GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIETY
UBC VANCOUVER

GSS Elections Policy

Last revision: January 2026

1 General

1.1 The Objective of the Elections Policy is to house all policies and procedures related to elections, previously found in the Graduate Student Society (GSS) Policy Manual. This manual will be available online alongside the GSS Policy Manual at all times and can be accessed by anyone.

1.2 The Scope of the Elections Policy covers all policies and procedures related to the GSS election process, the Elections and Engagement Committee's powers during an election, as well as by-election policies and procedures. Policies in the GSS Policy Manual shall be referred to in this Policy as "GSS Policy".

1.3 All Policies and Procedures in this Policy are an extension of the GSS Policy Manual and therefore amendments must follow GSS Policy 1.2.1. Elections and Engagement Committee is responsible for maintaining and overseeing changes in the Elections Policy. Recommended changes shall be brought to the Code and Policy Committee to ensure correct wording and that no conflicts in policy will be created. Policy changes will be brought to GSS Council in the usual manner of Policy changes as per GSS Policy 8.3.2.c. Elections and Engagement Committee is responsible for an annual review of the Elections Policy after every election to ensure best practice. All Policies and Procedures in the Elections Policy are to be treated as Policy and must be adhered to.

2 Abbreviations

CPC	Code and Policy Committee
E&E	Elections and Engagement Committee
EPP	Elections Policy Panel
ESEO	Electoral and Student Engagement Officer
GSS	Graduate Student Society
UBC	The University of British Columbia - Vancouver

3 Role of the Elections and Engagement Committee

3.1 The Elections and Engagement Committee (E&E) shall:

(a) be responsible for conducting Society elections in accordance with Bylaw 8.2 and with the procedures described in this Policy,

(b) not impose any additional rules or procedures other than those defined here, unless Council delegates responsibility for conducting the election to an organization outside of the Society. Any new rules or procedures must be proposed as amendments to this policy as per GSS Policy 1.2.1,

(c) have an Electoral and Student Engagement Officer (ESEO) who shall be:

i. appointed no later than three months before the election of each year,

ii. appointed by council by a special resolution,

iii. disallowed to stand for election, and

iv. whose duties shall, if a suitable candidate is not available, be fulfilled by the Chair of the Elections and Engagement Committee,

(e) report to the Council during the Council meeting following the election and make recommendations on the election process and procedure as it deems proper,

(f) prescribe and employ the necessary advertising strategies to call for nominations and to announce the date, time and place or method of Polling,

(g) prescribe the procedures for counting the ballots and communicate these procedures to the Candidates before the counting begins, and

(h) announce the results of the election to the Society membership via the Society website.

(i) meet with all candidates to present the rules and procedures governing the Elections after the nomination period closes.

(j) organize at least one meet-the-candidates meeting and/or candidates' debate before the opening of the polls. These events can be held on-campus, off-campus, or virtually.

(k) organize an Elections page on the Society website with a section that provides the candidates an opportunity to present their backgrounds, platforms, and intended goals for their term should they be elected.

4 Role of the Elections Policy Panel

4.1 The Elections Policy Panel shall:

(a) be formed no later than one week before the campaigning period,

(b) consist of the ESEO, Elections and Engagement Committee chair, one member from Elections and Engagement Committee, and one member from Code & Policy Committee. It can be chaired by either the Elections and Engagement Committee chair or the Electoral and Student Engagement Officer,

(c) be responsible for the expedient resolution of complaints regarding candidates' campaigning, and monitoring candidates' campaign material throughout the election cycle,

(d) be responsible for the approval of campaign material within one week of receiving it if there are no violations of policies described in Policy 7,

(e) review complaints regarding candidates' campaigning behaviour,

(f) demand retraction or rectification of campaign materials if it found a violation of policies described in Policy 7 within forty-eight (48) hours of reviewing the complaint,

(g) enforce Policy 9.5.18 regarding disqualification of candidates after failure to retract or rectify campaign materials,

(h) cease to exist once the Election Report is presented to Council following the elections.

5 General Elections Policy and Procedure

5.1 General Policy

5.1.1 Any ordinary member of the Society may be nominated for any position to be contested in the election.

5.1.2 Council shall vote whether to ratify the legitimacy of the Society elections process at the first Council meeting after the conclusion of the elections process and in any event, before the next term begins.

5.2 General Procedure

5.2.1 The dates for Society elections shall be set and announced to the membership of the Society by the President no later than thirty (30) calendar days prior to the start of voting.

5.2.2 The period of nominations, campaigning, and voting shall be set and announced to the membership of the Society by the ESEO no later than one (1) week prior to the start of the nomination period.

5.2.3 The ESEO may extend Nomination, Campaigning, and Polling periods by one (1) week increments up to three (3) weeks if deemed necessary. E&E must present the changes to Council at the next meeting.

