



University of Calgary Graduate Students' Association
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GSA Election Policy

Policy Statement and Objective

The following document outlines the election guidelines of the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary and aims to improve transparency in the election process. This document is designed to provide information about the electoral process to all Active Members of the Association. It outlines how the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) and Candidates should act during an election,

It is the responsibility of all Candidates and other interested parties to ensure that they are aware of and adhere to this policy. They are encouraged to direct any questions or concerns relating to this policy, the bylaws of the Association that concern elections, or any other issue arising from the election process to the CRO.

Definitions

Definitions herein shall have the same meaning as in the Association's bylaws. Should there be a discrepancy between this policy and the Association's bylaws, the Association's bylaws shall prevail.

"Academically Employed Graduate Student" (AEGS) is an Active Member employed as a teaching or research assistant as defined in the Post-Secondary Learning Act (Alberta), under the GSA Collective Agreement and as defined by the bylaws.

"Active Members" means all persons registered as graduate students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies or as Credit Certificate and Diploma Program students at the University of Calgary who pay full- or part-time association fees.

"All-Candidates Meeting" means a meeting scheduled by the Chief Returning Officer that is mandatory for all Candidates or Designates to attend.

“All-Candidates Forum” means a moderated forum in which Candidates address specific questions as posed by the moderator and/or Active Members at a predetermined time and place as identified by the CRO.

“Association” means the Graduate Students’ Association of the University of Calgary.

“Banners” means multiple individual Posters hung together or near each other, where each subsequent Poster is a continuation of the previous. 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.

“Board” means the Board of Directors of the Association.

“Chief Returning Officer” (CRO) as defined in the Bylaws.

“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 an elected position.

“Deputy Returning Officer” (DRO) is an Active Member whose role is to assist the CRO.

“Designate” means any Active Member designated by the Candidate and has been registered with the Chief Returning Officer to act on the behalf of the Candidate in all matters related to the Election.

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

“Graduate Representative Council” (GRC) is the group of Active Members responsible to fulfill their governance role according to the bylaws.

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

“Judicial Board” (JB) means the group of GRC members responsible for mediating disputes between parties within the Association as they pertain to the Association’s Objects and Bylaws.

“Labour Relations Committee” (LRC) means a group of Active Members comprised of academically employed graduate students who are responsible overseeing the Collective Agreement on behalf of the Association.

“None” refers to the candidate-type option representing the decision to not select any of the Candidates and leave the position vacant as described in Section 7.

“Poster” means a printed advertisement 11” x 17” or smaller.

“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 Association in a paid capacity, whether full-time, part-time, term certain, or contract.

“Third Party” means individuals or organizations including but not limited to Department Graduate Associations, University Faculties/Departments, other campus-based groups, or external organizations.

Applicability

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

Non-Compliance

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

Roles and Responsibilities

The CRO is accountable to the Judicial Board and the GRC for the proper conduct of the electoral process.

Candidates must adhere to this document in its entirety. The CRO oversees the electoral process and ensures its compliance with this document.

Should the CRO be unable to fulfill their obligations under this policy prior to January 1st, an interim CRO will be appointed by the Chair of the Judicial Board and approved by GRC at the next GRC meeting. Should the CRO be unable to fulfill their obligations under this policy after January 1st, the Chair of the Judicial Board will appoint a new CRO within two (2) business days of the CRO leaving the position. The newly appointed CRO will fulfill their obligations outlined herein under the supervision of the Speaker for the remainder of the term.

Should the Chair of the Judicial Board be unable to appoint a suitable candidate prior to the election taking place, the Chair of the Judicial Board will assume the responsibilities of the CRO. Should the Chair of the Judicial Board assume the responsibilities of the CRO, they must appoint a member of the Judicial Board within two (2) business days to assume the responsibilities of the Chair of the Judicial Board for any appeals related to the electoral process.

DRO(s) may be employed to assist the CRO with any provision herein.

