







Doubtful ballot papers – allowed votes

Suggested examples of allowed votes are provided here. All of these examples are based on previous case law or taken from the specific rules for the elections. Ultimately the decision on any particular ballot paper rests with the (Deputy) Returning Officer and it is for them to determine their own view of the application of case law.




Case references can be found in *Supporting the Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections – Dealing with doubtful ballot papers*. Other references are to the election rules: The Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of The Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (as amended).

Mark order of preference in space below	
	 1 CANDIDATE A A Party
	4 CANDIDATE B Independent
	 3 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 2 CANDIDATE D D Party




Allow. Assembly rule 44C(1) and Local rule 46(1).

Mark order of preference in space below	
1	 CANDIDATE A A Party
4 3	CANDIDATE B Independent
2	 CANDIDATE C C Party
4	 CANDIDATE D D Party




Allow. Assembly rule 44C(1), Local rule 46(1) and Cirencester case, Eley v Durant.

Mark order of preference in space below	
one	 CANDIDATE A A Party
four	CANDIDATE B Independent
three	 CANDIDATE C C Party
two	 CANDIDATE D D Party




Allow. Assembly rule 44C(1) and Local rule 46(1).

Mark order of preference in space below	
X	 CANDIDATE A A Party
2	CANDIDATE B Independent
3	 CANDIDATE C C Party
4	 CANDIDATE D D Party




Allow for candidates A, B, C and D as first, second, third and fourth preference respectively. Assembly rule 44C(1) and Local rule 46(1).

Mark order of preference in space below	
1	 CANDIDATE A A Party
3	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party




Partially accept – broken numerical sequence. Allow for candidate A as first preference. Assembly rules 44C(1) and 44G(4). Local rules 46(1) and 50(4).

Mark order of preference in space below	
1	 CANDIDATE A A Party
2	CANDIDATE B Independent
3	 CANDIDATE C C Party
3	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Partially accept – same order of preference indicated. Allow for candidates A and B as first and second preferences respectively. Assembly rules 44C(1) and 44G(4) and Local rules 46(1) and 50(4).

Mark order of preference in space below	
	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
<i>Candidate C1</i>	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Partially accept – allow for candidate C as first preference. Assembly rule 44C(1), local rule 46(1) and Ruffle v Rogers (provided there is no other candidate by the name of C).




Mark order of preference in space below	
yes	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Partially accept – allow for candidate A as first preference. Assembly rule 44C(1), Local rule 46(1) and Ruffle v Rogers.




Doubtful ballot papers – rejected votes

Suggested examples of rejected votes are provided here. All of these examples are based on previous case law or taken from the specific rules for the elections. Ultimately the decision on any particular ballot paper rests with the (Deputy) Returning Officer and it is for them to determine their own view of the application of case law.




Case references can be found in *Supporting the Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections – Dealing with doubtful ballot papers*. Other references are to the election rules: The Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) Order 2001 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of The Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (as amended).

Mark order of preference in space below	
1	 CANDIDATE A A Party
1	CANDIDATE B Independent
2	 CANDIDATE C C Party
3	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Reject – first preference opposite more than one candidate. Assembly rule 44C(1)(c) and Local rule 46(1)(c).




Mark order of preference in space below	
2	 CANDIDATE A A Party
3	CANDIDATE B Independent
4	 CANDIDATE C C Party
5	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Reject – no first preference. Assembly rule 44C(1)(b) and Local rule 46(1)(b).





Mark order of preference in space below	
	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

J.S. with 24 Acacia Grove Belfast





Reject – voter can be identified. Assembly rule 44C(1)(d), Local rule 46(1)(d) and Woodward v Sarsons, South Newington case.

Mark order of preference in space below	
2	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
1	 CANDIDATE C C Party
3	 CANDIDATE D D Party




Reject – void for uncertainty. Assembly rule 44C(1)(e), Local rule 46(1)(e) and Buckrose case.

Mark order of preference in space below	
	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party
 None of the above	




Reject – void for uncertainty. Assembly rule 44C(1)(e) and Local rule 46(1)(e).

Mark order of preference in space below	
1	 CANDIDATE A A Party
2	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Reject – first preference opposite more than one candidate / void for uncertainty. Assembly rules 44C(1)(c) and (e), Local rules 46(1)(c) and (e).

Mark order of preference in space below	
	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Reject – void for uncertainty. Assembly rule 44C(1)(e), Local rule 46(1)(e) and Rowe v Cox.

Mark order of preference in space below	
	 CANDIDATE A A Party
	CANDIDATE B Independent
	 CANDIDATE C C Party
	 CANDIDATE D D Party

Reject – ballot paper unmarked. Assembly rule 44C(1)(e) and Local rule 46(1)(e).