

Referendum Questions

For Services of SSMU

Updated as of 2024-06-25





Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

Students' Society of McGill University

Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

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Introduction

This document contains all the relevant information pertaining to referendum questions for Student Services of SSMU. A SSMU Service is a student-run group, officially recognized and managed by the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU). They provide a wide range of services and resources to the entire McGill student body.

For any questions related to referendum questions or motion-writing, please contact the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator. For any questions related to SSMU services, please contact the Services Coordinator.

Writing

Referendum Basics

- A referendum is a vote held by an organization to determine its membership's position on a particular question. The outcome of a referendum is binding, i.e. the organization must take steps to comply with the outcome of the vote.
- Referendums are held once per academic semester in early November and early March.
- Each referendum will consist of the 'Nomination' period, where questions can be nominated to be placed on the referendum and a 'voting' period, where students will vote on the questions.
- A referendum question refers to a specific question or item within the referendum that students can vote on, and a simple majority vote will trigger the actionable items of the question.

General Structure

- A referendum question is divided into 'whereas' clauses, which provide background information, and the question itself, which is what is being voted on.
- A referendum question can create or renew a fee, increase an existing fee, introduce a policy, amend the Constitution, amend a policy or Internal Regulation, or change the Executive Team composition.

Fee-Related Questions

- All fee-related questions must include the following information;



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- The amount per student per semester.
- First and final dates per semester of application.
- Whether the fee applies to full-time and/or part-time students, and if there will be a different amount charged to each.
- Whether the fee is opt-outable or non-opt-outable.
- All fee-related questions must be reviewed and approved by the Vice-President Finance during the Nomination period and this approval should be noted in the motion.
- If a fee needs to be increased and renewed, these should be presented as two separate questions, though they can be part of the same motion (i.e., a fee increase question should not renew the fee and a fee renewal should not increase the fee).

New Service Establishment

- Services must first acquire full-status as a club under SSMU.
- All Services applications must be reviewed with the Vice-President Student Life before the application is submitted to the Services Review Committee.
- If approved, the application will then be forwarded to the Legislative Council, who will vote specifically on the establishment of the Service and the referendum question to be forwarded to the student body.
- All Services are required to receive all their funding from their service-specific fee.
 - The establishment of a Student Service must be done by first getting a majority vote to establish a new fee that will sponsor the service.

Examples

Creation: “Do you agree to the creation of the opt-outable SSMU [NAME] Fee at a rate of \$[XXX] per student per semester, payable by all SSMU members, starting in [SEMESTER/YEAR] until [SEMESTER/YEAR] (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority ‘no’ vote will result in [OUTCOME]?”

[Motion Regarding the Creation of the Student Nutrition Accessibility Club Fee](#)

Increase: “Do you agree to the increase of the opt-outable SSMU [NAME] Fee from \$[CURRENT RATE] per student per semester to \$[Proposed Rate] per student per semester beginning in [SEMESTER/YEAR] until [SEMESTER/YEAR] (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority ‘no’ vote will result in [OUTCOME]?”

[Motion Regarding a Fee Increase for DriveSafe Referendum Question](#)

Renewal: “Do you agree to the renewal of the opt-outable SSMU [NAME] Fee at a rate of \$[XXX] per student per semester, payable by all SSMU members, starting in [SEMESTER/YEAR] until



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[SEMESTER/YEAR] (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority 'no' vote will result in [OUTCOME]?"

Presenting

- For Services, referendum questions can only be initiated through the Legislative Council and must be approved by the Vice-President Student Life and the Vice-President Finance.
 - Referendum questions initiated through the Legislative Council require at least one Councillor's involvement.
- Referendum questions should be presented using a motion, for more information please consult the [Motion Writing Guide](#).
- An additional clause should be included in the motion that ensures that grammatical/legal changes by Elections SSMU or McGill do not require re-approval.

Voting

- There are three options when voting in a referendum; 'yes', 'no', and 'abstain'.
 - Abstain means that the voter is neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the selected question, but is instead choosing not to vote.
 - Abstention does not count towards the vote, only majority 'yes' or 'no' will result in acceptance or rejection of the question.
- Referendum questions succeed by a simple majority, meaning that if more than 50% of voters select 'yes' then the question will be approved and the actionable items of the question will commence.
- During the campaigning period, which may overlap with the voting period, representatives or stakeholders for the referendum question can advocate and campaign for 'yes' votes, so long as they follow the regulations of campaigning as outlined in the [Internal Regulations of Elections and Referenda](#).

Campaigning

- Campaigning can only be done by Members to Members, meaning that no external bodies may campaign on behalf of a referendum question or be the recipient of campaign materials.
- Campaigning must be limited to the 'Campaigning Period' and 'Voting Period' established by the Chief Electoral Officer.



