

Student Election FAQ

1. What is campaigning?

Any statement, action and/or activity that identifies a candidate in an election, contains information on their platform, and/or encourages voters to vote for them constitutes campaigning. This includes statements and actions and/or activities of the candidate themselves as well as anyone speaking and/or acting on the candidate's behalf.

Slandorous or libelous campaigning is prohibited; campaigning must be in good taste. Candidates should ask themselves how they would feel or react if their opponent adopted a contemplated campaign strategy and should then conduct their own campaign accordingly. All campaign activities are subject to the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), University regulations, policies and by-laws, and relevant legislation.

2. What is the campaign ban?

The campaign ban is the period beginning at midnight the night prior to the first day of voting, and continues until the close of the polls on the last day of voting.

During the campaign ban candidates *may not* make announcements about the election or approach voters to solicit votes in their favour.

For elections to the Board of Governors and the University Planning Committee

- No campaigning of any kind shall be conducted during this period.

For elections to Senate:

- No *in-person* campaigning shall be conducted during this period. Candidates may continue to campaign using social media on election day(s). All regular campaign rules otherwise apply.

3. Do I have to campaign?

Candidates may choose whether or not to campaign, how much, and by what methods.

4. Can I put up posters? Where?

Yes. Candidates are responsible for ensuring that their posters are displayed according to each building's poster and advertising policies.

- [MSU Operating Policy – Promotions & Advertising](#)
- [McMaster University Student Centre](#)
- Other campus buildings, such as the McMaster residences, have their own policies that must be followed.

5. I put up posters around campus. Why have some of them been removed?

Under *MSU Operating Policy – Promotions & Advertising* non-compliant posters can be taken down by MSU staff; posters on bulletin boards may also be moved to make room for other posters, but may not be covered.

To prevent removal, be sure to follow the instructions in the *MSU Operating Policy – Promotions & Advertising* and/or the relevant building's poster and advertising policies.

Please note that Candidates shall not remove, move, cover, deface, or otherwise tamper with their opponents' campaign posters.

6. Can I use the McMaster crest on my posters and other campaign materials?

No. Use of all or part of the McMaster crest, shield, or logo is protected and requires permission of the Senate.

Similarly, the logo of any Faculty, Department, Area, or School, or of any student club, group, or association shall not be used on campaign materials.

7. Do I have to take down all my posters by midnight the night before voting begins?

Candidates *must remove any and all campaign posters* from within sight of any computer lab prior to midnight the night before voting begins. Posters not within sight of a computer lab may remain in place during the voting period.

Candidates are responsible for removing their campaign posters after the election has concluded according to the deadline set out in the *MSU Operating Policy – Promotions & Advertising*.

8. Can I hand out pens/balloons/suckers with a campaign message on them?

Yes. Candidates may hand out items of their choice to voters, as long as those items do not violate the campaign regulations and/or policies that govern individual buildings. For example, distribution of campaign materials is prohibited in the McMaster University Student Centre.

9. Can I stand up in front of classes and make my campaign pitch?

Yes, provided the candidate has permission from the instructor to address the class.

10. Can my friends campaign for me?

Yes, however, candidates are responsible for the conduct of those who are campaigning on their behalf. Candidates must ensure that everyone campaigning on their behalf follows the campaign regulations.

11. Can I set up a table/area in my Faculty and give speeches, hand out flyers, etc.?

Yes. Candidates must ensure that they have obtained all the necessary permissions to set up a meeting or speaking area in the building or area they wish to use.

12. Can I create a Facebook page/event for my campaign?

Candidates may use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, blogs, LearnLink, etc.) for campaign purposes. Use of social media is governed by the campaign regulations in the same way as any other campaign tools or strategies.

For elections to the Board of Governors and the University Planning Committee:

- Profile, event and other pages need not be removed or closed during the campaign ban, but no *new* messages shall be posted or reposted on these sites. This includes advertisements and sponsored posts that reappear or are reposted periodically or continually in news feeds or on profile pages. Candidates are reminded that this includes others posting (or reposting) support messages on behalf of the candidate. Candidates must make others who have access to the sites aware of the campaign ban and must be vigilant and endeavour to remove any messages that are posted during the campaign ban.

