

Policy: GV-01
NAME: Elections Policy
CATEGORY: Governance
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the election of Students' Council representatives, ensuring fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. This policy defines the roles of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO), Deputy Returning Officer (DRO), candidates, and voters in the election process.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all participants in the Students' Council election, including candidates, voters, current staff, current Students' Council representatives, and election officials.

3. Definitions

- a. **Bribery:** offering or promising any person any monetary incentive or a gift in excess of \$1.00 in value for the purpose of inducing any person to vote or refrain from voting for or against any candidate or any issue.
- b. **Misrepresentation:** communicating information (i.e. demonstrable factual statements of significance) that the communicator either knows to be false, or upon reasonable efforts could know to be false, to any voter other than the person that the information is about for the purpose of inducing any person to vote or refrain from voting and/or to undermine the election process.

- c. **Formal campaigning:** electronic or physical posting or distribution of campaign materials to students.
- d. **Sabotage:** damaging, destroying, removing, or undermining in some way proper campaign and/or election activities with the purpose of assisting or harming a candidate and/or to subvert an election or referendum.
- e. **Campaign Member:** any individual wearing or displaying campaign paraphernalia larger than 5 inches in diameter and/or acting on behalf of a candidate. Such individuals are responsible to the candidate they act on the behalf of.
- f. **Misconduct:** includes any act, omission, or misrepresentation by a candidate, campaign team, voter, or election official that breaches the election rules, policies, or the principles of fairness, transparency, and respect for the electoral process.
- g. **Chief Returning Officer (CRO):** a high-level critical role responsible for overseeing and managing aspects of the Students' Council election and referenda process for the Students' Association of NorQuest College (SANQC). This includes ensuring compliance with SANQC Bylaws, role appointment and election policies, maintaining fairness and transparency, and addressing any disputes or concerns.
- h. **Deputy Returning Officer (DRO):** supports the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) in administering the Students' Council elections, appointment process, or referenda. The DRO focuses on logistical and operational tasks to ensure the election runs smoothly.
- i. **Election Committee:** Composed of the CRO, DRO, and up to three impartial members. Tasked to resolve disputes, investigates complaints, and ensures the integrity of the election process.
- j. **Impartial Members:** Impartial members of the Election Committee may be drawn from Faculty or Administrative Staff, or External Stakeholders.
- k. **Faculty or Administrative Staff:** University or college staff with no vested interest in the election.
- l. **External Stakeholders:** Trusted individuals such as former staff or

council alumni, or representatives from partner organizations.

4. Eligibility Requirements

- a. **Voters** – Students currently registered in credit classes and/or credit programs at NorQuest College that have paid Students' Association fees for the current academic term, at least 24 hours prior to the start time of the voting shall be eligible and encouraged to vote in all elections and referenda.
 - Current Students' Council representatives must remain impartial during the election process, but are still eligible to vote.
- b. **Candidates** - Candidates for office must meet the requirements specified in the SANQC Nomination Package and the SANQC Bylaws.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Chief Returning Officer (CRO)

The Chief Returning Officer has the power to:

- a. Ensure compliance with SANQC policies and bylaws.
- b. Review and respond to any appeals regarding candidate conduct and the administration of the election, documenting all issues and sanctions thoroughly.
- c. Investigate complaints and enforce penalties for policy violations.
- d. Chair the Election Committee and manage appeals.
- e. Oversee the planning and execution of the election timeline.
- f. Ensure accessibility and inclusivity in the election process.
- g. Coordinate with the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) to manage logistics, confirm the eligibility of voters, and oversee the voting process.
- h. Remain impartial and available to candidates throughout the election process
- i. Co-lead the All Candidates Meeting with the DRO
- j. Handle withdrawals of candidates
- k. Verify the final election results and declaring the names of successful candidates

Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)

The Deputy Returning Officer has the power to:

- a. Work with the Executive Director (ED) for the selection and recommendation of a CRO to the Students' Council for approval.
- b. Communicate & submit election timeline to SANQC staff and Comms team
- c. Provide CRO access to all necessary election accounts (email, AdobeSign, etc.)
- d. Post and monitor online election web forms
- e. Verify nomination forms and election packages
- f. Provide CRO with list of verified candidates
- g. Send Candidates relevant status updates
- h. Maintain records of all candidates
- i. File a statement signed by the candidates indicating knowledge of and agreement to comply with all election rules and regulations
- j. Manage voting logistics, including the setup of online voting systems.
- k. Approve campaign materials
- l. Assist with coordinating the candidate recording sessions and pre-interviews
- m. Assist the CRO in monitoring campaign activities.
- n. Assist with scheduling & planning the Coffee with the Candidates meet & greet session
- o. Remain impartial throughout the election process
- p. Co-lead the All Candidates Meeting
- q. Maintain accurate records of election activities and results.

