Elections Protocol

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

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.
Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

ssmu.ca | 3501 rue Peel, Montréal, QC, H3A 1W7

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1. Campaigning

1.1. Campaign Committees

1.1.1. Involvement in a Campaign Committee by non-Members will result in sanctions for the Campaign Committee.

1.1.2. The appointed Chairs of the Campaign Committee must attend the information session provided by Elections SSMU, unless an exception has been made at the discretion of Elections SSMU. All those absent will be held to the same standard of knowledge as those who attended the meetings.

1.1.3. All Campaign Committees are responsible for following any additional rules and regulations set out by SSMU Elections during the information session.

1.1.4. All members who engage in active campaigning, including production of campaign material, recruiting of campaign members, campaigning planning, soliciting votes to other members must be included in the campaign committee list before they begin campaigning.

1.1.4.1. Members who are not in the campaign committee will be limited to voicing support and endorsing a candidate / campaign on their individual social media.

1.1.5. No Candidate or member of a Campaign Committee may interfere with the voting process. This includes:

1.1.5.1. Not touching a members' phone or screen throughout the whole process.

1.1.5.2. Standing at least 2 meters from the member while the member reads the questions and makes their selection.

1.1.5.3. Provide complete privacy and step away from the member when they reach the final stage of the process to submit their vote, ensuring they have complete privacy and freedom from oversight.

1.2. Campaigning

1.2.1. Campaigning may occur on campus grounds with the exception of libraries and residencies. Campaigning should also not occur in any SSMU workspaces which includes 3501 Peel, Gert's Bar, Gert's Café, and the offices in the University Centre. The restriction applies to physical campaigning as well as the distribution or display of campaigning materials.

1.2.2. Campaigning may take place in the following forms:

1.2.2.1. Speaking to SSMU members on authorized campaigning locations about your platform.
1.2.2.2. After being given authorization by the professor / instructor, speaking at the start of class or posting authorized campaigning messages on class platforms.
1.2.2.3. Putting up posters, respecting rules of the individual building.
1.2.2.4. Leaving messages on blackboards / whiteboards.
1.2.2.5. Speaking and participating in events organized by any non-external body after being given authorization by the organizer.
1.2.2.6. Organizing dedicated campaigning activities and events after approval by the CRO and ensuring all associated costs are declared.
1.2.2.7. Running ads on various platforms, ensuring the distribution is best limited to SSMU members, and all associated costs are declared.
1.2.2.8. Sending unsolicited electronic mail (not via any distribution list, unless assembled for the purpose of campaigning) and individual messages on social media platforms.

Any other form of campaigning must be approved by Elections SSMU.

1.2.3. Posters shall only be affixed inside of buildings with express permission, and must abide by all regulations of the building. Posters should be removed following the polling period according to the buildings' regulations.
1.2.4. Campaign stickers should not be affixed to public property, including that of the Society or the University.
1.2.5. All campaigning material is subject to approval by Elections SSMU before being in circulation. Elections SSMU will reject:
1.2.5.1. Material with any false / misleading information, wrong facts
1.2.5.2. Material that includes slander and/or the encouragement of slander of other opponents
1.2.5.3. Material that includes threatening language
1.2.5.4. Material that is off-topic and/or irrelevant to campaign
1.2.5.5. Material that is deemed as a gift by Elections SSMU
1.2.5.6. Any other material deemed unsuitable by Elections SSMU officers.
1.2.5.7. All campaign materials must include the following disclaimer: "If any information in this material or my campaign violates the Internal Regulations of Elections of Referenda, please contact Elections SSMU at elections@ssmu.ca or submit a complaint at (designated URL)".

1.2.6. All printed material should include the QR code to the Elections SSMU complaint form.

1.2.7. When possible, the link to the anonymous complaint form should be made accessible on all campaigning designed platforms.

1.2.8. Exceptions can be made based on discretion of the Chief Returning Officer.

1.2.9. Campaigning may not include the gifting of items (excluding flyers, stickers, or pamphlets) unless explicitly approved by Elections SSMU.