For elections to the Senate:

- Profile, event and other pages *do not need to be removed* or closed during the *in-person* campaign ban. Messages can continue to be posted/reposted on these sites.

13. Can I use YouTube to campaign?

YouTube is a social media site and the same rules apply.

14. How do I campaign outside my Faculty/Department?

It is up to each Candidate to decide how best to reach their constituency. As always, candidates must follow the campaign regulations.

15. Can I campaign with a candidate running in another constituency?

Candidates may agree to campaign together if they wish.

16. Can the University Secretariat send out campaign messages on my behalf?

No. The University Secretariat will not convey campaign messages on behalf of candidates.

17. How can I use e-mail to campaign?

Given the regulations against spamming of public forums and e-mail distribution lists, it would be difficult to launch any kind of campaign using e-mail and so it is best avoided.

18. Can I start an e-mail tree/chain to send out campaign messages?

No. E-mail trees or chains have the same effect and intention as sending out mass e-mails to distribution lists.

19. Can I send out mass text messages about my campaign?

No. Sending out mass text messages is prohibited.

20. Can I let voters use my laptop or other device to vote?

No. Candidates are prohibited from providing computers or other devices to voters for the purposes of voting. Candidates must not be present while voters are casting their ballots. This means candidates may not set up makeshift (mobile or stationary) voting stations.

These prohibitions include anyone acting on behalf of or in support of a candidate.

21. Who is eligible to vote in the election?

There are different eligibility criteria for each election (Senate, Board of Governors, and the University Planning Committee). The eligibility requirements for candidates and voters are posted on the University Secretariat website and can be found in the Board and Senate by-laws.

The elections for student representatives to the Board of Governors and the University Planning Committee are conducted across the University as a whole. Student representatives to Senate are elected by Faculty. Some students (such as graduate students in interdisciplinary programs or undergraduate students in programs that are not within a Faculty) are able to choose in which Senate election they wish to vote; sometimes these students have a choice, and sometimes they do not, depending on which elections are running at any given time.

22. It's election day and voting is now open: someone has asked me a question about how/where to vote, what can I tell them?

For elections to the Board of Governors and University Planning Committee:

- Once voting has opened candidates may only impart factual information about the election, such as voting dates and times. Candidates must follow the election guidelines, regardless of whether they are approached by voters in person, or online through social media.

For elections to Senate:

- Once voting has opened candidates who are approached by voters *in-person* may only impart factual information about the election, such as voting dates and times. Candidates may continue to campaign online through *social media*, so are free to address questions posted online.

23. Can I go over the \$50.00 limit for campaigning expenses?

Candidates will be reimbursed up to \$50.00 for campaign expenses on submission of an expense report supported by receipts. Expenses over and above \$50.00 will not be reimbursed. Candidates are strongly encouraged to remain within the reimbursable limit for expenditures.

24. How do I submit an expense report?

An expense report form is available from the University Secretariat. Candidates must submit an emailed copy of their completed form with original, dated receipts to the office of the University Secretariat at univsec@mcmaster.ca.

Candidates should keep a copy of the receipts for their own records. Receipts should be itemized and campaign items should be highlighted. If necessary, attach a note to the receipt explaining the item reported. Efforts should be made to purchase campaign-related items separately from other items to avoid complications.

Expense reports should be submitted at the end of the campaign period and no later than 30 days after the expense was incurred. Candidates may be able to have their expense claims deposited directly to their bank accounts.

25. What if I didn't keep the receipts for my expenses?

Expenses can only be reimbursed on submission of receipts. Candidates must obtain and keep receipts for their expenses.

26. How do I report campaign violations?

Allegations of campaign violations should be reported to the University Secretariat. The University Secretariat will assess the allegations and, as appropriate, issue a warning to the candidate. Individuals who allege repeated or serious violations may wish to make a formal report, which must include documentation of the violation(s). Formal reports will be investigated by the University Secretariat.