

**The Association of Electoral Administrators**



**AEA Qualifications**

# **Diploma in Electoral Administration**

**Candidate's Information Pack**

**June 2019**

## Introduction

In 1998, when launching the Qualification, the AEA had the twin overall aims of:

- improving standards and professionalism within the service; and
- providing a sound career platform for individual members with the associated benefits to their authorities.

A supplementary objective was to aid the professional development and recognition of the AEA by persuading local authorities of the worth and value of their electoral staff being recognised by the fact that they had achieved the only professional qualification in electoral administration in the UK. That objective has clearly been achieved as evidenced by the vast majority of job adverts for electoral administrators requiring potential candidates to hold or being studying for the AEA Qualification.

The Association continues to be committed to raising the profile and enhancing the status of electoral administrators who perform such a vital role in the democratic process. It is also dedicated to encouraging and maintaining the highest possible standards of work provided by its members.

The Qualification is offered on a progressive route from a Foundation Course to a Certificate and then to a Diploma.

## Qualification Format

### General requirements

Candidates must be members of the AEA at the time of registration and remain so at all times throughout the qualification process.

A candidate may not apply to register for the Diploma unless they have been awarded the Certificate.

## Registration and Fee

For the Diploma registration must be made by **1st October** in each year.

The application to register is available on the AEA's website –

<https://www.aea-elections.co.uk/training-qualifications/qualifications/diploma/>

The total fee is **£2,263**, which includes initial registration, the dissertation and the sitting of two examination papers. The fee is subject to VAT. The full scale of fees is set out at Appendix B.

# Diploma in Electoral Administration

## Background

The Diploma syllabus comprises of three modules:

**Module D1 Electoral Law:** To provide an understanding and working knowledge of the law relating to the registration of electors, the conduct of elections and the establishment and review of electoral boundaries.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the main principles of British electoral law and an ability to use that knowledge to provide sound working practices at a senior level and to offer advice to all those having an interest in such matters.

**Module D2 Public Administration, Electoral Arrangements and Electoral Systems:** To provide an appreciation and understanding of the major procedures and practices of local government and its relationship to the national political and administrative process; general and special electoral arrangements including matters relating to boundaries; and other electoral systems in common use in other democracies.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate a sound background knowledge of British local government and constitutional matters, a clear working understanding of matters relating to boundaries and other quasi electoral arrangements and be able to comment authoritatively on a variety of other electoral systems specified in the syllabus.

**Module D3 Management and Finance:** To provide an appreciation and understanding of the major principles employed in the effective management of organisations; how information systems can be used to achieve effective and efficient operation of the office environment; and specific financial and related considerations in the registration of electors and the conduct of elections.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate an ability to translate knowledge into practice in all fields of management covered in the syllabus and to be able to demonstrate a sound knowledge of financial matters relating to the work of a senior electoral administrator.

The syllabus guidelines are set out in full at Appendix A.

## **Timetable**

The Diploma must be completed within two years of the appropriate annual registration date, except that this requirement may be extended to allow a re-sit at the first assessment day following the second anniversary of the above appropriate annual registration date.

## **Dissertation**

A dissertation on one subject selected from a list of four published by the Examining Board or, alternatively, a different subject approved by the Examining Board upon personal application must be submitted by 30th September following the registration date.

The dissertation topics published by the Examining Board for the last five years are provided at Appendix C.

An outline of the dissertation must be submitted by the previous 31st January in accordance with procedures issued by the Qualifications Board. A dissertation outline that does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once and must be resubmitted within one month of the original notification.

The dissertation must be between 7,000 and 10,000 words and submitted in accordance with procedures issued by the Qualifications Board. A dissertation which does not meet the required standard may be resubmitted once and must be resubmitted within two months of the original notification.

An oral examination linked to the dissertation will normally take place by 31st January or, in the event of a re-submission, by 1st March. If the oral examination is failed, the candidate may re-sit the examination once. The second examination will take place within three months of the original notification.

The dissertation pass mark, to be validated at the oral examination, is 45 marks.

## **Assessment days**

Assessment days will be held on the same day at two regional centres in September of each year for each registration cohort. The candidate must attend the assessment day although they may choose which centre to attend. The assessments will comprise of:

- (a) a written examination of two and a half hours consisting of six questions (three each from modules D1 and D2), of which four must be answered (two from each module). This session will start at 10:30am.

