

GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION RULES

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Synod has before it the following—
 - House of Laity Election Rules (“HLR”)
 - House of Clergy Election Rules (“HCR”)
 - House of Bishops Election Rules (“HBR”)
 - Single Transferable Vote (Amendment) Rules
 - Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution.
2. These documents give effect to changes proposed to the current Election Rules for the General Synod by the Elections Review Group, a sub-committee of the Business Committee. The Election Rules set out the procedure to follow in the elections to the three Houses of Synod
3. As things stand, the next dissolution is expected on Tuesday 14th July 2026 with the inauguration of the twelfth General Synod to follow on Tuesday 17th November. Accordingly, the election period would begin on Tuesday 14th July and end on Monday 19th October 2026.
4. It is important to note that any voter who wishes to nominate and vote by using papers and sending them by post will continue to be entitled to do so. But it is expected that the vast majority of voters will use the online facility, known as the elections portal and operated by Civica Election Services (“Civica”), the organisation engaged to provide the system for electronic voting.

EXPLANATION OF MAIN CHANGES

Timetable

5. The election rules for the three Houses will set out a national timetable for the elections to each House (*HLR r.5, r.19; HCR r.6, r.14, r.21, r.41; HBR r.5*). Each timetable begins with the date on which the Convocations and the General Synod are expected to be next dissolved. The subsequent steps are reckoned by the number of days after the dissolution. In contrast to previous elections, the Archbishops will no longer set the election period and dioceses will have little flexibility.
6. An election timetable specifying the actual dates for each stage, beginning with the date of the dissolution, will be posted online by each diocese and other body involved.

Initial letter to electors

7. In a new feature of diocesan elections, the presiding officer to the House of Laity and to the House of Clergy will have to send each elector an initial letter (*HLR r.6; HCR r.10*). That letter will set out the timetable and process for the election and will enable electors to update their contact details and change their preferences for online participation.
8. The letter must inform the electors how Civica will communicate with them during the election process. The letter must also give each elector an opportunity to require the postal address not to be included on the electoral register; this step may be appropriate where, for example, the elector has been a victim of stalking. In addition, the letter must set out the grounds for disqualification from standing for election.

Universities and Theological Education Institutions

9. The conditions for qualifying as an elector in the Universities and Theological Education Institutions constituency (“the UTEIs”) will change in order to bring consistency with the other constituencies. Specifically, a correction to the register of electors may be made only up to the close of the period for nominations (*HCR r.23(6)*). The previous position for the UTEIs was to enable corrections to be made up to the close of the period for voting.
10. As part of the eligibility conditions for the UTEIs, the rules make special provision for Societies and Private Halls at Oxford University and for Approved Societies and Approved Foundations at Cambridge University (*HCR r.22(7) and (8)*). There is no equivalent for Durham University and the authorities there have asked for no further special provision.

Nominations

11. In elections to the House of Laity, there will be a facility on each diocese’s website for downloading and printing a nomination paper, in order to facilitate the process for the laity in making nominations (*HLR r.8(3)*).
12. The invitation to nominate will say that nominations must be made within the period stated in the invitation (*HLR r.8(4), HCR r.12(5), HBR r.9(3)*). The invitation will also say that, where there is an election, the name of each of the two persons nominating a candidate will appear alongside the name of the candidate (*HLR r.8(5), HCR r.12(6) HBR r.9(4)*). In addition, nominations for the House of Laity will also include the parish or parishes on whose church electoral roll the candidate’s name is entered (*HLR r.9(2)(d)*).
13. The information to be provided as part of a nomination will now include any commonly-used name, and any title or post-nominal letters the candidate wishes to include (*HLR r.9(2)(a) and (b), HCR r.29(2)(a) and (b), HBR r.10(2)(a) and (b)*) – that latter requirement will replace the previous one for “preferred styles” of address which proved confusing in practice. (A candidate is not, though, expected to specify academic qualifications.)
14. There will be a general requirement for a nomination to specify the candidate’s postal address, but that address will not be published if there are extenuating circumstances – for example, where a person has been a victim of stalking (*HLR r.9(2)(c), HCR r.29(2)(c), HBR r.10(2)(c)*).
15. The rules will now state expressly, to remove any doubt there might otherwise be, that a nomination received after the closing date will be classed as invalid and will not therefore be included (*HLR r.9(7), HCR r.29(7), HBR r.10(7)*).

