that each candidate brings to our student community.

Best of luck,

Caleb McGiffin

President

QUT Guild

1. History of the Guild

Why the Guild Exists

Since 1966, the Queensland University of Technology Student Guild (QUT Guild) has been at the heart of student life at QUT, advocating for fairness, building inclusive communities, and investing in initiatives that enhance the student experience.

Our union is dedicated to representing, supporting and empowering every student on campus. What began as a small group of elected student representatives has grown into a vibrant community organisation that supports more than 50,000 students across every stage of their university journey.

Student representation has evolved over the past 60 years from three student representatives to 24 SRC, 5 Board members, student media team, three collectives, 135 strong clubs and 75 active volunteers. This equates to over 11 thousand students involved at the Guild.

Find out more - qutguild.com/legacy/

2. What is an Election?

Understanding the Election Process

In Australia, an election is a democratic process where eligible voters choose people to represent them and make decisions on their behalf. Elections are used at local, state, and federal levels of government, as well as within organisations such as universities, unions, and student representative bodies. During an election, candidates nominate themselves for positions, communicate their ideas and priorities to voters, and campaign to gain support. Voters then cast their ballots, and the candidates who receive the required support are elected to represent their community for a set term.

Australian elections are guided by principles of fairness, transparency, equal opportunity, and secret voting to ensure people can vote freely and confidently. Elections are an important part of democracy because they give communities a voice, create accountability for elected representatives, and provide a structured way for people to influence decisions that affect them. Whether electing members of parliament or student representatives, elections enable individuals to participate in shaping the future of their community and ensuring leadership reflects the interests of those being represented.

Key Election Principles

- Fairness
- Accessibility
- Transparency
- Independence

3. Why Care About Elections?

Why Student Elections Matter

Student elections are important because they give students the opportunity to shape the direction of their university and ensure their voices are represented in decisions that affect student life. Through electing representatives, students influence priorities across areas such as education quality, student services, wellbeing initiatives, campus facilities, and the allocation of student resources. Elected student leaders advocate on behalf of their peers and contribute directly to governance and decision-making processes, helping ensure outcomes reflect the needs and experiences of the student community. Student elections also create valuable leadership opportunities, allowing students to develop skills in communication, governance, advocacy, teamwork, and public representation. Beyond decision-making and leadership, elections strengthen community by encouraging participation, connection, and shared responsibility for improving the student experience. By engaging in elections whether by voting, campaigning, or standing as a candidate students play an active role in building a more representative, inclusive, and engaged university environment.

Elections Change Things

Examples:

- The Shuttle Bus
- Cultural Events
- Supporting over 140 Clubs
- Foodbank
- Academic advocacy

4. What is a Returning Officer?

A **Returning Officer (RO)** is an **independent person responsible for managing and overseeing the election process**. Their role is to ensure elections are conducted fairly, transparently and in accordance with the Guild Constitution, Election Regulations and any relevant policies.

The Returning Officer does **not** represent any candidate, ticket or student group. Instead, they act as a neutral decision-maker whose responsibility is to protect the integrity of the election.

Independent Election Oversight

A **Returning Officer (RO)** is an **independent person appointed to manage and oversee the Guild election**. Their role is to ensure elections are conducted fairly, transparently and in accordance with the Constitution and Election Regulations. The Returning Officer remains impartial and does not support any candidate or ticket.

An independent Returning Officer helps to:

- Ensure elections follow the approved rules.
- Apply regulations consistently to all candidates.
- Make impartial decisions.
- Resolve disputes fairly.
- Protect the legitimacy of election outcomes.

Role and Purpose

The Returning Officer exists to ensure that:

- every eligible student has the opportunity to participate;
- every candidate is treated equally;
- election rules are consistently applied;
- complaints are assessed fairly; and
- election results accurately reflect student votes.

Their primary responsibility is **protecting the integrity of the democratic process**, not supporting any individual candidate.

Authority During Elections

During the election period, the Returning Officer has delegated authority to administer the election under the Guild's governing documents.

