



The Graduate Students' Association of Concordia University of Edmonton

GSA Election & Referendum Policy

Date Policy is Effective: 03/18/2020

Approved By: Graduate Representative Council

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Next Review Date: 03/18/2021

The Graduate Students' Association of Concordia University of Edmonton

Policy Title: GSA Election & Referendum Policy

Policy Statement:

The following document outlines the GSA's election guidelines and procedures. This document is designed to provide information to all GSA Active Members in relation to the GSA's electoral process.

Definitions

"Active Members" means all persons registered as graduate students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at CUE and who pay full- or part-time Association fees.

"Association" means the Graduate Students' Association of the Concordia University of Edmonton.

"Banners" means multiple individual posters hung together or near each other, where each subsequent poster is a continuation of the previous, is considered a banner. Posters hung together or near each other, each individually containing a complete message, independent of other posters, are not considered a banner. Any poster over 11"x17" will also be considered a banner.

"Campaign Materials" means banners, posters, handbills, AV materials, related social media content (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and any other Electronic Campaign Materials.

"Candidate" means any person running for a GSA Executive Board of Directors' position.

"CUE" means Concordia University of Edmonton.

"Deputy Returning Officer" (DRO) is an Active Member elected by the GRC during the annual April GRC meeting to carry out the duties of the ERO should the ERO be unable to perform their duties as required identified herein. Should the ERO transfer their duties to the DRO, the DRO will be excluded from voting in GSA elections and referenda.

"Electoral Returning Officer" (ERO) is an Active Member elected by the GRC to organize and oversee the annual election of the Board and any necessary by-elections and referenda. The ERO is elected annually at the April GRC meeting.

"Electronic Campaign Materials" means online voting materials, websites, blogs, and other services such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, other forms of text-messaging, or more broadly, activities such as blind phone calling, and any material made accessible by the Candidate on the internet or other communication service or device (such as cell/smartphones, computers, tablets, etc.).

"Eligible Voters" means all Active Members, excluding the Electoral Returning Officer, of the Association.

"Forms" means those listed in Appendix B.

"Graduate Representative Council" (GRC) is a group of Active Members from eligible departments as defined in the GSA bylaws.

"GSA" means the Graduate Students' Association of Concordia University of Edmonton

"Handbill" means any material meant to be distributed to electors and not posted.

"Judicial Board" is a group of GRC members, as defined in the Association's Bylaws, who are responsible for mediating disputes between parties within the Association as they pertain to the Association's Objects, Bylaws, Policies, and Procedures.

"Posters" means an advertisement smaller than 11" x 17".

"Slate" means a group of Candidates who run for elected office on a similar or singular platform for mutual advantage.

"Staff Member" means all persons employed by the GSA in a paid capacity, whether full-time, part-time, term certain or contract.

Applicability

This document applies to all Active Members of the GSA and Staff Members.

Reason for Policy

This document is meant to outline election policy and procedures in order to improve transparency in decision-making. While it outlines how the Electoral Returning Officer (ERO) and Candidates should act during the election, the ERO reserves the right to act in accordance with his or her interpretation of all pertinent bylaws of the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) at CUE in addition to the policies and procedures outlined herein.

It is the responsibility of all Candidates or other interested parties to ensure they are aware of and adherent to this policy document. Parties are therefore invited and encouraged to ask the ERO if they have any questions or concerns over anything relating to this policy, the GSA bylaws or any other issue arising from the election process.

Non-Compliance

This document contains procedures that carry significant liability for the GSA as it relates to the electoral process. Failure to comply with this document may result in disciplinary action up to and including disqualification for Candidates.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Electoral Returning Officer (ERO) to ensure that principles, guidelines, and procedures of this document are adhered to in their entirety. Should the ERO and/or the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) be unable to fulfill their obligations under this policy, a new ERO will be elected by the Graduate Representative Council (GRC) at the next regularly scheduled GRC meeting and the requirements of the new ERO will be the same as identified under the definition of the ERO herein. Should both the ERO and the DRO be unable to fulfill their duties identified herein, and the GRC will not have time to convene prior to the election taking place, the Chair of the Judicial Board will appoint a new ERO and the new ERO will fulfill their obligations outlined herein.

