

Elections and Referenda

Rationale

Regulations that detail the existence and responsibilities of elections officers and the processes whereby elections are carried out ensure that the election of student leaders is transparent, accountable, and fair.

Definitions

Campaign events include gatherings, by public invitation or announcement, in which promotion of a candidate's campaign or the distribution of campaign materials takes place.

A **Campaign Expense** is any expense incurred, or non-monetary contribution used, in the production of advertising or promotional material, the distribution, broadcast, or publication of advertising or promotional material in any media or by other means during a campaign period including by the use of a capital asset, or the payment of remuneration and expenses to or on behalf of a person for the person's services in any capacity. The CRO will determine monetary value, based on fair market value, where an itemized receipt is not submitted.

Campaign materials means a communication, tangible or intangible, authorized by a candidate for the purpose of advocating for the election of a candidate or advocating in favour or opposed to a referendum question.

A **Campaign Manager** is a SAMU general member identified by the candidate who is allowed to officially represent a candidate at election meetings or events.

A **Candidate** is a SAMU general member who is nominated to run for an elected representative role or a SAMU general member who is running a campaign for or against a specific referendum question.

A **Catalog** is defined as a list of all submitted materials for a complaint including any pertinent information such as the type of material (ie: photo of poster, photo of banner, screenshot of ad) location of the material (ie: facebook, second floor building 7).

Disciplinary action can be a warning, fine, and/or disqualification.

Endorse refers to declaring public approval or support.

The **Returning Officer** is an operational liaison between the Chief Returning Officer and SAMU for elections and referendums.

Regulations

Impartiality

- 1 All elections officials are required to sign a pledge of impartiality in the performance of their duties.



2 Elected representatives, SAMU Student Groups, and SAMU employees may not officially endorse a candidate or campaign.

3 All SAMU employees and elected officials may not volunteer for a candidate or campaign during work hours, or use SAMU resources to support a candidate campaign.

Returning Officer

4 The Governance Advisor serves as the Returning Officer (RO).

4.1 In the event that the CRO cannot fulfill their duties the responsibilities will temporarily fall to the RO until the CRO returns or is replaced.

5 The RO is responsible for the hiring of polling clerks.

Nominations

6 The nomination period for elections begins on a date determined by the CRO and ends no sooner than two weeks thereafter. Nominations must close at least nine days prior to the first polling day.

7 Individuals wishing to nominate themselves for candidacy, or to run a campaign either in favour or opposed to a referendum question, may do so during the nomination period. Candidates are nominated when the CRO verifies that their nomination forms have been completely and correctly filled out. Nomination forms are not accepted after the end of the nomination period.

8 A valid nomination requires potential candidates to submit information, via approved submission method, demonstrating eligibility, the endorsement from a minimum of five (5) general members nominating them for election, and a declaration of intent to stand for election and to hold office should they win the election, or to run a referendum campaign, and to abide by the bylaws, policies, and procedures of SAMU.

Candidate Names

9 Candidates must use either their legal given name or their preferred name as registered with MacEwan University for campaigning and on the voting ballot.

9.1 In the case(s) where more than one candidate has the identical first and last names, the first candidate to submit will be listed on the ballot with their submitted name. Subsequent submitters must provide an alternate naming convention, using their legal or preferred name, that will differentiate the candidate(s) from the previous submission.

9.2 Preference in naming convention will be given in the order of submission(s) received.

9.3 The CRO has final approval of all names to be listed on the ballot.



Campaigns

10 Candidates must act in a professional manner that reflects the values of SAMU during all stages of the election process.

11 Campaign materials may not be distributed until 6:00 a.m. on the Monday of the week prior to polling.

12 Candidates must adhere to the bylaws, policies, and procedures of SAMU.

13 Participation in prohibited activities during the campaign period may lead to the disqualification of a candidate.

13.1 Candidates may not use, nor may they knowingly allow others to use, SAMU or MacEwan University resources that are not normally accessible to all students for campaigning, except those designated by election officials.

13.2 Candidates or supporters may not disburse campaign materials that have value beyond their campaigning function.

13.3 Candidates and their supporters may not knowingly campaign within 5 meters of a student who is voting in order to maintain the integrity and secrecy of individual ballots.

13.4 Candidates may not campaign during class time without prior approval from the instructor. It is the responsibility of the candidate to inform the instructor that equal opportunity to campaign must be given to all candidates.

13.5 Candidates may not incur campaign expenses of more than \$225.00 inclusive of GST in their campaigns.

13.6 Candidates and their supporters may not misrepresent fact or deface another candidate's campaign materials.

13.7 Candidates may only campaign on social media platforms approved by the CRO

13.7.1 A list of approved social media platforms will be provided to all candidates prior to the start of campaigning.

14 Any campaign event that requires MacEwan University assistance is facilitated through SAMU. Where the CRO deems a campaign event to be inappropriate, that event may not take place.

15 Using campaign materials off-campus is not permitted.

16 Campaign events may not take place off campus.

Campaign Expenses

17 Candidates must maintain and submit records, via approved submission method, of all campaign expenses, including itemized receipts, to the CRO.