This authority may include:

- approving nominations;
- interpreting Election Regulations;

- issuing election directions;
- investigating potential breaches;
- making decisions on complaints;
- requiring campaign material to be amended or removed if it breaches the rules;
- applying sanctions where authorised; and
- declaring official election results.

All candidates are expected to comply with lawful directions issued by the Returning Officer.

Maintaining Fairness

A key responsibility of the Returning Officer is ensuring that every candidate competes on an equal playing field.

This includes:

- applying the same rules to everyone;
- ensuring equal access to election information;
- preventing misuse of Guild resources;
- responding consistently to complaints;
- maintaining confidentiality where appropriate; and
- making decisions based on evidence rather than personal opinion.

Fair elections build trust in student democracy and ensure elected representatives have a legitimate mandate from students.

Responsibilities

Running the Election

The Returning Officer manages the election from start to finish, including:

- publishing the election timetable;
- opening and closing nominations;
- verifying candidate eligibility;
- providing election information;
- overseeing voting arrangements;
- monitoring compliance throughout campaigning; and
- ensuring votes are counted correctly and accurately.

Complaint Handling

The Returning Officer is responsible for receiving and assessing election complaints.

This process generally involves:

1. receiving a complaint;
2. gathering relevant evidence;
3. providing procedural fairness by allowing affected parties to respond;
4. determining whether a breach has occurred; and
5. issuing an appropriate decision.

Where required, the Returning Officer may issue warnings, require corrective action or apply other remedies provided under the Election Regulations.

Results Declaration

Once voting has concluded, the Returning Officer:

- oversees vote counting;
- verifies election results;
- resolves any outstanding election matters;
- officially declares elected candidates; and

- confirms the election has been conducted in accordance with the rules.

Only the Returning Officer may formally declare election results.

What is the Student Representative Council (SRC)?

Understanding Student Representation

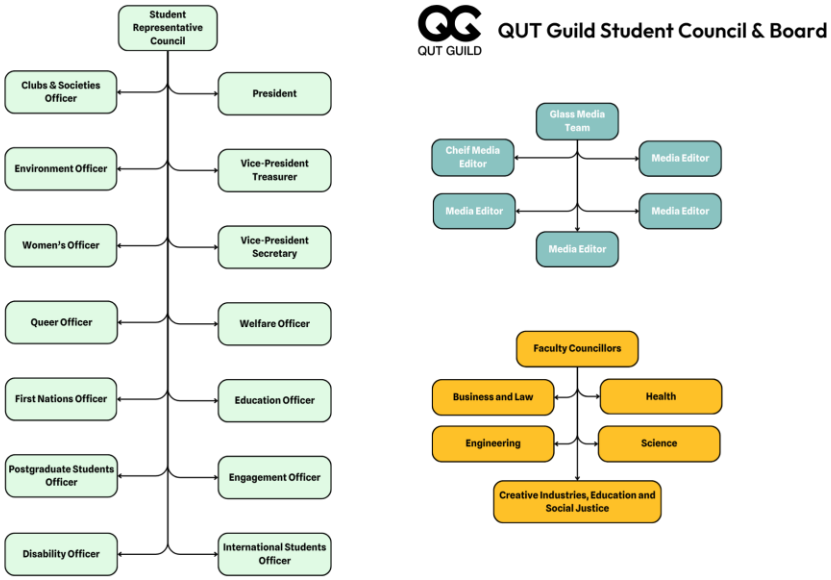
A Student Representative Council (SRC) exists to represent the interests, needs, and voices of students within a university or educational institution. Its primary purpose is to ensure students have meaningful input into decisions that affect their academic experience, wellbeing, campus life, and access to services.

The SRC acts as a formal communication channel between students and institutional leadership, advocating for improvements and raising concerns on behalf of the student body. This may include matters relating to education quality, student support, equity and inclusion, facilities, affordability, and broader student experience initiatives.

Student representatives often participate in committees, consultations, and governance processes to contribute student perspectives to decision-making. Through these mechanisms, the SRC promotes transparency, accountability, and student-centred outcomes across the institution.