Should the Chair of the Judicial Board be unable to appoint a suitable Candidate, acting reasonably, prior to the election taking place, the Chair of the Judicial Board will assume the responsibilities of the ERO.

Contacts

Subject	Name	Phone No	Email
ERO			
DRO			
Judicial Board Chair			

PROCEDURES

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. Candidates running for the position of GSA President must meet the academic eligibility criteria of having a minimum GPA of 3.4. (Overall)
- 1.2. Candidates running for the positions of GSA VP Academic Affairs and External Relations, GSA VP finance, and GSA VP student life do not have any academic eligibility criteria for GPA.
- 1.3. Candidates should be enrolled for consecutive three (3) semesters in his/her graduate program which should be confirmed from the registrar office to the ERO.

2. Nomination Process Procedure

- 2.1. In implementing this procedure, the provisions of the Association bylaws will be implemented in every respect.
- 2.2. Upon receipt of all pertinent campaign documents by the GSA main office or emailed to _____, the names of Candidates who have submitted documentation will be listed on the GSA website when the nomination period closes, the Candidates have been verified by the ERO and have been notified by email as provided on the nomination form.
- 2.3. Following the close of nominations, all nomination forms will be officially reviewed and then eligible Candidates whose paperwork is in order will be declared official Candidates and will be notified in writing by the ERO. Any Candidate whose paperwork was ruled out of order by the ERO will be considered ineligible and will be notified in writing by the ERO. If any Candidates are deemed otherwise ineligible at the sole discretion of the ERO, they will be notified in writing by the ERO.
 - 2.3.1. Any Candidates determined ineligible will be provided with a written explanation provided by the ERO within twenty-four (24) hours of the close of the nomination period.
- 2.4. Should the ERO, the DRO, or the Chair of the Judicial Board decide to run for an elected position, then he or she must resign from their current position at least fourteen (14) days prior to the beginning of the nomination period. The notice must be provided to the GRC.
 - 2.4.1. The ERO, the DRO, and the Chair of the Judicial Board are not eligible to be nominated for an elected position once the nomination period has started.

3. Campaigning

- 3.1. No Candidate shall run or be a member in a slate, real or apparent as determined by the ERO in their sole discretion, or share expenses for Campaign Materials, work together for mutual benefit, use similar or identical slogans or otherwise appear to be acting as a slate. Failure to abide by this rule constitutes a serious campaign violation and may result in disqualification of all Candidates that have been identified as running in a slate.
- 3.2. The GSA places a high priority on open lines of communication between Candidates and electors, Candidates are required to attend the All- Candidates forum as identified in Schedule A herein in a location determined by the ERO. The ERO will notify all Candidates in writing to the email address provided on the nomination form of when this forum will occur. If this requirement is not followed, the ERO reserves the right to disqualify the Candidate.
- 3.3. No Candidate shall make a speech to any class at CUE without the prior agreement of the ERO and the professor or instructor responsible for that class.
 - 3.3.1. Candidates are to submit the content of their presentations/ speeches to the ERO within twenty-four (24) hours before the forum for approval.
 - 3.3.2. ERO may ask DRO to monitor the content of the speech at the forum if the content differs from the speech submitted earlier in the email.

- 3.4. During officially organized events, which include all opportunities to officially address the student body either formally or informally, Candidates must behave in a professional manner as outlined in the GSA's *Code of Conduct* policy.
- 3.4.1. Should the Candidate not act professionally, as determined by the ERO in their sole discretion acting reasonably, they may be disqualified from the electoral process.
- 3.4.1.1. Should a disqualified Candidate wish to challenge the ERO's decision, they may do so by written appeal to the Judicial Board within forty-eight (48) hours of notification by the ERO.
- 3.5. Candidates, or any person(s) acting on the behalf of the candidate, may not assist voters in the electoral process.