- (b) a written examination of two hours consisting of five questions from module D3), of which three must be answered. This session will start at 2:00pm.

### **Assessment pass mark**

The assessments are marked using a previously agreed marking scheme for the contents.

The pass mark for the morning assessment is 45 marks (45%) and for the afternoon assessment 34 marks (45%).

If either part of the assessment is failed, the candidate may re-sit the appropriate part(s) once at the following assessment day to be held at two regional centres in September of the following year.

### **Award of Diploma**

Once the candidate has reached the required standard for their dissertation, passed the oral examination and achieved passes for both parts of the assessment day, the Diploma in Electoral Administration will be awarded.

The successful candidate will be entitled to use the designatory letters AEA (Dip) provided that the candidate remains in membership of the Association.

# Qualification – Rules

## Format

1. The AEA Qualification will be conducted strictly in accordance with the Qualification Format document. Candidates are deemed to accept the terms of the Format document and these Rules as a condition of applying for registration.

## Qualifications and Examining Boards

2. The Qualification will be administered by the Qualifications and Examining Boards in accordance with their terms of reference approved from time to time by the Association.

## Applications

3. Applications to register for either part of the Qualification must be made on the appropriate application form and accompanied by the appropriate registration fee. The application form and fee must be received by the Association by the appropriate date.

In exceptional circumstances, late applications will be considered provided that:

- (a) the application is received by no later than 28 days from the registration date;
  - (b) a letter outlining the exceptional circumstances is included with the application; and
  - (c) the prescribed late application fee is enclosed with the application.
4. Within 28 days of notification of registration, the candidate must submit the assessment day application form indicating their choice of date and venue.

## Dissertation and assessment fees

5. By submission of the outline of the dissertation topic, the candidate shall have paid the fees for the registration and dissertation or provided a purchase order number. Marking of the dissertation will not commence until such payment has been received or purchase order number provided.
6. Invoices for assessment fees will be issued by 1st July.

Candidates for whom an assessment fee has not been received will not be permitted to take part in an assessment day.

### **Resubmission and re-sit fees**

7. If a candidate wishes to resubmit a dissertation or re-sit any part of the assessment day or oral examination, they shall notify the Chair of the Qualifications Board in writing within 21 days of the date of the letter advising of the original failure. The notification must be accompanied by the appropriate resubmission or re-sit fee or purchase order number.
8. If a candidate wishes to withdraw a dissertation before receiving the mark for the document, the appropriate fee shall be payable. The mark for the resubmitted dissertation will not be released until the fee has been received or purchase order number provided.

### **Withdrawals/failure to submit or attend**

9. If a candidate chooses to withdraw from the Qualification or fails to submit a dissertation by the due date or fails to attend an assessment day, all fees paid shall be forfeited except that, in exceptional circumstances and at the absolute discretion of the Association, an appropriate part of the fees may be refunded.
10. Applications to be treated as exceptional circumstances shall be made in writing to the Chair of the Qualifications Board together with any supporting documentary evidence, and shall be made within 28 days of the relevant date. For this purpose, the relevant date will be deemed to be the date on which the Association is notified of the withdrawal or the date by which the dissertation should have been submitted or the date of the assessment day.
11. A candidate failing to submit a dissertation or to attend an assessment day or to make application for a resubmission or re-sit in accordance with Rule 7 will be deemed to have failed that part of the Qualification.

### **Extension of dates for submission of dissertations**

12. Dissertations not submitted by the due date shall be deemed to be a failure except that a candidate may apply for an extension of time for submission. Such an application shall be made in writing and must be received by the Chair of the Qualifications Board by no later than 21 days before the original date for submission of the document. The application must state the full reasons for the request and shall be accompanied by the prescribed extension fee or purchase order number.
13. The application shall be considered as soon as practicable by at least two members of the Qualifications Board in consultation. Any extension granted shall be for a period not longer than 21 days after the original date for submission of the document. If the application is not granted, 50% of the prescribed extension fee shall be refunded.