6. Candidate Affiliation

- a. The CRO, DRO, current Students' Council representatives, & SANQC staff members must not endorse or show special support for any candidate.
- b. Current Students' Council representatives cannot act as nominators for any candidate.

7. Elections

Elections will be held in accordance with the Students' Association Bylaws.

7.1. Timeframe

- a. Election Announcement: At least four weeks before the voting period in line with the Nomination period start

- b. Nomination Period: At least two weeks long. Open no later than the fourth week before the voting period.
- c. Verification Period: A one-week period will be allocated to review all eligibility requirements for candidacy. This review includes verifying the completion of nomination packages, confirming nominators, checking GPAs, and ensuring attendance at the recording pre-interview sessions and the All Candidates meeting.
- d. All Candidates Meeting: A mandatory All Candidates meeting will be held before the start of the campaigning period. This meeting will be scheduled to allow for a minimum of two days of formal campaigning. Campaigning details will be announced during the All Candidates meeting.
- e. Campaign Period: Minimum 2 days. Following the All Candidates Meeting
- f. Voting Period: open 48 hours
- g. Results Announcement: Publicly announced in 2-5 hours of voting closure
- h. Appeals: up to 24 hours after results publicly announced

7.2. Advertising

The DRO shall be responsible to ensure that all elections and referenda is advertised on campus through SANQC print and digital media sources, at least the fourth week prior to the voting period. Locations of voting, voting times, and voting procedures must be widely advertised.

7.3. Nomination Process

Students wanting to put their name forward for an open position on Council must:

- a. submit a completed online nomination package by the posted deadline. (Must include a current NorQuest grade transcript attachment)
- b. Have a minimum of 5 eligible voters sign the online nominator form (excluding current SANQC staff or Students' Council representatives).
- c. Meet all applicable requirements as defined by this policy and the

SANQC Bylaws.

- d. Book a recording session timeslot for pre-campaigning preparations.
- e. Attend the mandatory candidates meeting

7.4. **All Candidates Meeting**

The CRO and DRO shall co-lead a mandatory All Candidates Meeting. All Candidates shall be required to be present for the duration of the All Candidates Meeting.

7.5. **Coffee with the Candidates**

SANQC staff will schedule and host a meet & greet session for candidates to formally introduce themselves to students prior to the voting period opening.

7.6. **Election Information Booths**

Election information booths will be scheduled by the DRO and set-up for a minimum of 1 hour for a minimum of 2 days per election period.

8. **Campaign Guidelines**

- 8.1 **Campaign Period:** Campaigning is only permitted during the designated campaign period after the All Candidates meeting.
- 8.2 **Materials:** All Campaign (digital or printed) materials must be approved by the DRO before posting/handing distributing. There is no budget for campaigning. No financial reimbursements will be provided to candidates. Materials will be created and posted by SANQC for all candidates.
- 8.3 **Conduct:** All participants in the Students' Council elections must uphold fairness, integrity, and respect. Candidates and campaign teams must follow election rules, provide truthful information, avoid defamation or coercion, and comply with deadlines and procedures. Ethical campaigning, respectful engagement, and adherence to guidelines ensure a transparent and equitable election process.

8.4 Digital Campaigning: Online platforms are permitted but any posting follows the same approval process and regulations as physical/in-person campaigning. Candidates must provide the CRO with what platforms/accounts that they will be posting their campaign materials.

8.5 Withdrawing Candidacy: A candidate may withdraw their candidacy in writing to the CRO up to 24 hours prior to voting open.

8.6 Campaign Regulations:

All candidates and campaign members must adhere to the regulations outlined in this document. The following actions are strictly prohibited to ensure a fair and respectful election process:

a. Falsification of Information:

- Providing false or misleading information to the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) or Deputy Returning Officer (DRO).

b. Non-Compliance with Election Orders:

- Disobeying any valid election-related directives issued by the CRO or DRO.

c. Campaign Materials:

- using campaign stickers or decals.
- Exceeding the limit of three (3) posters, each measuring 12x18 inches.
- Self-posting (Posters must be submitted to the SANQC for proper display locations)

d. Damage to Property:

- Defacing, damaging, or destroying College or public property.

e. Premature Campaigning:

- Engaging in formal campaigning before the conclusion of the All Candidates meeting or before submitting all required signed statements.
- For clarity, obtaining support and signatures for a nomination package is not considered campaigning.

f. Policy Violations:

- Campaigning in a manner that violates SANQC or NorQuest College policies or guidelines.

g. Misuse of College Resources:

- Using NorQuest College funds, equipment, locations, or contact lists for campaigning purposes unless equally available to all candidates.

h. Unethical Behavior:

- Engaging in bribery or sabotage.

