

PREAMBLE

The function of the Elections Policy is to enable an orderly and democratic process for the selection of members to serve on the Society's Board of Directors as outlined in Bylaw VII. In conducting elections, the Society's process will prioritize democratic decision-making; respect for those participating in, and those conducting, the election process; and fairness and consistency in the application of the rules and the adjudication of complaints and appeals.

POLICY**1. DEFINITIONS**

By-election: an election process for a partial term of a position vacated prior to the term expiration.

General Election: an election process for a full term of an election as per Bylaw VII Section 2.

Member: a member of the Society as defined by Bylaw II

Nominee: a member who submits a nomination form seeking candidacy in a general or by-election.

Candidate: a nominee whose nomination form has been declared valid by the Chief Returning Officer.

Chief Returning Officer (CRO): position assigned by the Board to take primary responsibility for organizing and overseeing the election process.

Communication in writing: for the purpose of this policy, e-mail will be considered written communication and the time of receipt will be the time an e-mail is received by the CRO or the Society.

2. ELECTION SCHEDULE

The Board of Directors will set the dates of an election in accordance with Bylaw VII; the schedule for a general election will be set no later than December 15.

Campaigning will begin no earlier than 9:00am on the day scheduled for the opening of the campaign period and will end no later than 5:00pm on the day scheduled for the closing of the campaign period.

3. NOMINATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY**3.1 Eligibility**

Eligibility requirements are established in Bylaw VII Section 4. In addition to those requirements, the following provision applies: Society employees are not eligible for nomination to any position on the Board of Directors.

3.2 Distribution and Validation of Nomination Form

The CRO will ensure that nomination packages are available at the Society's office during regular business hours for the duration of the nomination period. Nomination forms will require:

- a. the name, student number, address, telephone number, email address, and signature of the nominee;
- b. the position being sought by the nominee;
- c. a biography of the nominee; and
- d. the name, student number, and signature of at least ten members supporting the nomination of the listed nominee.

Completed nomination forms must be submitted directly to the CRO or to a Society employee during regular office hours prior to the close of the nomination period. Incomplete or fraudulent nomination forms will result in the disqualification of the nominee from the election process.

3.3 Nominee Orientation

The CRO is responsible for orienting all nominees of their rights and responsibilities concerning conduct during the election process. The CRO will ensure all nominees receive a copy of the Society's Bylaws and Policies related to election procedure.

4. CAMPAIGNING

4.1 Conduct of Election Participants and Society Officials

Every candidate is required to:

- a. ensure that they and all of their campaign volunteers are aware of and comply with the rules, policies, and bylaws of the Society;
- b. be responsible to the CRO for their actions as well as the actions of their volunteers;
- c. report any breaches of the election rules, policies, or bylaws; and
- d. comply with the rules, policies, and procedures of the University.

Members of the Board will not participate in campaigning as a part of their official duties, and while engaged in work for the Society will not provide resources or counsel to candidates.

4.2 Candidates are permitted to campaign during the polling days but will not campaign within view of the polling location(s).

4.3 Candidate Campaign Materials

The following limitations will apply to campaign materials:

- a. Posters will be no larger than a legal sized piece of paper (8.5" x 14"). Posters may only be erected on general bulletin boards.
- b. Flyers will be no larger than one half of a letter sized piece of paper (8.5" x 11") and may be printed double-sided.
- c. Erection of banners will be done in consultation with the CRO to ensure that banners are hung in an approved location and in compliance with University rules.

- d. All materials must be approved by the CRO prior to use or posting. The approval process within one business day of material submission to the CRO. Materials containing factual inaccuracies, defamatory statements, or those considered to be in contravention of federal or provincial statutes will not be approved.

When engaging in campaigning, candidates may not:

- a. distribute or erect campaign materials in the Society office;
- b. deface, remove, vandalize, or otherwise alter campaign materials of another candidate;
- c. post or distribute materials in contravention of the University's policies and regulations on posting and materials distribution;
- d. use copyrighted materials, slogans, logos, or characters in campaign materials;
- e. campaign in a classroom during a class period without the prior approval of the professor; and
- f. campaign in unison with other candidates as part of a slate.

All campaign materials must be removed twenty-four hours after the close of the campaign period.

