

# CANDIDATE WELLBEING GUIDE

## WELCOME TO THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS!

Standing for an elected position is an exciting and rewarding experience. You'll have the opportunity to connect with other students and discuss real issues that impact students on a daily basis, while putting forward your own ideas for change at Winchester.

That said, running in an election can be tiring and difficult at times. It's therefore really important to regularly check in with your mental health and overall wellbeing. By looking after yourself, you'll be helping to make sure you are a healthier and stronger candidate and campaigner.

[www.winchesterstudents.co.uk/suelections](http://www.winchesterstudents.co.uk/suelections)

It's okay to have questions or concerns about running in an election. We're here to help you throughout your time as a candidate, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [suelection@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:suelection@winchester.ac.uk).

In this guide, you'll find our top wellbeing tips to keep in mind during campaigning, along with some wisdom and advice straight from the minds of previous candidates.

## TIP#1: TAKE BREAKS

### Take Time Out

Although trying to reach every student with your campaign is an admirable goal, you also need some time to yourself to recharge. Whether it is going for a run, grabbing yourself a take-away coffee, reading a book, or seeing a friend, taking regular breaks is important for your mental and physical health. Taking time for yourself can help you manage stress, improve your focus and creativity, and, believe it or not, help you problem solve as your brain looks for solutions 'in the background'. Far from being a waste of campaign time, taking breaks can make you a more effective campaigner.

### Switch Off, Touch Grass

From doomscrolling to email anxiety, all of us recognise the pull of social media in our day-to-day lives. During campaigning, this can feel more intense, as you'll likely be keen to check how your, and others', posts are faring, and want to keep up to date on any elections-related news - it's a lot of pressure! This makes screen breaks all the more vital. Take some time to get outside, get a lungful of fresh air, and be in the moment - it can be a great way to reduce stress and reconnect with yourself.

***" Make sure that you have downtime, ensure that you prepare before the start of the week, and have a good team of friends around you to help campaign. Also, always be yourself, because people will vote for you, not what you're trying to be :) "***

- Advice from a previous candidate

## TIP#2: EAT, SLEEP, DRINK



### Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

In the bustle of campaigning, it's easy to forget the essentials: eating well, staying hydrated, getting enough sleep, and engaging in exercise. Maintaining your body in these ways has immense benefits for your mood, your focus, your physical endurance, your immune-system, and emotional resilience.

### Plan Ahead

Eating well, and at regular intervals, can help you feel energised. While sugar and caffeine are certainly helpful for quick pick-me-ups, consider slow-release foods, like wholegrain rice, vegetables, and jacket potatoes, for meals to avoid crashes and keep you going. Dried fruit and nuts can also be a great sugar-alternative snack that you can keep in your pocket while out and about.

Batch cooking at the weekend can also be helpful to make sure you're having a quick, easy evening meal each day. If you're new to meal planning, there are plenty of resources online, including from the British Heart Foundation, and Tesco.

## Your Water Bottle is Your Friend

As mentioned, staying hydrated is very important, and the simplest way to do this is to keep a bottle with you which you can sip regularly from throughout the day - just make sure to fill it with something you will actually drink - there's no point carting around a litre of water everywhere, if you never touch it!

## Get Those Zzz's

Try establishing a day/night routine that works for you. If your morning starts at 11am, and your night starts at 1am, that is fine - when you sleep matters far less than the quantity of sleep you're getting.

As far as possible, try to avoid screen time right before bed, as this typically makes it harder to fall asleep. Instead, you could use some time before hitting the pillow to write a 'to do' list for the next day to organise your thoughts and clear your mind of distractions. You might also like to try relaxation exercises (such as yoga stretches), drinking some herbal tea, reading a book, or listening to relaxing music.



***"Stock up on food before the campaigning starts. It's so, so easy to forget to eat, but if you don't, you are grumpy, and not even able to talk to people". - Advice from a previous candidate***

## Keeping Active

Regular physical activity is an almost one-stop shop for supporting your wellbeing - it releases endorphins which enhance mood, reduces anxiety and stress, and helps to improve the quality of your sleep. Aside from all of your campaign activity, it is well worth considering engaging in some form of regular exercise throughout your campaigning. This doesn't have to be a hardcore 3hr gym session, but could be as simple as taking yourself for a 15 -20 minute walk, or stretching at your desk.

## Exercise Bingo Card

Below you can find some suggestions for simple exercises you could do throughout the week, either by yourself, or better yet, with a friend, pet, partner, or family member.