Contacts

Contact	Email address
CRO	cro.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Judicial Board Chair	speaker.gsa@ucalgary.ca
Executive Officer	gsaed@ucalgary.ca

Policies

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. All Active Members are eligible to run for office in an election subject to the provisions and limitations specified in the Association bylaws and herein.
- 1.2. Active Members seeking to run in an election must be available to serve a minimum of 11 months of the term of office for which they are running and must be present for any transition period in the initial weeks of their term.
- 1.3. Active Members seeking to run in the general election must be available to attend, or send a Designate to, the All-Candidates Meeting and the All-Candidates Forum as scheduled by the CRO. Candidates should inform the CRO who their Designate is a minimum of 24 hours prior to the event.
 - 1.1.1. During the All-Candidates Meeting, all terms and conditions will be discussed in detail.
 - 1.1.2. All nominees will sign a form acknowledging that they understand all the terms and conditions identified herein to formalize their candidacy.

2. Notice of Election

- 2.1. The CRO is responsible for ensuring that the Association's Elections Policy is posted in advance of the official announcement of the General Election.
- 2.2. The CRO is responsible for officially announcing all Association elections to Active Members. The announcement of an election shall include:
 - 2.2.1. Titles and descriptions of positions to be elected;

- 2.2.2. The nomination procedure and eligibility criteria for each position;
 - 2.2.3. Voter eligibility criteria associated to each position;
 - 2.2.4. All pertinent timelines;
 - 2.2.5. Dates and times of any All-Candidates Forums and election events;
 - 2.2.6. Identified point contact(s) for elections-related inquiries.
- 2.3. The announcement of the General Election should not be made on a date such that it forces the nominations period to close without reasonable time to appeal a candidacy decision before a weekend or term break.

3. Nomination Process

- 3.1. Active Members seeking to become a Candidate for an elected position in the General Election must be nominated and supported by five (5) other Active Members eligible to vote for that position;
- 3.1.1. Board members and/or GSA Staff who are also Active Members must not be nominators for any nominations.
- 3.2. At the time of the announcement of the General Election, the CRO is responsible for publishing a Nominations form to be completed by Active Members seeking an elected position. The Nominations form will include at least the following:
- 3.2.1. Contact information for the nominee;
 - 3.2.2. The name of the position being sought;
 - 3.2.3. Sufficient information identifying and confirming eligibility of the nominee for the position being sought;
 - 3.2.4. Sufficient information to identify, contact, and confirm voting eligibility of five (5) Active Members who support the nomination, and who are eligible to vote for the position sought.
- 3.3. Active Members become Candidates in the General Election upon receiving confirmation from the CRO of their successful nomination:
- 3.3.1. A nomination is deemed successful after all eligibility criteria are met as identified on the Nomination form, and verified by the CRO;
 - 3.3.2. The CRO must provide a response to the prospective Candidate within two (2) business days of the member submitting their nomination form. Any nominee determined to be ineligible will be provided with a written explanation via email.

- 3.3.3. Official Candidates will be listed on the Association's website.
- 3.4. Active Members seeking an elected position through a GRC election must be nominated from the floor by a voting member of the GRC
 - 3.4.1. Self-nominations are admissible.
- 3.5. Should the CRO, a DRO, or the Chair of the Judicial Board decide to run for an elected position, they must resign from their current position at least fourteen days prior to the first day of the nomination period. Notice must be provided, in writing, to the President, Speaker, the CRO, and the chair of the FSC.
 - 3.5.1. Neither the CRO, a DRO, nor the Chair of the Judicial Board are eligible to be nominated for an elected position once the nomination period has started.