4. Campaign Materials

- 4.1. All Candidates must have their campaign and communication materials, which include but are not limited to posters, banners, handbills, online materials, and electronic communication, etc., approved by the ERO or designate prior to distribution to the electorate. All campaign and communication materials must be provided to the ERO at least twenty-four (24) hours in advance of distribution.
 - 4.1.1. A copy of the material and/or communication message must be emailed to the ERO identifying when, where, and how the material/communication will be disseminated. Further, Candidates must receive permission from the ERO in relation to any materials and/or communication as to the content of the communique prior to dissemination.
 - 4.1.2. The material may only be disseminated after reception of a confirmation communication from the ERO.
- 4.2. All Candidates are strongly encouraged to create a Candidate platform which will be posted on the GSA website after the nomination period.
- 4.3. All Candidates are strongly encouraged to submit a video which states their name and the position sought. The video or video URL link must be submitted to the ERO and must be approved by the ERO prior to the dissemination of its content and URL link.
- 4.4. No Campaign Materials may contain misinformation, slander, inappropriate endorsements, and inappropriate or discriminatory content. Should the ERO determine in their sole discretion acting reasonably that a Candidate has contravened this clause, the Candidate may be disqualified.
- 4.5. During the designated campaign period, Candidates shall not distribute any item to electors, except for approved Campaign Materials.
- 4.6. All Campaign Materials shall include on the front, in legible form, the name of the Candidate and the position being sought.
- 4.7. All Campaign Materials shall where applicable, include on the front, in legible form, a statement declaring who paid to produce the Campaign Material. If campaign materials are paid for by the GSA under Article 4.4 herein, the GSA must be recognized by having "paid for by the GSA" on said materials.
- 4.8. Campaign Material shall only be approved if it contains statements about a Candidate's own campaign and platform. A Candidate shall not refer to the identity of another Candidate on any Campaign Materials.
- 4.9. A Candidate shall not misrepresent themselves as to the name or physical appearance on Campaign Materials.
- 4.10. Candidates or shall not use the logos of the Graduate Students' Association or CUE on any Campaign Material.
- 4.11. A Candidate may have no more than two (2) banners.
- 4.12. All Candidates must:
 - 4.12.1. comply with all CUE building regulations.
 - 4.12.2. follow CUE regulations on posters and the use of CUE grounds.
 - 4.12.3. not use stickers, decals, or any adhesive material of a permanent or semi-permanent nature.

- 4.12.4. ONLY use provided tack to post-campaign material.
- 4.12.5. ONLY post in approved locations and must have written consent provided to the ERO before posting materials on specific department or usage areas.
- 4.12.6. Be responsible for any damage to property caused through their campaign including but not limited to tape residue cleaning, damage to posting boards, or replacement of damaged materials.
- 4.13. Candidates that post materials without approval or in an unapproved manner will be given ONE warning before being removed from the election.
- 4.14. Only the Association and Candidates may post election-related or Campaign Material as approved in advance by the ERO.
- 4.15. Candidates may not campaign or post any Campaign Materials in any campus library.
- 4.16. No Candidate shall accept an in-kind donation of advertising space in any publication, advertisement space or media venue.
- 4.17. All Candidates are solely responsible for the removal of all their Campaign Materials from campus by the end of the campaign period.

5. Election Spending

- 5.1. No Candidate can spend more than \$150.00 (CAD) during his or her election campaign, from which the GSA will only reimburse a maximum of \$30 (CAD) on submission of all receipts (as specified in 5.2) if requested to do so.
- 5.2. All election expenses must be reported to the ERO in the form of receipts, and expenses must be incurred by the candidate himself or herself. Expenses must include all items considered Campaign Materials, the rental or use of facilities, and all items or services of any kind donated to a campaign, which must be assessed and reported at fair market value.
- 5.3. Candidates must submit a report to the ERO listing all expenses by the end of the campaigning period and before voting commences. If expenses are incurred Candidates must submit original receipts. Failure to submit a report may result in immediate disqualification of the Candidate.
- 5.4. If the ERO deems any expense not to be commensurate with the campaign or with fair market value, the ERO reserves the right to investigate the expenses before certifying the result. Further, the ERO reserves the right to invoke disciplinary action up to and including disqualification according to the ERO's interpretation of this policy.
- 5.5. No campaign expenses may be incurred during the voting period.
- 5.6. Candidates are limited to the number of posters printed for the campaign to a maximum of 20 posters with the size 11*17.