1.3. Expenses

1.3.1. All associated campaigning expenses must be declared and fall under the maximum allowed as per the Internal Regulations.

1.3.2. Any material of value needs to be declared, even if you did not spend money out of pocket, which shall be declared at fair market value as defined in the Internal Regulations.

1.3.3. Campaign material may be donated by or repurposed from any non-external body. These items must be declared as expenses at fair market value.

1.3.4. No campaign may accept cash as donations to aid in their campaign.

1.3.5. Campaigns may not buy likes or engagement on social media platforms.

1.4. Positions

1.4.1. All affiliations and potential conflicts of interests must be declared at the time of the nomination period. During the campaigning period, campaign committees may not use any privileged roles or access to any spaces / material / privileges to campaign that isn't reasonably accessible by a regular SSMU member.

1.4.2. Current SSMU Staff, including Officers, may encourage voting in general, but not directly support Campaigns. The Officers shall remain neutral in a Society Election or any other Elections run by Elections SSMU. This does not apply for Officers seeking re-election or a new position so long as they do not abuse their current position. This includes endorsements with private social media accounts and any use of their position title.

1.4.3. No Officer, Director, or employee of the Society may use their position, or any benefits associated with it, in order to aid a Campaign.

1.4.3.1. Society employees can support or join campaign committees outside of the work environment provided they are a regular SSMU member and do not use any work resources.

1.5. Endorsements

1.5.1. A campaign committee may solicit endorsements from:
- 1.5.1.1. Any SSMU member
- 1.5.1.2. Any clubs and services under SSMU and faculty associations

1.5.2. A campaign committee may not solicit endorsements from:
- 1.5.2.1.1. Faculty associations and departmental associations
- 1.5.2.1.2. Current SSMU Officers
- 1.5.2.1.3. SSMU Staff (in their capacity as staff members)
- 1.5.2.1.4. Any external body

1.5.3. Campaigning soliciting endorsements must:
- 1.5.3.1. Allow entities the right to remain neutral or not support your campaign.
- 1.5.3.2. Disclose any affiliations or conflicts of interest to the organization providing the endorsement.
- 1.5.3.3. Ensure any campaign members or referendum committee members are excluded from the endorsement decision making process

1.6. Social Media

1.6.1. All social media accounts must be declared and registered with Elections SSMU.

1.6.2. All accounts used for campaigning, no matter a pre-existing or dedicated campaign account, must be public and followed by Elections SSMU for the duration of the campaigning and polling period.

1.6.3. No anonymous campaigning is allowed.

1.6.4. External bodies may not be campaigning or soliciting votes for candidates on their respective accounts, which includes and is not limited to: posts, stories, reposts, comments, and status updates.
- 1.6.4.1. Reasonable effort must be made on the campaign committee to inform external bodies of the rules and requesting them to take down the story/post.
- 1.6.4.2. No engagement of posts of external bodies are allowed, which includes and is not limited to: likes, comments, replies, and reposts.

1.6.5. Messages of support or opposition may not be posted on private social media groups or listservs that are not accessible to all other SSMU members using the same social media platforms.

1.6.5.1. The exceptions are private groups established for the sole purposes of campaigning, where members have given consent and understand the purposes of the group.

1.6.5.2. Expenses should not be used to purchase advertisements on social media or artificially inflate engagement.

1.7. Exceptions

1.7.1. Campaigning for plebiscites must consist of accurate and unbiased information.

2. Debates

2.1. Structure

2.1.1. The debate for each executive position shall follow a standardized structure:

2.1.1.1. Opening Statements: An opening statement by each candidate, outlining their campaign.

2.1.1.2. Executive Questions: Elections SSMU, in consultation with the respective outgoing Executive Officer, will prepare questions for all candidates to answer for each executive role.

2.1.1.3. Candidate Discussion: Each candidate prepares questions for the other candidate(s) within their race to emphasize direct dialogue.

2.1.1.4. Open Discussion & Cross-Examination: Candidates may directly respond to or challenge each other based on everything said in previous sections or during their campaign and platform.