## **Notification of results**

14. Results for dissertations will be notified in the following manner:

- If the work obtains the pass mark or higher, the candidate will be notified that it has obtained a provisional pass.
- Following the oral examination, the Interview Panel will decide whether to confirm the provisional pass and, if so, will fix the grade in accordance with the following Rule.
- If the provisional pass is not confirmed, the dissertation may be re-submitted in accordance with Rule 7.

15. Candidates will be advised whether their work has achieved a pass or a fail by reference to the following grades:

- Distinction – 75% and above
- Credit – 60% to below 75%
- Pass – 45% to below 60%
- Marginal fail – 40% to below 45%
- Fail – below 40%

The actual mark awarded will also be advised.

16. In cases of marginal fails or fails for dissertations, the candidate will be advised of deficiencies, errors or technical faults. In cases of resubmitted dissertations, the highest grade that will be awarded is that of a pass.

## **Appeals**

17. Appeals against fails will only be allowed in extenuating circumstances which meet one of the following criteria:

- (a) in respect of an examination, the candidate was suffering from a medical condition which affected his/her performance on the day;
- (b) the candidate was prevented by a medical condition or other emergency situation from attending or completing an assessment day;
- (c) in respect of a dissertation, the candidate was unduly affected by some external circumstance during the period available for resubmission.

18. No appeal against a fail for a dissertation will be allowed where the candidate has failed to avail themselves of the resubmission opportunity.
19. Candidates wishing to appeal must do so in writing to the Chair of the Qualifications Board within 21 days of the date of the letter notifying the fail. The application must state the full grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documentary evidence. In the case of an appeal on medical grounds, the documentary evidence must include a written statement from a qualified medical practitioner who has been involved in the treatment of the candidate. The appeal will be dealt with by the Qualifications Board by way of written representations only except that the Board at its sole discretion shall have the right to require the appellant to appear in person before the Board.
20. The application must be accompanied by the appeal fee or purchase order number. This fee will be returned if the appeal is upheld.
21. In cases where the appeal is upheld, the following will apply:
  - (a) for an examination, the candidate will be permitted to re-sit the examination at the next assessment day without payment of the re-sit fee;
  - (b) for a dissertation, the candidate will be permitted to resubmit the work within two months of the date of the letter notifying the outcome of the appeal without payment of the resubmission fee.
22. The decision of the Association on all matters relating to appeals is final and will be notified in writing to the appellant. No further correspondence on an appeal will be entered into after the Association's notification letter has been sent.

### **Responsibility for preparation**

23. Candidates are responsible for their own arrangements for registration and compliance with these Rules. The Association can take no responsibility for any failure to comply.
24. Candidates are responsible for preparing for the Qualification under their own arrangements and for undertaking such preparation and study which is required. Candidates should ensure that any courses which they attend in preparation for the Qualification are suitable for their personal requirements. In this connection, it should be noted that no courses other than those directly provided by the Association and in its own name are accredited in any way.

## **Dissertation requirements**

25. Guidance notes for the preparation of dissertations will be provided to all candidates. Failure to comply with the requirements specified in the guidance notes will be treated as grounds for awarding a fail.

## **Administrative procedures/timetable**

26. For each cycle of the Qualification, a detailed administrative framework and timetable will be supplied to each candidate by no later than one month after the closing date for registration. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that they receive and comply with the procedures and timetable set out in the framework.

## **Marking procedures**

27. Each dissertation will be marked individually by two examiners using the marking schemes currently in use and approved by the Examining Board:

- (a) If the two marks awarded are within 10 marks of each other, the average of the two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail.
- (b) If the difference in the two marks is greater than 10, the script will be referred to a third examiner. Once the third mark has been obtained, the average of the closest two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail.

To obtain a pass, the average mark in either of the above two circumstances must not be less than 45.

28. Each examination question will be marked by one examiner using the marking schemes currently in use and approved by the Examining Board in relation to each individual question.

- (a) Any papers which fall in the band from 38% to 48% of the total marks for the paper will be referred to a second examiner.
- (b) Once the second mark has been obtained, the average of the two marks will be used to determine whether the script is awarded a pass or a fail.

To obtain a pass, the average mark must not be less than 45%.