4. Candidate Conduct

- 4.1. No Candidate shall run or be a member in a Slate as defined in the bylaws, share expenses for campaign materials, work together for mutual benefit, use similar or identical slogans, or otherwise appear to be acting as a Slate.
- 4.2. The Association places a high priority on open lines of communication between Candidates and electors. Candidates, or their Designate, are required to attend any All-Candidates Forum as announced by the CRO in the election announcement. If neither the Candidate nor a Designate attend the forum, the CRO reserves the right to disqualify the Candidate.
- 4.3. If a Candidate is unable to attend the forum, their Designate may play a 2-minute video of the Candidate at the forum or present a speech, and answer questions on the Candidate's behalf.
 - 4.3.1. Candidates are permitted to use their own University of Calgary email address for campaign purposes.
 - 4.3.2. No Candidate shall speak to any class of students in the University for the purposes of campaigning.
 - 4.3.3. Candidates shall not campaign in their capacity as a student leader in any position they may hold on campus, including but not limited to, teaching assistant, research assistant, committee chair, DGA chair, consortium chair.
 - 4.3.4. During officially organized events by the Association, Candidates must behave in a manner consistent with the Association's Code of Conduct policy; a copy will be provided to all Candidates before or during the All-Candidates Meeting and must be signed and submitted before the Candidate may begin campaigning.
 - 4.3.5. Current Association Board Members seeking re-election shall not use any Association resources to promote their candidacy.

- 4.4. Candidates are not responsible for enforcing bylaws or policy.
- 4.5. Candidates must obey university policies, municipal, provincial, and/or federal law/regulation about the use of resources and the conduct of election campaigns.

5. Campaign

- 5.1. All campaign and communication materials must be approved by the CRO. These materials include but are not limited to Posters, Banners, Handbills, electronic campaign materials, and electronic communication. All campaign and communication materials must be provided to the CRO, in writing, and receive CRO approval before distribution.
 - 5.1.1. A copy of the campaign material and/or communication message must be emailed to the CRO identifying when, where, and how the material/communication will be disseminated.
 - 5.1.2. A Candidate may post campaign material through their personal social media accounts or other personal online platforms.
 - 5.1.3. Campaign material shall only be approved if it only contains statements about a Candidate's own campaign and platform.
 - 5.1.4. A Candidate may campaign in social media groups either closed or public if they have the written permission to do so from the administrator or owner of the account or group in which they wish to post.
 - 5.1.5. A Candidate may respond to comments on their previously approved posts without requiring additional approvals from the CRO.
- 5.2. All Candidates shall create a campaign platform (maximum 2 pages) which will be posted on the Association's website after the nomination period by the CRO. The platform must be submitted by the time established by the CRO and communicated during the election announcement.
- 5.3. A Candidate must provide one photo and a platform summary with a maximum of fifty words to the Association for election promotion purposes.
- 5.4. Campaign materials must not contain misinformation, slander, inappropriate endorsements, or inappropriate or discriminatory content.
- 5.5. A Candidate must not misrepresent themselves in the campaign and/or on campaign materials. All campaign materials shall include, in a legible form, the name of the Candidate and the position being sought.

- 5.6. All campaign materials shall, where applicable, include in legible form, a statement declaring who paid for the production of the campaign material. If campaign materials are paid for by the Association under Article 6.4 herein, all materials must include the statement “paid for by the Graduate Students’ Association of the University of Calgary” on said materials.
- 5.7. A Candidate shall not make any reference to the identity of another Candidate either directly or indirectly on any campaign materials.
- 5.8. A Candidate shall not contact any other Candidate to review their platforms, ideas, campaign materials, etc., prior to the campaign period.
- 5.9. Candidates shall not use the logos of the Graduate Students’ Association or the University of Calgary on any campaign material.
- 5.10. Candidates shall respect copyright law and avoid plagiarism in all campaign materials
- 5.11. A Candidate may have no more than two (2) Banners.
- 5.12. All Candidates shall:
 - 5.12.1. Comply with all building and safety regulations;
 - 5.12.2. Follow university regulations on Posters, use of university grounds, and comply with all “no campaign” zones;
 - 5.12.3. Not use stickers, decals, or any adhesive material of a permanent or semi-permanent nature. If unsure if a material is permitted confirm with the facilities manager or department;
 - 5.12.4. Not campaign or post any campaign materials in any campus library;
 - 5.12.5. Not campaign in the GSA office, the Last Defence Lounge, Graduate Residence, That Grad Space, The Black Lounge, or The Den.
 - 5.12.6. No Candidate shall accept in-kind donation of advertising space in any publication, advertisement space or media venue.
- 5.13. Only the Association, Candidates, and Designates may post election-related or campaign materials as approved in advance by the CRO.
- 5.14. All Candidates are solely responsible for the removal of all their campaign materials at the end of the election period.

