PGSS General Elections 2013-14 – Candidate Guide

Introduction
The dedication of PGSS’s elected officials is crucial to the success of the organization; therefore, the commitment of the candidates is greatly appreciated by the McGill community. The operation of these elections is based upon PGSS’s bylaws, as well as my discretion as Chief Returning Officer. Please familiarise yourself with the regulations the documents found in the bylaws and manual of the PGSS. (https://pgss.mcgill.ca/en/society-bylaws-and-manuals). Candidates are expected to comply with these regulations in a manner that is in line with democratic traditions. As per the preamble of the ninth chapter PGSS Society Activities Manual (SAM), I reserve the right as Chief Returning Officer (CRO) to implement further regulations as I see fit. These will be communicated with you below, and via email.

Services in French
Toute la correspondance sera en anglais. Toutefois, les candidats pourront demander de recevoir une version française de certains documents et messages, moyennant un délai de quatre jours ou moins. Les candidats peuvent choisir de communiquer avec le directeur général des scrutins en français. Cependant, si cette communication est de nature juridique, la réponse sera rédigée en anglais puis traduite en français, ce qui retardera son envoi.

Candidate Behaviour and Regulation Enforcement
In the interest of ensuring that McGill remains a safe space for all individuals, candidates and their assistants are prohibited from threatening (verbally or otherwise), assaulting, coercing, or extorting voters, and all other members associated with these elections i.e. the CRO, assistants, etc. Candidates responsible for such behaviour may be disqualified. Defamatory, discriminatory (ascribed statuses or otherwise), or prejudicial speech also constitutes grounds for disqualification as per Section 10.10 (SAM). Please be reminded that these expectations apply to not only the relationships between the candidates themselves, but the relationships with their voters, the general public, and the Chief Returning Officer.

Dates of note
The campaign period will commence at the end of the second candidate information session, held on March 28th, at 8:45 pm. However, in the case of a candidate’s absence from either meeting, campaigning may commence after a make-up session with the CRO. Campaigning must cease at the end of April 28th. Voting dates are subject to council’s approval, but are tentatively scheduled for April 29th to May 10th.

Communications
Candidates are expected to communicate with the CRO by email whenever possible. While he will make every effort to reply as soon as possible, candidates may reasonably expect a delay of up to 36 hours for a reply. Since there is no clause in the bylaws which states a time expectation, time related complaints will not be entertained. The Results of the elections will be disseminated by email to all candidates, the 2012-2013 Secretary-General, and the VP Internal (who will then post them on PGSS’s website). A listserv email will also be distributed to PGSS members, and the on-campus newspapers will be contacted. As per regulations, this will be done within two hours of the end of voting. Any communications regarding changes or updates to election procedures will be transmitted to candidates via email; therefore, candidates are expected to check their McGill emails at least every twelve hours (see “A note on Digital Advertising”).
Complaints and Contestations
In the interest of having fair and transparent elections, candidates may submit complaints to the CRO when they believe bylaws, or CRO policies, have been violated in spirit or in practise. Please take note that any frivolous, or reckless complaints will result in an increased cost to PGSS; consequently, money, and time that could be previously dedicated to equality projects, childcare, social events, etc will be spent on elections. Any complaint regarding a potential violation in action must be submitted immediately\(^1\) via email. Any complaint regarding a durational violation (ex: failure to publicise the hustings) must be submitted as soon as possible, and within three days of the close of voting. Complaints submitted late will not be considered, and will not have recourse to the appeals board as per 15.2.1 (SAM). Any decision made by the CRO that a candidate considers unfair may be sent to PGSS’s appeal board. Candidates should familiarise themselves with past appeal board rulings before submitting one themselves as to avoid uselessly submitting claims. The appeals board recognizes that candidates and the CRO are not expected to have a professional understanding of law, and as a result, minor errors of little consequence may occur in good faith. These are not grounds to nullify an election.

Third Party Support
Candidates must formally declare in writing any persons who intend to support a candidate with zir\(^2\) campaigning. As per 10.10 (SAM) candidates are not liable for the actions of third-party members unless it concerns finances (see expenses), or is done on the expressed consent of a candidate. Implied consent may constitute grounds for a violation of the rules as well; consequently, candidates should ensure anyone assisting with their campaign understand these rules as well. Candidates must not, on any circumstances, accept support from any organization or grouping; this includes PGSAs, on campus groups, political organisations, etc. Individuals from said organisations are welcome to endorse candidates as individuals, holding a title (ex: Endorsed by Ms. White, President of Clue). Revised by the Appeals Board ruling – April 17\(^{th}\), 2013. Candidates must declare the support of third parties. As the third party would then be considered part of a candidate’s campaign team, it is expected that the candidate ensures their compliance with the election rules.