Election material

16. The rules will now seek to clarify the kind of election material which may, or may not, be distributed during the election period. A “communication” will be defined so as to exclude the election address which each candidate is entitled to circulate and any record of a hustings event which the presiding officer has authorised (*HLR r.14(4), HCR r.37(5), HBR r.14(3)*). The rules do not impose any requirements as to whether there should be hustings of what form they should take. Instead, those will be matters for each presiding officer to determine.

Voting

17. As a corollary of the new provisions on qualifications mentioned above, the invitation to vote will also specify a commonly-used name, a title or post-nominal letters which were included on the nomination form (*HLR r.15(5)(a), HCR r.38(6)(a), HBR r.15(4)(a)*). And the candidate’s postal address will appear on the invitation to vote unless there are extenuating circumstances (see paragraph 14 above) (*HLR r.15(5)(b), HCR r.38(6)(b), HBR r.15(4)(b)*).

Religious communities

18. Elections to the religious communities constituency will continue to be conducted by paper rather than online. That said, a number of the changes to the procedure for nominations and voting referred to above will apply to this constituency. For example, the nomination paper must specify the timetable for nominating; the name of the nominator will be published alongside that of the nominee; and a candidate may give a commonly-used name, a title or post-nominal letters, in addition to the candidate's religious name and title (*HLR r.23(3) and (4), r.24(2)(a) and (b), HCR r.45(3) and (4), r.46(2)(a) and (b)*). Any nomination paper received after the closing date will not count (*HLR r.24(7), HCR r.46(7)*). The equivalent changes will be made to the voting procedure.

Church Representation (Amendment) Resolution

19. The changes made by this Amendment Resolution provide the necessary underlying powers in order to make certain changes to the main Church Representation Rules ("CRRs"), particularly the changes which are necessary for enabling a national election timetable.
20. The length of the election period will be extended from three months to 100 days (*paragraph 2(1)*).
21. The CRRs will be capable of themselves making provision by reference to the election timetable set under Rule 56 (*paragraph 2(2) and (12)*).
22. A duty will be imposed on the presiding officer to send every elector an initial letter about the election process (*paragraph 2(3) and (8)*).
23. The CRRs will acknowledge that certain time limits will be set by the timetable in the procedural rules rather than in the CRRs themselves (*paragraph 2(4) to (6) and (9)*).
24. The provisions about inspections of the register of electors will be moved from the CRRs to the procedural rules under CRR Rule 56 (*paragraph 2(7) and (11)*).
25. The CRRs will enable each invitation to nominate to state that the name of each person nominating a candidate will appear alongside the candidate's name on the invitation to vote.
26. Annex A shows how CRR Rules 52 to 55 would be amended by the Amendment Resolution.

**Legal Office
January 2025**

Church Representations Rules

(as they would be amended in 2025)

Timing

- 52** (1) The elections to the House of Laity are to be carried out in the period of ~~three months immediately following a dissolution of the General Synod.~~ **100 days beginning with the day on which the General Synod is dissolved.**
- (2) The elections are to be carried out in each diocese ~~during such part of that three month period as the Presidents of the Synod jointly decide.~~ **in accordance with the timetable provided by rules under Rule 56; and a reference in these Rules to a date given in the timetable for the stage of an election is a reference to the date given for that stage of the election in accordance with that timetable.**
- (3) This Rule has effect subject to any directions given by the General Synod or the Presidents.

Presiding officer

- 53** (1) For an election to the House of Laity, the presiding officer in each diocese or, where a diocese has been divided into areas under Rule 51, in each area of the diocese is—
- (a) the registrar of the diocese or a person appointed by him or her with the approval of the registrar of the province, or
 - (b) if the registrar of the diocese is a candidate in the election, a person appointed by the registrar of the province.
- (2) The Business Committee must nominate an independent body which it is satisfied would be able to assist each presiding officer with the conduct of an election in the diocese to the House of Laity (including the issue of invitations to nominate and the lodging of nominations), in so far as the election involves a system of electronic voting.
- (3) The presiding officer of each diocese must appoint the body nominated under paragraph (2) and may not appoint any other body or any individual for that purpose.
- (4) The provincial registrars must jointly make rules imposing duties on the presiding officer in each diocese in connection with elections to the House of Laity held in that diocese.
- (5) Rules under paragraph (4) are of no effect unless the Business Committee has approved them.
- (6) The presiding officer must, in accordance with rules under Rule 56, give each person entitled to vote in an election to the House of Laity in a diocese a letter which contains the matters specified in those rules.**