6. Election Spending

- 6.1. No Candidate may spend more than \$150 (CAD) during their campaign, regardless of funding source. All election expenses must be reported to the CRO in the form of receipts. 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.

- 6.2. Each Candidate must submit a report to the CRO listing all expenses by the end of the campaign period and before voting commences. If expenses are incurred, Candidates must submit original receipts.
- 6.3. If the CRO deems any expense not to be commensurate with the campaign or with fair market value, the CRO reserves the right to investigate the expenses before granting their certification.
- 6.4. The Association will reimburse election expenses for each Candidate in the amount of up to \$150 (CAD) after a submission of all receipts (as specified above) if requested to do so.
- 6.5. No campaign expenses may be incurred before notification of Candidate status is announced and after the end of campaign period.

7. Voting (General Election)

- 7.1. Voting will take place over two uninterrupted days (48 hours), per the bylaws, and shall be done through electronic means, unless a physical ballot system has been approved by 2/3 majority in a previous GRC meeting.
 - 7.1.1. Polling stations, if required, must be staffed by neutral volunteers as selected by the CRO (minimum of two (2) per station).
- 7.2. Active Members may each cast one vote per position they are eligible to vote for during the election.
 - 7.2.1. Votes will be collected in the form of a ranked-choice ballot, where voters rank the Candidates in sequential numerical order of preference for the position, starting from their first choice (#1), until their preferred Candidates are exhausted.
 - 7.2.1.1. Each ballot shall include an option to rank the preference of “None” as an option to reject further Candidates. The ranking of None will signify a vote to leave the position vacant, and will be considered as standing for all further rankings on the ballot.
 - 7.2.1.2. Ballots needn’t exhaust the list of Candidates with their rankings. Blank ranks shall be considered as abstentions henceforth.
 - 7.2.1.3. Each Candidate (not including the None option) may only be ranked once per ballot. Ballots ranking a Candidate in more than one preference shall be considered spoiled.
 - 7.2.2. Voters may abstain from voting for a specific position while still voting for others. Abstentions shall not count towards the votes cast for the specified position.

- 7.3. The winning Candidate shall be the one who receives more than 50% of the votes cast for the position, where votes are tallied using instant-runoff, as follows:
- 7.3.1. For each Candidate, including the None option, count the number of #1 preferences identified by voters. If one Candidate has received more than 50% of the votes, they are the winner.
 - 7.3.2. If no winning Candidate is identified after counting voters' first choice (#1), then eliminate the Candidate with the fewest first choice (#1) rankings (excluding None) and count these votes towards the next preferred Candidate on each ballot. Repeat this process until one of the Candidates is declared the winner.
 - 7.3.2.1. In the event of a tie for fewest votes, try eliminating each Candidate to see if it makes a difference in the overall outcome and proceed accordingly.
 - 7.3.2.2. In the event of an equal number of votes for two or more Candidates at the end, the CRO may declare a tie to be resolved by GRC.
 - 7.3.3. If the preference of "None" is declared the winner by this process, the position will be declared vacant and proceed to a by-election.

8. Announcement of Election Results (General Election)

- 8.1. After the end of the voting period, the ballots shall be counted or confirmed by the CRO, and witnessed by a neutral third party (not a Staff Member, not a Candidate or their Designate, and not a nominator of a Candidate).
- 8.1.1. If physical ballots are used, the ballot count may be witnessed by one (1) scrutineer appointed by each Candidate (which may be the Candidate themselves).
 - 8.1.2. If an electronic ballot is used, a scrutineer may review the voting data after the preliminary results are announced.
- 8.2. The Candidate satisfying the voting criteria per Article 7 (Voting) herein will be declared the winner for their position.
- 8.2.1. If no Candidate is declared a winner due to election of the None option or disqualification of all Candidates, then the position will be declared vacant and the vote will go to a by-election.
 - 8.2.2. Ties will be resolved by GRC.