## **Relationships and Interests**

29. Any candidate who works or has worked with or has any personal relationship with an examiner must declare that fact in writing to the Chair of the Qualifications Board as soon as they become aware of the

fact. No candidate should attempt to use their working or other relationship with an examiner, officer or employee of the Association to advance their prospects in the Qualification or to seek an unfair advantage over other candidates.

30. The current list of examiners (current as at 21st June 2019) is:

- Sue Daniels
- Andy Hunter
- Steve Lake
- Laura Lock
- Glynne Morgan
- Billy Pollock
- Peter Stanyon
- James Stevens
- Pete Wildman

### **Cheating and plagiarism**

31. Allegations of cheating or plagiarism by a candidate will be dealt with by the Qualifications Board in accordance with procedures approved by the Board. A candidate found guilty of a charge of cheating or plagiarism may be subject to such penalty as the Board may determine on the evidence, including expulsion from the Qualification with or without a recommendation that the candidate be not permitted to register again for the Qualification within a stated time or sine die.

32. A candidate expelled from the Qualification shall forfeit all fees paid. In addition, the matter shall be reported to the AEA Board for consideration as to whether the Association's disciplinary procedures shall be invoked.

### **Failure to comply**

33. A candidate who fails to comply with these Rules may be charged with misconduct and in such cases shall be dealt with by the Qualifications Board in accordance with procedures approved by the Board. A candidate found guilty of a charge of misconduct may be subject to such penalty as the Board may determine on the evidence. In the case of expulsion from the Qualification, the same provisions as in the previous Rule shall apply.

## **Electoral Law**

### **Module D1**

#### **1. Acts of Parliament**

Appropriate Acts of Parliament relating to electoral law and, in particular, the following:

- 1.1. Local Government Acts, 1972, 1985, 1986, 1992, 2000 and 2003
- 1.2. House of Commons Disqualification Act, 1975
- 1.3. Representation of the People Acts, 1981, 1983, 1985 and 2000
- 1.4. Local Government and Housing Act, 1989
- 1.5. Boundary Commissions Act, 1992
- 1.6. Parliamentary Constituencies Act, 1986
- 1.7. Local Government and Rating Act, 1997
- 1.8. European Parliamentary Elections Act, 2002
- 1.9. Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act, 2000
- 1.10. Election Publications Act 2001
- 1.11. European Parliament (Representation) Act, 2003
- 1.12. Electoral Administration Act, 2006
- 1.13. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- 1.14. Political Parties and Elections Act 2009
- 1.15. Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Act 2011
- 1.16. Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011
- 1.17. Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- 1.18. Localism Act 2011
- 1.19. Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- 1.20. Recall of MPs Act 2015

#### **2. Statutory Instruments**

2.1. Appropriate Regulations, Rules and Orders relating to electoral law and, in particular, the following:

- Election Petition Rules
- European Parliamentary Election Rules
- European Parliamentary Elections (Returning Officers' Charges) Order
- European Parliamentary Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualification of Representatives) Regulations
- European Parliamentary Elections Regulations Local Government Elections (Changes to the Franchise and Qualification of Members) Regulations
- Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules
- Local Elections (Principal Areas) Rules
- Parliamentary Writs Order
- Parliamentary Elections (Returning Officers' Charges) Order

## **APPENDIX A Diploma Syllabus**

- Representation of the People Regulations
- Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidate's Election Expenses) Order
- Returning Officers' Accounts Regulations
- Parish and Community Meeting (Polls) Rules
- Local Authorities (Referendums)(Petitions and Directions) Regulations
- The Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections) (England and Wales) Regulations
- Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Functions of Returning Officers) Regulations
- Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Order
- Council Tax increases Regulations Neighbourhood Planning Regulations

### **3. Election Petitions**

3.1. The procedures to be followed in:

- lodging an election petition
- answering an election petition

### **4. Case Law**

4.1. The implications of decisions made by the courts in significant cases relating to electoral matters

(Note: The list of the cases to be considered under this part of the syllabus are those contained within Appendix E of Schofield's Election Law)

### **5. Circulars**

The content and purpose of all extant Circulars issued by Government Departments and the Electoral Commission including the published Codes of Practice

### **6. Electoral Registration – Applications and Objections**

- 6.1. Procedures for hearings
- 6.2. Documentary requirements
- 6.3. Appeals to County Court – rules and procedures

