ELECTIONS & REFERENDA POLICY

OF THE

SOCIETY OF GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON

Responsibility	SGPS Deputy Council Speaker SGPS Council Speaker
Approved by	SGPS Council **- February 10, 2026**
Last revised	February 2026

Part 1: Elections in General

a. The SGPS Elections Team shall be defined as:

   (1) The Deputy Speaker, who shall be responsible for the oversight and operations of the elections, and decision-making with regards to penalties assessed;

   (2) The SGPS Speaker, who shall be responsible for interpretation of policy, oversight over the Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee, and providing support to the Deputy Speaker in the running of the election; and

   (3) The Executive Director, who shall ensure the smooth transition of the election team and act as logistical support during the election period.

b. This policy is established pursuant to B.12 for the purpose of governing the conduct of SGPS elections and referenda. Changes to this policy do not affect any election or referenda for which the dates have already been set at the time that the changes are approved.

c. The Deputy Speaker, after conferring with the AMS Secretariat, shall recommend dates for the annual SGPS elections and referenda to Council by bringing forth a
motion to approve the recommended dates. This motion shall be brought no later than the November Council Meeting, if possible. Voting days may not take place on scheduled University holidays, SGPS office closures, during Fall and Winter Reading Week in the School of Graduate Studies or the Faculty of Law, or during March Break in the Faculty of Education or the School of Medicine. An exception can be made in the event of a joint AMS-SGPS referendum.

d. The SGPS Speaker is responsible for forming the Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee using volunteers from SGPS Council before the start of the nomination period.

e. The annual SGPS elections and referenda shall be completed no later than January 31st, if possible.

f. The dates approved by Council for the SGPS elections and referenda shall be based on the following recommended table, as close to as possible with the Executive election period for the AMS:

Day(s)	Day(s) of the Week	Event
1	TUES	Nominations Open
4	FRI	Advertisement of Uncontested Positions (1 or fewer valid candidates nominated)
8	TUES	Nominations Close (at 4:00 PM) Council Approval of Candidates either in Council or via e-vote (by 11:59PM)
10	THURS	Campaign Period Begins (at 12:00 AM)
16	WED	All Candidates' Debate (TBA)
21	MON	Campaign Period Ends (at 11:59 PM)
22, 23	TUES, WED	Voting Days

g. All SGPS elections and referenda shall allow two (2) consecutive days of voting, via an electronic ballot to be managed by the Executive Director.

h. All SGPS elections and referenda results must be ratified by Council in their subsequent meeting.

i. An all-candidates debate must be held during the campaign period (Day 16, suggested timeline in P.11.1.e). The SGPS Speaker shall moderate the debate.

j. By-elections to fill Executive vacancies must be carried out in accordance with Bylaws and Policies on elections, subject to the exceptions indicated in B.13 and based on the following shortened timetable:

Day(s)	Day(s) of the Week	Event
1	TUES	Nominations Open
7	MON	Nominations Close (at 4:00 PM) Council Approval of Candidates via e-vote (by 11:59PM)
9	WED	Campaign Period Begins (at 12:00 AM)
11	FRI	All Candidates' Debate (TBA)
14	MON	Campaign Period Ends (at 11:59 PM)
15, 16	TUES, WED	Voting Days

k. The SGPS, as an organization and all elected Executives, Board Members, and paid staff positions of the SGPS are not permitted to endorse or provide support to any candidate or referendum group, except in the case of an SGPS specific fee referendum. No SGPS resources, including the SGPS newsletter and social media accounts shall be expended or used for the purpose of explicitly supporting or opposing any candidate or referendum question with the exception of SGPS specific fee referendum questions. All elected Executives, Board Members, and paid staff positions of the SGPS cannot provide their signatures to any candidates or fee groups during the signature collection process.

Part 2: Conducting Elections and Referenda

a. SGPS Elections and Referenda must be conducted using Simply Voting, another approved platform such as Simply Voting, or, when online options are unavailable, paper ballots.

b. The candidate's name and position for which they are running shall be listed on the ballot.

c. Quorum for referenda shall be ten percent (10%) of the Ordinary Members of the SGPS. If quorum is not met, the results cannot be ratified and the SGPS Election Team must, at their earliest convenience, reconvene to discuss further action;

d. The Deputy Speaker shall vote twenty-four (24) hours in advance of an election or referendum via a password protected document. This document shall be opened and the ballot cast only in the event of a tie vote. In the event that there is more than one
candidate for a position, the Deputy Speaker will vote on that question using the ranked choice method. The Deputy Speaker is not otherwise allowed to vote.