In addition to advocacy and governance, the SRC plays an important role in building community and encouraging student participation. It may support events, campaigns, leadership opportunities, and initiatives that strengthen engagement and foster a sense of belonging.

Overall, the SRC serves as the democratic voice of students, ensuring their experiences and priorities are considered while developing future student leaders and contributing to a stronger and more responsive university community.



Responsibilities of SRC Members

Being elected to the Student Representative Council (SRC) means taking an active leadership role in representing the interests of QUT students. SRC members are expected to deliver on the commitments they made during their election campaign, advocate for students on issues that matter, and help shape the strategic direction of the QUT Guild by providing student perspectives to the Board. The role involves regularly attending Council, Executive Committee and any relevant University or Guild committee meetings, submitting monthly reports, and participating in Guild and QUT events connected to your portfolio. Beyond meetings, SRC members play an important role in influencing University and Guild policy, campaigning for systemic change at both the University and government level, and mobilising students when emerging issues affect the student community.

What Will You Get Out of It?

Benefits of Being Elected

Being elected to student office provides opportunities to develop practical leadership experience while making a meaningful contribution to the student community. Representatives build skills in decision-making, strategic thinking, advocacy, and collaboration through working with students, staff, and institutional leaders. The role offers valuable professional experience by exposing students to governance structures,

committee processes, policy development, budgeting, and organisational decision-making that mirror professional workplaces.

Representatives also expand their networks by connecting with university leadership, external stakeholders, community partners, and fellow student leaders. Through engaging with diverse student perspectives, elected members strengthen their communication, negotiation, public speaking, and conflict resolution skills. Participation in student governance can also enhance employability by demonstrating initiative, leadership, teamwork, and civic engagement on a resume and in future job applications. Beyond professional outcomes, serving in student leadership supports personal growth by building confidence, resilience, accountability, and a deeper understanding of how individuals can influence positive change within their communities.

What Can You Give?

What Great Student Leaders Bring

Great student leaders contribute more than ideas they contribute commitment to creating a stronger and more inclusive student community. Elected representatives act as the voice of students by listening, advocating, and ensuring diverse perspectives are reflected in decision-making. Effective student leaders bring fresh ideas and a willingness to challenge existing approaches in order to improve the student experience. They promote inclusion by creating opportunities for all students to participate and ensuring underrepresented voices are heard. Strong representatives also demonstrate accountability by acting with integrity, communicating openly, and following through on commitments made during elections. Serving in student leadership requires time, effort, and active engagement to attend meetings, consult with students, and contribute meaningfully to initiatives and governance processes. Above all, great student leaders maintain a student-first mindset placing the needs, interests, and long-term benefit of the student body at the centre of every decision they make.

Ask Yourself:

- Why do I want to run?
- What problems do I want to solve?
- What perspective can I contribute?

Running as a Ticket vs Running Independently

When considering student elections, candidates may choose to run either as part of a ticket or independently. A ticket is a group of candidates who campaign together under a shared platform, values, and set of priorities, presenting a collective vision to voters.

Running as a ticket can provide advantages such as increased support, shared campaign responsibilities, pooled resources, and greater visibility across the student community. It can also make campaigning more efficient through coordinated messaging and teamwork. However, tickets require collaboration, shared accountability, and coordination between candidates, meaning individuals may need to align with collective decisions and manage differing views within the group.

Alternatively, an independent candidate runs individually without affiliation to a ticket and develops their own campaign platform, messaging, and priorities. Running independently offers flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to communicate directly with students without representing broader group positions. However, independent candidates may face challenges in building recognition, managing campaign activities alone, and reaching voters without shared support structures. The right option depends on your goals, values, working style, and whether you prefer collaboration and shared responsibility or independence and individual leadership.

What is Campaigning?

Understanding Campaigning

Campaigning is the process through which candidates communicate their ideas, priorities, and vision to students during an election period in order to build awareness and gain support.

Effective campaigning is not simply about promoting yourself it is about engaging with students, understanding their experiences, and demonstrating how you would represent their interests if elected. Candidates use campaigning to explain their platform, share proposed initiatives, answer questions, and encourage participation in the election process. Campaigning can occur through conversations, events, online communication, promotional materials, and other approved election activities.

