



ISSU
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL
STUDENTS' UNION



A **STUDENTS** guide
to running for

ELECTION



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Step 1: Why You?

Ireland currently ranks 101st in the world for female representation in national politics. Additionally, at present, only 22.5% of the elected members of Dáil Éireann are women.

It's clear that something is lacking in our democracy and that is the number of women elected to represent. The only people who truly understand what it means to be a woman in the 21st century, the only people who can truly represent us - are women.

Politics needs **you**.

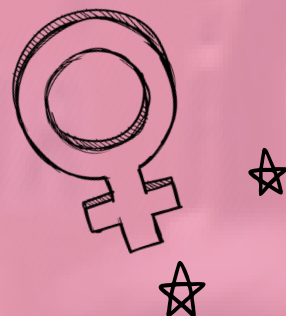
We have seen so many powerhouse women turn away from fears of losing and being afraid to put themselves forward. Thinking about running for election is the first step, it's a big step. You have so much to bring to the table, you will better the lives of students, especially female students and now you must ask yourself, why you?

Some people run for election because they may want to change an outdated policy in their school, or lobby them for better support. Others run because they believe they would do a better job than those currently elected and some because they simply have an interest in the area.

Before you run for election, you need to identify why you want to. This is something you may be asked about during the election and you need to ensure you have a thought-out answer prepared.

Sources: <https://stand.ie> | <https://www.irishtimes.com>

I want to run for election
because...



Step 2: Your Student Council

Understanding how your student council functions is extremely important when it comes to elections. How do they elect their members? What voting style do they use?

Most Student Councils elect their members in September or October at the beginning of the school year. If you're not sure when the Student Council elections are held, reach out to a current student council member and ask, if you don't know who they are, try reaching out to the Student Council Liaison Teacher or your school principal for help.

Reaching out to the student council and student body in your school will also be very helpful as you enter the early stages of your campaign. We can often become blind to the issues we see in school, but by reaching out to other students, you'll get an insight into what other students see, and have a better understanding of the problems facing students in your school.

How Voting Works

The most common voting style used in Ireland is Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote (PR STV). This is the system used to elect the President of Ireland and TD's to the Dáil.

The first step in any count is to establish a quota. This is the number of votes it takes for a candidate to be elected. The quota varies and will be lower the more seats are up for grabs. Three-seater constituencies, for example, are generally harder to be elected in than those with five or more seats.

Once you have a quota, the next step is to count the first preferences. This is every voter's #1 choice. Any candidate who matches or beats the quota on this first count is automatically elected.

After all the first choices have been counted, we move on to the second count. This is where things get more complicated. If a candidate or candidates have already been elected, and if they won more first preference votes than they needed to match the quota, then their extra or "surplus" votes are separated out and given to each voter's second choices. If these extra votes lead to another candidate being elected, the process is repeated until there are no extra votes to be reassigned.

Once there are no surplus votes to be counted, candidates with lower numbers of votes will start to be eliminated. When a candidate is eliminated, all their votes are again reassigned to their next highest preference. This process continues until either all the available seats are filled, or the number of candidates left is the same as the number of seats available. In that case, all surviving candidates are deemed elected whether or not they have reached the quota, because eliminating them would mean not every seat would be filled.

Sources: [RTÉ Junior](#) and [SpunOut.ie](#)

Step 3: Define Your Goals

To connect with the electorate and gain their trust, you need to define clear goals for your election. What will you do if elected? How will you use your voice to make change for those you represent?

Some examples could be you want to get a new water fountain in your school, advocate for gender-neutral bathrooms or get free sanitary products in your school. There is a large range of different ideas and projects you could do.

Set out some clear goals for what you would strive to do if elected. Ask yourself, what do you want to achieve? Think, "Vote for me because I will..."

My Goals are...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Step 4: Campaigning

Campaigning is the fun part! It's important to be creative and really put yourself out there, this is your chance to show the electorate who you are, what you can do and why they should vote for you.

Social Media

Social Media is a powerful tool when campaigning. It allows you to connect with people you may never have thought were reachable.

Setting up a social media page for your campaign is very important. Be sure to put exactly what you're running for in the username of your account, this is important for capturing people's attention. Ask your friends if they will share your content, this will help spread your message to more students.

Some examples:

- Emma4StudentCouncil
- Vote4Joanna
- Suzi4SCPresident

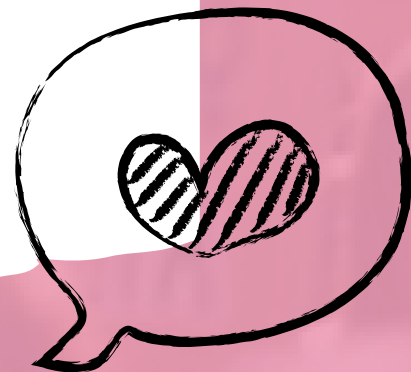
My Social Media Accounts Are...

1.

2.

3.


4.



Campaign slogan

Every good campaign is recognisable, it's consistent and has a running theme. This is often achieved with a catchy campaign slogan. These are particularly helpful if you are running against several other candidates, it ensures you stand out from the crowd and gives the electorate something to remember.

