

Scarborough Campus Students' Union Policy Manual

OPERATIONAL POLICY – REMOTE VOTING PLATFORMS

Amended as of February 8th, 2021

Motion: APPENDIX ON THE USE OF ELECTRONIC ELECTION MANAGEMENT AND REMOTE VOTING PLATFORMS

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1. Preamble

- a) This appendix applies only under conditions where electronic voting is a necessity. In all other circumstances, any normal procedures that appear to contradict what is written in this appendix will apply.
- b) The procedures put in place to facilitate electronic voting shall be deemed a necessity only when conditions outside of the Union's control permit for no other option.
- c) The procedures outlined in this appendix, as well as other procedures not explicitly outlined in this appendix but that have been developed by precedent and learned through experience, are designed with the aim of balancing the need for accessibility, ease of use, and security in electronic voting with standard SCSU elections practices (both those outlined in the code, and those developed by precedent and learned through experience). As such, any perceived ambiguity in this appendix should be approached with this spirit in mind.
- d) This appendix is intended to cover only those elements of election procedures where modification for the purposes of adaptation to the electronic context has been deemed necessary by the authors. It is not meant to replace or override the entire Elections Procedure Code, which remains in effect.
- e) In cases where any part of this appendix appears to conflict with any other clause in the Elections Procedure Code, the CRO shall be the final authority. The normal appeals process outlined in the Elections Procedure Code will apply in the case of a challenge to a CRO ruling.

2. Nomination of Candidates

- a) The nomination of candidates will be conducted according to standard practices. Where nomination packages are involved, they will be distributed to prospective candidates by the CRO via email at any time during the set nomination period after the prospective candidates meet electronically with the CRO, DRO, or SCSU Internal Coordinator to confirm their identity and indicate the position for which they intend to run.
- b) The design of electronic nomination packages will be as similar as possible to the paper packages used in previous years.
- c) A section of the electronic nomination packages, as with paper nomination packages, will be designed for the collection of nominations from students. The form that this section will take is to be determined by the CRO.
- d) It is strongly recommended that candidates running on teams avoid the real or perceived forgery of student nominations in their nomination's packages, a process potentially made easier by the electronic context (e.g., by copying and pasting nominations gathered by teammates without the consent of the original nominator). In cases of proven forgery of nominations, the CRO has the right to apply the penalty of disqualification, and in cases where forgery appears likely, the CRO has the right to apply a penalty of demerit points on the basis of the severity of the infraction. It bears stating
that candidates that engage in the forgery of nominations do so at a disadvantage to themselves, as the nomination period is typically a way for candidates to provide students with knowledge of their candidacy before the campaign period begins.
- e) In cases where the electronic nomination package takes the form of an editable document, the basic form of the document shall be preserved, and prospective candidates shall only edit the

document where it is indicated that they input the necessary information. All sections of the document must be returned to the CRO, even sections that candidates may opt to leave blank.

- f) After completion, nomination packages must be returned to election officials electronically via email before the end of the ascribed nomination period. The CRO will then provide proof of receipt of a candidate's nomination package in the form of an email reply to the candidate.

3. All-Candidates Meeting

- a) Eligible candidates will be notified via email of their invitation to the All-Candidates Meeting upon verification of their electronic nomination packages.
- b) The All-Candidates Meeting will take the form of an online, electronic forum of the CRO's choosing.

The forum must be able to accommodate all eligible candidates.

- c) The electronic platform selected to facilitate the election by the CRO shall be stated publicly.
- d) Statements of Understanding (i.e., the statements that candidates must sign indicating that they understand that it is their responsibility to abide by the rules outlined in the Elections Procedure Code) will be distributed electronically before the meeting begins and must be returned to election officials via email before candidates can begin campaigning.

