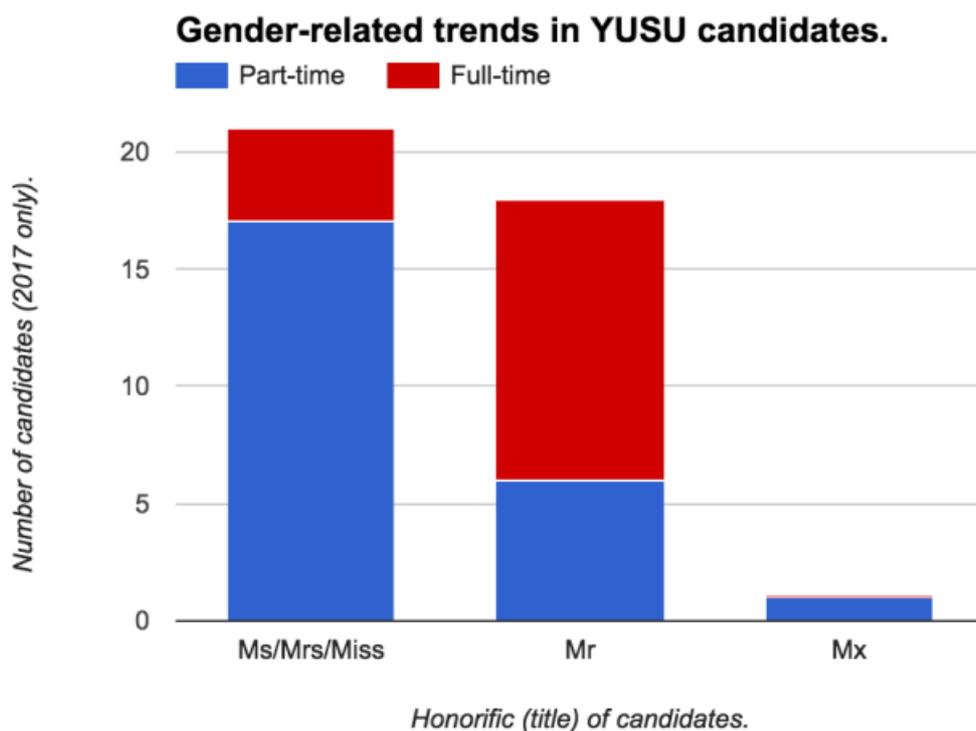


## YUSU elections put under the microscope: college chances, campus stances and gender imbalances

By [Michael Mokrysz](#)  
Tuesday 7 March 2017

In last edition’s Election Supplement, *Nouse* presented some preliminary analysis of the emerging patterns among the YUSU election candidates from the last two years. With the election over, it’s time to take a deeper look.

The People Finder, one of the sources used to provide honorific titles in their data, allows for a sense of the gender balance of candidates to be determined. Due to the binary nature of the data provided by The People Finder, there is an unfortunate risk that findings may misrepresent trans or non-binary candidates.



The “Gender-related trends in YUSU candidates” graphic representation shows whether candidates applied for full-time or part-time positions in 2017, divided by gender, with “Mx” pertaining to gender neutral candidates.

Upon examination of this graph, two things are immediately evident. First, more female candidates applied than male candidates, overall. This is to be expected, given the student population is majority-female. Taking this ratio of male-to-female in the student population into account, this graphic reassuringly suggests that male and female students are equally likely to run.

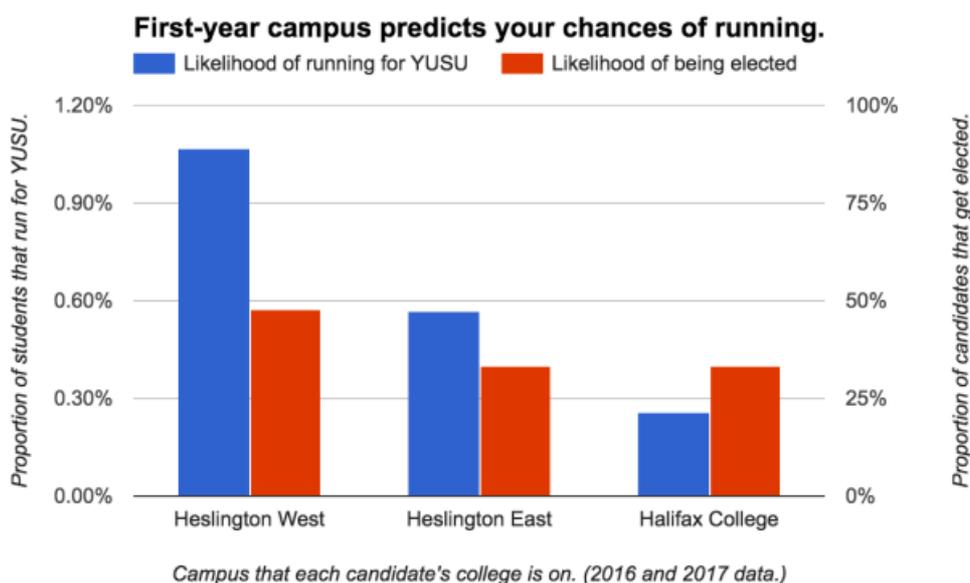
However, the second notable finding of this graph is the revelation that female candidates overwhelmingly ran for the more junior positions. Only 18 per cent of female-identifying candidates ran for the full-time leadership positions, in comparison to the 66 per cent of male-identifying candidates that

ran.