For example, Hillary Clinton used "I'm With Her" to highlight that she was the only female candidate. The short, catchy slogan was used as a chant at election debates as well as on her campaign material and empowered and inspired American voters to join her.



Write Your Own Campaign Slogan

Campaign Speech

Your campaign speech should summarise who you are, your experience and what you hope to achieve. This is one of the most important parts of your campaign.

The speech is often the decider for many voters and sticks with them as they go to cast their vote. Closing your speech with an inspirational final message is a powerful tactic and is often very effective in securing votes.

Campaign Jargon

Hustings

A public meeting or event in the run up to an election where candidates outline their policies as part of their election campaign. This could be a debate between candidates in class or a question and answers session.

Manifesto

A document outlining a person(s) values, goals and intended actions if elected.

Canvassing

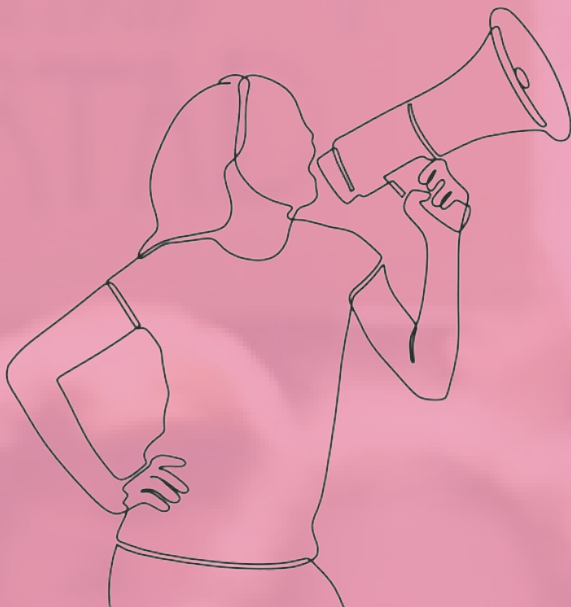
This can refer to trying to win votes by contacting voters directly. An example of this is when politicians go door to door to ask for votes or when they contact you online to ask for your support ie. sending you a direct message.

Candidate

Someone who puts themselves forward for election.

Electorate

Someone who votes or has the right to vote in an election. For example, in student council elections, the electorate are the students who vote.



Helpful Campaign Tools

Canva

This is very helpful for social media content creation. It has easy-to-use templates that suit every style and social media platform and is free of charge! Available online and as an app.



Google Drive

Google Drive is a file storage service developed by Google. It's a handy place to store and save your campaign materials and can be used to share them with others too.



Later.com

Later.com is a post-scheduler that can be used to schedule posts across a wide range of social media platforms.



Mixcaptions

MixCaptions is an app that can be used to add subtitles to any video you record. This is particularly helpful to make your campaign more accessible.



Step 5: Overcoming Adversity

One of the hardest steps is overcoming the adversity you may face as a woman running for election.

Often women can be told they're not good enough, or they may have sexist or misogynistic remarks made about them and their campaign.

It's important to know that these comments do not reflect you or your campaign.

You are just as worthy and deserving as any other candidate.

Let's hear from others who are currently elected and faced these battles too.

Annie Hoey

I'm an activist first, with a proven track record of successfully fighting for the young people of Ireland. I cut my activist teeth in the student movement before playing a key role in marriage equality and repeal.

My advise is to say yes more than you say no. If you are asked to take on a leadership role, to join a school committee, to set up a club or society, to be a leader, say yes.

You can do it, you absolutely can.

Don't wait for when you think you have enough experience, it is in saying yes and taking on challenges that you develop that experience.

You will make mistakes, you will not always get the result you want, but trying is the best (and ultimately) only way to find out. And be the person to ask someone else to go for a leadership role. Movements are built on the backs on activists who work collectively so find yourself like minded people who want to change the world. **You can absolutely do it!**



Annie Hoey
Senator

Yemi Adenuga

When you make the bold decision to take on a position of leadership and serve, there is an unspoken expectation for you to conform and become someone else, based on the norm in the industry you are entering into. **Remember this clearly, the best asset you bring with you to impact everyone positively on your leadership journey is 'YOU'.** No one does things the very way you do them, so bring your uniqueness to any role while delivering on the role responsibility. To do that consistently and impactfully here are things that have helped me overcome adversity as a leader of the years:



Yemi Adenuga
Meath County Councillor

- Define yourself by yourself, which will keep you authentic.
- Be very clear why you are going for the role, which will keep you focused.
- Set your core values which will keep you consistent.
- Find and surround yourself with a brilliant team which will keep you accountable.
- Find yourself a mentor which will keep you inspired.
- Pray, love and live, which will keep you human.
- Stand for what you believe in, which will keep you trustworthy.

Above all, enjoy the journey. After all, leadership is a journey, and the enjoyment of a journey is in the journey, not the destination.

The world is waiting to meet you

Clare Austick

If you're thinking about putting yourself forward for Student Council - you should absolutely do it!

