



ELECTIONS

GOVERNING POLICIES MANUAL

August, 2014

The Saint Mary's University Students' Association has developed and ratified a comprehensive set of regulations to continually administer a fair and equitable election process.

1.0 GENERAL

1.1 The Saint Mary's University Students' Association (herein after referred to as "the Association") will coordinate a fair, equitable and transparent election process in accordance with the Association's Constitution and Policy Governance model.

1.2 All members will be given one annual opportunity, at the minimum, to nominate, second or stand as a candidate for the Association's election process to the BOARD or PRESIDENT.

1.3 All members shall be given one annual opportunity, at the minimum, to participate in said process with voting by secret ballot for candidates competing for the available electable positions within the Association.

2.0 INTERFERENCE

2.1 To eliminate perception of election process interference the BOARD will define its role:

2.1.1 The Board authorizes the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) to direct operational organization and facilitation of elections processes.

3.0 POSITIONS

3.1 The following positions shall be filled in elections of the Association:

3.1.1 President;

3.1.2 Vacant BOARD seats.

4.0 TIMETABLE

4.1 The CRO shall determine a timetable for elections of the Association, to be forwarded to the Elections Committee for review on or before the first business day following November 15th.

4.2 The Elections Committee will submit the timetable for approval by the BOARD who must assure these stipulations are met:

- 4.2.1 The election process will be conducted between the first day of classes in the winter semester and two weeks after the University's winter reading break.
- 4.2.2 The nomination period shall last for twelve (12) business days as set out by the CRO in the elections time table.
- 4.2.3 The training period for candidates shall be conducted at least one (1) day prior to the start of campaigning.
- 4.2.4 Names of Potential candidates are to be published no later than one (1) business day prior to the commencement of the campaign period.
- 4.2.5 The campaigning period shall last for at least six (6) business days.
- 4.2.6 The voting period shall last for two (2) consecutive business days.

5.0 NOMINATIONS

5.1 All nominations shall be completed using only the nomination form provided by the CRO.

5.2 All completed nomination forms are subject to verification by the CRO and candidates will be ruled ineligible if they fail to prove that the nominators are members or disqualified if any nominators are found to be fraudulent.

5.3 The potential candidates will demonstrate a reasonable level of support to be eligible for election.

5.3.1 All presidential candidates will obtain nominations from one hundred and fifty (150) verified members.

5.3.2 All directorial candidates will obtain nominations from fifty (50) verified members.

6.0 ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

6.1 Elections Committee:

- 6.1.1 Will comprise of three (3) members of the BOARD.
- 6.1.2 Will be the elected by the BOARD to fill the vacant spots in the Committee during the first meeting fiscal year.

6.2 The Elections Committee shall be responsible for:

- 6.2.1 Conducting the interview process for the CRO and Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) positions in the month of September. The Committee will ensure that interviews will be conducted prior to the end of September.
- 6.2.2 Recommending a CRO and DRO to the BOARD who will then approve the potential employees.
- 6.2.3 Providing the BOARD with a report by the first business day in November. The report will include proposed changes to the Election Policy to be used in the coming election.
- 6.2.4 Providing an Election Timetable from the CRO to the BOARD for approval by the first business day of December.
- 6.2.5 Producing a panel of qualified individuals when comprising a sitting of the Appeals Committee which should only be done in case any appeal is made.
- 6.2.6 Selecting members for the Appeals Committee that have no direct interest in the specific appeal.

6.3 CRO and DRO:

- 6.3.1 Must be a member of the Association.
- 6.3.2 Shall be recommended by the Elections Committee and ratified by the BOARD with a 2/3 vote in favour of the candidate.
- 6.3.3 Shall not be a member of the BOARD.

6.4 The CRO shall be responsible for:

- 6.4.1 The preparation and implementation of all elections, by-elections, and referenda.
- 6.4.2 The call for nominations.
- 6.4.3 The distribution of any pertinent election information to all candidates in written form.
- 6.4.4 Ensuring the enforcement of this ELECTIONS POLICY.