This trend raises concerns pertaining to the forces that may be working to discourage female-identifying candidates from applying to more senior, full time positions. A reported trend outside of student politics suggests that women are less likely to seek elected office than men. In cases that women do run, they have equal chances of electoral success. If female-identifying candidates do not run, then they are underrepresented. This under-representation is similarly exemplified in the wider world: only 29 per cent of MPs are women as of 2015. Are women simply not putting themselves forward for these positions?

Again, comparing the situation exemplified in student politics with the wider political sphere would suggest the affirmative. High-profile women have dealt with significant abuse in recent years: York Central MP Rachael Maskell has been sent death threats and abuse in the wake of Jo Cox’s murder. Diane Abbott MP has commented that the abuse is “almost as if they want to drive some of us out of politics.”

If YUSU is serious about representation, then efforts must be made to limit discouragement to female-identifying candidates who may aspire to full-time positions.

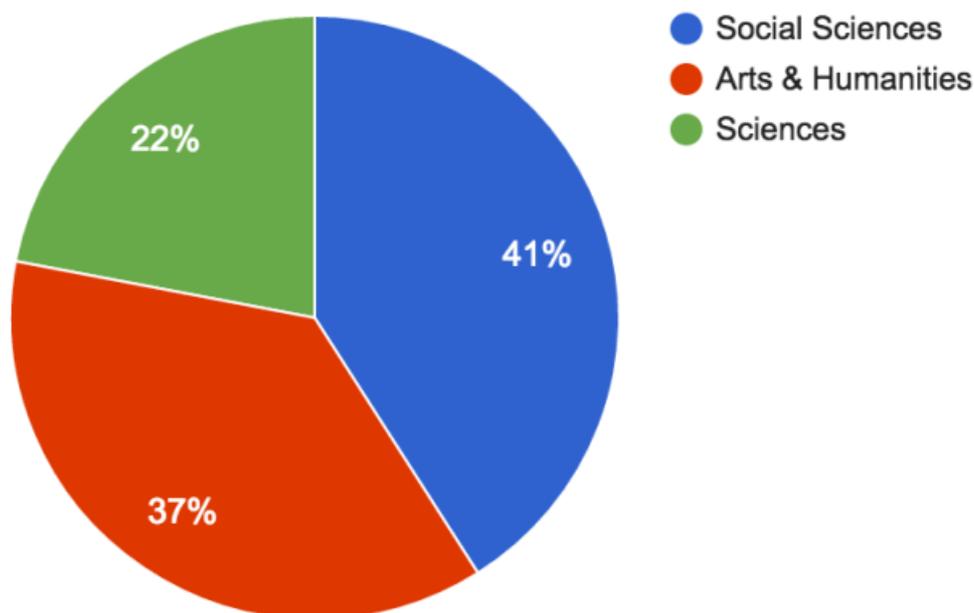


The “First year campus predicts your chance of running.” chart displays two sets of findings. In blue is how likely a random first year is to run for a YUSU position. As you can see, nearly 1 per cent of students on Heslington West go on to run for YUSU electoral positions. However, on Heslington East only 0.6 per cent of first years go on to run for YUSU positions. Further to this, in Halifax College only 0.3 per cent of students go on to run in elections. So a first year on York’s older campus is far more likely to run.

Displayed in red on the same chart is how likely you are to be elected if you do run for YUSU – or, in other words, the probability of a first year becoming a YUSU Officer is the blue multiplied by the red. Again, people who began university life on Heslington West do better than those from elsewhere. This is important: someone who spent their first year on Heslington West is more likely to run for a YUSU position and more likely to be elected. Just being on Heslington East or Halifax in first year is enough to halve your chances of becoming a YUSU Officer.

There’s also an issue of seniority. 9/10 of our recent Sabbatical Officers come from a Heslington West college. Only our new Academic Officer, Julian Porch, hails from Goodricke.

## Proportion of YUSU candidates from each faculty. (2016 and 2017 data.)



Lastly, the faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities have been found to be neck-and-neck for candidates running. Sciences students are less likely to run for YUSU – perhaps unsurprising, considering the high number of contact hours, but is worth noting.

Ultimately, trends such as these may weaken evidence-based policy in the wider world, as students who are less exposed to student politics may be less likely to take part in it once outside of university.



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