

How To: Write a Referendum Question

When you want to poll students for their opinion on something or their desire to see something executed, submitting a referendum question is a great way to do it. You want to know if students agree, so you ask them!

The structure of the question is simple. Include whereas clauses for background information as you see fit. Then ask your question.

“Do you agree...” “Do you support...” Are great ways to start.

Be very specific with the wording of your question.

The elections McGill website has referendum kits and all the instructions you need to get started. Read the instructions, talk to elections McGill if you have questions, think about what you're asking.

Here are some more details from the Constitution on Elections and Referenda with some translations:

27.1 Any member of the Society may initiate a referendum by presenting a question to the CRO who shall indicate to the member within twenty-four (24) hours whether the proposed question respects the requirements of Article 18.3. The member must then collect on a petition, clearly stating the referendum question at the top of each page, the signatures of five hundred (500) society members from at least seven (7) different Faculties or Schools, with not more than thirty percent (30%) from any one Faculty or School. All signatures shall be collected in the academic year in which the referendum is to be held.

Translation: Write your question, give it to the CRO, if they give you the green light, collect 500 signatures (with the question clearly stated at the top of the page), from 7 faculties or schools (with no more than 30% from any one).

27.2 The member shall submit the completed petition of signatures to the CEO at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the opening of advanced polls.

Translation: Think ahead, know when advanced polling opens and how early you need to start gathering signatures.

27.3 Student-initiated referenda may not alter the composition of the Society's staff or the membership fees or other financial matters of the Society.

Translation: Keep this in mind. Don't try to alter any of these things, your question won't be effective.