6. Election Voting Period

- 6.1. Voting shall take place over two days (48 hours) and shall be done through electronic means (D2L or its electronic equivalent) unless a physical balloting system has been approved by a 2/3 majority in a previous GRC meeting.
 - 6.1.1. All Active Members of the Association may cast one vote for each position during the election.
- 6.2. Polling stations, if required, must be manned by non-partisan volunteers as coordinated by the ERO (minimum of two (2) per station).

7. Announcing the Results

- 7.1. After the end of the voting period, the ballots shall be counted by the ERO and witnessed by a neutral third party,
- 7.2. The ballot count may also be witnessed by one (1) scrutineer appointed by each Candidate (which may be the Candidate him/herself) if so desired by the Candidate.
- 7.3. A first-past-the-post vote shall constitute the election of an officer in the case of all Executive offices. If no candidate is declared a winner, then the position will be declared vacant, and the vote will go to a by-election as outlined in the GSA Bylaws.
- 7.4. The ERO shall announce the initial results within 24 hours of the end of the voting period.
- 7.5. The results initially announced will be provisional until all outstanding issues are resolved, with regard to any outstanding violations of policy by Candidates, or other issues that may arise. Once these issues have been addressed, the ERO shall then officially certify the results.
 - 7.5.1. The ERO may take up to 2 weeks to certify the results of the election should an appeal take place.

8. By-elections

- 8.1. By-elections for the Association will follow all election policies with the following noted exceptions (see By-election policy):
 - 8.1.1. The by-election shall be held as part of the GRC meeting following the end of the campaign period, as per GSA Bylaws and as noted in the by-election announcement.
 - 8.1.2. Voting shall occur at the GRC meeting announced in the by-election announcement.
 - 8.1.2.1. Only eligible GRC members may cast votes during by-elections. Exceptions may be made by a GRC resolution passed with a majority (i.e. 2/3) at the previous GRC meeting.
 - 8.1.2.2. Voting shall be conducted using separate ballots for each contested position.
 - 8.1.2.3. The winner of the election is determined by the first-past-the-post procedure.
 - 8.1.3. The public forum shall occur prior to the vote in the GRC meeting in which the by-election is held.

9. Complaints, Infractions, and Penalties

- 9.1. Because electronic Campaign Materials can be of a variety of forms, and therefore practically difficult to approve before their release, they will be policed using a complaint-activated process. Any Active Member who believes that any such materials violate GSA bylaws, this policy, university policy or any other election procedure should contact the ERO. After adjudication, the ERO reserves the right to either warn a Candidate, disqualify the Candidate, or ultimately refuse to certify the election if such action is deemed appropriate by the ERO.
- 9.2. The following violations regarding Campaign Materials will result in the Candidate being disciplined up to and including disqualification, and the Warning Procedures herein will come into effect:
 - 9.2.1. Campaign Materials on a painted wall or surface;
 - 9.2.2. Campaign Materials displayed in an unauthorized area;
 - 9.2.3. Campaign Materials posted before the campaign period begins;
 - 9.2.4. Disobeying university, municipal, provincial, and/or federal law/regulation while campaigning;
 - 9.2.5. Campaign Materials containing misinformation, negative campaigning, slander, inappropriate endorsements, or discriminatory content;

- 9.2.6. Campaign Materials submitted by any outside organization or individual that is not an Association Active Member;
- 9.2.7. Candidates themselves enforcing bylaws or policy or otherwise being seen to “police” other Candidates;
- 9.2.8. Candidate received 3 warnings from an ERO, it will deemed to be automatic disqualification from the election
- 9.3. Any election violation including but not limited to policies outlined in this document will result in the Candidate being disciplined up to and including disqualification, and the warning procedures herein will come into effect.
- 9.3.1. The ERO reserves the right to act in a manner reflective of the severity of the infraction according to the ERO’s interpretation of said infraction up to and including disqualifying the Candidate(s). Should the infraction(s) be severe enough in the opinion of the ERO, the ERO may refuse to certify the election.