5.2.4 Candidates are required to attend the All-Candidates Meeting or should they be unable to attend the scheduled time of this meeting, they are required to make alternate arrangements for a make-up meeting with the ESEO that must take place no later than five (5) business days after the general All-Candidates Meeting. If a candidate misses the All-Candidates Meeting and has not made alternate arrangements for a make-up meeting with the ESEO that shall take place within the specified five (5) business days after the general All-Candidates Meeting, their name shall be withdrawn from the elections by the Elections and Engagement Committee.

5.2.5 Elections and Engagement Committee may require Candidates to submit one or more brief personal statements and a photograph, for purposes of advertising the election and informing voters regarding candidates. These materials may be published on GSS online communications channels and on the ballot, provided that candidates for the same office are featured equally in such communications.

6 Nominations

6.1 Nominations shall be affected by submission of a completed copy of the approved nomination form to the ESEO via email with signatures of three ordinary members in support of the nomination and the nominee themselves.

6.2 The form can be picked up in person from the Society office or downloaded from the Society website, and it shall be returned in person by candidates to the Society office so a Society staff member may witness the candidate signature.

6.3 The nomination form shall follow the format in Appendix III. It may be incorporated as a part of other materials, and aesthetic adjustments are allowed.

6.4 Nominations are to be open for at least a period of two weeks and shall close one week prior to the opening of Polling. Nominations are to close on the last day of the nomination period at the close of business of the Society’s office.

6.5 Nominations shall be filed with the ESEO or their designate.

7 Campaigning

7.1 Campaigning is defined by (including but not limited to):

(a) creating and distributing media that encourages UBC Graduate students to vote for the candidate,

(b) attending UBC events to speak with UBC Graduate students regarding the GSS Election, and

(c) assembling a campaign team and promoting oneself through the team.

7.2 The cost of a candidate's campaign shall not exceed one hundred and fifty dollars. Material used in previous campaigns shall be valued at original cost. The Society will reimburse candidates up to one hundred and fifty dollars for new campaign materials. A signed statement of expenses with receipts must be submitted to the ESEO at the close of the campaigning period, and will be subject to audit.

7.3 Candidates may not use any portion of their campaign budget to provide financial or in-kind benefit as an incentive for votes.

7.4 Campaign material must be posted in accordance with UBC Building Policy.

7.5 There shall be no campaigning within ten (10) metres of the polling booth when polls are open.

7.6 Candidates may not use Society or any email distribution lists administered by UBC, its Faculties, or Departments during their campaign.

7.7 Candidates may not run in slates, real or apparent, or share expenses for campaign material. A slate means a group of two or more candidates that campaign together for any position elected during the Society's elections on a similar platform for mutual advantage. This includes, but is not limited to, the following activities:

(a) appearing on another candidate's campaign materials, including but not limited to posters, banners, flyers, handouts, websites, and social media campaign groups;

(b) producing posters or other campaign materials that closely resemble those of another candidate in design, colour, branding or appearance; and

(c) using the same slogan or slogans as one or more other candidates.

7.8 At its discretion, the Elections Policy Panel may prohibit other activities that resemble a slate.

7.9 Candidates are expected to campaign independently, but if joint campaign activities, including but not limited to classroom announcements and leafleting, do occur, they must be reported to the Elections Policy Panel. Such reports must be submitted to the Elections Policy Panel within twenty-four (24) hours. At its discretion, the Elections Policy Panel may approve such activities or order them to cease.

7.10 Notwithstanding the rules against slates in Policies 7.7 through 7.9 above, candidates may endorse a maximum of two other candidates.

7.11 Candidates shall not in any way force, dishonestly influence, or materially induce a member into making a voting decision. This includes making unsubstantiated claims about other candidates, the GSS, or GSS members.

7.12 Candidates are responsible for informing themselves and anyone campaigning on their behalf as to the contents of this Policy.

7.13 Candidates may be held responsible for inappropriate conduct by themselves or anyone campaigning on their behalf.

7.14 Prepared campaign materials (including but not limited to posters, pamphlets and social media posts), must be approved by the Elections Policy Panel prior to distribution.

7.15 In the event the Elections Policy Panel deems a candidate has violated a policy in their online campaign material, said candidate is required to take down or otherwise retract the material and post a notice of retraction on the same platform within twenty-four (24) hours of notification. The notice of retraction must contain the details of the infraction and be approved by the Elections Policy Panel. Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the election.

7.16 Candidates who wish to appeal a decision made against them by the Elections Policy Panel are entitled to do so, and the appeal will be reviewed by both the Elections and Engagement Committee and the Elections Policy Panel. Said candidates are also entitled to receive a response within forty-eight (48) hours of filing the appeal.