Expenses
Candidates may elect to spend their own money to purchase campaign materials up to a maximum retail value of 300 dollars. The value limit means that services provided at a discount, or for free, will be considered at the purchase price for a layperson. Specialty services; provided by friends or family who are acting in a non-professional capacity without the use of commercial tools (ex: business licensed software not readily available to other candidates) and who are not paid, are not considered to hold monetary value. Otherwise, receipts for expenses must be submitted. In the case of discounted/free services, estimations must be provided showing its retail value. The CRO reserves the right to reassess the value of the latter. Candidates may not purchase any advertising space! For example, the following paid forms of advertisements are not permitted: facebook, twitter, newspaper, radio, anything related to media. An itemised list should be included with these receipts/estimations, as well as copies of the material purchased (in the case of non-consumables) within 24 hours of the close of polls. Failure to provide this will result in disqualification. If a candidate intends on spending less than five dollars (or nothing), documentation is not required. In this case, the candidate must inform me of zir intentions via email. If a candidate neither provides a list, nor informs me of minimal/no spending, zie will be considered disqualified. Any candidate spending in excess of 300 dollars, de jure or de facto (in value) will be disqualified.

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\(^1\) Or as soon to “immediately” as possible.
\(^2\) In the interest of including persons of all gender expressions, all CRO communications will make use of the gender neutral zir (possessive), zirself (reflexive), and zie (object, subject).
Advertising, and Campaigning
Candidates are actively encouraged to advertise their candidacy using print, verbal, and digital means. All tangible (paper, online) materials must be approved by the CRO before being distributed. This includes, but is not limited to, flyers, posters, websites, banners, facebook blurbs or groups, twitter feeds, etc. Requests for approval should be made whenever possible via email, including a copy of the material, and information on its size, quantity, etc. All materials must contain information regarding the candidate’s platform. Candidates do not need to seek approval for direct communications, such as responding to questions online/in person, twitter tweets, facebook status updates, etc. Any campaign materials or resources must be equally available to other candidates. The use of PGSA listservs, for example, cannot be used unless other candidates can also use it. All active campaigning must cease at the end of the campaign period; hence, no campaigning may occur after the 28th of April. This means candidates must refrain from distributing advertisements, responding to online questions, directing voters to look at campaign websites, etc. During the polling period, candidates may remind PGSS members to vote; however they cannot attempt to influence the vote, since such actions would be seen as grounds for disqualification. Such actions include: wearing or distributing materials related to one’s campaign, sending emails from a campaign site, or with direct links to campaign materials, distributing implied campaign materials (ex: a flyer saying a candidates name, along with a reminder to vote), etc.

A note on Digital Advertising
All digital advertising must contain a prominent, clear, and evident statement that reads:

If any of the information here is untrue, derogatory towards other candidates, or against election rules, notify the Chief Returning Officer elections.pgss@mail.mcgill.ca

Should an online advertisement be in violation of a rule, the CRO will contact you via email. You are required to remove the offending material within twelve hours of the email being sent.

Hustings
Three debates will be held; two at the downtown campus, one at Macdonald. The dates, locations, format, and times will be sent to you via email. While every attempt will be made to accommodate candidates’ schedules, time conflicts may arrive. As candidates are expected to attend these events, prior notice, and documentation of why should be provided if the candidate is not be able to attend. Acceptable reasons for missing a husting may include illness, bereavement, familial, employer or academic conflict.

Candidate Write-ups
In an effort to reach all voters, the PGSS will distribute an email containing a candidate description in English to all PGSS members who have not opted out of our listserv. Thus, please prepare a 750 word statement that must include a description of your platform in English or French. We will see to it that it is translated to English. You may include one link to a personal, professional, academic, or campaign website. This website must adhere to the previously mentioned rules. You may also provide the CRO with a 350 word statement (as well as a photo of you) that will be attached to your name on the online ballot. This will be offered to voters in English and French. We will provide the translation. This statement may also contain a single link to the aforementioned external material. Please note that a link counts as one word as part of the limit.

3 Should the translation be done by PGSS’s translator, the translated statement may slightly exceed the word limit.
Please do not hesitate to contact the CRO for further information

Best of luck to all