

Governance Policy:

POL #GP-0008



Policy: Elections & Referenda Policy

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Definitions

Campaign/Campaigning means an organized effort which seeks to influence the decision-making process within a specific group.

Campaign Platform refers to the process by which candidates intend to campaign, including but not limited to methods of voter engagement, policy positions, and all other aspects of the campaign that aims to influence voters.

Candidates are those who are recognized (accepted) by the Chief Returning Officer as having successfully completed all the requirements outlined in the nomination package, including having attended a Candidates' Meeting.

Candidates' Meeting is a mandatory meeting prior to the start of the campaign period which outlines specific rules that candidates must follow during their campaign.

Candidate Profile Means a short outline of a candidate's platform that can be submitted to SAOC for inclusion within any SAOC-maintained social media, publications, etc.

Chief Returning Officer (CRO) is the person responsible for administering SAOC's elections and enforcing all governing documents pertaining to Elections, and is outlined by the Bylaws as the Executive Director or designate.

Good Standing means an active student which has complied with all of their responsibilities in accordance with the governing documents of the SAOC and has not been placed on academic or non-academic probation.

In-Kind/Donation items shall be defined as an item or material that is gifted to the candidate and/or their campaign. The fair market value of the item(s) must be reflected in the expense form.

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Nominee is someone who intends on running for a position in SAOC elections by completing and submitting a nomination package.

Nomination Packages must be correctly completed and submitted by nominees. The nomination package is designed and distributed by SAOC and outlines dates, rules and details that nominees will have to adhere to should they wish to be a candidate.

Nominator is a SAOC member who has signed a nomination form of a nominee. The process of signing a nomination form indicates that the nominator recognizes the right of the nominee to participate as a candidate in SAOC's elections.

SAOC Member means an active student who has paid their SAOC fees within the current academic year.

Slates/Teams are defined as any formal collaboration between candidates where the goal is to increase the odds of the candidates becoming elected.

Vexatious/Frivolous Complaint means a complaint which is brought, regardless of its merits, solely to harass or subdue another person.

1.0 Authority

1.1 In accordance with the Students' Association of Olds College (SAOC) Bylaws: The powers and duties of the Board of Directors include making policies and decisions regulating the conduct of the organization provided such policies and decisions are consistent with applicable legislation and these bylaws.

2.0 Policy Statements

2.1 The Chief Returning Officer shall oversee the general conduct and implementation of elections on behalf of the SAOC and shall fulfill these duties with due diligence and impartiality in a manner that upholds the guiding principles of fairness, equality, transparency, and student interest.

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2.2 All election, by-election, and referendum processes shall be held in accordance with SAOC's Bylaws. Where the SAOC Bylaws and/or policies and procedures are silent on an issue, the Alberta Election Act may be used for guidance.

2.3 SAOC shall remain a neutral body and will not endorse or support the views of any candidate; the views of any candidate shall not necessarily represent the views of SAOC or its representatives.

2.4 Participation in SAOC elections is open to all members, as set out in SAOC's Bylaws. SAOC members must meet eligibility criteria in order to be declared a candidate. Candidates must have intentions of fulfilling their duties should they be elected.

2.5 Candidates and their representatives are responsible for familiarizing themselves with all election-related materials; candidates are ultimately responsible for their own campaign, which includes the actions of their campaign manager and campaign team. Ignorance is no excuse for violations.

2.6 Candidates, or their representatives, who violate SAOC's governing documents shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including: fines, demerits, disqualification and revocation of membership.

2.7 SAOC shall reimburse board officer candidates for approved campaign expenses in accordance with their Information for Candidates Package. The use of Club funds or SAOC funds for campaigning purposes is strictly prohibited. Director candidates shall not be reimbursed for any campaign expenses.

2.8 Use of SAOC supplies or equipment for the purpose of campaigning or campaign materials is strictly prohibited. The use of SAOC offices, operations and meeting spaces for campaign activities is also prohibited unless otherwise deemed appropriate by the CRO.

