



# **Elections SSMU**

## **Submitting Student-Initiated Questions to the Winter Referendum**



**Association étudiante  
de l'Université McGill**  
Students' Society of McGill  
University

January 21st, 2026

# Who is Elections SSMU?

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- Independent and neutral body responsible for administering and overseeing all SSMU elections and referenda. This includes:
  - First Year Council Elections
  - Fall Referendum
  - Winter Referendum and Executive Elections
  - Ratification of General Online Assemblies
- Ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance with SSMU's Internal Regulations and Constitution.
- Handling complaints, disqualifications, and violations related to election rules.
- But most importantly, encourage participation among SSMU members and reduce barriers to voting.

# Documents to Reference

## A Handy Guide to Writing a Student-Initiated Referendum Question



Updated as of 2026-01-01

[Link](#)

## SSMU Referendum

Nomination Kit for Student-Initiated  
Questions

Winter 2026

Please be sure to read all the information in this package and fill  
out all the necessary forms.  
Questions? Comments? More information?

Contact us  
[elections@ssmu.ca](mailto:elections@ssmu.ca)



[Link](#)

## Internal Regulations of Elections and Referenda



Updated as of 2025-12-04

[Link](#)

# What is a Referendum Question?

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- A way for members to establish fees, poll the membership, or edit governing documents (Constitution, Internal Regulations, or Policies & Plans).
- SSMU Referenda are regularly scheduled two times a year, Fall and Winter.
- As a SSMU member, it is your right to submit a referendum question via the student-initiated pathway.

However, referendum questions may NOT amend, establish, or rescind any policy of the society:

- a) Membership fees or the finances of the Society;
- b) the composition of the Society's staff; or
- c) legal matters.

# Two routes of Referendum Submission

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1. **Legislative Council-Initiated Questions:** The Legislative Council may initiate a referendum question by way of a resolution of council. If passed by a two-thirds majority ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ), it will be put to Members during the following Referendum period.
2. **Student-Initiated Questions:** Any SSMU member may initiate a referendum question through a submission through Election SSMU. Once approved, the member shall collect the signatures of at least five hundred (500) members or the signatures amounting to two (2) percent of the membership, whichever is less, on a petition. The total signatures submitted shall be from at least seven (7) different faculties or Schools, with not more than thirty-five percent (35%) being from any one Faculty or School.

# Timeline of the Winter Referendum

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- **Nomination Period and Signature Collection:** Thursday, January 29, 2026 to Thursday, February 12, 2026
- **Nomination Period and Signature Collection for Amendments of the Constitution and/or Internal Regulations:** Thursday, January 29, 2026 to Sunday, February 8, 2026
- **Legislative Council Review of Amendments of the Constitution and/or Internal Regulations:** Thursday, February 12, 2026
- **Review by McGill:** Monday, February 16th, 2026 to Friday, February 20th, 2026
- **Board Ratification:** Tuesday, February 24th, 2026
- **Polling Period:** Monday, March 9th, 2026 at 9:00AM to Friday, March 20th, 2026 at 9:00PM

# Steps of Student-Initiated Questions

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Nomination form completed and submitted.

The CRO approves/rejects questions, edit question wording if needed.

Collect 500 signatures from 7 faculties, with no faculties taking more than 35% of the signatures.

The CRO confirms signatures meet the requirement.

**(Only for questions pertaining to modification of Constitution and/or Internal Regulations)**

The question is presented as a recommendation to the Legislative Council, and voted on.

The Board of Directors ratifies and votes on the questions.

The CRO makes available all the questions of the referendum to the membership.

The question appears on the ballot during the polling period.

# **Completing the Nomination Package**



# Make sure you keep in mind of the deadlines

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- Due to the extent of the research and consultations necessary ahead of the referendum question proposal, ensure that you are giving yourself adequate time to complete all the steps.
- If you cannot complete the consultations in time for a referendum or you feel your question is underdeveloped, the motion should not be submitted and instead should be postponed to the next scheduled referendum until it is ready.
- If you feel your motion is being delayed by difficulties in the research or consultation process, contact the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator ([pac@ssmu.ca](mailto:pac@ssmu.ca)) or the Chief Returning Officer ([elections@ssmu.ca](mailto:elections@ssmu.ca)) to get support.

QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO CHANGES IN THE CONSTITUTION &  
INTERNAL REGULATIONS:

**Sunday, February 8, 2026**

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS:

**Thursday, February 12, 2026**

This includes:

- Submitting your nomination kit
- Getting approval from the Chief Returning Officer
- Collecting enough signatures that satisfy the requirements.

## 1. Brainstorm

Think about an issue that affects McGill's student body, then think about how SSMU can make a positive difference for that issue. This could include creating a new policy, project, role, or stance, or amending/improving something that SSMU already has in place. Try to think about both the issues and your solutions from a multitude of perspectives, not just your personal experiences.