- 6.4.5 Levying fines to candidates for violations to the rules and regulations.
- 6.4.6 Organizing a candidate's informational meeting to be held between the close of nominations and the start of campaigning.
- 6.4.7 Presiding over all elections, and the counting of ballots after closing of polls.
- 6.4.8 Booking all necessary equipment for polling stations.
- 6.4.9 Recruiting and training polling station clerks for each day the polls are open.
- 6.4.10 Recruiting and communicating with minimum of one volunteer 'mystery voter' per polling station, who will report on the performance of poll clerks and will help monitor their adherence to regulations.
- 6.4.11 Holding contact hours during the election process with no fewer than twenty (20) hours during the week.
- 6.4.12 Providing a written response to appeal an elections process's allegation to the Appeals Committee.
- 6.4.13 Tabulating and submitting the results of the Association's election process to the BOARD to be verified.
- 6.4.14 Submitting a written report to the BOARD within fourteen (14) business days of the Association's election.
- 6.4.15 Knowing the time and location of polling stations no less than forty-eight (48) hours before the start of voting.
- 6.4.16 Distributing the official results for the elections process less than seventy-two (72) hours after the BOARD ratifies them.
- 6.4.17 Organizing and advertising for a presidential debate as well as a BOARD candidate open forum.
- 6.4.18 Any other duties that are included in the CRO job description.
- 6.4.19 Any other duties that the BOARD deems necessary.
- 6.4.20 Meeting with the CHAIR, GENERAL MANAGER, PRESIDENT and the outgoing CRO/DRO for informational purposes prior to the last Sunday of April.
- 6.4.21 Providing an explanation of the point's system budget, campaigning materials and their assessments and/or fines that can be found in the Assessment of Campaign Materials information document available prior to the end of the nomination period.

- 6.4.22 As long as the CRO uses a reasonable interpretation of this ELECTIONS POLICY they are authorized to make all decisions, take actions, establish practices, and develop activities for the elections. Those decisions will have full authority as if decided by the BOARD and they will apply to all candidates equally.
- 6.4.23 Providing all agents with information on polling station locations and the time and location of ballot tabulation.

6.5 The DRO shall be responsible for:

- 6.5.1 Assisting the CRO in the preparation and implementation of all elections, by-elections, and referenda.
- 6.5.2 Assisting the CRO in upholding and enforcing this ELECTIONS POLICY.
- 6.5.3 Any other tasks that the CRO delegates to them.
- 6.5.4 Any other duties that the BOARD deems necessary
- 6.5.5 Holding contact hours during the election process with no fewer than fifteen (15) hours during the week.

6.6 Poll Clerks:

- 6.6.1 Shall be interviewed and hired by the CRO and DRO for a maximum of two (2) shifts on voting days.
- 6.6.2 Must not be directly affiliated with any candidate including: a candidate's agent, relative, partner, roommate, friend and/or anyone participating in or publicly endorsing a candidate's campaign.
- 6.6.3 Poll clerks shall be responsible for staffing the poll stations on voting days, providing assistance to voters as needed and remaining unbiased towards all candidates when working at a polling station.
- 6.6.4 The list of poll clerks shall be made available to candidates at least two (2) business days prior to voting days. Candidates may object to any poll clerk and shall attempt to resolve this objection with the CRO.
- 6.6.5 If the candidate and CRO are unable to resolve the objection it shall be handled promptly by the Appeals Committee. The poll clerk shall be ineligible to work polls while the Committee's decision is

pending.

7.0 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

7.1 The Appeals Committee will hear any timely mannered appeals by candidates that allege the CRO has failed to conduct the election process in compliance with the ELECTIONS POLICY. If the Committee concludes that an appeal is valid, it will decide the fairest course of action for all the involved members.

7.2 The Appeals Committee is empowered with the abilities to:

- 7.2.1 Dismiss the CRO if they are not performing their duties.
- 7.2.2 Dismiss members of the Committee if they are not performing their duties.
- 7.2.3 Override decisions made by the CRO only if an appeal is made by a candidate.

7.3 The Appeals Committee will comprise of the following eight members:

- 7.3.1 Three (3) members of the Association.
- 7.3.2 Two (2) members of the BOARD; one of which will be appointed the non-voting Chair of the Committee.
- 7.3.3 Three (3) Faculty members of the University.