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- Campaigning should not occur in the areas surrounding polling stations, or in any University library or residence, including physical materials such as postering.
 - In particular, stickers should not be affixed to the cities, the University's or SSMU property.
- All campaign materials must be approved by Elections SSMU before being used.
- All campaigns are strongly encouraged to minimize waste, using recycled materials where possible.

Step-by-Step for Service Fees

1. Identify Need

Identify a need within your Service for a change, increase, renewal, or establishment of a fee.

2. Verify Finances

Prepare the financial documents necessary to assess and justify the need for the referendum question. This should include a projected budget with and without the increased revenue (if applicable), as well as a summary of the current/previous years financial records.

3. Create an Outline

Draft an outline describing all of the relevant information, including financial documents, to be readily present when creating the motion.

4. Prepare for Councillor Involvement

As this referendum question will be Councillor-initiated via the Legislative Council, determine the mover and seconder who sponsor the motion.

- a. The mover and seconder are the two individuals who are presenting the motion to the Legislative Council.

5. Draft motion

Using the [Motion Writing Guide](#), create a motion to be presented at the relevant meeting, including the referendum question as an actionable item with the wording you wish to see on the ballot.



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6. Consultation

Contact the Vice-President Finance and Vice-President Student Life to review and approve of the proposed referendum question, ensuring you are providing them with all relevant documents including budgets and the motion.

7. Campaign

During the voting period, the Service and its representatives may campaign for votes among the student body so long as the Internal Regulations of Elections and Referenda are adhered to.

8. Await Results

If the majority of voters select 'yes', then the actionable items of the referendum question will be enacted. If the majority of voters either select 'no' or 'abstain' then the actionable items of the referendum question will not be enacted.

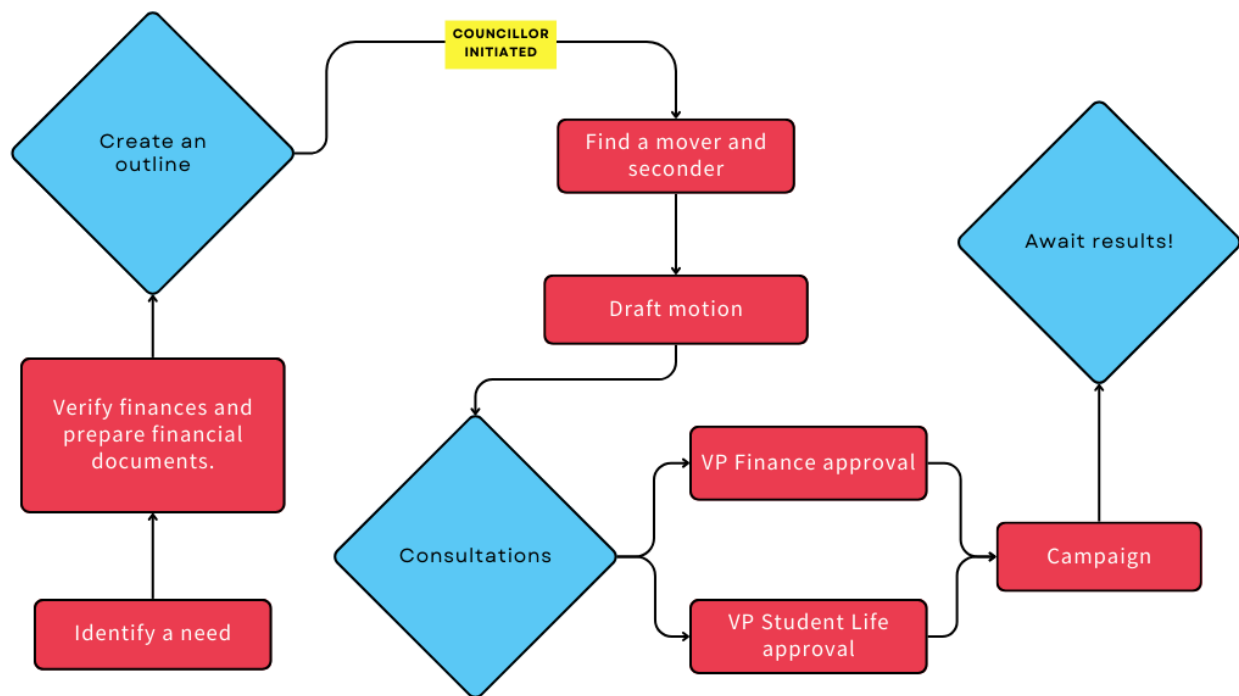


Image Description: Flowchart dictating the steps necessary for Service fee renewal or creation