e. Any Ordinary Member of the SGPS who believes that the Deputy Speaker may have a conflict of interest with respect to an election or referendum should make the objection known to the Speaker, prior to the start of the Campaign Period (Day 10 of the suggested timeline in P.11.1.e). The Speaker shall bring the objection to the Elections and Referenda Committee who shall determine if a conflict of interest exists, subject to an appeal to Council.

f. The candidate receiving a plurality of votes cast shall be declared the winner.

g. The Deputy Speaker shall attempt to advise each candidate and a representative of each referendum committee of the results before publicly releasing the results of any election or referendum.

h. The Executive Director shall keep the records from an election and/or referendum. These records shall not be destroyed.

Part 3: Nomination Rules

a. SGPS elections and referenda must be advertised through all available media for a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the opening of nominations, except in the case of a by-election, where the advertising period will be between the approval of the election dates by Council and the opening of nominations. The SGPS elections and referenda, and by-elections, shall be advertised through all available media for the duration of the nomination period. A candidate is only permitted to nominate themselves for one of the available positions.

b. In order to be nominated as a candidate for Executive, Graduate Student Senator, and/or SGPS Trustee roles, a candidate must file a nomination form in the manner set out by the Deputy Speaker, by the end of the nomination period.

c. All individuals running for elected office must be SGPS members and remain so for their entire term in office. If an individual expects to complete their degree program during the specified term of office, they are not eligible to run for office unless they have written confirmation that they will remain an SGPS member for the stated term (i.e. an acceptance letter from another program at Queen's).

d. The nomination and referendum forms must be made available on the SGPS website starting at 9:30 AM on the day nominations open. No prospective candidate or
referendum group may collect signatures for a nomination or a referendum question before 9:30 AM on the day nominations open and/or before the provided Qualtrics form for signature collection is made available.

e. The collection of candidate data shall respect the University and SGPS data collection and privacy policies. The only valid nomination form is administered by the SGPS
directly.

f. The nomination package must include the following information:

    (1) The candidate's name, student number, program, department/faculty and contact information;

    (2) The position the candidate is being nominated for;

    (3) A statement, signed by the candidate, that the candidate is an Ordinary Member and satisfies all eligibility requirements for the position as detailed in B.7.d;

    (4) The name, student number, and signature of not less than ten (10) Ordinary Members indicating support for the nomination of the candidate;

(5) A statement identifying and providing contact information for the candidate's campaign manager, if the candidate chooses to designate a campaign manager;

(6) A statement signed by the candidate and campaign manager (if applicable) that all information contained in the nomination form is accurate, that the candidate and campaign manager (if applicable) are aware of the Bylaws and Policies governing conduct of the elections, and that the candidate agree to follow the Bylaws and Policies governing conduct of the elections;

(7) A statement of the candidate's position on issues of relevance to the position for which they have been nominated. This statement will be posted on the SGPS website at the end of the nomination period. This statement may be altered once during the election campaign. The deadline for submission of any alterations to the statement of candidate's position must be received three (3) days prior to the first day of voting; and

(8) A photo to be placed on the website and accompany the statement of issues. Where no photo is included with the nomination form, the candidate may submit it later up until the deadline for updated statements referred to in subsection (7).

g. The nomination and referendum forms must be completed no later than 4:00 PM on the day nominations close.

h. Nominations shall be validated by the Deputy Speaker on a rolling basis throughout the nomination period as well as immediately following the close of nominations. If the number of nominations does not allow the Deputy Speaker to complete their validation before 5 PM on the day nominations close, the Executive Director may supply validation assistance. Where a nomination is not validated, the prospective candidate must be notified of the deficiency no later than 4:00 PM on the business day following the day the nomination was received. Where a nomination received on the last day of nominations is not validated, the prospective candidate must be notified by 11:59 PM that day.

i. Where a nomination is not validated because it is incomplete or contains information that is incorrect, a prospective candidate may submit a supplementary email by the deadline for nominations that needs to contain only the additional or corrected information.

j. A decision by the Deputy Speaker not to validate a nomination may be appealed to the Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee by 12 pm the following day. If only one (1) valid nomination for any position is received by the Deputy Speaker by the close of nominations, the candidate's name for that position shall appear on the ballot in the following question: "Do you agree to the acclamation of (name of candidate) to the position of (name of position) of the Society of Graduate and Professional Students at Queen's University?"

