Guidelines for Campaigning

Purpose
To seek feedback from students on potential changes to the Guidelines for campaigning in UNSW elections (‘the Guidelines’, attached as Appendix 1) to respond to the increased use of technology (notably mobile devices) during the voting period.

Context
The Guidelines are issued by the Returning Officer, pursuant to the UNSW Rules, to set out the expectations of candidates during election campaigns. Matters addressed by the current Guidelines include:

1. Relevant UNSW Codes and Policies that candidates are expected to comply with;
2. Requirements for candidate statements; and
3. Campaigning activities that are not permitted.

The use of electronic voting in University elections offers significant efficiencies as well as providing a simple and easy to access voting system for students and staff. However, in recent years, the increased use of mobile devices as a means of electronic voting has created the potential for specific behaviours which the University considers to be unacceptable. Essentially these behaviours involve “canvassing” (ie, seeking) votes in a manner which places students under pressure, and/or disturbs students during study.

Discussion
At UNSW and other Australian universities, a practice has emerged whereby candidates and/or a supporter approaches students during the voting period offering them an electronic device (for example, an iPad, tablet or mobile phone) to use to vote in the presence of the candidate or supporter. The candidate or their supporter may sit or stand in close proximity to the person being invited to vote, and may seek to discuss the candidates standing in the election or other issues relevant to the election. It appears that, on occasion, the approach targets specific cohorts of students (eg, international students).

It is essential that University elections be conducted in a fair and proper manner and that students and staff who are considering voting, or who have decided to vote, do so without coercion or pressure. The behaviour described above has the potential to impose pressure on those approached to vote and/or to vote for a particular candidate.

There have also been concerns raised about canvassing votes or campaigning in areas intended for quiet study (eg, the library, computer laboratories, classrooms), which disturbs students.
**Proposed changes to the Guidelines and next steps**

Student feedback is invited on the proposed changes which we envisage will:

- Prohibit candidates and their supporters from canvassing (ie, seeking) votes from students by means of providing a mobile electronic device to enable voting in the presence of the candidate or his/her supporter
- Prohibit campaigning or canvassing votes in any libraries, computer laboratories and classrooms.

**Recommendation**

Students are invited to provide feedback on the proposed changes to the Guidelines. The feedback would then assist Governance and Legal to draft appropriate amendments for approval by 16 August 2017.

Comments can be made until 5pm 11 August 2017 to James Fitzgibbon, Director of Governance: elections@unsw.edu.au.

**Mr James Fitzgibbon**  
**Director of Governance**

**Appendices:**  
1. *Current Guidelines for Campaigning*
Introduction

The UNSW Rules (the Rules) give the authority to the Returning Officer to make guidelines in relation to the campaigning conduct of candidates during elections.

The University welcomes active participation in elections and the free exchange of opinions and ideas, but wishes to ensure a level playing field for all candidates and that candidates do not make improper use of their position or badger fellow staff or students.

Code of Conduct and applicable UNSW policies/guidelines

Candidates are expected to comply with the University’s Codes of Conduct and any applicable University policies and/or guidelines.

In addition, candidates are expected to conduct their candidacy in a respectful, ethical and collegial manner and with the overarching responsibility to act in the best interests of the University.

Statement of reasons for candidature

The Rules allow candidates to submit to the Elections Office a 150-word statement of reasons for their candidature (in the form prescribed by the Rules) and a photograph for distribution to voters. The elections office will edit out content of statements beyond the first 150 words.

If a candidate chooses to submit a statement and/or a photo, subject to these Guidelines, this material will be made available to voters as follows:

- Voters will be advised once candidate details are available (this will be as soon as practicable following the close of nominations). Voters will be provided with a link to those details which will be available from the elections website: https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/elections

- Voters will be sent an email on the day that voting opens with a link to the online voting system (which will contain details of eligible candidates and their candidate statements and photos).

Impermissible campaigning activities

A candidate’s statement and any campaigning material must comply with these Guidelines. In addition, they must not use the University’s logo or other University branding or state or imply that a particular candidate has the endorsement or approval of the University.

Set out below are the activities which are not permitted in the context of individual campaigning activity:

- Printing posters or flyers using UNSW equipment, systems or materials
• In respect of staff, conducting campaigning activities during time which would ordinarily be used for the discharge of academic or professional duties

• Accessing UNSW contact details that are not available to all staff or students (as the case may be) or accessing explode lists to send campaign emails

• Using UNSW servers or systems to build, maintain or host a campaign website

• Badging personal websites to look like official University websites

• Using any means to apply pressure on a person to vote, or to vote for a particular candidate.

Campaigning emails (that is, emails which promote or endorse one or more particular candidates) may only be sent by candidates, and not by others on their behalf. Senior staff are encouraged to make staff and students within their School or Faculty aware of elections in which they can participate, subject to these Guidelines and bearing in mind that in doing so, particular candidates should not be promoted or endorsed. If any person wishes to send campaigning emails, they should be mindful of the restrictions set out above and clearly mark the email as a campaign-related email. Any person sending campaigning emails should be mindful of not badgering staff or students (as the case may be).

Further information

Code of Conduct:

Student Code Policy:

Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology Policy:

Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology Procedure:

Who can I call for advice?

Contact the Elections Office: elections@unsw.edu.au or 02 93853073.

These guidelines are issued by Elizabeth Grinston, Returning Officer pursuant to sections 5.2 (c), (d), 5.7 (b), (c) of the Rules on 26 August 2016.