



Universities UK



Association
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Promoting, Representing, Supporting.

The
Electoral
Commission



Dear Vice Chancellor / Principal,

We are writing to you collectively to ask for your help in registering your students to vote ahead of the UK Parliamentary General Election on 7 May.

Young people, including students, have historically been less likely to be registered to vote than those in other age-groups. Research conducted by the Electoral Commission has indicated that around 30% of 18-24 year olds are not registered to vote compared to less than 5% of those aged over 65.

The Electoral Commission is working with a range of organisations, including the National Union of Students, Universities UK, the Association of Colleges, Guild HE and the Academic Registrars Council to address this discrepancy. Your Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) at your local council will also have plans for getting students registered, so we'd encourage you to get in touch with them to see what activity is planned. We would welcome your support for this work and this letter includes ideas about what your institution can do to help. We would also ask that you commit publicly to doing this and have set out how you can do so.

Changes to the registration system

Before outlining how you can help, we thought it may be useful to set out some more background to this issue.

It is important that all students are made aware that responding to a request from an ERO to provide information so that they can be registered to vote is both a legal requirement and that if they wish to vote in the General Election on 7 May this year that they must be registered by **20 April** to do so. It is worth noting that students aged 17 are also entitled to register, and those who turn 18 by 7 May

2015 will be able to vote at the election providing they register before 20 April 2015.

Residential students can register at both their home address and their term time address but will need to choose whether to vote in the General Election in their home constituency, or their constituency at university or college. Students can vote in person at their local polling station or can choose to apply to vote by post, which may be particularly helpful if they want to vote in their home constituency.

It is particularly important that students are aware that in June 2014 a new system of electoral registration was introduced. This means that they are required to register to vote individually rather than this being done by a 'head of household' who registers all occupants at an address. This change means that universities can no longer act as the 'head of household' and register their residential students en bloc. They will now have to register themselves. However, as part of the move to individual registration, it is also important that they know they can now register quickly and easily using a new online system www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

What you can do to get your students registered

We have set out below some ideas for what you can do to help get your students registered and would ask that you do as many of these as possible, they include:

1. **Emailing all your students** with details of how they can register, giving them the link to the online voter registration site, www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. We have designed a template e-mail that you can use and you can find this at Appendix B at the end of this letter.
2. **Holding registration drives** in all tutorials or lectures in a particular week ideally well in advance of the registration deadline for the General Election on 20 April. Students can do this in 5 minutes online through phones, tablets or computers. They will need their National Insurance number so they would need advance warning of this before the sessions and you could tell them where they can get these from your finance departments if they need to get them.
3. **Placing posters in your buildings** to highlight voter registration and the online registration link. These are available on the Electoral Commission's website [here](#).
4. **Putting information about registration on your website** and any social media channels and intranets used by students and staff.

5. **Liaising with your local students' union** and other bodies to support any activity they are doing to encourage voter registration, including on National Voter Registration Day on 5 February.

Your institution holds a unique position in the lives of your students and we ask that you encourage them wherever possible to register to vote. The actions we have outlined are suggestions of how you can do this, but we welcome any further ideas you have.

We are also asking that you commit publicly to helping get your students registered. The Electoral Commission have created a form on their website where you can sign up to confirm that you are doing this. It will only take a minute to complete and your institution's name will then be listed on the Commission's website so that people can see that you are doing your bit to help get your students registered.

If you need any support or further information in the meantime, please do let us know. You can do this in the first instance by contacting Rosemary Davenport, Senior Communications Officer, on 0207 271 0530 or rdavenport@electoralcommission.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Chair, Electoral Commission



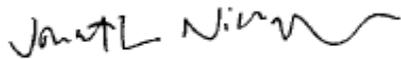
Nicola Dandridge, Chief Executive,
Universities UK



Andy Westwood, Chief Executive, GuildHE



Richard Atkins, President,
Association of Colleges



Dr Jonathan Nicholls,
Registrary, University of Cambridge,
Chair, AHUA



Toni Pearce, President,
National Union of Students

Appendix A – background to Individual Electoral Registration.

Over the past few months Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) in local authorities across Great Britain have used publicly-held data to match existing entries on electoral registers against data held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and local councils.

Although 87% of people were matched against these data-sets, this still left around 5.5 million who were not transferred automatically to the new registers and who will have received a letter from their local ERO notifying them of this and providing them with a registration form to complete. Although no one is being removed from the register as a result of the implementation of IER, in addition to those not transferred onto the new register automatically, there are a further 7.5 million people who were not registered prior to the data matching exercise and are missing from the register at the moment.

We know from the Electoral Commission's research that there are significant numbers of students in both of these groups – i.e. those either not data matched or not previously registered. Particular groups that are not likely to be registered will likely include those who have recently moved to the area (so first year or new post-graduate students), those who have moved out of their previous student accommodation but are still in the area, or those who were not registered under the old system.

EROs in areas with a significant population of students will have plans for reaching out to them and all of our organisations are working to help supplement this local activity to make sure students know what they need to do to register.

Appendix B - Email to students

Dear NAME,

The General Election is now just around the corner and I wanted to let you know that you can now register to vote quickly and easily online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Young people, including students, are less likely to be registered to vote than those in other age-groups. Around 30% of 18-24 year olds are not registered to vote compared to less than 5% of those aged over 65.

We are keen that everyone at INSTITUTION NAME is able to vote, but if you want to make your voice heard in the General Election on 7 May, you must be registered by **20 April** at the latest, so I would encourage you to take 5 minutes to do this now. Remember that, when registering you'll need your National Insurance number. [If you don't know where to find this, you can get it from our FINANCE/FEE/SUPPORT OFFICE on PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL.]

Thanks,

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