17.1 Candidates incurring no expenses are required to submit a zero balance expense report.

18 Candidate expense records are due to the CRO by 4:00pm on the business day prior to voting beginning.

18.1 On submission of expense reports, the candidate may incur no further campaign expenses. Candidates found incurring further campaign expenses face disciplinary action from the CRO.

19 Failure to submit expense reports results in disqualification.

20 The campaign expenses of eligible candidates are reimbursed. Reimbursement may be withheld if candidates do not remove their campaign materials on time, or, if elected, fail to attend at least 80% of the training for their positions.

20.1 Any fines incurred during the election process will be deducted from the balance of the candidate's reimbursed campaign expenses.

20.2 Any outstanding fines not covered through reimbursement must be paid in full to SAMU within 10 business days of the election becoming official or the candidate will be considered disqualified.

20.2.1 Candidates with unpaid fines may not take office or run in future elections until their fine has been paid.

Campaign Materials

21 The CRO has the right to refuse authorization of print campaign materials.

22 Campaign posters and banners are placed in accordance with the requirements of MacEwan University, as outlined by the CRO.

23 Candidates may put up no more than 30 campaign posters. Campaign posters may not exceed 11" by 17" in size.

24 Candidates may distribute campaign material prior to submitting their campaign expense report.

25 Campaign materials that shall not be permitted include food, drinks, money in any form, gift cards, services to students, or anything deemed inappropriate by the CRO.

26 Candidates found distributing campaign material in violation of this procedure face disciplinary action.

27 Candidates are responsible for recycling all campaign materials where applicable.

Election Periods

28 Councilor elections take place in October and Executive elections take place in March.



28.1 The CRO confirms the election dates.

Candidate Withdrawal

29 A candidate may withdraw their name from an election by submitting to the CRO or RO a signed letter or email declaring that they are withdrawing.

Election Marketing Requirements

30 The nominations period, campaigning, formal interaction with candidates, voting days, and election results are marketed by SAMU including, but not limited to:

30.1 posters on SAMU bulletin boards and in other areas within MacEwan University;

30.2 banners within MacEwan University;

30.3 information featured prominently on the SAMU website; and

30.4 updates to SAMU social media.

31 SAMU provides a forum for candidates to be heard and for the membership to speak with the candidates and will be run impartially.

Polling Stations

Online Ballots

32 When voting takes place strictly through an online voting platform the RO will ensure that promotion of the election occurs during the voting hours by impartial promotion clerks.

32.1 The RO will determine the promotion schedule.

33 When voting takes place through an online voting platform the CRO will ensure that verbiage is included reminding voters that they should cast their ballot in private.

Physical Ballots

34 The RO, in consultation with the CRO, is responsible for determining the location of polling stations operated by impartial polling clerks appointed by SAMU.

35 The RO ensures that polling stations provide voters with an opportunity for votes to be cast privately.

36 On voting days, election officials remove all campaign material found within 10 meters of a polling station.

37 Two polling clerks operate each polling station.



38 The CRO ensures absentee ballots are provided for students who cannot vote on scheduled polling days. Absentee ballots are available one week prior to the first day of polling.

Tiebreak

39 For an election where the results is a tie, the CRO facilitates a coin toss to decide the winner, as witnessed by the tied candidates.

40 For an election using a yes/no vote, a candidate must receive a simple majority voting 'yes' to be considered successful.

Complaints

41 Complaints regarding candidates violating bylaw, policy, or procedure are submitted to the CRO in writing before or during the campaign.

42 A complaint that is considered by the CRO must include the following information:

42.1 The name of the person filing the complaint and their MacEwan email address;

42.2 The name of the candidate who is allegedly in violation of election rules;

42.3 The section of SAMU policy, procedure, or any other applicable laws that have been allegedly violated;

42.4 A description of the violation with supporting evidence; and

42.5 A catalogue of all submitted evidence.

43 Incomplete complaints will not be considered and the complainant will be informed as such.

43.1 The CRO may dismiss any complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, trivial, vindictive, or unsubstantiated.

44 The CRO will investigate all complaints and inform all involved parties of the decision within 24 hours from the receipts of the complaint.

44.1 Decisions will include facts of the complaint, including the relevant policy or procedure in violation, any directives from the CRO, any timelines associated with completing the directives, and the decision in the case of failure to meet those timelines.

44.2 If a decision cannot be reached within the prescribed 24 hours the CRO will inform the parties involved in the complaint of the circumstances and may extend this deadline once by an additional 24 hours.



Appeals

45 Any SAMU member may appeal the results of an Election or Referendum to the CRO if they believe there was a violation of elections policy or procedure, or if they believe fraud, intimidation, or undue influence occurred during the election or referendum.

45.1 Appeals of the results must be submitted to the Governance Office within 24 hours of the close of the election.

45.2 Appeals must include the following or they will not be accepted:

45.2.1 The name of the person filing the appeal, their MacEwan email address, their student ID number, and their phone number.

45.2.2 An explanation identifying how the appellant believes there was a violation of elections policy or procedure, or how they believe fraud, intimidation, or undue influence occurred.

