

# OFFICIAL ELECTIONS POLICY

## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To detail the requirements in hosting an election for candidates in the Faculty of Science;
- 1.2. To outline a standard that would have elections run fairly and effectively;
- 1.3. To act as a rulebook for candidates to refer to throughout the campaign period;
- 1.4. To provide a process for filing complaints against candidates during the campaign period.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. General Member: As defined in Article 4 of the MSS Constitution, any student in the Faculty of Science;
- 2.2. Nomination Period: The period in which general members of the MSS may nominate themselves for an elected position on the MSS. Once a nomination form has been submitted and the individual attends the all-candidates meeting, they are now considered a candidate in the election;
- 2.3. Campaign Period: The period in which candidates are allowed to advertise their candidacy for the position they are running for;
- 2.4. Voting Period: The period in which general members of the MSS are able to cast a ballot in a given election;
- 2.5. Election Cycle: The period in which Presidential and Core Executive elections occur. Begins one (1) week before nominations are open, and ends one (1) week after elections close;
- 2.6. First Year Election Cycle: The period in which First Year Representative elections occur. Begins one (1) week before nominations are open, and ends one (1) week after elections close;
- 2.7. All Candidates Meeting: A meeting to be hosted by the VP Internal to detail rules

and guidelines for the election;

- 2.8. Regular Office Hours: These occur Monday to Friday at advertised times in the MSS Office (BSB B108) and serve as an opportunity for general members to interact with MSS Executives;
- 2.9. Class Talk: Where a candidate speaks in front of a class to advertise their candidacy with the instructor's consent;
- 2.10. Elections Team: Group of individuals who are responsible for overseeing the MSS Elections proceedings, as per Article 3 in the MSS Elections Policy.

### 3. ELECTIONS TEAM

- 3.1. The Elections Team shall be comprised of:
  - 3.1.1. The Vice-President Internal,
  - 3.1.2. The Policy and By-Laws Officer,
  - 3.1.3. The Chief Returning Officer
  - 3.1.4. The Internal Operations Officer,
  - 3.1.5. Two (2) current Year Representatives;
- 3.2. The Vice-President Internal and Chief Returning Officer shall co-chair the Elections Team;
- 3.3. The Elections Team shall adjudicate all MSS elections in a fair and just manner. All decisions shall be confirmed by a majority vote of the Elections Team;
- 3.4. The Elections Team may establish additional rules for the associated Election Cycle at its discretion. These rules must:
  - 3.4.1. Be presented at an MSS Executive Meeting at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the start of the relevant Elections Cycle,
  - 3.4.2. Be passed by a majority vote of the MSS Core Executive at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the start of the relevant Elections Cycle,
  - 3.4.3. Be presented to the candidates at their associated All-Candidates Meeting,
  - 3.4.4. Be made accessible to all candidates for the duration of the campaign and

voting periods;

- 3.5. Under no circumstances shall a member of the Elections Team seek office in an election, support or denigrate any candidate, or endorse a position in a referendum administered by the MSS while on the Elections Team;
- 3.6. If a member of the Elections Team (excluding the Chief Returning Officer) intends to seek office during an Election Cycle, they shall forfeit their position on the Elections Team at least one (1) month before it begins:
  - 3.6.1. In the event that the Vice-President Internal is unable to participate in the Election Cycle, the MSS President shall chair the Elections Team;
  - 3.6.2. In the event that one member of the Elections Team is unable to participate in an Election Cycle, a member of the MSS Executive shall be appointed to replace them. The appointment must be confirmed by a majority vote of the Core Executive at least twenty-four (24) hours before nominations close.

#### 4. NOMINATION PROCESS

- 4.1. The MSS shall make nomination forms available online 7 days before the All-Candidates Meeting, and as a hardcopy 5 days before in the MSS Office, during regular office hours;
- 4.2. Nomination forms must follow the MSS Nomination Form Guidelines:
  - 4.2.1. The form must contain space for the full name, McMaster email, student number of the candidate, and the names and student numbers of 10 signatories,
  - 4.2.2. The form must indicate the time and location to which the form is due and the time and location of the All-Candidates meeting,
  - 4.2.3. The form must include the contact information of Vice-President Internal,
  - 4.2.4. The form must include the relevant nomination, campaign, and voting periods;
- 4.3. A student is eligible to nominate themselves for an elected position if they meet the conditions of an MSS General Member;
- 4.4. A student is eligible to vote if they meet the conditions of an MSS General Member;