4.3 Online Campaigning

Candidates may campaign online via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the NBC GSS App. Other social media platforms may be considered upon request to the CRO. Online campaign forums must be universally accessible to all members of the Society, and postings must be publicly viewable. Candidates are responsible for the content of their online campaign, including posts by others. All efforts must be made to ensure that the candidates' online presence fully adheres to the Election Policy.

4.4 Financing

Materials and printing costs will be the responsibility of each individual candidate. No candidate may spend more than \$100 on their campaign inclusive of donations, both monetary and in-kind. Upon request, candidates must submit a list of campaign expenses, including itemized receipts, to the CRO.

Candidates will not share financial resources with each other.

5. BALLOTING AND RESULTS

5.1 Polling

The CRO will be responsible for preparing ballots. For both physical and electronic voting, the ballot will include:

- a. voting instructions;
- b. a listing of candidates below the corresponding position in alphabetical order by surname; and
- c. an option for the voter to select "none of the above" for each position.

Only the CRO and staff hired exclusively as balloting clerks will be permitted to staff polling stations. In the event of online polling, only the CRO will be permitted to monitor the voting system.

When physical ballots are used, the polling station on the Prince George campus will be held in the Society office. The CRO will, prior to the opening of polls on the first day of polling, prepare one ballot box for the poll. After ensuring the ballot box is empty, the CRO will lock the box and seal the aperture of the box in such a manner that it cannot be opened without breaking the seal. Following the closing of the poll, the aperture of the ballot box will be resealed with a seal provided by the CRO.

Except when casting a ballot, a candidate must remain out of the voting area during polling.

In order to ensure voter eligibility, voters are required to provide identification bearing their picture, name, and student status. A valid UNBC student card will be accepted as identification. When the poll clerk or CRO is satisfied of the voter's eligibility, the voter will sign or initial next to their name on the voters list.

If a voter spoiled their ballot in error, a new ballot may be requested. The spoiled ballot must be returned to the CRO, who will void the ballot and store it separately from the ballot box; the voter will then be issued a new ballot.

5.2 Counting of Ballots

Only the CRO and staff hired exclusively as balloting clerks will be permitted to count ballots. For each position, the ballots will be counted twice to ensure the accuracy of the result. Where the first and second count results differ by greater than 5% of the overall ballots cast for the position, or if the difference is great enough to alter the results of the vote, the ballots will be counted a third time by the CRO.

No candidate will be permitted to be present during the counting of ballots. In accordance with Bylaw VII Section 7e, each candidate may appoint one scrutineer to observe the counting of the ballots by providing written notice to the CRO prior to the end of the campaign period.

The CRO, in the presence and in full view of the scrutineer(s) assigned by the candidates will, in the case of physical ballots, follow the following process:

- a. count the number of electors whose names appear on the voters list as having voted;
- b. count the cancelled ballots, if any;
- c. open the ballot box and empty its contents onto a table; and
- d. count the number of votes given to each candidate and the number of spoiled and blank ballots for each candidate, giving full opportunity for those present to examine each ballot.

A candidate who has received a plurality of votes cast for the corresponding position will be deemed elected. If the "none of the above" option receives a plurality of votes for the corresponding position, the position will be declared vacant. If an equal number of votes are cast in favour of more than one candidate for the same position, the CRO will immediately call a by-election for the position.

Candidates may request a recount of the ballots cast as per Bylaw VII Section 8a. Such recounts will be undertaken where the request is in writing from a candidate for the position in question and the difference between the candidates for the position in question is less than 10% of the total votes cast.

5.3 Announcement and Ratification of Results

Following the counting of the ballots, the unofficial results will be communicated to all candidates. Once the outstanding appeals and complaints have been addressed and results adjusted accordingly, the unofficial results will be communicated to the Board of Directors for ratification.

The CRO will produce an Election Report containing:

- a. the list of positions being elected and schedule of elections;
- b. the final results, including numerical totals;
- c. a list of candidate breaches of the Bylaws or Elections Policy during the election period; and
- d. any recommendations regarding improvements or alterations to the Elections Policy.

The Electoral Report will be submitted for review and ratification by the Board of Directors within seven days of the close of the election period.

Official results will be posted on the Society's website, via email to all members, and on posters at the Society office on bulletin boards of the Prince George campus. Published results will indicate those elected and those not elected and will not contain the numerical result. The numerical result will not be published unless directed by a resolution of not less than two-thirds of the Board of Directors, or by a simple resolution at a quorate general meeting.

