

Student Referendum Procedures

This document describes the process for the conduct of a referendum concerning the approval of an increase in ancillary fees.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

The University Ombudsperson shall be appointed CEO for the conduct of the student referendum. If the Ombudsperson is not available then the Ancillary Fee Committee will appoint a CEO.

The CEO is accountable to the Ancillary Fee Committee. His/her responsibilities are to:

- Ensure the referendum is conducted in an honourable, fair and thorough manner, and exhibit or exercise no political or other bias in favour of, or against, the referendum issue;
- Approve the wording of the referendum question as submitted by the Ancillary Fee Committee
- Make decisions with respect to any question or dispute arising in the referendum;
- Appoint two Returning Officers as well as the necessary number of Deputy Returning Officers and polling clerks;
- Report to the Ancillary Fee Committee on the results of the Referendum.

Returning Officers

The Returning Officers are responsible for:

- Facilitating the day-to-day operations of the referendum subject to any directives from the CEO.
- Enforcing the referendum procedures and the rulings of the CEO.
- Supervising the Deputy Returning Officers, Poll Clerks, or other referendum staff.

Writ

Following the approval of the Ancillary Fee Committee, the CEO shall publish a Writ of Referendum. The Writ will be published seven business days before campaigning begins in the campus media (as approved by the CEO) in electronic publications, and will be posted in designated areas on campus.

The Writ will normally include:

- The wording of the referendum question which will be stated in such a way that it can be answered YES, NO, or abstain.
- Date of referendum
- Polling stations: locations and voting hours (if applicable)
- Referendum Budget

Yes and No Committee

- There shall be only one YES committee and one NO committee for each referendum question.
- The CEO shall announce the date and time of the first meetings of the YES and NO committees in the campus media and through any other means deemed necessary.
- The CEO is empowered to grant each committee a credit allowance up to the maximum of \$400.
- No more than 1/4 of the total YES or NO committee membership can be non-students.

Budget

- The Ancillary Fee Committee will determine the total budget and allowable expenses for the referendum.
- A budget of up to \$5000.00 will be allocated to promote participation in the referendum.
- All expenses in support of either committees shall be accounted for and by the specific committee. Expenses made by people outside of the specific committee's campaign, who are endorsing the committee, must also be included.
- Each committee must prepare a final, complete and accurate report of all expenditures made, including all receipts, and other evidence of expenditures to be submitted to the CEO before the polls close on the final day of voting.

Campaigning

- Campaigning shall be defined as the process of distributing, advertising, exhibiting, presenting, broadcasting, or soliciting that directly promotes or opposes the referendum question.
- There shall be a period of no less than seven (7) business days in the campaign period before the polls open.
- All leaflets, banners, posters, handbills, or other material to be used in the referendum shall first be submitted to the CEO for approval. Approval of the CEO shall be denoted by the stamp of the Office of the CEO which shall appear on every poster/handbill and which shall appear on the originals of all other material. The CEO may refuse any item if, in the opinion of the CEO, the material is libelous, or if the material does not clearly identify its originator(s).
- Postering shall be restricted to areas determined by the CEO. The postering areas shall be clearly marked by the CEO and shall be large enough to accommodate equal space from each committee.
- Postering shall be restricted to the designated posting areas at the University.
- Use of the web and electronic list-serves for mass mailings must be approved by the CEO; and if approved must be accessible to both committees.
- The CEO must hold two (2) Public Forums where all committee Chairs or their designates are invited to speak and answer questions, at locations determined by the CEO. Additional public forums shall be held at the discretion of the CEO. One of the forums must be held in the Residence precinct.

Referendum Offences

These offences include:

- Interfering with the operation of seminars, laboratories, offices, or other normal functions of the University;
- Damaging or defacing any property, including campaign materials;
- Disrupting the operation of any part of the Residence complex;
- Campaigning on any Residence floor without prior written permission of the resident fellow of that floor;
- Disrupting any RRRR operation, service or activity, unless explicit written permission is granted to the CEO by the RRRR Executive;
- Addressing a class without prior permission of the instructor;
- Actively distributing campaign materials in a commercial area;

- Campaigning within fifty (50) feet of a Polling Station; and
- Postering outside of the designated postering area.