2.9 Once declared a candidate, incumbent directors cannot participate in public engagements, discussions with the media or other events that may seem to benefit their campaign; access to SAOC offices during the week of voting is prohibited unless authorized by the CRO.

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2.10 Malicious or deliberate interference with candidate(s) campaigns, or SAOC's election and voting processes, may subject an individual or Club to disciplinary action, loss of funding, or revocation of membership.

2.11 Following the close of polls, the provisional results will be declared; upon the close of the appeal period, the provisional results shall become official, and the Board will ratify the report provided by the Chief Returning Officer.

2.12 Complaints, concerns and appeals regarding an election or a candidate may be submitted as set out in SAOC's governing documents; staff should direct complaints or concerns to the Executive Director.

2.13 All referendum questions shall be initiated and administered as prescribed in the SAOC's Bylaws.

3.0 Elections

3.1 General

3.1.1 Candidates are responsible for familiarizing themselves with all material relevant to the electoral process, including but not limited to: relevant Bylaws, Election Policies and Procedures and any other material distributed by the CRO.

3.1.2 No candidate may promise to donate any portion of their honorarium if elected.

3.1.3 Slates, real or perceived, are not permitted.

3.1.4. Elections shall be decided by single-winner plurality votes held for each office in contention.

3.2 Administration of Election

3.2.1. It is the duty of the Chief Returning Officer to administer the elections in a manner that is consistent with the governing documents of the SAOC.

3.2.2. The duties of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) include, but are not limited to:

a) Declaring provisional and official results to candidates, members, and other relevant parties;

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- b) Ensuring all correspondence and messaging to candidates and members is accurate and timely;
- c) Providing recommendations to the SAOC Board on all related matters, including policy, procedure or Bylaw amendments. Recommendations are to be included in the CRO's final report to the Board;
- d) Reporting any conflicts of interest to the Board.
- e) Facilitating the Candidates' Meetings;
- f) Enforce the governing documents.

3.2.3. The SAOC shall make available to the CRO such resources as required to organize and conduct the election.

3.2.4 The Chief Returning Officer shall take into consideration and work within the budgetary and organizational capacity of SAOC in making any election related decisions.

3.2.5 The CRO may adjourn voting to another time in the event that an emergency, disaster or unusual or unforeseen circumstance has:

- a) Significant effect on the ability of electors to be informed and to vote;
- b) Put or may put the health or safety of the staff and students at risk.

3.2.6 In the event that voting is adjourned, the CRO shall coordinate the immediate notification to the SAOC Board of Directors, staff, candidates and members regarding the change of voting hours. The total number of rescheduled voting hours must total a minimum of half of what was originally scheduled.

3.2.7 Any concerns regarding the conduct of SAOC staff or the CRO are to be brought to the attention of the Executive Director.

- a. In the case where the Executive Director is acting as the CRO, concerns regarding the conduct of the Executive Director are to be brought to the Chair of the Board.

3.3. Schedule of Elections

3.3.1. Each academic year there shall be one Election of Board Officers in the Winter Semester.

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3.3.2. Each academic year there shall be one Election of Board Directors in the Fall Semester.

3.3.3. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Chair of the Board, shall propose the ensuing academic year's election dates to the Board for approval no later than August.

3.3.4. Election dates are to include the opening and closing of nominations and voting days. The opening and closing of nominations must be for a minimum of five (5) business days where regular classes are scheduled. More than one nomination deadline may exist providing the supplementary nomination deadline falls no later than two (2) business days prior to the opening of polls. Voting shall take place over two (2) concurrent days.

3.3.5. In accordance with SAOC Bylaws 8.3, voting for the Election of Board Officers shall commence before March 1st.

3.3.6. In accordance with SAOC Bylaws 8.4, voting for the Election of Board Directors shall commence before October 15th.

3.4. By-elections

3.4.1. By-elections shall be conducted in accordance with SAOC's governing documents pertaining to elections .

4.0 Eligibility

4.1. For a nomination to be considered valid, an eligible nominee must:

- a) Ensure that their SAOC and Olds College fees are paid in full;
- b) Be in good standing; and
- c) Attend at least one Candidates' Meeting.

