Student Election FAQ

1. **What is campaigning?**
   A campaign is defined as a connected series of activities designed to bring out a particular result. Any statement or action/activity that identifies a candidate in an election, contains information on his/her platform, and/or encourages voters to vote for him/her constitutes campaigning. This includes the statements and actions/activities of the candidate him/herself and anyone speaking/acting on the candidate’s behalf.

   Slanderous or libelous campaigning is forbidden; campaigning must be in good taste; campaign activities are subject to official University regulations and policies (By-Laws, Codes of Conduct) and the laws of the land. Good judgement must be used when making campaign decisions. 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.

2. **What is the campaign ban?**
   The campaign ban is the period beginning midnight the night prior to the first day of voting and continues until the close of the polls on the last day of voting.

   - **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 platforms on election day(s). All regular campaign rules otherwise apply.

   Allegations of campaigning after the ban is in effect are among the most common complaints reported against candidates.

3. **Do I have to campaign?**
   Candidates can choose whether or not to campaign, how much, and by what methods. Candidates must use good judgement when campaigning. Campaigning must be in good taste and follow all University regulations and policies and the law of the land.

4. **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 elections for student representatives, both undergraduate and graduate, to the Board of Governors and the University Planning Committee are conducted across the University as a whole.

   Student representatives to Senate, however, 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.

   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. Contact the University Secretariat for further information.
5. Can I put up posters? Where?

Yes, candidates can put up posters. The regulations regarding posters in most main campus buildings are governed by the McMaster Students Union. Candidates must follow MSU Operating Policy – Promotions & Advertising when putting up posters. Candidates must ensure that any posters are stamped by Underground Media as per the Policy and that they are put up only in areas indicated in the Policy. Some specific buildings (McMaster University Student Centre, the McMaster University Medical Centre, McMaster residences, etc.) have their own policies regarding poster displays; candidates are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and follow the policies for these specific buildings. A link to the MSU Policy is included on the campaign regulations.

6. I put up posters around campus and now some of them are gone/moved…

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 Policy. Candidates should be aware that some buildings, such as the McMaster University Student Centre, the McMaster University Medical Centre, McMaster residences, etc. have separate policies regarding posters that must be observed.

Candidates shall not remove, move, cover, deface, or otherwise tamper with their opponents’ campaign posters. Misconduct should be reported to the University Secretariat.

7. 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.

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

The campaign regulations specify that candidates must remove any and all campaign posters from within site of the computer labs prior to midnight the night before voting begins. Posters not within site of the computer labs 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.

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

Allegations of misuse of social media are among the most common complaints reported against candidates.

12. **Can I use YouTube to campaign?**
   YouTube is a social media site and the same rules apply.

13. **Can I set up a table/area in my Faculty and give speeches, hand out flyers, etc.?**
   If candidates wish to set up a meeting or speaking area, they must ensure that they have obtained all the necessary permissions to do so in the building or area they wish to use. When delivering speeches, candidates must follow the campaign regulations. In particular, slanderous or libelous campaigning is forbidden; campaigning must be in good taste; campaign activities are subject to official University regulations and policies (By-Laws, Codes of Conduct) and the laws of the land.

14. **How do I campaign outside my Faculty/Department?**
   It is up to each candidates 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. The value, however, of doing so is questionable, as paired candidates running in different elections may confuse voters. A candidate also runs the risk of campaigning to groups who are not eligible to vote in the election in which the candidate is running.

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. Sending out mass text messages is also prohibited.

19. **Can I let voters use my laptop to vote?**
   No. Candidates are prohibited from providing computers or other devices to voters for the purposes of voting. This means candidates may not set up makeshift (mobile or stationary) voting stations. Candidates must not be present while voters are casting their ballots. These prohibitions include anyone acting on behalf of or in support of a candidate.

   Allegations associated with provision of computers for the purposes of voting are among the most common complaints reported against candidates.

20. **It’s voting day and someone has asked me how/where to vote, what can I tell them?**
   During the campaign ban candidates may not make announcements about the election or approach voters to solicit votes in their favour.

   It may be the case that a voter will approach a candidate during the campaign ban to ask questions about the candidate’s position or to ask for information about where or how to vote. During the campaign ban, candidates may impart factual information about the election, such as voting dates and times. Candidates
must be careful how they direct voters to MacVote to avoid allegations of misconduct. (It is advisable, if necessary, to direct voters to the University Secretariat website.) Candidates must not be present while voters are casting their ballots and must not make computers or other devices available to voters for the purposes of voting.

- **For elections to the Board of Governors and University Planning Committee:** candidates must follow the above guidelines, regardless of whether they are approached by voters in person, or online through social media.
- **For elections to Senate:** the campaign ban applies only to in-person campaigning. Candidates may continue to campaign online through social media, so are free to address such questions posed online.

21. **Can I hand out pens/balloons/suckers with a campaign message on them?**
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. Distribution of campaign materials is, for example, prohibited in the McMaster University Student Centre.

22. **Can I go over the $50.00 limit for campaigning expenses?**
Students running for election 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. Students are strongly recommended to remain within the reimbursable limit for expenditures.

23. **How do I submit an expense report?**
An expense report form is available from the office of the University Secretariat. Candidates must submit a hard copy of their completed form with original, dated receipts to the office of the University Secretariat. 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. The University Secretariat will notify candidates when their expense cheques are ready for pick up, normally within 3-4 weeks of submitting the claim. Some candidates may be able to have their expense claims deposited directly to their bank accounts.

24. **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.

25. **How do I report campaign violations?**
Allegations of campaign violations should be reported to the office of 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.