



The Commonwealth

# Commonwealth Youth Council Electoral Regulations

June 2015

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## 1. Introduction

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1. The Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) Electoral Regulations are devised and adopted, in accordance with the CYC Constitution.
2. The Electoral Regulations shall serve as a guide for transparent and democratic elections for CYC positions.
3. The Regulations provide the procedures and rules governing the conduct of elections including :
  - a) complete understanding of CYC Constitution and procedures of the CYC General Assembly procedures;
  - b) call for candidates ;
  - c) confirmation of candidates ;
  - d) election results and appeal;
  - e) the publication of the official list of candidates;
  - f) the management and logistics for elections (Returning Officer, list of voters, ballot papers, voting facility, count of votes, minutes and other relevant matters.);
  - g) the circulation of general information about the election among the delegates, government bodies, representatives of the media and other relevant stakeholders.
4. It is, therefore, necessary for each delegate to understand the Electoral Regulations in order to ensure that the elections are transparent and democratic. In particular, this means:
  - a) adhering to the CYC Constitution and procedures of the CYC General Assembly;
  - b) avoiding any conflicts of interests that could discredit the impartiality of the elections.

## 2. Application

These Regulations shall apply to elections to the Executive (including the Chairperson, Vice Chairpersons, regional representatives, the representative for special interest groups), the Returning Officer and the President of the General Assembly, in addition to elections for members of other committees deemed appropriate in the view of the Executive of the CYC.

## 3. Basic Principles

1. The principles of democracy and transparency and publicity for the electoral processes of CYC shall be observed at all times.
2. External interference of any kind in the electoral process or composition of the elective body (CYC General Assembly or Executives) of the CYC shall not be permitted.

3. Commonwealth or government rules on elections shall not apply to the internal administration of the CYC and these regulations shall not require the approval of any Commonwealth or government body.
4. The CYC shall adapt and approve these regulations in accordance with the CYC Constitution.
5. At the time of the election all candidates shall attend the General Assembly.

#### **4. Returning Officer and Electoral Board**

1. The Returning Officer shall be elected, on the nomination of the Chief Executive, in accordance with the provisions of these regulations and the CYC constitution, by a simple majority of the members of CYC General Assembly. This provision shall come into force on the dates of the CYC General Assembly in Malta, 2015.
2. The Returning Officer shall organise and supervise the election process and shall take all decisions relating to the election.
3. For simplicity and efficiency, the Returning Officer shall appoint members of the Electoral Board. The Returning Officer shall also assign duties and responsibilities to the Electoral Board appointed on or before the day of the CYC elections.
4. The Electoral Board shall be composed of a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of four (4) members and shall be formed from within the CYC General Assembly.
5. No member of the Electoral Board shall serve on the CYC Executive.
6. The Returning Officer and members of the Electoral Board shall be bona fide members of the CYC.
7. The members of the Electoral Board shall immediately decline to give an opinion and withdraw from deliberating on any matter in question if they are:
  - a. a candidate for an elected post;
  - b. a relative, whether by birth or marriage, of one of the candidates for an elected post;
  - c. a government official of any kind.
8. In the event that a member of the Electoral Board stands as a candidate for an elected post or is unable to carry out any of his/her duties, he/she shall resign from the Board. Any member who resigns shall be replaced by a substitute.
9. The Board may be assisted by members of the CYC Secretariat at any time provided that they are not standing as candidates for elected posts.
10. The Returning Officer shall be the Chairperson of the Electoral Board.
11. The President of the CYC General Assembly from the host country, who is elected before the elections, shall serve as Secretary to the Electoral Board.
12. The Secretary to the Electoral Board shall take part in the activities of the Board in a consultative capacity, shall be responsible for the related logistical matters and shall take care of administrative matters.

#### **5. Duties of the Electoral Board**

The Electoral Board shall be responsible for all tasks relating to the organisation, running and supervision of the elective General Assembly including, but not limited to the following:

1. strictly enforcing the CYC's Constitution and regulations;
2. strictly enforcing the regulatory deadlines for elections;
3. distributing information to the members of the general assembly as well as to government bodies, the media and the public;
4. the candidate procedure (launch, manifesto, distribution of information, evaluation, publication of official list etc.);
5. drawing up the list of voters in accordance with the CYC's constitutional provisions
6. all matters relating to the administrative and technical organisation of the General assembly that are not covered by the regulations shall be ruled upon by the Board;
7. all matters relating to the running of the elections not covered by the regulations shall be ruled upon by the Board;
8. the members of the Board shall observe the utmost impartiality when carrying out their duties.

## **7. Nomination Process**

1. Elections shall be held in harmony with the Constitution and Commonwealth practice.
2. Only nominated and approved candidates shall be presented to the floor by the Electoral Board for each position to be filled.
3. The Electoral Board may choose to present a series of partial reports, findings and investigations about the elections.
4. The Returning Officer may re-open nominations if the candidates for the positions are not accepted by the General Assembly, or in the case where the positions cannot be filled from the previous call for nominations or where a candidate withdrawn his/her nomination. The Returning Officer may extend period of nominations to seek more nominations for the positions.
5. There shall be an option for Re-Open Nomination (RON) which shall be counted as a 'candidate' marked on the ballot, so voters may choose not to vote, wherein none of the nominated candidates are preferred.