Handling Violations (*See protocol revision at the end of this document*)

- The committing of a Referendum Offence shall result in an immediate verbal warning to the offending committee by the CEO. The CEO will then document the incident, and issue to the charged committee written notice to that effect.
- A second Referendum Offence shall result in a loss of any refund of the committee's expense. The CEO will document the incident, and issue to the charged committee written notice to that effect.
- A third Referendum Offence shall result in immediate disqualification of the committee.

Immediate disqualification will result should the Yes or No Committee:

- Fail to present a report of expenditures, either preliminary or final, to the CEO
- Exceed the maximum allowable expenditures
- Present a fraudulent or inaccurate final report of expenditures to the CEO
- Attempt to tamper with Ballots
- Attempt to, or solicit the aid of any member of the Electoral Office, to tamper with the voting process.

Voting Entitlement

- An eligible voter is entitled to vote once, and only once
- In a referendum that involves graduate or undergraduate students solely, only the relevant group (graduate or undergraduate students) may vote.

Voting

- All referendums will be held online and managed by a mutually-agreed election and referendum service provider ("ERSP"). Voting will be conducted in a manner to ensure anonymity of voters and will follow procedures as agreed upon between the ERSP and the CEO.
- The CEO will approve the appearance and text on the ballot.
- Voting shall take place on a minimum of two days as published in the Writ.
- All ballots will be conducted electronically and sent to the students' University issued student email account.

Polling

- Polling stations with computers may be set up at the discretion of the CEO.

Tabulation

Tabulation of the ballots cast during the polling period shall be conducted the day after the final close of the polls.

- The ERSP will tabulate all results and send an electronic copy of the results to the CEO.

Referendum Outcome

- Referendum Outcomes
- All referendums affecting a single Student Association will require the minimum participation of at least 15% of the eligible student body in order to be valid (i.e. as applicable 15% participation of the graduate or undergraduate student body).
- In addition, a referendum involving both graduate and undergraduate students will be deemed to be in favour of the question if 15% of both student bodies participates and one of the following criteria is met:
 - a majority of both undergraduate and graduate students who vote support the proposed change; or
 - 60 percent or more of the total number of students who vote support the proposed change.
- A referendum involving only graduate or undergraduate students will be deemed to be in favour of the question if a majority of the students who vote support the proposed change.

Voting Records

- The ERSP will maintain a time-stamped record of all votes cast in the referendum for a minimum of 60 days.

Recall

Following the approval of the Ancillary Fee Committee, the CEO may publish a Writ of Recall for another referendum. The Writ will be published seven days before campaigning begins in the campus media. The Writ will normally include:

- The wording of the referendum question stated in such a way that it can be answered: YES, NO, or Abstain
- Date of recall referendum
- Polling stations: locations and voting hours (if applicable)
- Referendum Budget

Electoral Disputes

- Any member of CUSA, GSA or the University who has reason to believe that there has been an infraction of electoral procedures and rules outlined in this document or ordered thereunder by the CEO may charge an offender in writing.
- The CEO shall be entrusted to investigate the charge and at his/her discretion, shall take such action pursuant to the relevant articles of the Electoral Code.
- Any electoral dispute arising before the opening of the polls shall be investigated and adjudicated before polls open. The CEO shall be empowered to suspend the opening of polls for up to, but no longer than, one (1) day until a dispute has been resolved.

Declaration of Results

Following the two (2) day period after polling, and after any and all investigations filed with the CEO have been resolved, then an Official Declaration of Results shall be made.

- An Official Declaration of Results will be made either verbally or in writing by the CEO to the sponsor (such as CUSA, GSA, Society, or Administrative Office) either verbally or in writing by the CEO.
- A copy of the Official Declaration of Results shall also be forwarded to all members of the Ancillary Fee Committee.

Revised protocol note (2024):

As CEO, the Ombudsperson is responsible for planning and administering the upcoming referendum (per established protocol) with the exception of having a delegate, as determined by the Ancillary Fee Committee, handle the review and adjudication of any violations. The Ombudsperson will act as the appeal mechanism, from a procedural/fairness perspective.