**Public Administration, Electoral Arrangements and  
Electoral Systems**  
**Module D2**

**1. Public Administration**

1.1. The structure of local government including:

- Functions and tiers of local government
- Roles of members and officers
- Constitutional arrangements
- Political groups and their role

1.2. The financing of local government including:

- Business rates
- Council Tax
- Government support
- Revenue support grant
- The capping regime
- Other sources of income

1.3. The political process including:

- National and local political processes
- Political parties and their organisation
- Parliament as the legislature
- The Executive and Cabinet Government
- The Judiciary

1.4. The notion of accountability including:

- Political controls in the public sector
- Audit and financial controls
- The Local Government Ombudsman
- Complaints systems
- Judicial control and the use of judicial review
- Conduct of individuals (Codes of conduct)
- Members' interests

## **2. Electoral Arrangements**

### **Electoral Commission**

- 2.1. General functions

### **Boundaries**

- 2.2. European Parliamentary boundaries
- 2.3. Parliamentary constituency boundaries
- 2.4. Local Government boundaries
- 2.5. Review procedures
- 2.6. The Parliamentary Boundary Commissions
- 2.7. The Local Government Boundary Commissions

### **Polling District Reviews**

- 2.8. Polling District boundaries
- 2.9. Review procedures
- 2.10. Publicity and consultation
- 2.11. Legal requirements

### **Combined Polls**

- 2.12. How and when applied
- 2.13. Special Rules (compulsory and discretionary)
- 2.14. Administrative and logistical matters
- 2.15. Accounting arrangements
- 2.16. Effect on Parish elections

### **Parishes/Communities**

- 2.17. Review of existing parishing arrangements
- 2.18. Establishment of new parishes
- 2.19. Creation of new parish councils
- 2.20. Parish warding arrangements

Note – references to parish should be read as community in Wales

### **Parish Polls**

- 2.21. Legal framework
- 2.22. Purpose of poll
- 2.23. Procedures
- 2.24. Result and effect

**Referendums**

- 2.25. Legal framework
- 2.26. Responsibilities of Proper Officer

**BIDS/Neighbourhood Planning**

- 2.27. Role of authority Returning Officer
- 2.28. Creation of register
- 2.29. Conduct of referendums/elections

**Performance Standards**

- 2.30. Electoral Registration Officers
- 2.31. Returning Officers
- 2.32. Counting Officers
- 2.33. Procedures for returns

**3. Electoral Systems**

- 3.1. Referendums
- 3.2. Proportional representation - the principles
- 3.3. Proportional representation - the methods
- 3.4. Rolling Register
- 3.5. Voting methods
- 3.6. Compulsory registration and voting
- 3.7. Early voting
- 3.8. Absent voting
- 3.9. Electronic voting and counting systems
- 3.10. Electoral Commissions
- 3.11. Pilot Election schemes
- 3.12. Regional electoral systems including Welsh Assembly and Greater London Authority

## **Management and Finance**

### **Module D3**

#### **1. Management of People**

Key objective – to get the most from the team including recruiting, training and building the team; allocating and evaluating work; dealing with people problems; and managing yourself and your relations with others at work

- 1.1 Managing yourself and developing your own resources
- 1.2 Enhancing your own performance
- 1.3 Creating, developing and enhancing effective and productive working relationships
- 1.4 Selecting personnel for activities
- 1.5 Contributing to the development of teams and individuals
- 1.6 Developing teams and individuals to enhance performance
- 1.7 Developing management teams and leading the work of teams and individuals to achieve their objectives
- 1.8 Managing the performance of teams and individuals
- 1.9 Delegating work to others
- 1.10 Responding to and dealing with poor performance in your team
- 1.11 Redeploying personnel and making redundancies
- 1.12 Dealing with health and safety issues
- 1.13 National Occupational Standards

#### **2. Management of Information**

Key objective – to obtain, analyse and use information effectively to take decisions including leading and contributing to meetings

- 2.1 Managing information for action
- 2.2 Facilitating meetings
- 2.3 Chairing and participating in meetings
- 2.4 Providing information to support decision making
- 2.5 Establishing information management and communication systems
- 2.6 Using information to take critical decisions

#### **3. Management of Quality**

Key objective – to provide total quality management, quality assurance and quality control