Go for a 5-10 min walk	Stretch for 5 mins between engagements	Take a One-Song Movement break
Vacuum your house / flat / room	Self-Challenge Pick a stretch or activity (e.g. squat), and see how many you can do in 1 minute	Do 10 gentle muscle squeezes contract / squeeze for 5, then release for 5

## Activity Groups

Activity Groups provide fantastic opportunities for taking a break, as well as providing opportunities for physical activity, and to connect and relax with others. Whether you're a member of an Activity Group, or have hobbies and interests you pursue outside of the Union, consider keeping time for them during campaigning as a way of practising self-care during a busy period, even if you choose to attend for a shorter time than you usually would.

## TIP#3: BE ORGANISED

***"Prepare your materials ahead of the campaigning dates, and remember to get plenty of rest!" - Advice from a previous candidate***

### **Draw (and Keep) Work-Life Boundaries**

When working on your campaign, where possible, try to do so in a space which is separate from where you'd normally relax (e.g. working from your bed). This isn't always practical, but keeping these spaces separate can help you to switch-off (and switch on!) when appropriate, and also enhance your focus when you need it most, as your brain associates each space with a particular activity.

### **Create a Plan**

There can be a lot to keep track of during the Election period, so consider creating a plan for the week to help you manage your time. You can include key campaign activities, as well as mapping out those important meal and break times, too! Try to plan something nice to do in the evenings to de-stress, as well - whether this is some planned time for self-care, or time with friends.

Be realistic with your expectations for yourself, and don't try to fit too much into one day. Your wellbeing is more important than a few extra votes.

### **Find the Balance**

Try and keep up with your studies as much as possible - running in the election is not an excuse to miss lectures! If you're worried about time, some candidates consider giving other commitments a short break while campaigning to help manage the load. Equally, others prefer to keep a normal routine, and other commitments help them to switch-off from campaigning.

If you feel like you're struggling to keep up with your studies whilst campaigning, feel free to reach out to the Union team, or the University's Student Support and Success teams. The Academic Skills team can support you with organising your time, and signpost you to options for extensions, if needed.

## TIP#4: BE KIND TO YOURSELF



### Self-Care

Self-care is very important during Campaign Week, and will be individual to everyone. Examples include: taking breaks, eating well, getting enough sleep, and getting fresh-air. Be kind to yourself and remember to do something nice when you're not campaigning.

### Avoid Comparing Yourself to Others

It is human nature to want to compare yourself to others, especially when campaigning. However, indulging in negative comparison is unhelpful, and unfair - everyone has their own strengths, and ways of doing things, and no one interaction is likely to make or break a campaign. A healthier practice might be to compare yourself only to yourself - to reflect on your achievements, and identify your next steps. Take inspiration from others, but run only against yourself.

***"Stay true to what you believe in and just be yourself. It's hard, but if you stay true to your campaign, people will support you"***

- Advice from a previous candidate

## Mindfulness and Meditation

Being mindful, and meditating, are really just ways of taking time to be present in the moment, and to put the stresses of the day, and constant thinking about 'what's next?' to one side for a moment. It is well worth considering building 5-10 mins into your day to engage with yourself in this way, and boost your mental wellbeing.

There are lots of resources online, including some great YouTube videos, and mindfulness apps. To get you started, we've included some examples below. Feel free to experiment and find what works best for you.

### 5-4-3-2-1

This is a grounding technique which can help bring you into the present moment, and support you when you're feeling anxious, or overwhelmed.

Find a space, and name: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

Try to really focus on each thing you identify, perhaps adding an adjective to describe it further (e.g. I can see a small, round, grey stone).



## Box Breathing

This is a breathing technique which you can do anywhere, and at anytime. Either find a square around you, or picture one in your mind. Start at the upper left corner and inhale for 4 beats. As you inhale, trace your eye along the top edge of the square, arriving at the right corner when you hit 4. Now, hold for 4 and move your eye down to the bottom right corner, then exhale for 4, moving your eye to the left corner, and hold for the final 4, moving your eye to your starting point.

Repeat this cycle 4 times.

## Feet on the Floor

This can be done while sat down at a desk, in a meeting, in a car, or on public transport - where you find yourself sat down.

Sit upright, and press both feet flat on the floor. Apply gentle pressure downward, through your feet. Notice the physical sensations. Take 5 slow breaths.

## Self-Celebration

Taking time to focus on the positive aspects of our lives, and to celebrate ourselves for who we are can not only improve our mood in the moment, but also help us build emotional resilience in the long term, too.

Take a moment and reflect on: A time you felt joy, something you do well (e.g. a talent or skill), something that makes you laugh, something you've achieved today, and something you love about yourself (e.g. "I love that I...")

***"Try and embrace the challenge and excitement that running in an election brings. If you have a bad day, try not to let it affect how you perform the next. Elections can be stressful, so making time for self-care is important. You've got this!"***

***- Advice from a previous candidate***

## TIP#5: ASK FOR HELP



### It's Okay to Lean on Others

Having a strong support network around you while campaigning can be really helpful. Whether it be people to talk to about how it's going, or your campaign team providing direct support with engaging students, having those key people around you can keep you going during the campaign period.