- Making defamatory statements, including slander or libel, about candidates. This includes remarks related to race, gender, creed, culture, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religion.
- i. **Unapproved Campaign Materials:**
 - Failing to have campaign materials (physical or digital) approved by the Deputy Returning Officer.
- j. **Restricted Campaigning Areas:**
 - Campaigning within 100 feet (30 meters) of scheduled election information booths.

9. Voting Process

- a. Voting shall be conducted via a secure and accessible online platform.
- b. Ballots will list candidates randomly for each open position and include an abstain option.
- c. Candidates running unopposed will participate in a “Yes/No” vote.
- d. The DRO will obtain the eligible voter list no earlier than 24 hours before voting opens.
- e. All eligible voters will be sent their secure voter information to their NorQuest student email address, with up to two follow-up reminders.

10. Voters’ Rights

- a. **Right to Information:** Voters have the right to access clear, accurate, and timely information about the election process, including candidate platforms, voting procedures, and key dates.
- b. **Right to Participate:** Every eligible voter has the right to cast their vote without coercion, intimidation, or undue influence.
- c. **Right to Privacy:** Voters have the right to a confidential and secure voting process, ensuring that their choices remain private.
- d. **Right to Fair Representation:** Voters have the right to expect a fair election process where all candidates are treated equally and without bias.
- e. **Right to Report Concerns:** Voters have the right to report any concerns or violations of election rules to the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) or appropriate election authorities without fear of retaliation.
- f. **Right to an Unbiased Process:** Voters have the right to an election free from fraud, tampering, or improper influence.

11. Violations and Penalties

- a. Any allegations of misconduct, including but not limited to voter intimidation, bribery, coercion, fraud, or improper campaigning, must be reported immediately during the voting process. Reports made after the posting of the results will not be considered. All misconduct must be brought to the attention of the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) or Election Committee as soon as it occurs to ensure a fair and transparent election.
- b. All allegations must be submitted in writing to the CRO before the voting results are publicly posted.
- c. The CRO, in consultation with the Election Committee, will investigate and determine penalties, and implement corrective measures if violation is confirmed. These may include verbal or written warnings, candidate disqualification, or, in extreme cases, nullification of election results.
 - Votes cast for a disqualified candidate will be treated as invalidated

12. Post-polling Election Process

- 12.1. **Results:** Immediately following the close of voting, the Chief Returning Officer shall oversee tabulation and verification of votes. Following a 2-hour waiting period, all the candidates will be contacted with the results. Results shall be publicly announced immediately thereafter, no later than 5 hours of the close of voting period.
- 12.2. **Ties:** In the case there is a tie vote to fill an open position, the CRO will call for a run-off vote between the tied candidates. If the run-off vote still results in an exact tie, then the CRO will break the tie using a random chance method that is video recorded in front of neutral witnesses.
- 12.3. **Appeals:** Appeals regarding the election results must be submitted in writing to the CRO within 24 hours of the posting of the results. The Election Committee will review appeals and issue a final decision within 72 hours.

Appeals may only be made on the following grounds:

- a. **Violation of Election Rules:** Evidence that the election process, including voting or campaigning procedures, was not followed in accordance with the established rules.
- b. **Technical Errors:** Issues with the voting system or process that may have affected the accuracy or fairness of the results.
- c. **Eligibility Concerns:** Disputes regarding the eligibility of candidates or

voters that may have impacted the election results.

The Election Committee's decision will be final and binding.

12.4. Finalization: Unless appealed, election results shall become binding 24 hours after they are publicly announced. If appealed, election results shall become binding or invalidated, as stated by the CRO upon the Election Committee's findings and recommendations.

13. Post-Election Requirements:

- a. Elected Candidates must attend all required training & orientation sessions and be sworn in during their first Students' Council meeting of office.
- b. Councilors must follow the instructions that will be given to apply and submit their police check results in a timely manner.

14. Amendment and Ratification:

This policy shall govern all election and referenda activities for any given academic year.