- 4.5. Completed nomination forms must be delivered by the candidate to the current VP Internal, either through email or by hand to the MSS Office, by the due date stated on the MSS Nomination Form:
    - 4.5.1. The latest time that this due date may be is one (1) hour before the All-Candidates meeting;
  - 4.6. To be considered a valid nomination form:
    - 4.6.1. The nominee must be a full-time student in the Faculty of Science,
    - 4.6.2. All ten (10) signatories must be full or part-time students in the Faculty of Science,
    - 4.6.3. All ten (10) signatories must be validated by the Office of the Dean as full or part-time students in the Faculty of Science,
    - 4.6.4. Names and student numbers included in the nomination form must be correct and void of errors,
    - 4.6.5. For Year Representative nomination forms, signatories must also be in the same year as the position the candidate is planning to run for;
  - 4.7. Nomination forms must be reviewed by the Office of the Dean to ensure all signatories of any candidate are full-or part-time students in the Faculty of Science;
  - 4.8. Any candidate whose nomination form is complete but does not meet the validation requirements shall be given one (1) school day after receiving notice to amend and resubmit the nomination form for final validation:
    - 4.8.1. If all signatories are not confirmed by the Office of the Dean (i.e. if they don't meet eligibility criteria outlined in Article 4.5) after the resubmission deadline, the candidate will forfeit their nomination;
  - 4.9. A candidate may withdraw at any time after nomination and prior to the opening of polls by delivering to the Elections Team written notice of their decision to withdraw.
5. ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING
- 5.1. Members wishing to nominate themselves for a position must attend the associated All-Candidates meeting or they shall forfeit their candidacy:
    - 5.1.1. If the candidate is unable to attend the respective All-Candidates Meeting,

they must email the VP Internal at least 24 hours before the start of the All-Candidates meeting to discuss alternative arrangements,

5.1.2. Failure to determine an alternative arrangement with the VP Internal within the timeframe shall result in the nominee forfeiting their candidacy.

5.2. The All-Candidates meeting must:

5.2.1. Be held no less than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the start of the campaign period,

5.2.2. Be held on the date and time specified on the Nomination Form,

5.2.3. Be hosted in a way that is accessible to all candidates,

5.2.4. Outline the rules and regulations set for the election,

5.2.5. Outline the process for approval of campaign materials,

5.2.6. Include a period for candidates to ask questions about the election.

## 6. CAMPAIGN REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Campaign periods must be a minimum length of 3 days to a maximum length of 5 days;

6.2. An individual may not run for more than one position in any given election;

6.3. Candidates may not leverage involvement in other areas to help their campaign or gain votes. This includes:

6.3.1. Utilizing current or past leadership positions and/or past campaign materials for the purpose of campaigning,

6.3.2. Campaigning via a social media group, a work email, or social media page associated with the area of involvement,

6.3.3. Using physical resources as a part of the campaign that are only accessible as a result of a candidate's current or past involvement;

6.4. A candidate may not seek endorsement from any clubs, teams, organizations, or external groups, as a part of their campaign;

6.5. Under no circumstances may a candidate:

- 6.5.1. Actively campaign against an opposing candidate. This includes any behaviour aiming to deliberately spread negative or false information about someone or something to worsen the public image of the described,
  - 6.5.2. Utilize polarizing language/actions of any kind within the breadth of their campaign, including but not limited to: homophobic, transphobic, racist, and misogynistic language and/or actions,
  - 6.5.3. Present any content (as part of their campaign) that directly violates the Student Code of Conduct;
- 6.6. Violation of any of the clauses in 6.5 will result in disqualification as decided by the Elections Team.

## 7. POSTER GUIDELINES

- 7.1. Each candidate will be able to use a maximum of 40 posters when running for a Core Executive position. For First Year Representative elections, the maximum number of posters is 30;
- 7.2. Each poster must not exceed 11"x17" (27.94cm x 43.18cm);
- 7.3. There is a maximum of 2 posters per unbroken wall per candidate. Doors, windows, corners, etc. serve as breaks;
- 7.4. Posters must not compromise safety, e.g., must not block any fire exits or directional signs;
- 7.5. Posters must not come in contact with other posters;
- 7.6. Valid posters must not be removed by MSS Candidates to accommodate for other posters;
- 7.7. Posters must follow guidelines set by the respective campus buildings;
- 7.8. Posters may not be posted in:
  - 7.8.1. The McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC),
  - 7.8.2. The McMaster Children's Hospital,
  - 7.8.3. Health Sciences Centre (HSC),

- 7.8.4. Any library spaces at McMaster (Thode, Mills, Innis, Health Sciences Library, IAHS Library),
- 7.8.5. Any student residences at McMaster;
- 7.9. All posters must be removed no later than 2 business days after the polls close:
  - 7.9.1. Failure to adhere to this guideline will result in a penalty as outlined in Article 12.