2.1.1.5. Online & Audience Questions: Questions from the Membership to be answered by each candidate.

2.1.1.6. Closing Statements: A closing statement by each candidate, summarizing their campaign, platform points, and the debate.

2.1.2. Details regarding number of questions and response time shall be communicated with the candidates beforehand.

2.1.3. The moderators of the debate reserve the right to reduce or re-arrange the debate structure due to extenuating circumstances (i.e. time constraints), but each candidate shall be given an equal opportunity to speak.

2.1.4. To ensure fairness, the order by which candidates go first shall be determined randomly for each section, and not known for the candidates beforehand.

2.1.5. Members shall be given access to a form to submit questions in advance or throughout the debate. Elections SSMU will screen all questions and read aloud those which meet the below criteria:

2.1.6. Questions may only be submitted by Elections SSMU Officers, current Executive Officers, SSMUnion, or the SSMU members.

2.1.6.1. Questions which are offensive or contain irrelevant information as judged by the Chief Returning Officer or Deputy Returning Officer will be considered out of order.

2.1.6.1.1. Irrelevant information will include those questions not directly related to the SSMU and its operations.

2.1.6.2. In the case where there are more eligible questions than allotted, a random draw will occur

2.1.6.3. Questions from the outgoing Executive Officers, and Candidates must be submitted in advance and pre-screened by Elections SSMU.

2.1.6.3.1. Any pre-prepared questions are meant to be confidential and not meant to be known by any Candidates

2.1.6.3.2. Any approved questions are meant to be presented and read as approved.

2.1.6.3.3. No Officer, Director, employee of the Society, or SSMUnion Executive may use their position, or any benefits associated with it, in order to aid a Campaign including directly or indirectly revealing a prepared question.

2.2. Behaviour

2.2.1. All candidates must carry themselves with decorum.

2.2.2. No candidate shall speak unless called upon by the moderator and shall not interrupt the speaking of other candidates.

2.2.3. The moderators hold the right to intervene if a candidate's behavior is disruptive, if the discussion requires guidance, or if the back-and-forth begins to slow down. Candidates must respect the authority and instructions of the moderators.

2.2.4. Each candidate during the debate is solely responsible for uplifting and communicating their campaign and may not use their allotted time to disparage or make negative comments ad hominem about other candidates. Responses should focus on policy, platform, record, and statements said during the debate rather than personal attacks.

2.2.5. The moderator reserves the right to stop a candidate from continuing for the following reasons and not limited to:

2.2.5.1. Aggressive or abusive behaviour, such as shouting or personal insults;

2.2.5.2. Disrespectful comments or conduct;

2.2.5.3. Spreading malicious rumours or gossip;

2.2.5.4. Discrimination or harassment;

2.2.5.5. Offensive comments/jokes or body language;

2.2.5.6. Actions that put into question the safety and care of participants;

2.2.5.7. Isolation, deliberate exclusion and/or non-cooperations;

2.2.5.8. Disrespectful or discourteous language and behaviour;

2.2.5.9. Comments that make reference to personalities;

2.2.5.10. Statements that contravene the Charte des droits et libertés de la personne (Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms), and/or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

2.2.5.11. Disruption or hindrance of the ability of the debate to continue in good order, including but not limited to, speaking out of turn, engaging in side conversations, knocking on desks, clapping, snapping, or other behaviour deemed by the moderators to be disruptive

2.2.6. Should a particularly egregious violation occur, the Chief Returning Officer shall be vested with the authority to remove any candidate from the debate for repeated or extraordinary violations.

2.2.7. No campaigning activity should be done by the candidate or the campaigning committee during the debate, such as distributing handbills and soliciting votes.

2.2.8. All Members should have the option to attend the debate, in person or online via livestream. All members of the audience must carry themselves with decorum to demonstrate respect for the electoral process and the candidates.