- 3.1 Promoting the importance and benefits of quality
- 3.2 Providing advice and support for the development and implementation of quality policies
- 3.3 Managing continuous quality improvement
- 3.4 Implementing quality assurance systems
- 3.5 Providing advice and support for the development and implementation of quality systems

- 3.6 Monitoring compliance with quality systems
- 3.7 Carrying out quality audits

#### **4. Management of Projects**

Key objective – to plan, control and complete projects to satisfy the project's original objectives

- 4.1 Planning and preparing projects
- 4.2 Managing the running of projects
- 4.3 Completing projects including post implementation review
- 4.4 Risk assessment and risk management

#### **5. Electoral Finance**

Key objective - To control, use and account for electoral budgets

##### **Electoral Registration**

- 5.1 Employment and payment of staff (permanent, temporary and canvassers)
- 5.2 Procurement of equipment and stationery
- 5.3 Costs of printing, postage and delivery
- 5.4 Advertising costs
- 5.5 Budget preparation and monitoring
- 5.6 Records and accounts

##### **Elections Administration**

- 5.7 Employment and payment of staff (polling station, clerical assistants, counting assistants, supervisors, postal votes, others)
- 5.8 Election fees
- 5.9 Funding
- 5.10 Accounts
- 5.11 Taxation and superannuation
- 5.12 Expenses and subsistence
- 5.13 Other costs (e.g. premises, transport, delivery)
- 5.14 Insurance

##### **Parliamentary Elections**

- 5.16 Parliamentary election accounts
- 5.17 Quotations for works and services
- 5.18 Advances
- 5.19 Bank accounts

## Indicative Reading List

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author(s) / Publisher</b>	<b>Part</b>
AEA Foundation Course Manual	The AEA	Certificate and Diploma
AEA website	The AEA	Certificate and Diploma
Cabinet Office website	The Cabinet Office	Certificate and Diploma
Electoral Commission Guidance to Candidates	The Electoral Commission	Certificate and Diploma
Electoral Commission website	The Electoral Commission	Certificate and Diploma
Guidance to Returning Officers and materials	The Electoral Commission	Certificate and Diploma
Parker's Law and Conduct of Elections	Price / Lexis Nexis	Certificate and Diploma
Past examination papers and Examiners' Reports	The AEA	Certificate and Diploma
Running Electoral Registration	The Electoral Commission	Certificate and Diploma
Schofield's Election Law	Posner and Footner / Sweet and Maxwell	Certificate and Diploma
Data Protection Act Guidelines	The Information Commissioner	C1 and C2
AEA Diploma Manual	The AEA	Diploma
Parliament Website (House of Commons / House of Lords)	UK Parliament	D1 and D2
Electoral Reviews – Guidance and Procedural Advice	Local Government Boundary Commission	D2
Good Commonwealth Electoral Practice	Commonwealth Secretariat	D2
Guide to the Local Government Ombudsman Service	Ombudsman website	D2

## APPENDIX A Diploma Syllabus

Title	Author(s) / Publisher	Part
International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design	Reynolds and Reilly / IDEA	D2
International IDEA website	International IDEA	D2
Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies	Parliamentary Boundary Commissions	D2
National Occupational Standards	The AEA website	D3
Parliamentary Election Accounts Guidance	Electoral Claims Unit	D3

## APPENDIX B Qualification Scale Fees

### Diploma

**Basic fee** **£2,263**

- *Registration* £1,141
- *Dissertation* £428
- *Examinations (each paper)* £347

Dissertation re-submission £428

Examination re-sits (each paper) £347

Dissertation extension £79

Late application for registration £79

Appeal against failure £135

**Note: all fees are subject to VAT.**

## **Dissertation Topics**

Candidates are required to complete a dissertation on a subject to be chosen from those set by the Examining Board or, alternatively, one of the candidate's own choice which has been approved by the Board. A dissertation outline must be submitted by 31 January and the dissertation submitted by 30 September.

By way of example and indication of the sort of subjects which are selected by the Board as suitable areas for dissertations, the set topics for the last five years are shown below.