- 8.3. The CRO shall announce the initial results within 24 hours of the end of the voting period. Until the election results are certified, the positions will be designated (Vice) – President Elect.
- 8.4. The results initially announced will be provisional until all discrepancies are resolved with regard to any outstanding violations of policy by Candidates or other issues that may arise, including confirmation of campaign expenses. Once these issues have been addressed, the CRO shall then officially certify the results.
- 8.5. The CRO may take up to 2 weeks to certify the results of the election should an appeal take place. The CRO will sign a certification document and the official results will be announced on the GSA website.

9. Neutrality

- 9.1. Members of the Board must announce a time slot for when they will be available to provide potential Candidates with honest information about the Association positions.
- 9.2. Current Board members may not use their position or influence to campaign on the behalf of another Candidate.
- 9.3. All members of the Board and GSA staff must remain neutral in all matters pertaining to the election process.
- 9.4. Current Board members may run in the election and campaign only for themselves without breaching neutrality.

10. By-elections

- 10.1. By-elections for the Association’s Board of Directors will follow all election guidelines with the following noted exceptions:
 - 10.1.1. The by-election shall be held as part of a GRC meeting, as specified in the by-election announcement;
 - 10.1.2. Only eligible GRC members may cast votes during by-elections
 - 10.1.2.1. An exception may be made by a GRC resolution passed with a 2/3 majority at the previous GRC meeting to either:
 - 10.1.2.1.1. Open the vote to the membership during the next GRC meeting
 - 10.1.2.1.2. Open the vote to the membership during a Special General Meeting (SGM)
 - 10.1.2.2. Voting shall be conducted using separate ballots for each contested position.

10.1.2.3. The winner is determined using the same procedure as the General Election.

10.1.2.3.1. If there is a tie, then vote again; keep voting until a winner is selected.

10.1.3. The public All-Candidates Forum shall occur prior to the vote in the meeting in which the by-election is held.

10.1.4. Campaigning for the by-election may take place for a minimum of the five (5) business days immediately preceding the meeting in which the by- election vote is held as determined by the CRO.

11. Elections conducted by the GRC

11.1. Each nominee is permitted the floor to speak briefly to their candidacy, prior to voting.

11.2. All voting members of the GRC may cast one vote for each position up for election.

11.2.1. GRC members may not proxy their vote;

11.2.2. The council must elect a Candidate to each of the positions up for election by GRC;

11.2.3. Votes will be cast and counted using the same procedure as for the General Election, notwithstanding the exclusion of the option to vote for none of the Candidates.

12. Labour Relations Committee Chair (AVP-Labour)

12.1. During the Association's annual election, the Association will include a separate election for the LRC Chair (the Associate Vice President, Labour). Nominees for LRC Chair (AVP-L), must, at the time of the election, meet the definition of an Academically Employed Graduate Student.

12.2. Only academically employed graduate Students may nominate Candidates for the LRC Chair (AVP-L).

12.3. Only Academically Employed Graduate Students may vote in the Association's annual LRC Chair (AVP-L) election.

12.4. All rules and regulations contained herein will be applicable to the LRC Chair (AVP-L) annual election with the exception of Article 1 (Eligibility) and Article 11 (By-election) of this document.

12.5. Should the LRC Chair (AVP-L) position remain vacant after the electoral process, the CRO will hold a by-election for the AEGS to vote.

13. Complaints, Infractions, and Penalties

13.1. Any Active Member who believes that any Campaign Materials violate Association bylaws, this policy, University policy, or any other election procedure, should contact the CRO.