5.4 Destruction of Ballots

Ballots, voter lists, and other election materials containing personal information will be destroyed within fourteen days of the Board of Directors receipt of the Election Report and ratification of the results.

6. DISCIPLINE AND DISQUALIFICATION

6.1 Complaints

Complaints may be made by nominees, candidates, or members and may relate to the conduct of election participants or the implementation of the election process.

The following will apply to the consideration of complaints:

- a. All complaints must be in writing to the CRO; complaints against decisions made by the CRO will be addressed in accordance with Bylaw VII Section 8b.
- b. Complaints must contain the name and student number of the complainant; a full description of the cause for complaint including references to the associated policy or bylaw; the individual responsible for the breach; and supporting facts and evidence.

- c. Incomplete complaints will be returned to the complainant.
- d. Complaints will be investigated and ruled on within two business days of the complaint being received by the CRO.
- e. The subject(s) of the complaint will have the opportunity to respond to the complaint prior to the decision is made. Respondents will have twenty-four hours to submit a response after receiving a copy of the complaint.
- f. Complaints may be filed up to forty-eight hours following the close of the campaign period. Complaints filed after this period will not be considered.

6.2 Minor Offences

Minor offenses will be those breaches of Bylaws, Election Policy, or regulation not listed under Section 6.3 of this policy.

Minor Offenses of a Similar Nature

- a. In the case that a candidate commits a minor offense, the candidate will be issued a written warning outlining the offense and the steps necessary, if any, to correct the situation.
- b. Should a candidate commit a second offense of similar nature to their first offense, the candidate will be issued a final warning and will have their materials allocation reduced by 50%, including the removal of 50% of previously erected materials.
- c. Should a candidate commit a third offense of similar nature to their first and second offense, the candidate will be disqualified by the CRO.

Diverse Minor Offenses

- a. In the case that a candidate commits a second offense, but the second offense is of a different nature than the first, the candidate will be issued a second letter of warning outlining the offense and steps necessary, if any, to correct the situation.
- b. In the case that a candidate commits a third offense that is different in nature to the first two offenses, the candidate will be issued a third and final warning outlining the offense and the steps necessary, if any, to correct the situation. Additionally, the candidate will have their materials allocation reduced by 50%, including the removal of 50% of previously erected materials.
- c. Upon a fourth offense of any kind, the candidate will be disqualified.

6.3 Major Offences

Major offences will result in the disqualification of a candidate. Major offenses include:

- a. campaigning in residence without the approval of UNBC Housing;
- b. campaigning within visible range of a polling booth;
- c. continued loitering in the voting area;
- d. interfering in the voting process;
- e. campaigning before the commencement of the campaign period;
- f. engaging in harassment of any kind against members, other candidates, the CRO, or officials of the Society or the University;

- g. removal or vandalism of other candidates' campaign materials;
- h. making, joining, or participating in campaigning that defames other candidates, the CRO, or officials of the Society or the University;
- i. exceeding campaign expense limits;
- j. any violation of the election policy, bylaws, or regulations that is malicious and seeks to undermine the election process.

6.4 Discipline

The CRO and candidates will abide by the following guidelines when dealing with discipline and enforcement:

- a. If the offense involves campaign material, the offending material shall be removed by the CRO.
- b. The CRO will make every reasonable effort to meet with a candidate and communicate the desire to meet with the candidate in writing before rendering a decision on discipline.
- c. The CRO will provide the candidate with a copy of any written complaint with information about the complainant redacted.
- d. The CRO will provide the candidate with the decision on discipline in writing. If the discipline applied is disqualification, the candidate being disqualified will be offered a formal meeting to discuss the reasons for disqualification.
- e. The candidate may appeal the CRO's decision in accordance with Section 6.5 of this policy.

6.5 Appeals

In accordance with Bylaw VII Section 8b, an appeal may be submitted to the Board of Directors or to a quorate general meeting of the Society. An appeal of the ruling of the CRO will only be accepted from the respondent or the complainant related to the decision. The appeal must be issued in writing to the Board of Directors within two business days of receipt of the ruling.

The results of the election will not be considered official until rulings are made on all outstanding appeals.

Governing Documents Associated with this Policy:

Northern British Columbia Constitution and Bylaws (2020)

Amendment History

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