Good source: [Governing Documents - Students' Society of McGill University](#)

- SSMU Constitution
- Internal Regulations
- Policies
- Positions

# Some past student-initiated questions

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## Winter 2018 - Policy on Implementation of a Fall Reading Break

**Whereas**, 61% of Canadian universities have already implemented four or more study days in the Fall semester;

**Whereas**, evidence suggests that a Fall Reading Break reduces stress levels in students, particularly first-year students;

**Whereas**, a 2015 survey of 5112 students conducted by Enrollment Services found that 71.5% of respondents were in favour of a Fall Reading Break;

**Whereas**, a Proposal for a Fall Reading Break at McGill University has already been developed;

**Whereas**, the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) has supported proposals for a Fall Reading Break in the past;

**Be it Resolved**, that the SSMU renew its stance of support for a Fall Reading Break at McGill University;

**Be it further Resolved**, that the SSMU support campaigns for the implementation of a Fall Reading Break at McGill University through the offices of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and Vice-President (University Affairs);

**Be it further Resolved**, that the SSMU through the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs), lobby the University to implement a Fall Reading Break at McGill University as soon as possible;

**Be it further Resolved**, that the SSMU, through the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs), lobby the provincial government for legislation implementing a Fall Reading Break;

**Be it further Resolved**, that the SSMU encourages the Senate Caucus to pursue implementation of a Fall Reading Break until said break is implemented or this policy expires;

**Be it further Resolved**, that this policy be valid for five years until April 1, 2023, when it will be brought back to the membership for renewal;

**Be it further Resolved**, that this Motion be brought to the SSMU membership for approval during the 2018 Winter Referendum period under the question:  
"Do you agree that the Policy on Implementation of a Fall Reading Break be adopted as a policy of the SSMU?"

**Be it further Resolved**, that the SSMU Legislative Council endorse the adoption of the Policy on Implementation of a Fall Reading Break.

# Some past student-initiated questions

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## Winter 2023 - Student Support Fee Renewal

Student Support is a for-profit organisation proposing that all part-time and undergraduate students pay an opt-out-able Student Support Fee of \$10.29 per semester. If this motion is passed, students would receive unlimited access to Udemy, Calm and ProWriting Aid starting in Fall 2023 and ending in Winter 2024 (inclusive). Do you agree?

# Some past student-initiated questions

Winter 1992

## Student-Initiated Referenda Questions:

Do you agree that the name of the "University Centre" (Union Building), located at 3480 McTavish Avenue, be changed to the "William Shatner University Centre"?

Yes	1582	50.9%
No	1355	43.6%
No Opinion	171	5.5%

Whereas:

"SSMU" refers to the Students' Society of McGill University

**ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF ADOPTING THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS SSMU POLICY?**

### Tuition Fees

1. The SSMU is unconditionally opposed to any increases whatsoever in the total dollar amount of university tuition fees.
2. The SSMU is opposed to all forms of charges for "services" levied by universities ("frais afférents") including the so-called "course materials charge".
3. The SSMU shall not become nor remain a member of any organization whose policies are in contradiction with sections (1) and (2) of this policy.
4. This policy supersedes all previous policies of the SSMU regarding tuition fees.

Yes	1637	58.0%
No	760	26.9%
No Opinion	427	15.1%

## 2. Research

Conduct research into the issue, as well as the solutions that either SSMU or external groups have implemented to address the issue. Research might include understanding current events, reading articles or journals on the topic, reviewing SSMU documents, identifying equivalents at other institutions, and more.

## 3. Governance team contacted ([pac@ssmu.ca](mailto:pac@ssmu.ca))

When you contact the governance team, they will provide you with some preliminary feedback on your work so far and suggest next steps for you. This includes checking your knowledge of SSMU governance, of the consultation process, of any relevant documents, and of SSMU's previous actions related to the issue. The governance team will essentially act as a guide to make sure that you stay on track and follow SSMU's standards.

## 4. Consultations

Use SSMU's [Consultation Policy](#) as a foundation for your consultations, including who you consult and how you consult them.

Some potential people include:

- Policy and Advocacy Coordinator ([pac@ssmu.ca](mailto:pac@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions regarding the SSMU Constitution, Internal Regulations, Policies, SSMU positions.
- Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary ([governance@ssmu.ca](mailto:governance@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions regarding SSMU Governance (executive council, legislative council, general assembly, board of directors) and legal issues.
- Accountability Commissioner ([accountability@ssmu.ca](mailto:accountability@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions regarding measures to hold officers, councillors, directors, and staff accountable.
- VP Clubs and Services ([studentlife@ssmu.ca](mailto:studentlife@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions regarding SSMU clubs and services, IRs of student groups.
- VP Finance ([finance@ssmu.ca](mailto:finance@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions involving finances and fees.
- VP University Affairs ([ua@ssmu.ca](mailto:ua@ssmu.ca)) - Any questions involving McGill, their structures, and their policies.
- Other SSMU executives
- SSMU Commissioners and Coordinators



## 5. Completing the nomination package

Based on the initial brainstorming, the research conducted, the consultations, and any other relevant information, begin to write a draft of the nomination package based on the template and SSMU's standards. At the same time that the package is being drafted, you should also begin creating any other documentation that should be included with the motion in the Appendix.