Entitlement to vote

- 54** (1) A person is entitled to vote in an election to the House of Laity held in a diocese if, at the close of nominations, the person is a diocesan elector in that diocese.
- (2) In each diocese other than the diocese in Europe, the diocesan electors are the members of the house of laity of each deanery synod in the diocese, apart from any person who is—
- (a) co-opted under Rule 18(2), or
 - (b) a lay member of a religious community which has separate representation in the General Synod under Rule 46(1)(c).

- (3) In the diocese in Europe, the diocesan electors are the persons elected by the annual meeting of each chaplaincy, with the number to be elected being determined by the bishop's council and standing committee of the diocese; and a person is qualified for election as a diocesan elector if he or she is a lay person—
 - (a) who is an actual communicant,
 - (b) who is aged 18 or over, and
 - (c) whose name is entered on the electoral roll of a chaplaincy in the diocese.
- (4) The deadline for qualifying as a diocesan elector in an election to the House of Laity is 6.00 a.m. on—
 - (a) the date of the dissolution of the Synod, or
 - (b) in the case of an election to fill a casual vacancy, the date on which invitations to nominate are issued.
- (5) The diocesan electoral registration officer must, ~~at least 21 days before invitations to nominate are issued under Rule 55~~ **by the date given in the timetable (which must be at least 21 days before invitations to nominate are issued under Rule 55)**, give the secretary of each deanery synod in the diocese a copy of the names and addresses recorded in the register of lay electors.
- (6) The secretary of each deanery synod must, ~~within seven days of receiving the copy names and addresses~~ **by the date given in the timetable (which must be within seven days of the date given in the timetable for the purposes of paragraph (5))**, provide the diocesan electoral registration officer with—
 - (a) if the names and addresses are correct, a certificate in writing to that effect, or
 - (b) if they are not correct, a notification in writing of the corrections required.
- (7) In ascertaining for the purposes of paragraph (6) whether the names and addresses are correct, the secretary of each deanery synod must ask each elector who has not provided an email address whether he or she wishes to provide one.
- (8) The diocesan electoral registration officer must, ~~no later than seven days before invitations to nominate are issued under Rule 55~~ **no later than the date given in the timetable (which must be at least 14 days before the date given in the timetable for the issue of invitations to nominate under Rule 55)**, give a copy of the names and addresses (with any corrections required having been made) to the presiding officer in the election.
- ~~(9) The register of lay electors must be available for inspection at the diocesan office during the period beginning with the issue of invitations to nominate under Rule 55 and ending with the close of nominations.~~
- ~~(10) The register of lay electors must, in the form in which it is made available for inspection, include the name of each elector but no other personal data.~~
- ~~(11) Corrections to the register may be made up until the close of nominations; but after the close of nominations, no names may be added to or removed from the register until the declaration of the result of the election.~~

Nomination

- 55** (1) A candidate for election in a diocese to the House of Laity must be nominated by two persons, each of whom is a diocesan elector in the diocese.
- (2) The presiding officer in each diocese, **having taken into account the replies received to the letter sent by virtue of Rule 53(6)**, must ensure that, **on the date given in the timetable**, each diocesan elector in the diocese is issued with an invitation to nominate.

- (3) If a person who is qualified for election but is not a diocesan elector requests a nomination paper, the presiding officer must ensure that the person is issued with a nomination paper.
- (4) ~~The presiding officer must determine the period within which nominations are to be given to him or her; and the period so determined must be at least 28 days~~ **The period for making nominations begins with the date given in the timetable and ends with the date given in the timetable; and that period must be at least 21 days** beginning with the day after that on which the invitations to nominate are issued.
- (5) The presiding officer must ensure that, when an invitation to nominate is issued to a person, the person is also given written notification of when nominations close.
- (6) **The invitation to nominate must state that, if an election is held in which there are sufficient candidates to require invitations to vote to be issued, the name of each person who has nominated a candidate will be published alongside the name of the candidate.**
- (7) **Rules under Rule 56 must include provision for the inspection of the register of lay electors during the period within which nominations may be made.**