

# VOTE COUNTING GUIDELINES



## Purpose and Authority

These Vote Counting Guidelines are issued by the Returning Officer under the [Governance Rule](#). They set out the requirements governing the counting of votes and the transparency of the scrutineering process.

In accordance with the Governance Rule, the Returning Officer determines the manner in which an election is conducted and will determine all matters relating to the conduct and results of the election. The Returning Officer's determination on all such matters is final.

## Voting System

Voting is conducted by optional preferential voting in accordance with the Governance Rule.

## Eligibility Check

Prior to the commencement of the vote count, the Returning Officer will confirm that each candidate:

- remains eligible to stand for election in accordance with the Governance Rule; and
- may reasonably be expected to remain eligible as at the commencement of the term of office.

If the Returning Officer determines that a candidate does not meet these requirements, that candidate will be declared ineligible for election and excluded from the count.

## Counting Process

The ballots cast in an election are counted in accordance with the following longstanding convention that has been used by the University since 1999:

- A ballot is "formal" and will be counted if it indicates a first preference ("1") and optionally can have consecutive preferences for the remaining candidates.
- A ballot is "informal" and will not be counted if it does not indicate a first preference, or if it includes duplicated or non-consecutive preferences.
- The formal ballots cast in an election are counted as follows:

1. The total number of first preference votes for each candidate are counted.
2. If a candidate has an absolute majority, that candidate is elected.
3. If no candidate has an absolute majority:
  - a. the candidate who has the fewest votes is excluded;
  - b. the votes allocated to the excluded candidate are reallocated to the next remaining candidate in accordance with electors' preference, or are "exhausted" if no remaining preference has been given; and
  - c. the procedures above are repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority (or the number of remaining candidates is equal to the number of positions to be filled).

- If two or more remaining candidates have equal numbers of votes and one of them must be excluded from the count, the Returning Officer must determine by lot which of them is to be excluded.
- If there are only two remaining candidates and they each have equal numbers of votes, the Returning Officer must determine by lot which of them is to be elected.
- An absolute majority of votes means a number greater than one half of the total number of votes remaining in the count.

## Treatment of Votes for Ineligible Candidates

Where a candidate is declared ineligible or is otherwise disqualified before or during the counting process:

- any ballot that records a preference for that candidate will be treated as if that candidate had been excluded from the count;
- the vote will be allocated to the next available preference indicated on the ballot for a remaining eligible candidate;
- if no further preference is indicated for a remaining eligible candidate, the ballot will be treated as exhausted; and
- the ballot will otherwise continue to be counted in accordance with the optional

preferential voting process set out in these Guidelines.

For the purposes of the count, an ineligible or disqualified candidate is taken to have been excluded at the earliest practicable stage of the counting process, as determined by the Returning Officer.

## Integrity of the Count

The Returning Officer will ensure that appropriate measures are in place to maintain the accuracy, integrity, and security of:

- the electronic voting system; and
- all data used in the vote count.

Records of the vote count will be retained in accordance with the Governance Rule.

## Scrutineers

Each candidate may appoint a scrutineer to review the counting process in accordance with the Governance Rule.

Scrutineers may:

- attend a briefing conducted by the Deputy Returning Officer;
- review the vote counting process;
- inspect de-identified records from the electronic voting system and reports showing how votes have been counted;
- request demonstrations of how vote totals have been calculated; and
- raise questions or concerns about the counting process.

Scrutineers must:

- be provided with a copy of [Schedule 5 of the Governance Rule](#) and this Guideline;
- sign an acknowledgement of their role and obligations before participating; and
- comply with all reasonable directions of the Returning Officer (or nominee).

## Confidentiality

Everyone involved in the count, including scrutineers, must maintain strict confidentiality. In particular no person involved may:

- disclose, or assist in disclosing, how any voter has voted;
- copy, record, or retain any election data or materials; or
- use information obtained through the process for any purpose other than fulfilling their role.

A breach of confidentiality may result in removal from the process and referral for misconduct or disciplinary action.

## Complaints and Determinations

Any question or concern regarding the count must be raised as soon as practicable with the Deputy Returning Officer via [elections@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:elections@newcastle.edu.au).

The Returning Officer may investigate any matter relating to the counting of votes and make such determinations as they consider appropriate.

The Returning Officer's decision on all matters relating to the conduct and results of the election is final.

## Final Declaration of Result

The outcome of the vote count will initially be treated as a provisional result. The Returning Officer will declare the final result once satisfied that:

- the count has been conducted correctly;
- any questions or concerns raised have been considered and determined; and
- the successful candidates have indicated that they will accept election to the position.

## Further Information

Contact the Deputy Returning Officer, Legal and Governance Services E: [elections@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:elections@newcastle.edu.au)

Name of Scrutineer: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that I have read and understood the role of a Scrutineer and will perform the role in accordance with these Guidelines.

Signature of Scrutineer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_