## 8. SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

- 8.1. A candidate is able to create one (1) social media account on each of the following social media platforms for the purpose of campaigning:
  - 8.1.1. Facebook,
  - 8.1.2. Instagram,
  - 8.1.3. Twitter,
  - 8.1.4. Snapchat,
  - 8.1.5. TikTok;
- 8.2. A candidate's campaign social media account(s) must be new accounts that have not been previously affiliated with another individual, institution, or organization:
  - 8.2.1. Social media accounts and pages created for or as a result of previous leadership roles (including elected positions outside the MSS) may not be reused for the purposes of promoting a candidate's current MSS election;
- 8.3. Campaign social media accounts must be approved by a member of the Elections Team prior to the account becoming public. The rules for getting a social media account approved shall be outlined at the All-Candidates Meeting;
- 8.4. All photos and/or videos that are to be posted to a candidate's account(s) must be approved in advance by a member of the Elections Team. The rules for getting photos or videos approved shall be outlined at the All-Candidates Meeting;
- 8.5. Candidates may utilize their personal Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok accounts for the purpose of campaigning, so long as:
  - 8.5.1. Prior to posting campaign content on their personal accounts, the candidate

declares their intent to use their personal account to a member of the Elections Team, as well as shares the social media handle for their personal account,

- 8.5.2. Their personal account follows the McMaster Science Society on the relevant social media platform, and the McMaster Science Society follows them back,
- 8.5.3. All graphics and/or videos posted are approved material;
- 8.6. A candidate may not utilize the social media accounts of any clubs, teams, organizations, or external groups, as a means to promote or share their campaign content;
- 8.7. Under no circumstance may a candidate:
  - 8.7.1. Post campaign content prior to receiving approval from a member of the Elections Team,
  - 8.7.2. Create a private social media page or group to advertise their candidacy,
  - 8.7.3. Make a Facebook event page advertising voting or their candidacy,
  - 8.7.4. Campaign (e.g. post) in any Facebook groups, Reddit pages, Discord servers/channels, or similarly closed groups;
- 8.8. Candidates may ask for permission to post their campaign content on an Avenue class page or a Microsoft Teams group affiliated with a course within the Faculty of Science. The candidate must:
  - 8.8.1. Receive approval from the professor to post their content. This content must be approved by the Elections Team. Additionally, the candidate must send proof of professor approval to a member of the Elections Team,
  - 8.8.2. Ask the professor to post the content on their behalf. Under no circumstance may a candidate directly post their campaign content on Avenue or in a Microsoft Teams channel;
- 8.9. Mass messaging (i.e. communicating to more than one person in a single message) via text, social media, group chat or email for the purpose of campaigning is prohibited;
- 8.10. A candidate's supporters are permitted to share a candidate's content from their campaign page to their personal social media accounts, so long as:



- 8.10.1. McMaster Science Society is tagged in the repost,
- 8.10.2. The supporter's actions follow Article 6.5. in the MSS Elections Policy,
- 8.10.3. The content is a repost or share from one of the candidate's approved campaign accounts. The supporter is not allowed to directly post a candidate's graphics or photos to their personal account.

## 9. CLASS TALK GUIDELINES

- 9.1. Class talks may be given by a candidate for the purpose of promoting their candidacy;
- 9.2. Class talks are only to be given during the campaign period;
- 9.3. Before giving a class talk, the candidate must receive approval from the instructor;
- 9.4. Candidates are advised to limit their class talks to one minute. Professors and instructors have the right to cut off class talks if they exceed a reasonable timespan;
- 9.5. Professors and instructors have the right to deny candidates the ability to give class talks.