If you live with others, consider asking housemates or family members whether they can help you, particularly during Campaign Week. They could help by cooking a meal one evening, taking on one of your normal chores for the week, or even meeting up with you for coffee to help you keep to your planned breaks.

Candidates often make friends with other candidates in elections. Take the opportunity to get to know each other, and to motivate and support one other. Being kind and supportive towards your fellow candidates is definitely not against the rules, and is likely to contribute to a positive experience for everyone.

## Virtual “Hello’s”

If you're not close with those you live with, or if you live alone, you can still reach out for support. Video calling a friend, or even a family pet, is a great way to de-stress and feel supported. Consider asking people to check in on you throughout the campaign period to see how you're doing, or organising ahead of time to call each other. Most importantly, give yourself permission to talk about how you're feeling - both the highs and the lows!

## Results Night

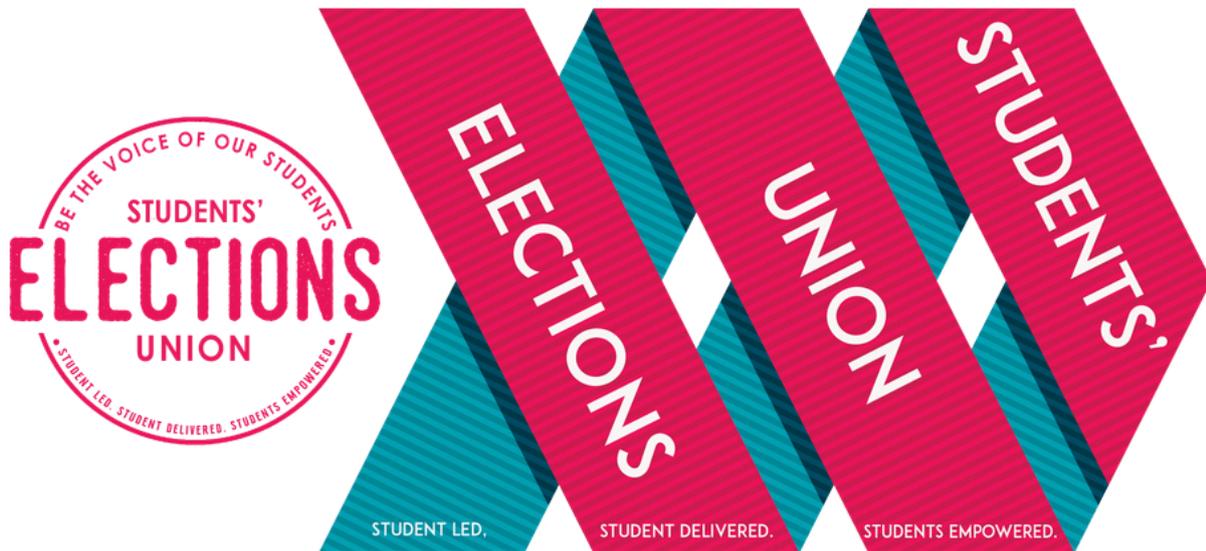
Elections Results Night is, naturally, a very stressful time for candidates, especially since you're all so passionate about the roles that you're running for. Let your support network know the date and time of the Election Results, and consider asking a friend if they can be with you on the evening (virtually, or in person).

Whether you choose to attend the Results Night is entirely up to you, so make sure you do whatever feels most comfortable. In previous years, candidates have attended together, and supported each other throughout the evening, as well.

Why not plan something for after the announcement to celebrate the end of Elections? Irrespective of the result, you should be proud of having stood to represent students, and should take the time to recognise the effort you've put into your campaign. So, whether it's going for a night out, or marathoning your favourite series with a stack of snacks at your side, take some time after the Elections have finished to celebrate yourself. You deserve it.

***“Get stuck in, and try to engage with all student groups. Take regular breaks from your phone and campaigning to do things you enjoy. If you can, have a buddy, such as a partner or housemate, who can make sure you take breaks, and take time to relax!”***

- Advice from a previous candidate



# FINDING THINGS TOUGH? GET IN TOUCH!

## Elections Support

Email us at [suelections@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:suelections@winchester.ac.uk) for anything elections-related, or any elections concerns you may have - we're here to help!

## Students' Union Advice Centre

You can contact our Students' Union Advice & Wellbeing Manager for general wellbeing tips, or if you'd like to have a chat with someone not connected to the elections process. You can email them directly via [SU.Advice@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:SU.Advice@winchester.ac.uk).

## Student Support & Success

The University's Student Journey team are available for support if you would like to talk generally about your wellbeing. You can email them on [Student.Advice@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:Student.Advice@winchester.ac.uk), or call 01926 827341.