7.17 Candidates must disclose all campaign platforms that will be used for their campaign to the Elections Policy Panel. The provided platforms must be accessible to the general public from when they are nominated until the results of the election are announced.

7.18 Current Executives cannot use Society resources, which are not accessible to other candidates, to campaign for themselves and/or other candidates including but not limited to:

(a) social media, and,

(b) email distribution lists.

7.19 Candidates may assemble a campaign team to help run their election. Candidates must disclose who is on their campaign team to the Elections Policy Panel.

8 Debate

8.1 Candidates are required to attend the Elections Debate(s). If a candidate is absent from a Debate, their name will be withdrawn from the elections by the Elections and Engagement Committee, if the candidate does not provide a legitimate reason for their nonattendance to the committee. The decision of the Elections and Engagement Committee in discerning the legitimacy of a reason will be final.

8.2 The format and the rules of the Elections Debate(s) will be determined by the Engagement and Elections Committee and candidates will be notified of the format and the rules at least five (5) business days before the Elections Debate(s).

9 Debate

9.1 Ballots shall follow the format in Appendix IV; the only changes allowed are the listing of candidate names, unless approved by Council.

9.2 The ordering of candidates shall be random whenever possible.

9.3 The ballots shall carry two extra options for each position, called "Reopen Nominations" and “Abstain”. Whenever possible, the ballots should include an explanation of these two options for voters.

(a) The purpose of “Reopen Nomination” is to allow members to call a new election if all the candidates for a position are unsuitable. The votes for “Reopen Nominations” shall be counted as if it were a candidate. If “Reopen Nominations” wins an election, then that position shall be declared vacant, and a new election (for the respective position only) shall be called by the ESEO.

(b) The purpose of “Abstain” is to allow members to decline voting for or against the candidates for a position.

9.4 Candidates for Student Senators shall be appointed by acclamation if there are only two candidates for the two (2) position openings.

9.5 The GSS shall use the SimplyVoting software for its polling purposes.

9.6 The Elections and Engagement Committee shall:

(a) designate the ESEO to be the electronic voting system administrator (the "Administrator"),

(b) instruct the Administrator to use one of the following options:

(i) A local administration: oversee the installation and configuration of the electronic voting system administration software, ensure the safekeeping of the elections administration software on a computer available for audit, use an account with a unique login and password known only to the Elections and Engagement Committee, or

(ii) A remote administration: secure a contract for the services of the electronic voting system personnel, where the Administrator can monitor the configuration of the electronic voting system election, population of the voters list, security of the software, and counting of ballots. Furthermore, the contract should make the electronic voting system available for audit.

9.7 If a polling station is employed to provide access to the electronic voting system, the station must be kept secure and any materials at the polling station must be neutral and not influence the voter's decision in any way.

10 Counting of the Votes

10.1 No member shall be allowed more than one vote in any Society election. If a member is found to have cast more than one vote, all of that member's votes shall be voided, and Council may, at their discretion, penalize the member.

10.2 After the polls have closed on the last day of polling, the Administrator shall collect the results of the Elections. There shall be at least two members of the Elections and Engagement Committee present at the collection of electronic voting system results.

10.3 In the event of a tie for the most number of votes, the vote shall be decided by the toss of a coin by the ESEO.

11 Announcing Results and Ratification

11.1 At the conclusion of counting, the ESEO shall draft a report of the preliminary results and announce the preliminary results. This report shall be signed by all present at

counting, including scrutineers. It shall follow the form outlined in Appendix V and shall be made public no later than seventy-two (72) hours following the closing of the polls.

11.2 The results are deemed official once ratified by Council.

12 Announcing Results and Ratification

12.1 Any complaint by a member of the Society regarding the elections shall be reported in writing to the ESEO no later than five business days after a specific incident if the complaint concerns another candidate's behavior. If the complaint concerns the general election procedure, the complaint shall be reported in writing to the ESEO no later than five business days after the preliminary announcement of the election results.

12.2 The Elections and Engagement Committee may penalize a candidate in the event of a breach of any policies outlined in this section or rules set at events held by the Elections and Engagement Committee. The Elections and Engagement Committee shall determine the penalties for such breaches. Any decision taken along with the reasons for such action must be presented to Council. Penalty options include, but are not limited to:

(a) removal of campaign material,

(b) retraction of campaign material,

(c) correction of campaign material,

(d) withholding re-imbursement of campaign expenses,

(e) disqualification of the candidate from the election, or

(f) any combination of the aforementioned penalties.

12.3 Complaints and Appeals are to be filed using an Elections Complaint Form (Appendix VI), sent by email to the ESEO. All Elections Complaint Forms will be relayed to the Elections Policy Panel. The ESEO also reserves the right to file complaints themselves.