## 10. CAMPAIGN FINANCES

- 10.1. Every candidate may spend a maximum of \$50 on anything related to the campaign. This value drops to \$35 for First Year Representatives. The amount includes:
  - 10.1.1. Physical materials, including posters and tape,
  - 10.1.2. Social media promotions,
  - 10.1.3. Contracting graphic designers or cinematographers,
- 10.2. Candidates must submit their receipts/proof of payment to the VP Internal no later than 2 business days after the polls close;
- 10.3. Candidates can be reimbursed up to their budget through the Student Opportunity Grant. The form must be submitted by the last day of classes of the same semester as the election.

## 11. COMPLAINTS REPORTING PROCESS

- 11.1. A voter or opposing candidate may file a complaint if they feel a candidate has violated any of the clauses outlined in the MSS Elections Policy or the McMaster Student Code of Conduct;
- 11.2. All complaints against another candidate must be submitted to the Vice-President Internal through the [MSS Elections Complaint Form](#) no later than twenty-four (24) hours after voting closes;
- 11.3. Submitted complaint forms will be reviewed by the Elections Team;
- 11.4. The candidate has twenty-four (24) hours from when they're notified to appeal to the VP Internal and President:
  - 11.4.1. The Elections Team shall make the final decision as to whether the appeal was successful,
  - 11.4.2. Failure to appeal may result in a penalty or disqualification at the discretion of the Elections Team,
  - 11.4.3. If the appeal is successful, no penalty is given to the candidate.

## 12. PENALTIES

- 12.1. Non-compliance with this Elections Policy or supplementary rules established by the Elections Team at the All-Candidates meeting shall be viewed as penalties;
- 12.2. Penalties are to be given if a candidate fails to:
  - 12.2.1. Stay within the budget for their campaign,
  - 12.2.2. Appeal any complaints made towards them or their campaign team that warrant a penalty,
  - 12.2.3. Uphold the bylaws as stated in the MSS Elections Policy and any supplementary rules established by the Elections Team and presented in the All-Candidates Meeting;
- 12.3. Disqualification may be given if a candidate:

- 12.3.1. Accumulates 2 penalties over the course of the campaign period and voting period,
  - 12.3.2. Exceeds the maximum budget by \$15 or more,
  - 12.3.3. Commits an infraction that is deemed significant enough to warrant an immediate disqualification (i.e. disqualification before the accumulation of 2 penalties) as determined by the Elections Team,
- 12.4. The Elections Team shall assess the nature and number of violations and may exercise any combinations of the following:
- 12.4.1. Issue a warning,
  - 12.4.2. Issue a penalty,
  - 12.4.3. Disqualify a candidate;
- 12.5. The chair of the Elections Team shall assess the nature and number of violations during the campaign period and may exercise any combinations of the following:
- 12.5.1. Issue a warning,
  - 12.5.2. Issue a penalty;
- 12.6. Final decisions will be made at the discretion of the Elections Team by a majority vote.

### 13. VOTING

- 13.1. The voting period may occur over one or two days, up to the discretion of the VP Internal, but it must be two days for the election of the MSS President;
- 13.2. Candidates are allowed to campaign during the voting period, but candidates may not make changes to their platforms during the voting period;
- 13.3. Voting is to be conducted as a ranked ballot system except in the case of the First Year Representative elections, in which a simple ballot is used;
- 13.4. Ballots may only be cast for Year Representatives by the students in their corresponding year;
- 13.5. Voting is advised to take place at 8am on the first day of voting and end at 6pm on

the final day of voting;

- 13.6. A minimum of 2% of the eligible voters must vote in any given election for it to be deemed valid. If less than 2% of eligible voters cast a ballot, a revote must be conducted.

#### 14. MSS EXECUTIVE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 14.1. Any MSS Executive member may not openly support any candidate during any campaign or voting period. This includes:
  - 14.1.1. Liking and/or sharing a specific candidate's posts on their affiliated social media accounts,
  - 14.1.2. Negative campaigning towards other candidates,
  - 14.1.3. Class talks on behalf of a specific candidate,
  - 14.1.4. Posts on their personal and/or professional social media accounts that support only (a) specific candidate(s),
  - 14.1.5. Any other behaviour deemed as one-sided support as per the discretion of the VP Internal or the Elections Team;
- 14.2. Any MSS Executive member who shows open support to a certain candidate during the campaign period is subject to disciplinary action per the discretion of the VP Internal and the Internal Operations Officer;
- 14.3. The actions of an MSS Executive member who shows open support to a certain candidate shall be considered a violation of the Elections Policy for the candidate that is being supported. A penalty may be given at the discretion of the VP Internal and the Elections Team, including but not limited to a disciplinary meeting.

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