4.2. A valid nomination form must include:

- (a) The name, address, telephone number, and Student ID number of the candidate; and
- (b) The program and year in which the candidate is enrolled.

4.3. All nominees are expected to understand and abide by:

- a) All SAOC governing documents;
- b) SAOC's Code of Conduct;
- c) The Alberta Human Rights Act; and
- d) All Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Laws.

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4.4. A nominee may be denied candidacy if they:

- a) Fail to meet the requirements;
- b) Have had their SAOC membership revoked;
- c) Were removed from an elected or appointed position in the current or previous academic year; or
- d) Were disqualified from an election or by-election in the current or previous academic year.

5.0 Nominations

5.1. Nomination forms are to be readily accessible to students online and in print at the opening of nominations.

5.2. At 12pm, noon, on the date appointed as the nominations' deadline, the CRO shall declare the nominations officially closed;

5.3. By 12pm, noon, on the day immediately following the close of nominations, the CRO shall:

- a) Announce the names of all officially nominated candidates; and
- b) Announce dates and times at which polls will open and close and when the results will be announced.

5.4. Only those duly nominated for office shall be included in all official lists of candidates for office and shall have their names placed on the ballot.

5.5. Should there be no nominations submitted for an election, new dates may be chosen at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

6.0 Candidates

6.1. Withdrawal of a Candidate

6.1.1. At any time after the filing of their nomination, a candidate may withdraw by providing the CRO with a written declaration to that effect signed by the candidate wishing to withdraw. A withdrawal is effective immediately upon receipt of notice by the CRO.

6.1.2. Reimbursement of a withdrawn candidate's expenses, if any, shall be at the discretion of the CRO.

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6.1.3. In the event that a candidate withdraws, and there is an equal number of or fewer candidates running than there are positions available, all candidates shall be acclaimed.

6.1.4. If a candidate withdraws, the CRO shall ensure voters are so advised and, if time allows, ensure the candidate's removal from the ballot.

6.2. Campaign Representatives

6.2.1. Each candidate is permitted, but not required, to appoint campaign representatives; campaign representatives may serve as a Campaign Manager or Team Members and are considered an extension of the candidate and must be registered with the CRO.

6.2.2. Candidates are responsible for their campaign and their campaign representatives.

6.2.3. Campaign representatives must be active SAOC members and may only be registered to one campaign at a time.

6.2.4. A limit of one (1) Campaign Manager and three (3) Team Members exists for all candidates.

6.2.5. All Campaign Representatives are encouraged to attend the Candidates' Meeting; Campaign Managers are required to attend.

6.3 Conflicts of Interest

6.3.1. Candidates shall declare if they are a staff or volunteer of the SAOC.

6.3.2. Candidates shall declare if they are club leaders.

6.3.3. Candidates shall not campaign while fulfilling their duties as staff, volunteers or club leaders within the SAOC.

6.3.4. Staff and current elected representatives are not permitted to endorse candidates; failure to comply with this policy shall result in disciplinary action.

6.3.5. Self-endorsement of incumbent candidates is permitted only while not fulfilling duties associated with their incumbent role.

6.3.6. Conflicts of Interest, real or perceived, pertaining to candidates shall be managed by the CRO.

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6.3.7. Should a situation arise involving staff, the Executive Director shall be informed by the CRO.

6.3.8. Should a situation arise involving elected or appointed representatives, the Executive Director and Chair of the Board shall be informed by the CRO.

7.0 Meetings, Events, and Submissions

7.1. Candidates' Meeting

7.1.1. All nominees must attend an informative Candidates Meeting to be advised of the election's rules, provided a copy of this policy and an Information for Candidates package prior to campaigning, which shall occur fourteen (14) days before the voting period begins.

7.1.2. If extenuating circumstances prevent the nominee from attending the Candidates' Meeting, the individual must contact the CRO by 12pm (noon) on the day of the meeting; absences from the meeting must be approved by the CRO and alternative arrangements may be provided.