4. Online Campaigning (for campaigning rules specific to the voting period, see section [5] below)

- a) Candidates should follow the Elections Procedure Code closely and be aware that electronic campaigning materials ought to be treated the same way as physical campaigning materials (e.g., individual or team graphics, statements, endorsements, etc.), and must be approved by the CRO before posting to chat groups and social media platforms that could reasonably be seen to be created for the purpose of campaigning.
- b) Online campaigning accounts, pages, groups, etc. created by teams and candidates must have their names and handles approved by the CRO.
- c) All online platforms, services, applications and tools used by candidates for the purposes of campaigning must be approved by the CRO. All such platforms, services, applications and tools shall be publicly available.
- d) Online campaigning accounts, pages, groups, etc. are limited to one per candidate, and one per team, per platform.
- e) Wherever possible, all postings to all online platforms will tag the SCSU CRO account in the post, and will use the hashtag #SCSUvotes**, where '**' is the last two digits of the year in which the election is being held (e.g., for elections in the year 2021, the hashtag will read #SCSUvotes21). The CRO will inform candidates of the CRO account information across all relevant platforms before the campaigning period begins.
- f) Any campaign materials, including all images and information, posted to online platforms created by individual candidates or teams, personal accounts or otherwise, must be approved by the CRO.

- g) Campaigning materials or statements that do not use new images, and that simply re-state a candidate's publicly stated platform and do not convey any new information, do not need to be reapproved by the CRO.
- h) Endorsements of individual candidates or teams posted from online sources other than candidates' personal or campaign-specific online platforms (e.g., campus organizations, personal friends, etc.) do not need to be approved by the CRO.
- i) Candidates and teams will be held accountable through the means provided by this Code for failing to address instances where online postings of any type and on any platform are used as a means of spreading gossip, hearsay, disinformation, or unsubstantiated allegations that support their campaign or attack opponents. If the disinformation is not removed, candidates must provide the CRO with evidence that they have taken appropriate measures to contact the parties responsible. Penalties for infractions of this type will be awarded at the discretion of the CRO.
- j) Postings that are critical of publicly stated positions, political platforms, voting records, or other information of this type, are allowed. As a general rule, it is advisable to criticize the position rather than the candidate to avoid a descent into behaviour that might reasonably be considered to be against the rules of fair play, and shade into gossip and disinformation.
- k) Social media platforms, websites, large group chats, and other groups and pages may be used to distribute campaign material.
- l) All social media accounts, pages, groups, etc. used for campaigning purposes shall be public.
- m) Candidates may send campaign emails only to members of SCSU whose consent has been granted during, and not prior to, the campaign period. Emails may not be collected for the purpose of campaigning outside of the campaign period. Endorsing organizations may make use of email lists in their possession or group listservs to publicize their endorsement of candidates to their memberships.
- n) Candidates may campaign in virtual classrooms pending approval by the lecturer throughout the campaign period, with the exception of the voting period.
- o) Campaign material may be distributed over social media forums (e.g., Facebook groups) without approval by the CRO so long as that material does not convey any new images or information not covered by the candidate's or their team's political platform.
- p) Candidates must not campaign, or be seen to be campaigning, through any official SCSU online platform for the duration of the campaigning and voting period. Current SCSU Executives and Directors running for re-election to any position who must appear on official SCSU online platforms as part of the obligations demanded by their position must not make any mention of their campaigns nor urge SCSU members to vote in any appearance on such platforms.
- q) Any purchase of online campaign advertisements or campaign aids including paid viewership boosts for posts must immediately be reported to the CRO for approval and accounted for in the campaign expense report. Purchases of online advertisements or campaign aids must be made by the candidates or teams themselves through their approved campaigning account only (i.e. not their personal accounts), and not by a third party, and their purchase and use are subject to the same rules as all other campaign material covered by the Elections Procedure Code.
- r) Personal friends posting single or infrequent endorsements of candidates and teams on their own personal social media accounts or other online platforms do not have to be added to candidates' or teams' volunteer lists. However, individuals posting repeatedly to online accounts, pages, or groups that are not their own personal accounts, pages, or groups must be registered as volunteers.

- s) Any member of SCSU may volunteer to aid a candidate or team in the creation of a campaign website free of charge, without reducing the remaining amount of available campaign expenses. If, however, a website is professionally created as a paid service offered by an SCSU member or non-SCSU member, the expense must be recorded in the campaign expense report and the cost may be reimbursed.
- t) No paid automated mass-messaging services, applications or tools of any of any kind may be used to campaign. This includes paid services, applications, tools in a candidate's possession prior to the election period. Services, applications or tools freely accessible to the public may be used to campaign.
- u) The CRO has the right to administrative access to all online campaign (though not personal) platforms, social media accounts, pages, groups, etc. at any time during the campaign period for the purpose of verifying information and thorough adjudication of the election.
- v) All online campaign material (including online pages and groups created for the purpose of campaigning) must be removed 72 hours after the close of the voting period. Content posted to an online platform via a candidate's personal account does not have to be removed.
- w) The above rules regulating the campaign period are modified during the voting period in accordance with part (5) of this appendix below.