Successful campaigns focus on authentic engagement, respectful communication, and creating meaningful connections with students rather than simply seeking votes. Through campaigning, candidates build trust, increase visibility, and encourage students to take an active role in shaping their student community and institutional decision-making.

Campaign Activities

- Social Media engagement
- On campus conversations
- Presidents Debate
- Glass Media Election Edition
- Strategy Sessions

Campaign Rules

Ethical Campaigning
Ethical campaigning means promoting yourself, your ideas, and your platform in a fair, honest, and responsible way. Candidates should communicate accurately, avoid misleading information, and focus on positive engagement rather than personal criticism of others. Ethical campaigning helps maintain trust in the election process and supports a fair opportunity for all candidates.

Respectful Conduct
Candidates are expected to demonstrate respectful behaviour throughout the election

period. This includes treating other candidates, supporters, election officials, staff, and students professionally and courteously. Healthy debate and differing opinions are encouraged, however campaigning should never involve harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or conduct that discourages student participation.

Election Compliance

All candidates must comply with election rules, procedures, and directions provided by the Returning Officer or relevant election authority. This may include requirements relating to campaign materials, spending limits, approved campaign periods, use of university resources, and election communications. Following election rules ensures fairness, transparency, and confidence in the integrity of the election process.

How to Run an Effective Campaign

Building Your Campaign Strategy

Running an effective campaign begins with having a clear plan and focusing your efforts on meaningful student engagement. A successful campaign combines clear messaging, visibility, authentic conversations, and organised voter outreach. Rather than trying to reach everyone at once, strong campaigns focus on building trust and creating genuine connections with students.

Step 1: Define Your Message

Start by identifying why you are running and what change you want to create. Develop a small number of clear priorities that reflect student needs and explain how you would represent and advocate for students if elected. Your message should be easy to understand, consistent, and aligned with your values and campaign goals.

Step 2: Build Visibility

Students need opportunities to learn who you are and what you stand for. Use approved campaign materials, posters, social media, and other election channels to increase awareness of your campaign. Consistent and recognisable communication helps students remember your message.

Step 3: Connect With Students

Effective campaigns begin with listening. Speak with students, ask questions, understand their concerns, and have genuine conversations about their experiences. Strong engagement creates trust and helps ensure your campaign reflects real student

priorities. Be on campus! Social media will only work if you already have a following. It should be somewhere you send students once they have connected with you in person.

Step 4: Get Out the Vote
As voting approaches, encourage participation by reminding students when and how to vote. Develop an election day plan that focuses on visibility, accessibility, and encouraging informed participation while remaining compliant with election rules.

What Resources Do You Need?

Support Available

- Candidate information sessions
- Campaign guidelines
- Election Regulations
- QUT Guild Website
- Staff support (where permitted)

Campaign Resources

Setting up for a campaign can be time consuming and there may be some out-of-pocket expenses. The Guild does not provide any resources to candidates throughout the campaigning and voting period and this includes club recourses.

Below is a list of potential resources you may need and where you may get them.

- Marquee/tent - The Party Hire Place or Anaconda
- Table and Chairs – The Party Hire Place or Kmart
- Branded T-shirts – The T-Shirt Mill
- Leaflets – Vista Print
- Corflute Sign – Vista Print
- Banner – Vista Print
- Micelaneous (Snacks, Water, Sunscrean, pens)

Election Timeline

Important Dates

Stage	Description	Date
Election Announcement		
Nominations Open		24th August
Nominations Close		26th August
Candidate Briefing		14th & 15th September
Campaign Period Opens		29th September
Voting Opens		6th October
Voting Closes		9th October
Results Declared		12th October
Induction		16th – 19th November