2.2.9. Attendees shall remain silent while a candidate has the floor to ensure minimal distractions, and that the livestream and recording remain clear for all SSMU members

2.2.10. Any behavior deemed by the moderators to be disruptive will result in a warning. In case of repeated or extraordinary violations, the Chief Returning Officer shall be vested with the authority to remove any candidate from the debate. Such behaviour can include but is not limited to:

2.2.10.1. Shouting, booing, engaging in loud side conversations, clapping, snapping, making excessive noises when a candidate or moderator is speaking.

2.2.10.2. Any form of discrimination, harassment, or the use of offensive jokes and body language towards the moderators and candidates.

2.2.11. English and French are the official languages of the Society. Members may submit questions in either language. Candidates can respond to questions in either language.

2.3. Sanctions

2.3.1. Any infraction of the Rules for the Debate, including violations of decorum or negative campaigning, shall be investigated and sanctioned by the Chief Returning Officer in accordance with the demerit point system and procedures outlined in the Internal Regulations of Elections and Referenda.

2.3.2. The following table is a non-exhaustive list of sanctions to guide the determination of demerit points and their consequences during debate. These demerit points can be applied retroactively (following the debate). Demerit points earned during the debate will be added to the total demerit points of an Electoral Period.

Amount of points	Example of debate infraction	Consequences (debate specific)
1+ demerit points	• Swearing • Clapping, snapping, or making noise	
2+ demerit points	• Consistently speaking over time, even after warning • Speaking without being recognized by the moderator • Stating overtly incorrect or misleading facts that can be disproven by Elections SSMU.	
4+ demerit points	• Intentionally disrupting and/or disrespecting another candidate • Repeated ad hominem attacks • Direct personal attacks, insults, or malicious characterizations of an opponent's motivations.	• Public announcement during the debate. • The candidate will not be allowed to participate further in the current or next segment.

8+ demerit points	• Use of sexist, homophobic, ageist, racist, or any other language used to attack a certain group. • Explicitly or implicitly encouraging the audience or a committee member to boo, hiss, or verbally attack an opponent. • Threats or incitation of negative conduct towards another candidate. • Physical violence to another candidate. • Any conduct that compromises the safety, security, or well-being of other candidates, the audience, or the moderators	• The candidate will not be allowed to continue in the debate. • Formal warning to campaign in question.

Note: Demerit points compound.

3. Investigations

3.1. Complaints

3.1.1. Any person or entity, no matter if they are SSMU members, have the right to launch a complaint against a campaign in all elections.

3.1.2. Elections SSMU must ensure complaints are able to be submitted in a way that is accessible and ensures confidentiality throughout the whole process. An option to submit anonymous complaints shall be included.

3.1.3. Elections SSMU must acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 1 business day. Elections SSMU is obligated to investigate each complaint, unless the complaint is deemed to be lacking in credible evidence or unclear. Lack of response from a complainant to follow-up can lead to the complaint being disregarded due to lack of evidence.

3.2. Investigation Procedures

3.2.1. The Chief Returning Officer must consider evidence should be weighed on a hierarchy, based on the reliability of the evidence. From most reliable to least reliable:

3.2.1.1. Any form of objective evidence, such as photographic evidence, recordings, voting receipts

3.2.1.2. First-hand witness accounts that are deemed unbiased, where the individual is not on a campaign committee, closely associated with a candidate, or have a conflict of interest towards a certain side.

3.2.1.3. Interview with Elections SSMU without any third parties

3.2.1.4. Written statements obtained from Elections SSMU

3.2.1.5. First-hand witness accounts from individuals associated with a candidate or referred by a candidate

3.2.1.5.1. Interview with Elections SSMU without any third parties

3.2.1.5.2. Written statements obtained from Elections SSMU

3.2.1.5.3. Statements taken by candidates.

3.2.1.6. Anonymous witness accounts.

3.2.2. The Chief Returning Officer must not use solely hearsay, second hand accounts, or anonymous complaints without evidence to make a final decision on a potential infraction, but can use them to trigger an investigation, corroborate facts of non-anonymous complaints, and consider them with other evidence of non-anonymous complaints on a balance of probabilities.

3.2.3. When using anonymous complaints, the Chief Returning Officer must try to verify the identity of the complainant as an eligible elector in the election.