Part 4: Fee Referenda Rules

a. A referendum on a fee is required in order to:

   (1) Establish a new fee; or,

   (2) Increase the dollar value of an existing fee.

b. Fee referendums must be held at the same time and on the same system as the annual SGPS Executive election as outlined in P.11.1.

c. Mandatory and Optional fees require a Simple Majority to pass , unless quorum, which shall be ten percent (10%) of Ordinary Members of the SGPS, is not met. If quorum is not met, Mandatory and Optional fees require a 2/3 Vote to pass. A fee that fails to achieve the requisite threshold in a referendum is cancelled effective the following academic year.

d. Fees for University services, AMS services, clubs ratified by the Queen's Clubs Office, and organizations external to Queen's shall expire after three (3) academic years following a successful referendum result.

e. During any academic year of a fee's collection, the group may apply to establish a new fee or increase an existing fee for the next three (3) academic years following that
referendum.

   (1) Should a group with an existing student fee attempt to establish a new or increase an existing fee, but fail to achieve the required votes, the existing fee shall continue uninterrupted until the conclusion of the original three (3) academic years.

f. Only eligible groups are entitled to establish or receive a Fee. The following conditions restrict eligibility:

   (1) No athletic team is eligible to receive a Fee;

   (2) No SGPS, AMS or University committee is eligible to receive a Fee;

   (3) No group, except for the SGPS itself, shall be eligible to obtain a fee for the purposes of a single, one-time capital purchase;

   (4) No commercial or otherwise for-profit group or organization may be eligible for a Fee.

g. Where a group does not meet eligibility requirements as provided above, the Deputy Speaker shall notify the group within 24 hours of receiving their nomination package.

h. A group may only fail at a referendum twice (2) out of every three (3) years. All sections of the Referendum form that do not include sensitive and/or personal information shall be made publicly available to society members for review during the referendum period.

Section 1: Establishing New Student Activity Fees

a. For a new fee to go to referendum, the fee and its recipient shall satisfy each of the following conditions:

(1) The group must be an eligible group as designated under P.1.9.2;

(2) The group shall submit a Fee Referendum form to the Elections Team Committee no later than the last day of the nomination period as set by the Deputy Speaker under P.1.1.e.

b. This form must contain, at the very least, the following items listed below in order to sufficiently assist in the Committee's membership's determination of eligibility:

1.	A written description of the group or organization seeking the fee and specific purpose for which the fee revenue will be used.
2.	A detailed budget and financial information that clearly indicates how the fee will be spent;
3.	For further clarification, registered charities and non-profit organizations shall include their most up-to-date annual report and audited financial statements.
4.	Collected electronic signatures of at least 250 Ordinary Members, in accordance with the nomination period as set by SGPS Council, collected through an electronic platform (Qualtrics) operated by the SGPS Elections Team;
5.	A detailed report answering the following questions: a. Why is your group seeking a fee? b. What direct benefit will SGPS members derive from granting your group a fee?

	c. How is the dollar value of the fee related to the benefit you are proposing to provide? d. When was your group established? e. If you have collected a fee in the past, what initiatives and/or opportunities have you provided the Queen's Community with the collected funds?
6.	Answers to any other questions as prescribed by the Committee included in the nomination form.

c. Upon completion of the requirements as laid out in Subsections P.1.4.f and P.1.4.g. listed above, Council shall require a majority vote to add the fee to the referendum ballot.

Section 2: Renewing Pre-Existing Student Activity Fees

a. For a pre-existing fee which will expire the next academic year to go to referendum, the fee and its recipient shall satisfy each of the following conditions:

    1) The group must still be an eligible group as designated under P.1.9.2;

    2) The group shall submit a Fee Referendum form to the Elections Team no later than the last day of the nomination period as set by the Deputy
    Speaker under P.1.1.e.

b. This form, created to assist in the Committee's determination of eligibility, shall contain:

1.	A written description of the group or organization seeking the fee and specific purpose for which the fee revenue will be used.
2.	A detailed budget and financial information that clearly indicates how the fee will be spent;
3.	For further clarification, registered charities and non-profit organizations shall include their most up-to-date annual report and audited financial statements.

4.	Collected electronic signatures of at least 125 Ordinary Members, in accordance with the nomination period as set by SGPS Council, collected through an electronic platform (Qualtrics) operated by the SGPS Elections Team;
5.	A detailed report answering the following questions: f. Why is your group seeking a fee? g. What direct benefit will SGPS members derive from granting your group a fee? h. How is the dollar value of the fee related to the benefit you are proposing to provide? i. When was your group established? j. If you have collected a fee in the past, what initiatives and/or opportunities have you provided the Queen's Community with the collected funds?
6.	Answers to any other questions as prescribed by the Committee included in the nomination form.

c. Upon completion of the requirements listed above, Council shall require a majority vote to add the fee to the referendum ballot.

