

Ofcom's rules on due impartiality, due accuracy, elections and referendums

1. Do you agree with Ofcom's proposal to remove the list of larger parties from Section Six of the Code and the PPRB rules? Give reasons for your answer.

No.

- Since 1922 there have only been Labour or Conservative PMs. To deny people a Labour or Conservative voice on a political story is not reflective of the choice of who will ultimately lead the country.
- Despite the increase in number of other party candidates standing, the share of votes for Labour and Conservatives in GB rose from 66.6% in 2010 to 68.8% in 2015.
- Not ensuring the PEBs, PPBs or RCBs are at peak time limits accessibility to major political parties and their policies.
- National broadcasters should always cover the two main political parties – even if the focus is on an area where Labour or the Conservatives are unlikely to win, they will still be contending the most seats nationally.
- The principle of larger parties has ensured balanced debate and that viewers have access to debates across the country.
- Broadcasters will have to decide their own rules to replicate what Ofcom are no longer deciding for them which could prove chaotic in terms of monitoring appeals.

2. Do you agree with the proposal laid out in paragraph 3.30 that Ofcom produce an annual digest of electoral support? Give reasons for your answer.

No.

- It is already a complicated and difficult feat to compare past election results with a range of variables, such as comparing the results to the last election, or the last similar election. With boundary changes also forthcoming, this is set to be even more complex and as a result, increasingly inaccurate.
- There is no clear guidance on how 'current polling' will be judged. Which polls will be included/excluded, when they might have been set and by whom, or if there will be a freeze date on them.
- Given the recent accuracy of polls in elections, we question whether the emphasis put on their results be allowed to influence elections in such a substantive way.
- Ofcom producing their own annual digest could mean that data and judgements are nearly a year out of date and potentially not reflecting major debates or recent changes in support.

3. Do you agree with the proposed amendments to Section Six set out in Annex 5 a) in relation to larger parties and b) to include BBC broadcasting services and BBC ODPS? Give reasons for your answer.

a)

No. As above in responses to Q1 and 2.

b)

Yes.

- In principle we support the BBC falling under the same Ofcom conditions as other broadcasters.
- Agree with the principle that candidates should not be presenters or interviews during election period, but that there is no need to remove archived material.

4. Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the PPRB Rules set out in Annex 4 a) in relation to larger parties and b) to include BBC broadcasting services? Give reasons for your answer.

a)

No. As above in responses to Q1 and 2.

b)

Yes.

- In principle we support the BBC falling under the same Ofcom conditions as other broadcasters.

5. Do you have any comments on Ofcom's proposed amendments set out in Annex 5 for the purpose of regulating BBC broadcasting services and BBC ODPS in the area of due impartiality and due accuracy?

- We welcome the emphasis on due impartiality and accuracy. Whilst we believe that larger political parties should have fair representation, inaccuracies and balance based on fake stories should be addressed.