7.4 In order for the Appeals Committee to have a quorum or meeting to revoke or support decisions made by the CRO, all members of the committee must be present and in order for a motion to pass, it shall have a majority vote in favour of it.

7.5 The procedure for a candidate to make an official complaint or appeal a decision of the CRO is as follows:

- 7.5.1 Provide the complaint or appeal, in writing; to any BOARD member in the Association within five (5) business days of the CRO's administered decision, penalty, fine, dismissal and/or disqualification.

- 7.5.2 The Appeals Committee will be called within five (5) business days to meet and debate the complaint or appeal.
- 7.5.3 The Appeals Committee will provide an opportunity to involved parties in the complaint or appeal to speak.
- 7.5.4 Upon reaching a decision, the Committee via the Chair, will deliver this decision to the candidate(s).

8.0 ELECTION PROCESS

- 8.1 Votes shall be cast by secret ballot.
- 8.2 The method of voting shall be preferential balloting.
- 8.3 Candidates running unopposed shall be required to obtain a two-thirds (2/3) vote in favour on a yes/no ballot.
- 8.4 An agent shall be defined as a member of the Association but not the BOARD that is appointed by a candidate as a representative in meetings that the candidate is unable to attend. It is also the right of the agent, if directed by the candidate, to ensure that polling and counting of ballots adhere to the regulations outlined in this policy.
- 8.5 The names of all candidates running for a particular position shall be arranged alphabetically by order of their last names and shall contain their given name or a generally recognized abbreviated version thereof.
- 8.6 Voting members will have the option to abstain or spoil the ballot.
- 8.7 To avoid a tie the BOARD CHAIR shall cast their vote only in writing before the polls open and not during the regular voting period.
 - 8.7.1 The BOARD CHAIR shall cast a separate vote for each position by ranking all the candidates in order of preference, sealing each ballot, if there is more than one, in a separate marked envelope, and delivering all the envelopes to the CRO.

8.7.2 Only in the case of an equality of votes for a position shall the appropriate sealed envelope be opened and the votes recorded.

8.8 Any candidate may appoint an agent to polling stations and/or during ballot tabulation for ELECTIONS POLICY adherence. However, candidates must submit the names of their agent to the CRO at least two (2) business days prior to the opening of polling stations and/or at the start of ballot tabulation.

8.9 There shall be no voting by proxy.

8.10 If paper balloting is used, a ballot is spoiled if the voter:

8.10.1 Votes for more than the maximum number of candidates or choses to spoil her/his ballot on purpose.

8.10.2 Marks in more than one block and/or extraneously marks the ballot. It makes the voters intention unclear.

8.10.3 Marks on the ballot in a way which may identify the voter.

9.0 ELECTION RULES

9.1 Campaigning:

9.1.1 All candidates' materials will be verified by the CRO who may refuse to verify obscene, degrading or discriminatory material. However, candidates can bear in mind that a sense of humour may exist.

9.1.2 No candidate will display individuals other than themselves in their materials.

9.1.3 No candidate will use the Association's or the University's logos, slogans, colours or anything otherwise conspicuously similar to solicit support, to imply preference or endorsement from the campus.

9.1.4 No candidate will post materials or solicit support in areas restricted by the CRO such as: Off-campus, The Gorsebrook Lounge, the Art Gallery, Chaplaincy Office, Faculty space, the three (3) Residences or their virtual representations.