# Instructions on completing the package

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## Issue

Brief summary of issue.

*(max. 4 sentences)*

## Background and Rationale

Include a summary of key points required in support of discussion and/or a decision. Include information about when the issue was last discussed (as relevant) the reference numbers of previous documents, and/or approvals by Council/Board (as relevant).

Include the rationale for why this issue requires this motion and why the SSMU should adopt this position or take this action over alternatives.

*(max. 300 words)*

## Alignment with Mission

Briefly explain how the proposed motion aligns with the SSMU Mission (Service, Representation, Leadership) or other relevant Policies (e.g., Equity Policy, Indigenous Solidarity Policy, etc.).

*(max. 2 sentences)*

# Instructions on completing the package

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## Consultations Completed

Before bringing this motion to the floor, it is expected that you consult with the relevant Commissioner(s)/Committee(s)/Officer(s). Explain these consultations here.

Motions pertaining to finances must have been discussed with the Vice-President (Finance) in advance.

*(max. 150 words)*

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## Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Comment specifically on risk factors that taking this decision poses, including any human resource, finance, or other resource implications as well as communications/optics issues.

*(max. 5 sentences)*

# Instructions on completing the package

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## Sustainability Considerations

Have sustainability implications been taken into consideration in the development of this proposal and, if pertinent, what impacts (social, economic, environmental) will proposed actions have on SSMU's sustainability efforts?

*(max. 4 sentences)*

## Impact of Decision and Next Steps

The action that will be taken if the proposed resolution or recommendation is approved. If required, provide a communications strategy, including details as to when this matter can be made public or if it is to remain confidential.

Specifically note which Commissioner/Committee/Officer is being assigned a mandate and the timelines for that mandate (if applicable).

*(max. 200 words)*

# Instructions on completing the package

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Specifically note which Commissioner/Committee/Officer is being assigned a mandate and the timelines for that mandate (if applicable).

*(max. 200 words)*

## 6. Consultations follow up

Once the motion has been drafted, send it to all the consultants for a chance to give more feedback. This would also be the step where you would negotiate with the individual (if applicable) on their level of involvement or responsibility for any projects that would follow from the motion's approval.

## 7. Motion finalized

Now that consultants have provided feedback or approved of the motion, it is time to do one last review to make sure the motion meets SSMU standards. This includes implementing any changes that consultants may have suggested, proofreading, and verifying the structure matches the SSMU template. This is also when you ensure that any corresponding documents are completed and affixed to the Appendix.

## 8. Submit package to the Chief Returning Officer

Once the question and package has been submitted, the Chief Returning Officer will review it to ensure it is in line with SSMU standards. If it is approved, you will be prompted to start collecting signatures.

## 9. Question is ratified at the Board of Directors - **Feb 24, 2026**

Approved Referendum questions will be circulated and voted on by the Board of Directors at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the Polling Period.

If the question involves changing the Constitution and/or Internal Regulations, it will also be voted on at the Legislative Council.

# Some past student-initiated questions

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## Winter 2023 - Student Support Fee Renewal

Student Support is a for-profit organisation proposing that all part-time and undergraduate students pay an opt-out-able Student Support Fee of \$10.29 per semester. If this motion is passed, students would receive unlimited access to Udemy, Calm and ProWriting Aid starting in Fall 2023 and ending in Winter 2024 (inclusive). Do you agree?



# **Approval by the Chief Returning Officer**

The CRO, upon reviewing your nomination package, will accept/reject changes based on the following criteria:

- Questions cannot contradict the Constitution and Internal Regulations, unless the question aims to directly change them.
- Questions cannot contradict the law.
- Questions and the whereas causes must be neutral.
- Questions cannot be about finances of the Society, alter staff composition, or be involved in legal matters.

Some back and forth, as well as wording questions is to expected. Start early!

# Signature Collection

- 500 signatures from SSMU members
- From at least 7 faculties or schools
- No faculty or school should have over 35% of signatures
- If you have more than 500 signatures but a certain faculty is overrepresented, you should gather more signatures from other faculties to offset the overrepresentation. Please note that the 35% rule applies to the total number of signatures and not just the first 500.)
- Will be done via a Google Form issued by Elections SSMU

# **Legislative Council Voting**

**For Amendments to the Constitution and IRs**

**February 12th, 2026**

# **Board Ratification**

**For ALL questions**

**February 24th, 2026**

**Congratulations, your  
questions will now be on the  
ballot!**

# Next steps

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- **Campaign!** Form a “yes” committee and tell people why they should say yes for your question.
- To campaign, you must attend a mandatory campaign meeting.
- You may only campaign during the campaigning period.

# Thank you!

*Mike Lee, Chief Returning Officer  
elections@ssmu.ca*