10. Warning Procedures

- 10.1. Any Candidate who violates any provision herein that results in an official warning or disqualification will be notified in writing by the e-mail provided on the nomination form by the ERO of their violation. All warnings, sanctions, and disqualifications will be posted on the GSA website and in the GSA office.
- 10.2. Any Candidate receiving an official sanction, not including disqualification as a result of a policy violation will have twenty-four (24) hours to fix the violation; otherwise, the Candidate will be disqualified from the election.
- 10.3. Any violation of Campaign Material expense limits may result in immediate disqualification from the election without a previous warning.

11. Appeals

- 11.1. As per GSA bylaws, Candidates may appeal decisions made by the ERO to the GSA’s Judicial Board.
 - 11.1.1. Appeals must be received by the Chair of the Judicial Board in writing within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving notice by the ERO.
 - 11.1.2. The written appeal should be sent to ERO through an email before the specified date.

12. Interpretation and Approval

- 12.1. This policy must be approved by the Board of Directors of the Graduate Students Association of Concordia University of Edmonton on a yearly basis prior to the Annual General Meeting. The interpretation of this policy is at the sole discretion of the Electoral Returning Officer as defined herein.
- 12.2. All the necessary arrangements at the election forum is a responsibility of GSA VP student life.

13. Withdrawal of nomination

- 13.1. Candidate can withdraw his/her name of nomination from the election before forum i.e. before the first Monday of March month.

14. Referendum

- 14.1. A question may go to a referendum only after it has been approved by the General Council.
- 14.2. A question can also go to a referendum by petition which states the question and bears the signatures, names, and student identification numbers of 25% of the GSA’s General Membership.
- 14.3. A referendum election must be held two (2) weeks or more after the date of validation;

- 14.3.1. The next business day after validation, the GSA must inform the General Members about the referendum.
- 14.4. A referendum is binding on the GSA when a simple majority of members, who are present and voting, vote in favor of the referendum question.
- 14.5. The GSA Executive Council can decide by a vote to take one of three positions on a referendum question: 1) Endorse the question and campaign in support, 2) Remain neutral and refrain from campaigning, or 3) Denounce the question and actively campaign against.
- 14.6. Voting will follow the process outlined in Election and Referendum Policy for dates, voting, and campaigning.

15. Guidelines for ERO & DRO

- 15.1. ERO should not use any social media platform to communicate with candidates, rather the communication should be through email.
- 15.2. ERO should not allow or give permission to things (e.g. coming late to the forum) to candidates that are not mentioned in the election policy unless it's an emergency or medical need.
- 15.3. ERO should conduct a presentation session only to candidates informing about the election policy, important dates of the election process, designated area to paste the posters for the campaign.
- 15.4. ERO must at all times comply with this election policy with entirety.
- 15.5. ERO must inform all the candidates regarding the members of the GSA judicial board and process to appeal.

Appendix A - Timeline

First Monday in February – Official announcement of the election

Second Monday in February – Nominations open (12:30 PM)

The fourth day after the second Monday in February – Nominations close (4:30 PM)

The fourth day after the second Monday in February – Nominees are notified (before 12 PM)

Third Monday in February – Campaigning begins (1 PM)

First Monday in March – Nominee platforms sent to ERO (12 PM)

First Monday in March-- Election forum (4-6 PM)

Second Monday in March -- Campaigning ends (Midnight)

The first three days after the second Monday in March -- Voting days

The fourth day after the second Monday in March – Election announcements

Appendix B
Forms

**Concordia GSA Election 2020
NOMINATION FORM**

Date ___ / ___ / 2020

Full Name of the nominee (you may nominate yourself if you wish to do so)	
Contact Phone Number	
Email	
For the position of:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• President• Vice President Academic and External Relations• Vice President Student Affairs• Vice President Finance & Services
Nominated by (Nominator/s must be an active member of the GSA)	
Name	Signature

**Concordia GSA Election 2020
NOMINATION FORM**

Date ___ / ___ / 2020

Full Name of the nominee (you may nominate yourself if you wish to do so)	
Contact Phone Number	
Email	
For the position of:	Program Representative of _____ _____
Nominated by: (Nominator/s must be an active member of the GSA)	
Name	Signature