### **2018 Programme**

1. Given the advances in technology, discuss where these could be applied to the electoral processes, both as individual areas of work through to wholesale changes. Consider the steps that would have to be taken to implement any changes?
2. Electoral registration in the UK has long been based on the principle of maintaining complete and accurate registers but it could be argued that since IER was introduced, neither is being achieved. Discuss and make recommendations as to whether this basic principle remains realistic today by reference to examples of registration systems in use globally.
3. Is the media a threat or an opportunity? Explore this question in relation to the administration of elections from the perspective of voters, electoral administrators and candidates.
4. Is it time the House of Lords is abolished as a second "chamber" in Parliament? Consider the arguments from both sides and if abolition did not take place, what changes could be made to ensure that the will of elected representatives is not overridden by the Upper House.

### **2017 Programme**

1. Compare and contrast the methods of challenging an election in a UK Parliamentary constituency with challenging elections in two other countries. What recommendations would you make for change in the UK.
2. Since 2006, the Electoral Commission has been permitted to set and monitor performance standards for Electoral Registration and Returning Officer. Consider how successful or not the performance standards regime has been for key stakeholders in the intervening period and suggest how, with the ever changing electoral landscape, the monitoring of standards of performance might best be achieved to improve the quality of service delivery.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Previous Dissertation Topics**

3. Identify radical options to reduce the costs of delivering electoral services whilst ensuring that the roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer are discharged in accordance with legislation. Draw on examples of good practice from the UK and abroad to illustrate how far the delivery of electoral services might evolve.
4. Despite a plethora of changes to electoral systems over the last 20 years, many people still appear to be disengaged from political processes. Given a blank sheet of paper, what electoral systems should be introduced that will provide access to the modern democratic process whilst ensuring that it can be trusted? Compare with two other countries which provide good examples of such development.

### **2016 Programme**

1. In the multi-cultural and multi-national environment that exists in the UK, has the time come to extend the franchise to all residents and allow everyone the right to vote at every type of election?
2. How secure is our electoral system from fraud? Consider how the current UK system has developed in comparison with at least one other mature democracy and another more recent democracy. Suggest any changes to our electoral system that may make the processes more robust.
3. It could be said that online registration has encouraged participation in the democratic process. Examine further online or e-democracy initiatives that will engage the electorate to participate in democracy over the next 510 years.
4. With continued pressure on local authority spending, identify radical options to reduce the costs of delivering electoral services whilst ensuring that the roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer are discharged in accordance with legislation. Draw on examples of good practice from the UK and abroad to illustrate how far the delivery of electoral services can evolve within the current legislative framework. Where there are significant barriers to such evolution, outline the changes you would advocate making and the advantages which would be gained.

### **2015 Programme**

1. How can efficiency savings be made for the budget for UK Parliamentary General elections? Examine the processes that can be put in place to make such efficiencies.
2. Analyse the role, methods and effectiveness of consulting with the local electorate through Council Tax referendums, Neighbourhood Planning

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Previous Dissertation Topics**

referendums and Parish Polls and suggest how these could be made fit for modern day society.

3. Since 2006, the Electoral Commission has been permitted to set and monitor performance standards for Electoral Registration and Returning Officers and to collect information on the costs of electoral services. Consider how successful or not the performance standards regime has been for key stakeholders in the intervening period and suggest how, with the ever changing electoral landscape, the monitoring of standards of performance might best be achieved to improve the quality of service delivery.
4. Consider whether the delivery of electoral services should continue to be delivered by local government or whether the time has come to investigate alternative delivery models. Draw on examples of good practice from the UK and abroad to illustrate how the delivery of electoral services can evolve.

### **2014 Programme**

1. How can budget efficiency savings be made for UK Parliamentary elections? Examine the processes that can be put in place to make such efficiencies.
2. The Government has introduced legislation into Parliament to permit certain prisoners to enjoy voting rights. Consider the background to this matter, undertake a comparative study with at least three other countries, comment on the nature of the legislation and how it might work and recommend a way forward to satisfy the requirements of the European courts.
3. The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and Mayoral Elections are the only elections at which the Returning Officer plays a role in the publication of Candidates' election addresses. Examine the law and experience at elections where this has been done and make recommendations as to whether this should be introduced at other elections.
4. Consider whether the delivery of electoral services should continue to be delivered from within the framework of local government or whether the time has come to investigate alternative delivery models.