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**Hustings guide for Schools**

**What is a hustings?**

A hustings is a meeting where candidates standing to become members of the Senedd (MS) take questions from an audience.

**Why would I want to arrange a hustings?**

By arranging a hustings, you will be providing your students the opportunity to put their own questions to candidates about issues that are important to them. While party manifestos can tell voters about polices parties would like to put into place if they are elected, hustings are an opportunity for voters to get to know where candidates stand on other issues.

**How do I organise a hustings?**

*Who should I invite?*

It is important that your hustings does not favour any individual party or candidate. To avoid this, you could invite all the candidates standing in your area.

If you do not want to invite all the candidates in your area (for instance, there might be a large amount of candidates in your constituency), you could decide to only invite candidates who are expected to get a large percentage of the vote. For instance, you could invite candidates from parties that received five or ten percent of the votes in the last election.

Some tips on inviting candidates:

* Give objective reasons why you have not invited particular candidates (i.e. share of vote in a previous election in your constituency);
* Make sure candidates you do invite represent a variety of views from across the political spectrum;
* Allow candidates an equal opportunity to answer questions and a fair opportunity to respond to points made against them;
* It’s important to tell students about other candidates taking part in the election, so they know who hasn’t been represented.

*How should I invite candidates?*

One way of contacting your local candidate is by contacting the political parties directly, who will be able to share candidate details with you. Most political parties will have confirmed their candidates by early 2021. You can

find a full list of all the parties registered with the Electoral Commission, and the contact details for those parties, [here](http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk/Search/Registrations?currentPage=1&rows=10&sort=RegulatedEntityName&order=asc&open=filter&et=pp&register=gb&register=ni&register=none&regStatus=registered&inWales=true&optCols=CampaigningName&optCols=EntityStatusName&optCols=ReferendumName&optCols=DesignationStatusName&optCols=CompanyRegistrationNumber&optCols=FieldingCandidatesInEngland&optCols=FieldingCandidatesInScotland&optCols=FieldingCandidatesInWales&optCols=FieldingCandidatesInEurope&optCols=FieldingCandidatesMinorParty&optCols=ReferendumOutcome).

Another way to contact your candidate is to look at the confirmed list of candidates on your local authority’s website. A final list of confirmed candidates will be published from 9 April 2021.

When contacting your candidate, you will want to mention:

* When and how you intend to host your hustings;
* Who will be attending the hustings
* A bit of information about Project Vote! (you can signpost them to the Project Vote website for more information)

Rules they will have to abide by if they attend the hustings.

**Can we organise a digital hustings?**

Yes – and we advise schools to organise digital hustings where possible and to follow Welsh Government COVID-19 guidance on external visitors to schools.

You can host a hustings using tools such as Microsoft Teams. You can share a link to students via their Hwb email addresses and ‘tune into’ the hustings from home or in their classrooms.

The benefit of a digital hustings is that you can record the session for students to watch at another time. If you want to record the hustings, remember to ask permission from the attendees to do this.

**Who should chair the hustings?**

It is important that your hustings is chaired by someone who is neutral and fair, and who feels confident speaking in public. The chair is responsible for making sure each candidate has an equal opportunity to speak, and is able to ask candidates to finish speaking if they’ve gone over their time. It’s the chair’s responsibility to ensure candidates treat each other fairly, such as stopping them from talking over each other and interrupting.

We recommend asking children and young people who they think should chair the hustings. They may ask for a senior student such as a head student to chair the discussions. A teacher could also chair the hustings, or even a local radio show host or journalist. Remember to follow your school’s safeguarding rules, whether your hustings is in the school building or online.

**Can I work with another school to organise a hustings?**

Yes! Candidate times is very precious, as they will want to speak to as many people before the election as possible and convince them to vote for them. If you want to arrange a joint-hustings with another school, make sure they share the same constituency as your school so your students are voting for the candidates represented during the hustings.

You can find out your school’s constituency by typing the postcode into the [Senedd’s online search tool](https://senedd.wales/en/memhome/Pages/memhome.aspx).

**When should I arrange my hustings and who should attend?**

It’s up to you when you’d like to arrange hustings. We would advise you to contact candidates sooner rather than later, as their diaries will quickly fill up with campaigning activities.

Students who are 16 and 17 on the date of the election (6 May 2021) will be able to vote for these candidates as part of the ‘real’ Senedd election, so you may want to ensure they can attend, too.

Be sure to mention at the beginning of the hustings that the candidates represented are from your school’s constituency, and that they may be different from the candidates they will be voting for in their home constituency. For example, your school might be based in the Swansea East constituency, but you may also have students attending school from Swansea West or Gower constituencies.

**How should I structure my hustings?**

Here is a suggested structure for your hustings:

1. Introduction from the chair. They will explain what the hustings is about, when election day is, who is eligible to vote.
2. Candidates draw lots to determine who to speak. Each candidate has five minutes to say why they should be elected.
3. Candidates take questions from the audience. Candidates have 90 seconds each to respond. You can decide whether you want to give candidates the opportunity to challenge each other’s points.
4. At the end of the hustings, the chair thanks candidates and audience for attending, reminding them of election day.

**Who should ask questions?**

Ask audience members to raise their hands to ask questions. In order to cover a broad range of issues, you could ask audience members to submit questions in advance and ask them to ask their questions in turn. Try and include as broad a range of issues as possible. You may want to ask audience members they can only ask questions about issues the Senedd has powers over, including health, education, the environment and local transport.

**What should we do if candidates share controversial opinions or upsets members of the audience with their response/s?**

We would advise you to do some preparatory work with students so that they understand that some candidates will have controversial or contradictory views to their own. Preparation work should also include sharing of information on where students can seek advice and support on any issues that may have resulted from the hustings.

**We can’t bring many candidates together at one time. What else can we do?**

If you can’t bring the candidates together at the same time in the same place, you may want to consider recording short Q&A sessions with candidates on key devolved issues and display these Q&As with children during registration. These can be short, five-minute videos to help give students a flavour of the candidates, their priorities and their personalities.

You could also write to your local candidates, asking them to write short, concise written info to be shared with students. For instance, you might want to ask for the ‘Top 5 things’ the candidates will do if they’re elected.

**Where can I go for more information?**

For more information on holding hustings, the Electoral Commission has also published a guide available [here](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/are-you-holding-a-hustings).

**Senedd Education Team**

The Senedd’s Education team is keen to support schools holding their own hustings in the run-up to the 2021 Senedd Election. Members of the team are happy to support audiences with questions about the role of the Senedd and its members. If you would like to speak with a member of the Senedd’s Education team, email education@senedd.wales.

**Checklist**

* Invite candidates
* Select a chair
* Arrange a venue/online platform
* Advertise the hustings (email on Hwb, posters around the school)
* Confirm details with the candidates
* Select questions (optional)