5. Campaigning During the Voting Period

- a) As per the Elections Procedure Code, the campaign period extends through the voting period. In the spirit of preserving the restrictions on campaigning near the polling stations and ballot boxes, the rule below will apply as a modification to the campaigning rules during the voting period.
- b) Campaigning by a candidate in any pre-scheduled event not organized by the same candidate (e.g., lectures, talks, etc.), is prohibited during the voting period.

6. Campaign Expenses

- a) Campaign expenses on advertisements and boosted posts on all online and social media platforms must not exceed two-thirds of a candidate's total allowable budget (i.e., \$100 for candidates running for an Executive position, and \$50.00 for candidates running for a Director position). This restriction is designed to mirror the restriction on the number of allowable posters per candidate in paper ballot elections outlined in the Elections Procedure Code.
- b) As in paper ballot elections, candidates running on teams may pool funds and other resources so that they may be used for the promotion of the team as a whole.

7. Reporting Violations and Allocation of Demerit Points

- a) In addition to the already existing rules governing the allocation of demerit points, it is worth emphasizing that, due to the electronic character of the election, screenshots or similar forms of evidence are expected when submitting allegations of rule violations to the CRO.

- b) If the CRO or, in the case of an appeal, the ERC, decides that a rule violation has occurred, the rule violation and associated demerit points will be posted on the SCSU website under the 'Elections' tab.
- c) While most of the examples of violations warranting demerit points that are listed in the Elections Procedure Code can apply unaltered in the context of an electronically conducted election, common sense dictates that the clauses referring to violations occurring in physical spaces are not applicable.

8. Selection of Voting Platform and Information on Voting Process

- a) The CRO and other election officials will carry out research with the aim of selecting an appropriate voting platform. The CRO will submit a report recommending a voting platform to the Union's Elections and Referenda Committee for review. The voting platform must be approved by this committee before the nomination period begins.
- b) The voting platform decided upon should:
 - i. Have a track record of success and be recommended for use by institutions similar to the SCSU;
 - ii. Be reasonably affordable in comparison to similar services on the market;
 - iii. Offer substantial support packages to ensure that CROs unfamiliar with electronic voting are able to run electronic elections smoothly;
 - iv. Be accessible to both voters and election officials alike;
 - v. Offer a tried and tested means of ensuring that ballots are distributed to voters in an equitable and secure fashion.
- c) The name of the electronic voting platform selected by the CRO to facilitate the administration of the election will be provided to candidates at some point before, and/or during, the All-Candidates Meeting. General information about the method of delivery of electronic ballots and the voting process will be provided at the All-Candidates Meeting, so that candidates are able to respond to prospective voters' queries on this matter. Any further inquiries regarding the selected platform and overall process must be directed to the CRO or other election officials.
- d) The electronic ballots will consist only of candidate names listed in alphabetical order, the candidate's last name appearing first and slate/team affiliations if any.

9. Counting of Electronic Ballots, 'Scrutineering', and the Release of Election Results

- a) **In the case of automatically tabulated electronic voting results, the CRO will review the results and then send the results to the Elections and Referenda Committee within 24 hours.**
- b) In the absence of paper ballots, scrutineers will not be required for the ballot count, as electronic ballots are incontestable.



- c) As the vote tally occurs electronically and instantaneously, a challenge to the validity of the elections results may be requested in line with the Elections Procedure Code.
- d) The CRO will procure an election analysis and report from the selected electronic election platform within 24hrs of the closing of the polls. Individual candidates may appoint one SCSU member, and teams may appoint two SCSU members, to act as 'scrutineers' to view this information, edited to exclude information that would reveal the final vote tally prior to ERC's announcement of the unofficial results. The information will be made accessible in the form of an electronic document shared with scrutineers for two hours.