What to Expect if I Win

Transition into Office

Winning your election is the beginning of your transition into office and preparation for your term as a Student Representative. Following the declaration of results, successful candidates will receive a formal acceptance email outlining next steps and providing all required onboarding documentation to complete. Representatives will then attend mandatory induction between **16–20 November**, designed to introduce key responsibilities, governance expectations, policies, and the role of the Guild. From **1 December**, onboarding and access arrangements will commence, including a combination of online and in-person training sessions delivered across December and January. During this period, representatives will gain access to Guild systems, workspaces, and relevant areas, meet Guild staff and fellow elected representatives, and begin building the knowledge and relationships needed to succeed in office. The transition period will also include opportunities to connect socially with the team, including attendance at the Guild Christmas Party, helping establish a strong foundation

Your Responsibilities

- Attending meetings such as Council, Executive committee, relevant internal committees, QUT committees
- Provide feedback on governance and policy within QUT and QUT Guild
- Create events, initiatives or campaigns that support QUT students
- Abide by governing documents, policy, code of conduct, and team charter

Time Commitment

- 28 – 11 hrs per week depending on role, 80% in office attendance.
- Welcome week is a peak blackout period where you are expected to participate in Guild activations.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I campaign in classes?

You can let your classmates know you are a candidate but during campaigning and voting period you are not allowed to campaign in teaching areas

Can staff support candidates?

No, QUT Guild and QUT staff must not support a candidate or engage with the elections.

Can I run with friends?

You can run with friends but make sure you have the right friend for the position.

What happens if only one person runs for a position?

You automatically win the position uncontested.

Can I incentivise votes?

No, you cannot incentivise people to vote for you, a friend, or other members of your ticket.

Can I get friends to help me campaign?

Yes, other people can help you campaign to spread your message, though you are responsible for them and they must be identifiable and abide by the election regulations.

Do I get extra credit?

No, you do not receive credit for participating in elections or becoming a member of the SRC.

Do I get paid to campaign?

No, you do not get paid to campaign. If you are a current SRC member rerunning, you cannot use your hours. This ensures it is fair for all candidates.

Glossary

Candidate

A currently enrolled student who has successfully nominated to stand for election to a position on the Student Representative Council (SRC) or another elected Guild body.

Ticket

A group of candidates who choose to campaign together under a shared name, platform, or branding. While ticket members support one another's campaigns, each candidate is elected individually by students.

Campaigning

Any activity undertaken to promote a candidate or ticket and encourage students to vote for them. This includes distributing promotional materials, speaking with students, hosting events, using social media, and displaying campaign signage during the official campaign period.

Returning Officer

An independent person appointed to oversee the election. The Returning Officer is responsible for ensuring the election is conducted fairly, impartially, and in accordance with the election regulations, including managing nominations, enforcing campaign rules, resolving electoral matters, and declaring the results.

Governance

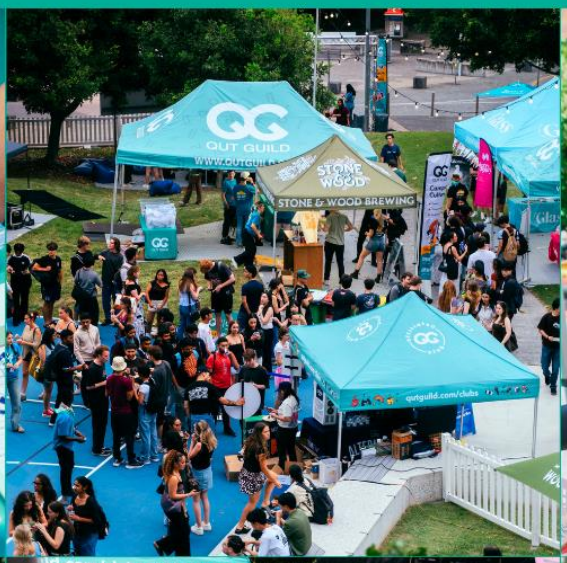
The framework of rules, policies, processes, and decision-making that guides how the Guild operates. Good governance ensures the Guild is accountable, transparent, ethical, and acts in the best interests of students.

QUT GUILD

Ready to run?

Student leadership starts with putting your hand up.

Questions? Contact:
Election Team / Returning Officer
Email: elections@qutguild.com
Website: qutguild.com



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