12.4 If a complaint is not within the purview of the Election Policy Panel it will be handled by the Elections and Engagement Committee.

12.5 If a complaint is about the ESEO or the Election Policy Panel, the complaint will instead be filed to the chair of the Governance and Accountability Committee.

13 By-Elections

13.1 By-elections may be called by Council to fill any executive vacancy, subject to Bylaw 8.4.

13.2 By-elections shall be conducted under the existing Elections Procedure and shall be conducted by the existing Elections and Engagement Committee.

13.3 Subject to Council's discretion, the By-Election period may be shorter than the regular election period.

Ballot Layout for GSS Elections

Appendix III. Nomination Form for GSS Elections

UBC Graduate Student Society Nomination Form for the Executive

Applicable for all elected offices of the Society.

Name: _____

Nominated Position: _____

Student #: _____

Department: _____

Positionality Statement (include only as much as you are comfortable with):

Example: As a first-generation college student from a working-class background and a cisgender woman of color, my positionality deeply influences my academic perspective. My experiences navigating systemic barriers in education and witnessing the intersection of race, gender, and socioeconomic status have shaped my commitment to studying issues of equity, access, and social justice. I approach my research with reflexivity, recognizing how my personal experiences inform the questions I ask and the interpretations I make. To mitigate bias, I strive for transparency and prioritize collaboration with diverse perspectives to ensure my work is ethical, inclusive, and impactful.

Address: _____

Phone # (Home): _____

Phone # (Office): _____

Campaign Website(s):

Nominators:

Three (3) signatures are required. The nominators must be currently enrolled as Graduate Students at UBC.

_____

_____

_____

Ballot Layout for GSS Elections

I hereby accept the nomination for the above position. I am aware of the responsibilities this position entails. I will abide by must abide by the Constitution and Policies of the Graduate Student Society. I, as well as the nominators, am currently registered as Graduate Students at UBC.

I certify that I will be a graduate student for the entire duration of my tenure in GSS. I acknowledge that I must provide enrollment letters each term to remain eligible for the position. Failure to prove enrollment will result in dismissal.

Signature of Candidate: _____

Signature of the candidate must be performed in front of the Office Secretary (or designate) in the Main Office at the Graduate Student Centre. Student I.D. will be required.

Signature of Witness: _____

Name of Witness: _____

Date: _____

Nominations must be delivered to the GSS Office by _____.

Ballot Layout for GSS Elections

Appendix IV. Ballot Layout for GSS Elections

UBC Graduate Student Society Elections 20____

Please make only one hole for each position. Note: If "reopen nominations" wins the greatest number of votes for that position, a new election for that position will be called.

President

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

Vice President, External Relations

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

Vice President, Students

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

Vice President, University and Academic Affairs

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

Ballot Layout for GSS Elections

Financial and Executive Oversight Officer

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

GSS Senator

- Candidate A
- Candidate B
- Candidate C
- Reopen Nominations

Preliminary Announcement of Election Results

Appendix V. Preliminary Announcement of Election Results

UBC Graduate Student Society Elections 20____

Date (yyyy/mm/dd):

The Engagement and Election Committee reports the following as the results of the GSS Executive Elections of 20___:

Candidates for President

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

Vice President, External Relations

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

Vice President, Students

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

Vice President, University and Academic Affairs

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

Financial and Executive Oversight Officer

-

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

Preliminary Announcement of Election Results

GSS Senator

Candidate A	_ votes
Candidate B	_ votes
Candidate C	_ votes
Reopen Nominations	_ votes
Total	_ votes

There were a total of __ ballots cast. Attested to by:

[signature of Electoral and Student Engagement Officer]

[name], Electoral and Student Engagement Officer

Engagement and Elections Committee:

[names] [signatures]

Scrutineers:

[names] [signatures]

GRADUATE STUDENT SOCIETY UBC VANCOUVER

Elections Complaints and Appeals Form

Appendix VI. Elections Complaints and Appeals Form

This form is to be filled out and sent to the Electoral and Student Engagement Officer (ESEO)† up to five (5) business days after the inciting incident.

Fields marked with a (*) are required, but please provide as much information as possible.

†: Note: If your complaint is about the ESEO or the Election Policy Panel itself, please instead submit this to the chair of the Governance & Accountability Committee (G&A).

Date of incident (if applicable)	
* Date submitted:	
* Complainant/Appellant name:	
* Complainant/Appellant email address:	
Complaint/Appeal subject:	

* Summery of the complaint/appeal:

If applicable, include references to the policy manual. Policies of interest: Policy 12 outlines Election Procedure, and Policy 8.5 outlines the Elections Committee Terms of Reference.

Expectations from the complainant on the resolution:

Resolution remarks from the Elections Committee (EC) (to be filled by the ESEO, EC chair or G&A chair after resolution of the complaint/appeal):