

Senate Office Guidelines for Hosting Student Elections

In partnership with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP), the Senate Office provides an online election service to Carleton University student academic societies. The following document defines the scope and conditions of this service to student societies, plus the timelines and deliverables the Senate Office will require in order to run these elections effectively.

Scope

The Senate Office will support student academic society elections at the Faculty, Department or Unit level. Academic student societies must be recognized as legitimate academic societies by the relevant Chair, Director or Faculty Dean. Non-academic student society elections (CUSA, for example) will not be supported by the Senate Office and are not included in these guidelines. The Senate Office has a limited capacity to run elections. As a result, student groups should build some flexibility into their timelines to accommodate this reality.

Procedures

This document outlines the following steps in the online election process:

- Requesting assistance with an online election
- The communication process – using a Chief Returning Officer;
- Information required for the Senate Office to run an election;
- The role of the Senate Office; and
- An overview of the election process.

1. Requesting assistance - how does a group seeking to run an on-line election register with the Senate Office?

Student Academic Societies planning an election should contact the Senate Office (senate.office@carleton.ca) as soon as the approximate time period and/or dates of the election have been confirmed, even if the election is months away.

It is best to consult with the Senate Office before fixing voting dates, to confirm that the Senate Office is able to run an election during that time period.

At minimum, the Senate Office must be notified of the upcoming election one month prior to the proposed election date(s), and more notice is preferred, if possible. Information and documentation contained in the *Writ of Elections* (see below) also should be received by the Senate Office one month prior to the election date(s). If these timelines are not observed, the Senate Office cannot guarantee that the election can be held on the proposed date(s).

2. What is a Chief Returning Officer (CRO)?

The Chief Returning Officer is a person appointed by the student organization in question to exercise (for the group having the election) direction and supervision over the preparation of the election. The CRO is responsible for ensuring that all documentation reaches the Senate Office in a timely manner. The Senate Office will communicate with the CRO for clarification on all issues related to the election, and once the election has concluded, the Senate Office will provide an official report of the election results to the CRO.

3. What information should the CRO provide?

The following information must be provided to the Senate Office:

- Documentation to prove status of the appointed CRO for the organization (e.g. letter from the executive, meeting minutes documenting motion for and approval of appointment, etc.). This should be sent to the Senate Office at least one month prior to the election.
- A copy of the *Writ of Elections*, outlining the positions up for election, the election timeline (including dates for the nomination period, campaign period, and voting period), eligibility criteria for candidates and voters, and the name and contact information of the CRO. This information should be provided to the Senate Office as soon as possible and at least one month prior to the election date(s).
- A summary of the nomination process and a description of the process used for advertising the election to potential candidates and constituent voters.
- Once the nomination period closes, a list of candidates with student identification numbers must be sent to the Senate Office. This information should be provided as soon as possible after the nomination period closes and at least one week prior to the election.

4. The Role of Senate Office

Once the CRO has provided the required documentation, the Senate Office will review the material to ensure that all of the information is complete and that the election timeline and process meet best practice standards. The Senate Office will contact the OIRP to pull the voter list(s) for the election. Once candidate eligibility has been confirmed, the Senate Office will use the election software to create the ballots and connect them with the voting list(s). A draft of the ballot(s) will be provided to the CRO for review.

Note that ballots cannot be created until the list of candidates has been confirmed and their eligibility status has been verified. For this reason, the Senate Office requests that student societies provide the candidate list(s) to the Senate Office at the close of the nomination period, and allow at least one week between the end of the nomination period and the beginning of the election proper.

5. The Election Process – an overview

The Senate Office will ensure that the ballots are distributed electronically to the constituency via the election software. An invitation to vote with a link to the online ballot will be emailed to constituent students at their Carleton email account. This link, unique to the student, can be used only once and cannot be shared with any other account. The Senate Office will ensure that the voting site opens and closes on the designated dates and will monitor the election for any issues. The CRO also must notify the Senate Office immediately if they perceive any irregularities or issues with the election once it has begun.

After the conclusion of the election, the results will be presented to the CRO in the form of an official election report, signed by the Clerk of Senate. It is essential that results are then reported as provided to the electorate by the CRO.