

ES16 Supervise the verification and counting of votes, and declare the results of elections/referendums

Unit Summary

What is the unit about?

Supervising the verification and counting of votes in a manner which maintains security and prevents fraud is a critical aspect of the democratic process, as is accurate declaration of the results of elections/referendums. This unit emphasises the need to maintain political neutrality, transparency and impartiality throughout, and describes the competences required to: verify ballot papers, supervise the count, adjudicate in cases regarding doubtful ballot papers, liaise with candidates and agents, and ensure the proper declaration of results.

Who is the unit for?

This unit is appropriate to the work of Returning Officers, Acting Returning Officers, Deputy Returning Officers, Counting Officers and Chief Electoral Officers (in Northern Ireland).

Links with other units

This unit links with the following units:

- D2 – Develop productive working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders
- D5 – Allocate and check work in your team
- ES12 – Issue, receive and open postal ballot packs
- ES18 – Recruit, brief and deploy casual staff for electoral services
- ES19 - Establish, maintain and develop effective working relationships with stakeholders in electoral services
- B10 – Manage risk

Scope of the unit

This unit covers the following types of [elections/referendums](#):

- UK Parliamentary elections
- European Parliamentary elections
- Local government elections
- Mayor of London and London Assembly elections
- Mayoral elections
- Welsh Assembly elections
- Scottish Parliamentary elections
- Northern Ireland Assembly elections
- Referendums at local, regional and national level
- Other issue-based voting events e.g. Parish Polls, Community Polls

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Outcomes of Effective Performance

Supervising the count

You must be able to:

1. assess the suitability of the counting area, taking appropriate action if you have any concerns
2. ensure that candidates, agents and all others present understand relevant aspects of policy and procedure relating to the count
3. ensure the security of the count process and of the ballot papers throughout
4. verify each ballot paper account and deal with any discrepancies appropriately
5. once the verification process is complete, calculate the percentage turnout for the [election/referendum](#) and communicate this to candidates and agents in a timely manner
6. supervise the counting process in accordance with statutory requirements
7. adjudicate in cases regarding doubtful ballot papers
8. ensure that all ballot papers have been counted
9. review the provisional totals and, if satisfied, share this information with candidates and agents
10. decide whether to order a recount, and initiate the relevant procedures if necessary
11. liaise with candidates and agents throughout the verification and count process, taking appropriate action to address their needs
12. maintain the transparency and impartiality of procedures throughout

Declaring the result

You must be able to:

13. delegate the authority to declare the result of [elections/referendums](#) to the relevant individual if necessary, whilst retaining overall responsibility for the task
14. ensure that the result of [elections/referendums](#) is confirmed before the outcome is orally declared clearly and accurately
15. ensure that copies of the result are available to all those entitled to view them
16. maintain impartiality and political neutrality throughout

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand the following:

Legislation, policy and practice

- K1. relevant legislation, codes of practice and guidance relating to supervising the verification and counting of votes and declaration of the results of elections/referendums
- K2. your organisational policies and procedures relating to supervising the verification and counting of votes and declaration of the results of elections/referendums
- K3. your role, responsibilities and authority relating to supervising the verification and counting of votes and declaration of the results of elections/referendums

Supervising the count

- K4. the characteristics of a suitable counting venue, how to assess them, and the actions to take where there are concerns e.g. about security
- K5. the importance of ensuring that candidates, agents and others understand relevant aspects of policy and procedure relating to the count
- K6. how to verify ballot paper accounts and deal with any discrepancies
- K7. how and when to calculate the percentage turnout for the event, and the importance of communicating this to candidates and agents at the right time
- K8. how to supervise the count correctly in accordance with statutory requirements
- K9. how to adjudicate in cases regarding doubtful ballot papers
- K10. the importance of ensuring that all ballot boxes have been checked and that all ballot papers have been counted
- K11. how to review the provisional totals; when it is appropriate to share this information with candidates and agents
- K12. how to decide whether to order a recount, and initiate recount procedures
- K13. how to maintain the security of the count process and ballot papers throughout; the potential consequences of compromises to security
- K14. the importance of liaising with candidates and agents throughout, and the extent to which you are responsible for addressing their needs
- K15. the importance of maintaining the transparency and impartiality of procedures throughout; the potential consequences of compromises to this

Declaring the result

- K16. the different approaches used for declaring the results of different types of election/referendum
- K17. the circumstances where it is appropriate to delegate authority to declare the result; the individuals to whom authority can be delegated; the importance of retaining overall responsibility for the task
- K18. the importance of ensuring that the result is checked the result before it is orally declared; the consequences of errors when declaring results
- K19. how to ensure that copies of the result are available to all those entitled to view them
- K20. the importance of maintaining impartiality and political neutrality throughout; the potential consequences of failing to maintain impartiality and political neutrality