- 9.1.5 No person or persons who are not members shall solicit support on behalf of any candidate, referenda, or plebiscites.
- 9.1.6 No candidate or agent will solicit support anywhere on campus on voting days.
- 9.1.7 No candidate shall distribute items of a commercial value that could be interpreted as a voter bribe. All campaign materials shall be subject to the discretionary approval of the CRO.
- 9.1.8 No candidate will take advantage of access to resources or information as a result of a position they already hold on campus. (e.g. No Association/University business cards and/or other materials.)
- 9.1.9 All forms of advertising by any medium including speeches and public forums designed and/or likely to influence voters shall not take place prior to or after the campaigning period set by the CRO.
- 9.1.10 Potential candidates shall attend the candidates' informational meeting (optional for their agents) occurring prior to the start of campaigning at the time/location scheduled by the CRO. After this meeting, candidates must sign a Memorandum of Understanding to acknowledge they have read and understand the Elections Policy in its entirety. If for some reason the candidate cannot attend the meeting, she/he shall notify the CRO and arrange for their agent to attend the meeting on her/his behalf.
- 9.1.11 Candidates may not use resources of the Association which are not available to all members unless the services are paid for.
- 9.1.12 Candidates using the Association's Marketing Department or the University's Print Centre must produce a receipt for the CRO.
- 9.1.13 Candidates and their agents shall not work or loiter at or near the polling stations.

9.2 Referendums and plebiscites are direct votes from the students at the time of elections asking to accept, reject or spoil a particular proposal for the Association and/or the University.

- 9.2.1 The Association shall reflect non-partisan views on any given question presented on a ballot to avoid swaying the opinions of voters based on personal business agenda's or obvious financial interests.

- 9.2.2 A referendum may include more than one question to be put to the voters.
- 9.2.3 A referendum question shall be worded so that each voter may express an opinion on the question by checking after either of the words yes/no on the ballot.
- 9.2.4 The text of the referendum question must be presented to the BOARD at least seven (7) days before the election period.
- 9.2.5 If the referendum includes a monetary addition to student fees (levy), the presenter must demonstrate to the BOARD how the monetary addition shall be allocated if the referendum passes.
- 9.2.6 If the referendum is to create a new levied society, the current society executives must demonstrate how the levied society would be structured.
- 9.2.7 The referendum question must be moved and passed by the BOARD before being put on the ballot.
- 9.2.8 In order for a referendum question to pass, a majority vote in favour is required.
- 9.2.9 If the referendum includes a monetary addition to student fees (levy), a two-thirds (2/3) vote in favour is required.

10.0 CAMPAIGN FINANCES

- 10.1 No presidential candidate will spend more than 50000 points and no directorial candidate more than 10000 points from their campaigning budget on materials designed to solicit support from Association members.
 - 10.1.1 An explanation of the points system budget, campaigning materials and their assessments and/or fines can be found in the Assessment of Campaign Materials information document provided by the CRO.
 - 10.1.2 Candidates will be reimbursed up to twenty percent (20%) of their allowed campaigning material budget. That is to say 1 cent per point for 20% of the points used by the candidate. i) All proof of payment receipts must be submitted to the CRO or DRO no later than two (2) days after a candidates' campaigning period has

ended in order to receive the mentioned reimbursement compensation.

10.1.3 All fines shall be administered by the CRO for any candidate's infraction of elections regulations, in accordance with this ELECTIONS POLICY and the Assessment of Campaign Materials information document.

10.1.3.1 The candidate will be notified by phone or e-mail from the CRO or DRO to explain any given fines.

10.1.3.2 The candidate shall be solely responsible for rectifying the cause of the fine so as to avoid further fines.

11.0 POSTERS AND MATERIALS

11.1 Posters must follow the Association's Poster Policy, distributed by the CRO at the Candidate's Informational Meeting.

11.1.1 An exception is the size regulation for posters on unpainted brick, which may be disregarded.

11.2 The CRO must assess all campaign material before the material may be used in a candidate's campaign.

11.2.1 Any materials used without the CRO's consent will result in a fine as described in the Assessment of Campaign Materials information document and will be deducted from the candidate's campaigning budget.

11.2.2 Presidential candidates who exceed 50000 points or directorial candidates who exceed 10000 points in their campaigning budget may be disqualified from the election if it is deemed reasonable to do so by the Appeals Committee.

12.0 AMENDMENTS

- 12.1 Amendments shall be suggested to this document by the CRO and/or the Elections Committee when deemed necessary.
- 12.2 Amendments made by mentioned parties must be then approved by the BOARD before official enactment.
- 12.3 At NO time will any new amendments to this policy and/or documents related to the elections contradict the Association's Policy Governance model and/or Constitution.