Section 3: Increasing a Pre-Existing Student Activity Fee

a. For a currently established fee to be increased at referendum, the fee and its recipient group shall satisfy each of the following conditions:

   1) The group must still be an eligible group as designated under P.1.9.2;

   2) The group shall submit a Fee Proposal Referendum form to the Elections Team no later than the last day of the nomination period as set by the
   Deputy Speaker under P.1.1.e.

b. This form, created to assist in the Committee's determination of eligibility, shall contain:

1.	A written description of the group or organization seeking the fee and specific purpose for which the fee revenue will be used.
2.	A detailed budget and financial information that clearly indicates how the fee will be spent;
3.	For further clarification, registered charities and non-profit organizations shall include their most up-to-date annual report and audited financial statements.
4.	Collected electronic signatures of at least 125 Ordinary Members, in accordance with the nomination period as set by SGPS Council, collected through an electronic platform (Qualtrics) operated by the SGPS Elections Team;
5.	A detailed report answering the following questions: k. Why is your group seeking a fee increase? What circumstances have changed to necessitate a change in your fee? l. What direct benefit will SGPS members derive from granting your group a fee? m. How is the dollar value of the fee related to the benefit you are proposing to provide? n. When was your group established? o. What initiatives and/or opportunities have you provided the Queen's Community with the funds collected? Will these initiatives change with the increase to your fee? If so, how will they change?
6.	Answers to any other questions as prescribed by the Committee included in the nomination form.

c. Upon completion of the requirements as laid out in Subsections P.1.4.l and P.1.4.m listed above, Council shall require a majority vote to add the fee to the referendum ballot.

d. A group seeking a fee increase before their tri-annual renewal may fail at referendum and keep their current fee amount until their tri-annual renewal referendum. A group who is seeking a fee increase at their tri-annual renewal referendum and fails to secure enough votes to do so loses their fee.

Part 5: Referendum Questions

a. The SGPS may conduct referenda on any matter within its jurisdiction. Valid results of referenda shall be binding on the SGPS and actively enforced by the Executive.

b. Referendum questions may be submitted to the Deputy Speaker by Council or by a petition bearing the signatures specified in P.1.4.

Referenda may only be held during the fall and winter terms and may only take place outside an ordinary election period if a special referendum date is approved by Council or to replace a previous referendum invalided because of lack of quorum. No question may be submitted for referendum if a question on the same topic has been the subject of a referendum within the previous eleven (11) months, unless the prior referendum was invalid due to lack of quorum.

c. The following standard wording must be used for referenda questions:

(1) For SGPS fees:

i. "Do you agree to the establishment of a mandatory student fee of [$x] for [group]?"

ii. "Do you agree to a [decrease/increase] in the [group] mandatory student fee from [$x] to [$y], a [decrease/increase] of [$z]?"

iii. "Do you agree to the establishment of an optional student fee of [$x] for [group]?"

iv. "Do you agree to a [decrease/increase] in the [group] optional student fee from [$x] to [$y], a [decrease/increase] of [$z]?"

(2) For non-SGPS mandatory fees:

i. "Do you agree to the establishment of a mandatory student fee of [$x] for [group]? This fee is subject to triennial review."

ii. "Do you agree to the renewal of a mandatory student fee of [$x] for [group]? This fee is subject to triennial review."

iii. "Do you agree to a [decrease/increase] in the [group] mandatory student fee, from [$x] to [$y], a [decrease/increase] of [$z]? This fee is subject to triannual review."

(3) For non-SGPS optional fees:

i. “Do you agree to the establishment of an optional student fee of [$x] for [group]? This fee is subject to triennial review.”

ii. “Do you agree to the renewal of an optional student fee of [$x] for [group]? This fee is subject to triennial review.”

iii. “Do you agree to a [decrease/increase] in the [group] optional student fee from [$x] to [$y], a [decrease/increase] of [$z]? This fee is subject to triennial review.”

d. In exceptional circumstances, SGPS Council may adopt language different from that prescribed in P.1.5 (e), upon a Simple Majority vote during the Council Meeting in which the fee slate is approved.