7.1.3. Failure to attend a Candidates' Meeting or to make alternative, approved arrangements with the CRO shall disqualify nominees from candidacy.

7.2. SAOC shall organize an opportunity for students to meet all candidates.

7.3. No candidate shall participate in any externally organized forum or panel unless each candidate has received at least 24 hours notice and will be afforded an equal opportunity to speak.

7.4. Candidates are encouraged to provide the SAOC with a Candidate Profile and headshot/photo for posting on the SAOC website.

7.5. Expense Forms

7.5.1. Candidates are required to track and record all spending.

7.5.2. Limits on campaign expenses are intended to provide an equitable platform for all candidates; candidates are not required to spend any funds on their campaign. In the event that no funds are expensed, the candidate is still required to submit an expense form stating that no funds were spent.

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7.5.3. Candidates are to take all efforts to ensure their form is accurate and complete.

7.5.4. Failure to submit the expense form and receipts by the deadline will result in disqualification.

7.5.5. Failure to adhere to the limits and regulations pertaining to expenses will result in disqualification.

7.5.6. Failure to honestly declare all spending will result in disqualification.

8.0 Campaigning

8.1 General Campaigning shall constitute the following:

- a) The distribution, posting, or publication of any campaign materials;
- b) Public appearances or speeches related to the election; and
- c) Social media posts related to the election.

8.2. Campaigning may not occur:

- a) Before the end of the final Candidates' Meeting; nor
- b) During the voting period.

8.3. Candidates shall not:

- a) Share expenses for campaign materials with another candidate;
- b) Appear on another candidate's campaign materials; nor
- c) Produce campaign materials that resemble those of another candidate in colour, branding or design or use the same slogan or slogans as another candidate. Should a candidate be an employee, student leader, or volunteer of SAOC, campaigning during scheduled work or volunteer hours is strictly prohibited and may result in disqualification and dismissal.

8.4. Candidates are permitted to address a class of students provided they have the explicit permission of the instructor.

8.5. Campaign Materials

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8.5.1. No material shall depict or infer anything offensive or illegal, nor refer to, nor be seen to refer to any other candidate in any way, nor infer any specific endorsement by the SAOC of any candidate.

8.5.2. Candidates will limit their campaign material to a maximum of:

- a) 7 - 4' x 4' banners may be placed throughout the campus – with a maximum of one per building.
- b) 50 posters size 8½" x 11" (letter) in total for the entire campus.
- c) 10 posters in any other size to a maximum of 22" x 28" in total for the entire campus.

8.5.3. Campaign Flyers less than 8" x 8" are not limited in quantity.

8.5.4. Use of the SAOC or Olds College logos is strictly prohibited.

8.5.5. Use of registered trademarks, logos or copyrighted materials, or their likeness, is strictly prohibited without written consent from the copyright owner.

- a) Should written consent be granted, the candidate must provide a copy of the consent to the CRO prior to usage of such materials.

8.6. Social Media

8.6.1. Candidates are encouraged to utilize social media websites to promote their campaign. The following restrictions apply:

- a) Candidates are permitted to create a unique page to support their election or utilize an existing social media account;
- b) All Campaigning on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram must include the official #SAOCVotes hashtag;
- c) Candidates are permitted to advertise through social media websites. All costs associated with social media advertising must be accounted for on the Expense Form.

8.6.2. Candidates cannot campaign through email, but are permitted to use their student email to respond to students or instructors who initiate contact.

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8.6.3. Use of Olds College's global address book for mass-mailing is strictly prohibited and will result in disqualification, potential revocation of membership and other actions as deemed appropriate by Olds College.

8.7. Slates, whether perceived or real, are not permitted.

8.8. Campaigning, whether perceived or real, at any location off the Olds College campus, is not permitted.

8.9. All physical campaign material must be removed prior to the start of the voting period.

8.9.1. No digital campaign material may be posted during the voting period. Existing digital campaign materials (e.g. social media posts) may remain online.