- 13.2. Complaints may be made by using the Election Complaint Form on the GSA website or by email. Complaints must be submitted by email to both the CRO and the Chair of the JB.
- 13.3. Upon receipt of a complaint, the CRO shall provide an initial response to the Complainant within 48 hours. During the voting period the CRO shall provide an initial response to the Complainant within 24 hours. The CRO will investigate further if necessary and provide a written notice to both parties involved indicating the final decision which may include a warning or sanction. All complaints must include:
 - 13.3.1. Full name of the complainant
 - 13.3.2. Full name of the Candidate and any others involved.
 - 13.3.3. A description of the perceived violation including a reference to the section of the GSA Election Policy or Bylaw that has been violated
 - 13.3.4. Any additional evidence such as emails, photos, screenshots, etc. may be dropped off in person or emailed to the CRO.
- 13.4. 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.
 - 13.4.1. The CRO reserves the right to act in a manner reflective of the severity of the alleged infraction, according to the CRO's interpretation of said infraction, up to and including disqualifying the Candidate(s). Should an infraction(s) be severe enough in the opinion of the CRO, the CRO may refuse to certify the election.

14. Warning Procedures

- 14.1. Any Candidate who violates any provision herein that may result in an official warning or disqualification will be notified by the CRO of the alleged violation in writing to the e-mail address provided on the nomination form. The notification shall include:
 - 14.1.1. A clear description of the violation including details of which policy was violated
 - 14.1.2. Where and when the violation is alleged to have occurred
 - 14.1.3. All evidence that was used by the CRO to come to their decision

- 14.2. Any Candidate receiving an official sanction because of a policy violation will have twenty-four (24) hours to fix the violation and notify the CRO of its resolution. If the violation is resolved and the CRO notified within this time period, the sanction will be documented internally, but no public warning or sanction will be issued, unless:
 - 14.2.1. If the nature of the violation is such that it is repeated or cannot be rectified, the CRO will determine whether the appropriate penalty is a warning or disqualification.
- 14.3. All warnings, sanctions, and disqualifications will be posted on the Association's website and in the Association's office after all appeals have been exhausted. Overturned sanctions shall not be posted publicly.

15. Appeals

- 15.1. As per Association bylaws, Candidates may appeal a decision made by the CRO to the Association's Judicial Board.
 - 15.1.1. An appeal may be made to the Judicial Board within one (1) business day after the respondent is notified by the CRO.
 - 15.1.2. The Chair of the JB must convene the JB within two (2) business days of receiving the appeal.
 - 15.1.3. The JB may uphold the decision of the CRO or overturn it. They may provide recommended course(s) of action, however the CRO is not required to carry out the recommended course of action.
 - 15.1.4. The JB will release their findings and recommended course(s) of action within one (1) business day of convening. The Judicial Board's ruling shall be final.
 - 15.1.5. The JB Chair may request the JB uphold or overturn appealed decisions electronically if they deem the issue to be frivolous or straight-forward and not requiring further discussion.
 - 15.1.5.1. The Chair of the JB will write a formal resolution and send it by email to the JB members.
 - 15.1.5.2. The resolution will be passed if 2/3 of JB members respond in approval of the electronic resolution.
 - 15.1.5.3. If any single JB member denies the electronic resolution through an email to the chair within the time frame provided by the Chair, it will result in the JB convening.

16. Election Reporting

- 16.1. The CRO will provide a written report to the board no later than thirty days after the election has been completed. This report will outline at minimum:
 - 16.1.1. A summary of the election including:
 - 16.1.1.1. Number of eligible and ineligible nominees who ran for specific elected positions;
 - 16.1.1.2. Number of Active Members who voted; and
 - 16.1.1.3. Election results.
 - 16.1.2. A summary of any concerns, complaints, comments, observations, and issues that need to be addressed prior to the following year's electoral cycle; and
 - 16.1.3. Recommendations for changes to the Associations bylaws and/or election policy.

17. Interpretation and Approval

- 17.1. The CRO has the authority to interpret this policy in order to complete their duties.
- 17.2. The final interpretation of this policy is at the sole discretion of the Judicial Board.
- 17.3. This policy remains in effect until rescinded or updated by the GRC.