6. Candidates can withdraw their nomination at any time, but shall do so before the counting of the votes, by notifying the Returning Officer in writing. The votes of the next preferred candidates shall be counted, and results announced.
7. The Electoral Board shall meet in closed session. This does not mean deliberations of the Board cannot be made public.

## **8. Manifesto and Campaigns**

1. Each candidate shall submit receipts and report of costs of their campaigns, and declare all gifts and donations obtained for election purposes to the Returning Officer by the stipulated date as indicated by the Returning Officer.
2. Each candidate shall be limited to the equivalent of GBP 200 (or the equivalent in local currency) to be spent on campaign materials.
3. 2000-2500 word manifesto, based on one of (where applicable) the main themes or sub-themes of the Commonwealth Youth Council General Assembly of the Commonwealth Youth Forum to be held in Malta, 2015. For details see: [www.chogm2015.mt/fora/youth](http://www.chogm2015.mt/fora/youth) or [www.commonwealthyouthcouncil.org/general-assembly](http://www.commonwealthyouthcouncil.org/general-assembly)
4. Once nomination is approved, each candidate shall submit a 3 minute video speaking directly about their background, qualifications, skills, interest in CYC and key content of their manifesto.
5. Each candidate shall be allocated a stipulated time slot at the General Assembly to present his/her manifesto and to answer any questions from the delegates.
6. The Returning Officer shall issue rules of engagement for campaigns, and a strict code of ethics shall be followed by all candidates. Campaigns shall be conducted in a mutually responsible and respectfully manner. Where any candidate engages in misconduct or causes any disorder in the elections, he/she shall be disqualified from the elections.

## **9. Voting Process**

1. By ruling of the Returning Officer or by majority vote of the delegates present and voting, voting may be by secret ballot or use of electronic device.
2. Where voting is by secret ballot paper, the ballot paper shall be divided into three detachable parts: the ballot itself, the counterfoil and the stub, which shall remain attached to the ballot book. The stub and counterfoil shall have a matching serial number printed on them. The serial number shall be strictly a temporary control mechanism used to ensure that the ballot given to the elector is the same ballot returned to the Returning Officer.
3. When voters enter the polling station, they shall present themselves to the Returning Officer. Members of the Electoral Board shall then check to determine that each elector's name appears on the voters' register.

4. Voting by proxy shall be allowed if a delegation already registered to vote is unable to attend the General Assembly or a decision-making process. The delegation shall appoint someone or group they trust to vote on their behalf or shall do so by such means approved by the Council.

## **10. Alternative Voting**

1. The voting process shall be by the alternative voting (AV) system where the voter shall have the opportunity to rank the candidates in order of preference.
2. The voter shall put a '1' by their first choice, a '2' by their second choice, and so on, until he/she no longer wishes to express any further preferences or run out of candidates.
3. Candidates shall be elected outright if they gain more than half of the first preference votes. If not, the candidate who lost (the one with least first preferences) shall be eliminated and their votes shall be redistributed according to the second (or next available) preference marked on the ballot paper.

## **11. Election Results and Appeals**

1. After the polls close, the Returning Officer, assisted by the Electoral Board and witnessed by the candidates or their representatives, shall record the number of votes received by each candidate and the number of rejected ballots on a Statement of the Vote.
2. Results of the elections shall be announced at the General Assembly. The candidates who receive the highest votes shall be elected and announced as having been elected.
3. The Returning officer shall validate the results by adding the totals given on each Statement of the Vote. The returning officer shall then deliver a certificate announcing the validated results to the candidates.
4. At election time, results shall be announced and published on Elections online or means of notification as they become available. Election results shall be announced within 5 hours after the polls closed.
5. Any complaints concerning the elections other than those against the conduct of the Returning Officer or members of the Electoral Board, shall be addressed in writing to the Returning Officer. In the event that a candidate is not satisfied with the decision of the Returning Officer, the candidate may appeal and the matter shall be forwarded to the Arbitrators. The decision of the Arbitrator shall final and cannot

be appealed further, except in circumstances where the engagement of the Commonwealth Secretariat through the Stakeholders Panel is appropriate.

## **12. Transitional Arrangements**

1. From November 2013 to November 2015, provisional arrangements have been developed and agreed by the Commonwealth Youth Council and the Commonwealth Secretariat for conduct of the CYC Elections until the Returning Officer is appointed in line with the CYC Constitution. These Regulations, together with the CYC Constitution provide a clear basis for the management of CYC Elections.
2. A committee or individuals recommended by the Commonwealth Youth Council and the Commonwealth Secretariat, together with delegates nominated by the respective candidates shall serve as Electoral Board and Elections Observers, who will be empowered to validate and confirm announcement of the elections results.