45.3 The Governance Office will confirm receipt of appeals and notify the appellant on whether the appeal has been accepted or not by email.

45.4 The CRO will notify the appellant and any respondents of their decision(s) by email.

46 Any SAMU member may appeal a decision of the CRO via email.

46.1 Appeals must be received by the Governance Office within 24 hours of the issuance of the decision.

46.2 Appeals must include the following or they will not be accepted:

46.2.1 The name of the person filing the appeal, their MacEwan email address, their student ID number, and their phone number.

46.2.2 an explanation identifying how the appellant believes the decision was in violation of elections policy or procedure.

47 Once an appeal of the CRO's decision has been received the governance office will work to form the the body that has been delegated the responsibilities for adjudicating these appeals.

47.1 The governance office will supply all necessary documentation that is required for a decision to be made.

Election Budgeting

48 The Governance Office liaises with the CRO during the budgeting process to ensure adequate funding is in place for the operation of elections.



Appendix A: Infraction Guidelines

*This appendix provides guidelines for the CRO but is not to be considered exhaustive and other punitive measure may be made by the CRO.

Example Infraction	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense
Defacing other candidates campaigning material	Disqualification		
Exceeding \$225.00 on campaigning materials	Disqualification		
Distributing campaign material prior to campaign period	Disqualification		
Not reporting all campaign expenses	Disqualification		
Failure to pay fine	Disqualification		
Slander or harassment of opponents publicly or on social media	Up to \$150 or disqualification		
Utilizing unapproved campaign materials	Up to disqualification		
Campaigning off campus with campaigning events	\$100 up to disqualification		
Failure to adhere to poster guidelines	Warning	Up to \$25	Up to disqualification
Knowingly campaigning within five meters of a student who is currently voting	Warning	Disqualification	
Moving other's materials	Warning	Disqualification	
Not removing campaigning marketing materials after election	\$20 + \$5 per poster, etc.		

Please note: Committing multiple offences may result in disqualification.

Fact Sheet**Approvals:**

First Approval – April 30, 2014

Last Approval – August 12, 2026

Date of Last Review: August 12, 2026

Source and Updates:

April 30, 2014: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2014-04-30-2 on the recommendation of the Procedure Review Ad Hoc Committee. Source material drawn from *Procedure 4 – Elections*.

June 10, 2015: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2015-06-10-6 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub Committee.

July 15, 2015: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2015-07-15-3 on the recommendations of the Procedure Sub Committee. Updates based on upcoming change to MacEwan poster policy.

April 27, 2016: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2016-04-27-2 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. “Appeals” section removed as it is now covered in the Governance Investigation Committee Terms of Reference in Appendix C of the *Committees* policy.

July 5, 2017: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2017-07-05-2 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Changes made to acknowledge CFAC campus moving to City Centre Campus as well as identifying Appendix A as guidelines instead of ‘sample’ guidelines.

December 18, 2019: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2019-12-18-7 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Major updates include prohibiting elected SAMU representatives from endorsing candidates or campaigns, prohibiting elected SAMU representatives or employees from volunteering for a candidate or campaign during work hours or to use SAMU resources to support a campaign, and clarifying submission and distribution deadlines.

July 29, 2020: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2020-07-29-6 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Major updates include the addition of “Extraordinary Event” references as well as the addition of the Appeals section.

July 28, 2021: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2021-07-28-3 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Updates include the reduction of endorsements from ‘25’ to ‘10’, having the CRO approve and identify which social media platforms can be used during campaigning, and extending the deadline for expense records to be submitted to ‘prior to voting beginning’.

August 24, 2022: *Elections* approved by Executive Committee motion 2022-08-24-1. Updates include removal of ‘Extraordinary Event’ references, providing for the CRO to determine appropriate



submission methods for required documents, and enhancing/defining more specific requirements around Complaints.

June 14, 2023: Elections approved by Executive Committee motion 2023-06-14-4 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Major updates include addition of digital posters to the Campaign Materials definition, noting that full-time SAMU staff may not endorse a candidate or campaign, requiring that appeals of CRO decisions must be received within 48 hours of the issuance of a decision, and requiring that election results appeals must be received within 48 hours of voting closing.

July 17, 2024: *Elections* procedure approved by Executive Committee motion 2024-07-17-4 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Updated to remove the Chief Returning Officer responsibilities as those now live in the *Role and Responsibilities of the Chief Returning Officer* policy.

July 30, 2025: *Elections and Referenda* procedure approved by Executive Committee motion 2025-07-30-1 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Major updates include – edits to definitions of Campaign Expense and Campaign Materials, as well as adding definition of Endorse; increasing the campaign expense limit to \$375.00; and, defining separate processes for online vs physical ballots.

August 12, 2026: *Elections and Referenda Procedure* approved by Executive Committee motion 2026-08-12-2 on the recommendation of the Procedure Sub-Committee. Updates include: addition of a section relating to naming convention for candidates, reduction of campaign expense maximum to \$225, removal of banners being able to be used, and better defining the process for appealing election results and CRO decisions.

Related Documents and Forms:

Election Nomination Package