8.10. All campaign material must be approved by the CRO, must be stamped by the SAOC office, and must be posted according to the rules of the building in which it will be placed.

8.10.1. Campaign materials must not be posted on walls, windows, on doors, or in doorways.

8.10.2. No campaign material shall overlap or obscure, in any way, the material of any other candidate.

9.0 Demerits, Disqualifications, Complaints & Appeals

9.1 Demerits

9.1.1. The CRO may issue demerits to candidates who have been found to have committed a campaign violation.

9.1.2. Demerits shall be issued up to the maximum for a specific violation.

9.1.3. Multiple penalties may be assigned where the violation encompasses more than one offense.

9.1.4. Demerit points are assessed on, but not limited to, the following:

Infraction	Demerits
Failure to attend mandatory candidates' meeting.	2.0

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Failure to submit campaign budget prior to the end of the campaigning period.	2.0
Unparliamentary behavior: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slandering or defaming a candidate in written or verbal communication. • Defacing or removing another candidate's campaign materials. 	2.0
Campaigning off-campus.	2.0
Campaigning in a slate.	2.0
Campaigning at a club meeting or event without all candidates being provided the same opportunity.	1.0 per event or meeting campaigned at.
Failure to have posted campaign material approved by the CRO and stamped by the SAOC main office.	0.5 per piece of unapproved campaign material.
Failure to post campaign materials according to the rules of the building in which they are posted.	0.5 per piece of infringing material.
Obscuration, to any degree, of another candidate's campaign materials.	1.0 per piece of obscuring material.

9.2. Disqualification

9.2.1. Candidates may be disqualified at the discretion of the CRO, should the candidate's demerit point total meet or exceed two (2) points.

9.2.2. In the event that a candidate is disqualified, the CRO shall notify the candidate immediately via email.

9.2.3. In the event a winning candidate is disqualified, the results of the ballot will be void and the runner-up with the highest number of votes will be declared the winner.

9.3. Complaints

9.3.1. Complaints or concerns regarding any aspect of the election process or the conduct of a candidate or their campaign materials can be submitted to the CRO via an

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Election Complaint Form. Frivolous or vexatious complaints will not be tolerated. Complaint Forms may be requested from the CRO. Complaints or concerns must:

- a) Contain the complainant's contact information;
- b) Contain a detailed description of the perceived wrong or violation (date, location, witnesses, etc.); and
- c) Reference specific Election Policies or Procedures, when applicable.

9.3.2. The CRO shall respond to all complaints in a timely manner, with an aim to resolve all complaints or concerns within two business days.

10.0. Voting

10.1. The CRO shall ensure voting begins at 12:00 PM on the first day designated as Voting Day #1 and be held open for forty-eight (48) hours.

10.2. Voting will be conducted online and made available to students via their student emails.

10.3. Ballots and vote collection shall be conducted via the Olds College IT Department, and kept confidential from all candidates.

10.4. At their earliest convenience, the person(s) within the Olds College IT Department responsible for the facilitation of voting shall send results to the CRO.

10.5. Upon verification of election results, the CRO shall deliver a message declaring successful candidates to the VP Communications for immediate distribution to all students via the Olds College global address book.

10.5.1. In the event that the VP Communications position is vacant, the distribution of results shall be ensured by the CRO via the officer currently managing the VP Communications email account.

11.0 Appeals to Election Results

11.1 Appeals may be filed with the CRO in written form.

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11.2 Appeals will be upheld or denied at the sole discretion of the CRO, according to the clauses of this policy and any campaigning rules laid out in the Information for Candidates packages.

12.0 Referenda

12.1. A referendum shall be conducted in accordance with SAOC's governing documents.

12.2. There must be a minimum of two (2) weeks between the date of the special resolution of the Board and the date of the referendum. During this time, the question is open to discussion and campaigning. SAOC will be required to run a neutral campaign in regards to the referendum question.

12.3. Notice of a referendum shall be given to all appropriate media channels and actively communicated to membership.