Part 6: Petitions Against Referendum Results

a. If the Deputy Speaker receives a petition signed by not less than ten percent (10%) of the Ordinary Members of the SGPS requesting that the referendum be declared invalid prior to the Council Meeting at which ratification would otherwise occur. Where a
petition is received that invalidates one or more referendum results, that petition is deemed also to be a petition for a new referendum on the invalidated question. The Deputy Speaker shall schedule a new referendum based on the dates in P.1.1.e not including a nomination period.

b. In the event the Deputy Speaker receives a petition signed by ten percent (10%) or more of Ordinary Members, requesting the referendum be declared invalid for any reason(s) other than a lack of quorum, the Elections and Referenda Appeals
Committee shall make a final ruling on the validity of the referendum, at the next Council Meeting. This must be received prior to the Council Meeting at which ratification would otherwise occur.

Part 7: Campaign Rules

a. The campaign period shall end at 11:59 pm before the first voting day. No campaigning shall occur for any election or referendum except within the campaign period. Nothing can be added, modified or removed from campaign social media pages after the end of the campaign period. Referendum committees must designate one campaign manager, who is an SGPS Ordinary Member, for their campaign.

b. No person who is not a candidate or referendum committee's campaign manager shall authorize the spending of money on campaign expenses.

c. All candidates and referendum committees are required to submit any campaign material to the SGPS Deputy Speaker for approval before use.

d. The maximum amount that can be spent on campaign activities by any candidate is $100.00 (one hundred). All funds spent by candidates must be reimbursed to the candidate by the SGPS at the conclusion of the campaign period. No reimbursement will be given to referendum groups.

e. For the purpose of this policy, without limiting its generality, the following shall be included in the meaning of "campaigning":

    (1) Placing posters, or leaving up posters already placed, that support or oppose any candidate or referendum question; and

    (2) Sending e–mail communications supporting or opposing any candidate or referendum question; and

    (3) Posting to social media;

f. Engaging in outreach on social media or via messaging applications Any other method of encouraging support or opposition for any candidate or referendum question.

g. The following shall not be considered "campaigning":

    (1) Any communication encouraging members to vote in the election, so long as the communication does not encourage support or opposition for any
    candidate or referendum question; and

    (2) Efforts made prior to the deadline for accepting nominations for the purpose of obtaining signatures in support of a nomination.

Part 8: Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee

a. All parties participating in an election or referenda must familiarize themselves with election procedures as outlined in this document. Candidates must engage their campaigning in good faith and in a clean and positive manner. In the event of uncertainties or lack of clarity, candidates shall pre-emptively contact the Deputy Speaker.

b. The Deputy Speaker shall have sole authority to administer the aforementioned election policies and reserves the right to make rulings on issues and events not covered in these policies.

c. Allegations of election violations to the Bylaw and Policy shall be submitted to the Deputy Speaker via email. Such allegations must be made within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident occurring, and prior to the conclusion of the end of the voting days.

d. If a candidate or referendum committee violates aforementioned provisions on elections and referenda, the Deputy Speaker shall determine, at their discretion, whether the violation warrants disqualification. The Deputy Speaker must
communicate this decision to the candidate(s) and complainant within twenty-four (24) hours and prior to the conclusion of the end of voting days.

e. In the event of a disqualification during the voting period, the candidate with the second-most votes will be declared successful. In the event that the disqualification leaves no valid candidates, a by-election will occur as per P.1.1.j.

f. All candidates and their representatives must not commit any of the following infractions, as these will result in immediate disqualification:

    (1) Harassment of candidates, SGPS members, or community members;

    (2) Threats to a candidate or intimidation of voters;

    (3) Attempts to tamper with election process or outcome;

    (4) Blatant discrimination, enumerated in the Ontario Human Rights Code;

    (5) Libel, slander, and gross misrepresentation of other candidates; and

    (6) Misrepresentation of eligibility for position, as described in their relevant provisions.

g. If a candidate is unsatisfied with and wishes to appeal a formal decision by the Deputy Speaker involving their disqualification, written communication must be provided to the Speaker who will relay the appeal to the Elections and Referenda Appeals
Committee. The appeal must be filed with the SGPS Council Speaker as the chair of the Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee by 12 pm the following day.

h. The Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee shall be comprised of the SGPS Speaker and two Council members who volunteer at the SGPS Council Meeting prior
to the start of the elections timeline. SGPS Executive members and staff cannot sit on the Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee.

i. The Elections and Referenda Appeals Committee will meet and come to a decision within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of an appeal to the SGPS Speaker. The decision of the Committee will be provided to the Deputy Speaker and candidate; however, if the decision of the committee results in disqualification, it will be posted publicly.

j. If a complaint is received prior to the conclusion of the voting days, the results of the election will be withheld until the complaint has been processed by the Deputy
Speaker and the candidate permitted the allowed hours to appeal the decision.