Something about representing the voice of your peers or making a difference in school life appealed to you! Being a woman in a leadership position can be challenging at times. We are often put under enormous pressure and held to unattainable high standards to prove how much of a leader we are. While it might be an obstacle, it shouldn't let you be turned away from your goals and reaching your full potential. The first step towards achieving any goals you have, is believing in yourself enough to push yourself forward.



I was a class representative in college in my second year, when I decided to run for a part-time position on the Students' Union. I lost and thought my days of representing students was over. However, losing my first proper election didn't stop me. From then onwards, I went on to being the Vice President for Welfare & Equality and President of NUI Galway Students' Union. After that, I was elected the Vice President for Welfare of the national union and now I am the President of the Union of Students in Ireland. If you are passionate enough, are driven and hungry to make a difference, you can and you will get there. It might take a little time but don't give up and let obstacles stand in your way.

Women are significantly under-represented in politics, senior positions and key decision-making spaces. It's time we occupy those spaces and demand a better future for all of us. It is because of thousands of women that came before us and spoke their minds that we now have the right to vote, access to abortions and birth control, political representation, sexual liberation, maternity leave, the right to work after marriage and have more education on consent.

While, a lot has improved over the decades, there is still a significant amount of injustice and inequality around us. Ask yourself what you want the world to look like for women in 50 years from now and what you can contribute to achieving that? It's in your hands to make it happen.

*Always remember; **you are so much stronger, more capable and important than you know.** Never let anyone stand in your way. As the inspiring Ruth Ginsburg once said 'Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.'*

Be inspired - uplift others around you - and most importantly believe in yourself! It's time to smash the glass ceilings!

Maria Walsh



Maria Walsh

Irish Member of the European Parliament (MEP)

It is no secret that women and those who identify as women, experience societal and structural barriers which prevent them from entering the political system.

I did not grow up in politics. I found my way to the political table because of my passion for community activism, bridging the gap between young people and our politics. Since my election in 2019, I see how impactful change is when our community is reflected in our politics, and our political landscape reflects our communities.

At the core of empowering women is to ensure each woman has access to and is represented in decision-making spaces. As Ireland's youngest Member of Parliament, I am incredibly proud to see fellow young women having an interest in politics, wanting to make impactful change, build a more diverse, and equal community.

I grew up in Shrule, a small village on the border between Mayo and Galway. As many of you who grew up in rural communities will know, there is a feeling of community that is difficult to find anywhere else. From the outset of my career, I have continued to link my work and vision to the Irish word - meitheal. Meitheal embodies the spirit of a community; one of support and of belonging. At the very core of my 'why run' is to be that voice for my community, my constituency of the Midlands-North-West and for the challenges that face communities, especially women and young people. I hope that my journey can inspire people to get involved in politics on a local, national and European level.

How do we challenge and change sexism in politics? We run. We run for election, we support a candidate who is building a campaign and a vision that embodies meitheal. We step up and away from 'armchair activism'. We build on the shoulders of the thousands who shifted the needle a little closer to equality for us all. We continue this change. We continue for the generations who should not have to question why they do not see someone who looks and sounds like them in our politics.

Eileen Flynn

I am delighted to be able to encourage the young women reading this Irish Second-Level Students' Union handbook to go for election at all levels. We need elective offices that are representative of all our people.

If you had told me three years ago that I would be a senator, I would have told you where to go! However, it's important that we challenge ourselves and we know that we're good enough and that we belong in these spaces.

You have to believe in yourself. I'd say believe in yourself so much that the people around you have no choice but to believe in you, too.

My nomination to the Seanad didn't happen overnight. It took years of activism and building relationships and doing the work on the ground. It was about pushing myself, and it seemed there was a change that was possible, and I had a team of people around me who knew that it was possible.

Sometimes we don't always succeed - that's part of life. When I put myself forward for election to the Seanad before I was nominated, I lost out by less than two votes. Stay focused. Remember that when we don't get the result we hoped for that it doesn't mean we failed, because it still means that we tried.

*As a woman, a Traveller and a senator, I know women can face so many barriers to achievement. I believe it's about accepting yourself for your difference and your uniqueness - **be you, and stay true to yourself. Don't let the system change you. You get in there and change the system.***



Eileen Flynn
Senator

Step 6: What Now?

Now that you've defined your goals, planned your campaign and learned all the important lingo, you're probably wondering... what now? It's time to put what you've learned to use!

Get Your Name On The Ballot

How do the students in your school get their name on the ballot? Do they ask their Student Council Liaison Teacher? Do they tell students to write their names in? Reach out to the student council or the Student Council Liaison Teacher and find out how.

Talk To Your Peers

What are the problems facing the students in your school? How can you help resolve them? Talk to your peers, your teachers and school staff to narrow down what the biggest problems facing your school community are. Use this knowledge to write your manifesto and share it among your peers.

Begin Your Campaign

Pick what social media platforms you'll use for your campaign and set up the accounts. Figure out what style best suits your campaign ie. what colours or fonts you want to use, which pictures you think represent you best. Start a campaign team and get help from your friends.

And remember...

You can do it!

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IS

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