

BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE ON
CAMPUS

AMS EXECUTIVE ELECTION

A How-To Guide for Running in the AMS
Executive Election



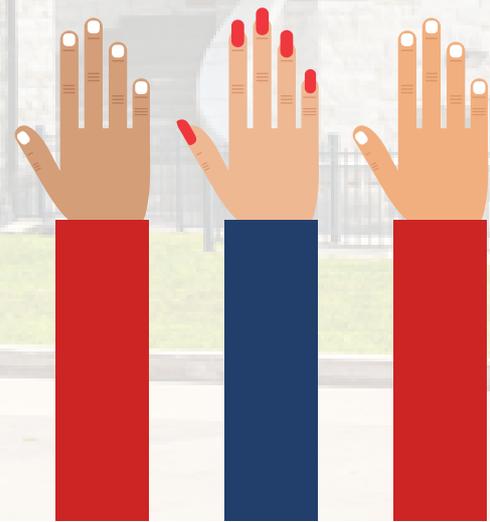
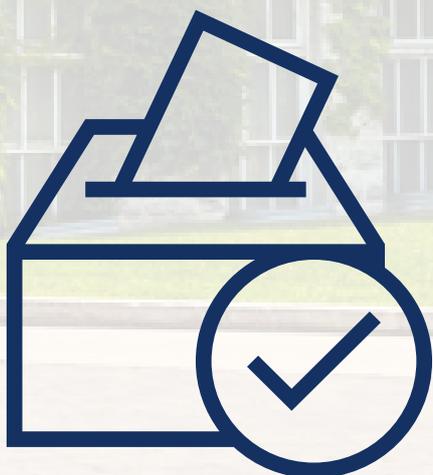
ALMA MATER SOCIETY

SECRETARIAT

Prepared by the AMS Elections Team 2022-2023

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Introduction

Dear Candidate,

Welcome to our How to Run Guide!

So you're thinking about running for AMS Executive. Congrats! This is a super exciting time, and you are about to embark on an adventure that will help you learn more about yourself and your school. This process will inspire you, challenge you and help you grow in ways you never thought possible. While it may seem daunting, it will also be one of the most rewarding experiences of your undergraduate journey.

As head of one of the largest student-led governing bodies in the country, these positions will give you the unique opportunity to learn more about the Queen's students and the surrounding community. As AMS executives you will be able to facilitate change on campus. The lessons you will learn and the skills you will obtain while serving in this role will be invaluable to your post-grad endeavors.

Elections are always exciting, but they also come with their own set of challenges. During this election, you will touch on a wide range of issues affecting students all over campus. You will be able to use your unique skills and experiences to create a platform on how you plan to make a difference.

Whether you've participated in a campaign before, or are stepping into this for the first time, this one-stop guide with everything you need to know to run for AMS Executive. This guide will give you tips on choosing your team, building your platform and running a successful campaign. Throughout the process, from the pre-election season and beyond, the election team will be here to answer any questions and support you in any way we can. We cannot wait to meet potential candidates and hear all the brilliant ideas you will bring forth during this period!

Sincerely,

Nate Feldman, Chief Electoral Officer
Caroline Abouchar, Disputes Deputy
Calder Bryson, Logistics and Finance Deputy
Sylvia Kathirkamnathan, Marketing Deputy

AMS Election Team 2022-2023



Timeline of Events

January 9th

Executive Information Session, Nomination
Packages Available

January 12th - 18th

Nomination Period Opens*

January 26th

Validation at Assembly, All Candidates
Meeting

January 29th - February 5th

Campaign Period

February 2nd

All Candidates Debate

February 6th & 7th

Voting days (Online Campaigning Allowed)

*Nomination packages are available for teams to view and read over the rules and expectations. Signature gathering and package submission is only allowed during the nomination period.



Who are the AMS Executives?

The AMS executives are an integral part of the student government sphere at Queen's. As the oldest and central student government at Queen's, the AMS executives are one of the highest student positions.

The AMS executives are responsible for advocating for students in every faculty and overseeing:

6 Offices

5 Commissions

11 Services

300+ Clubs

The executive panel is broken down into three positions: President, Vice President (University Affairs), and Vice President (Operations).



President

The President is responsible for fulfilling the Alma Mater Society's mandate and mission and acts as an overall representative of Queen's students to external parties. The President manages offices such as Internal Affairs, Human Resources, Marketing, and Communications offices, as well as the Student Life Centre, and Market Research. In addition to managing internal services, the AMS President is responsible for advocating on behalf of Queen's students to the University Administration, Municipal, Provincial, and Federal Governments. The President also sits on the Queen's University Senate, representing the wants and needs of students directly to the highest levels of the University Administration.

Vice President (University Affairs)

The Vice President of University Affairs is responsible for matters of political and educational concern, within the University. They are also responsible for managing many of the commissions that the AMS oversees, such as the Social Issues Commission, Clubs Commission, Environmental Sustainability Commission, External Affairs Commission and the Campus Affairs Commission.

Vice President (Operations)

The Vice President of Operations is responsible for all operational matters that the AMS is involved in or runs. The Vice President (Operations) oversees all AMS services, the Bus-It Program, Health and Dental plans, and the overall budget of the Society. They also manage many of the services that the AMS offers, such as Common Ground Coffeehouse, Walkhome, The Queen's Journal, and Tricolour Outlet.



Parts of the Process

Policy and Procedure

Before deciding to run, ensure that you meet the criteria outlined in the AMS Election Policy found here under Government Policies.

In order to run, you must have paid your AMS membership fee. You must also ensure that you are a member of one of the following student societies:

- Arts and Science Undergraduate Society
- Concurrent Education Students Association
- Physical and Health Education and Kinesiology Students Society
- Engineering Society
- Health Sciences Society
- Computing Students Association
- Commerce Society
- Nursing Students' Society

Please note that you will not be eligible to run if you are currently running for another position within any of the above-mentioned societies and associations. You can run if you are currently employed by any of the above associations and societies as long as you adhere to their policies on employment and running for elected offices.

If you are directly employed by the AMS (in a salaried position) you will be required to take an unpaid leave of absence.



Parts of the Process

If you have met the above criteria, you may register to run! Congratulations! Ensure that you fill out and hand in your nomination packet before the scheduled deadline.

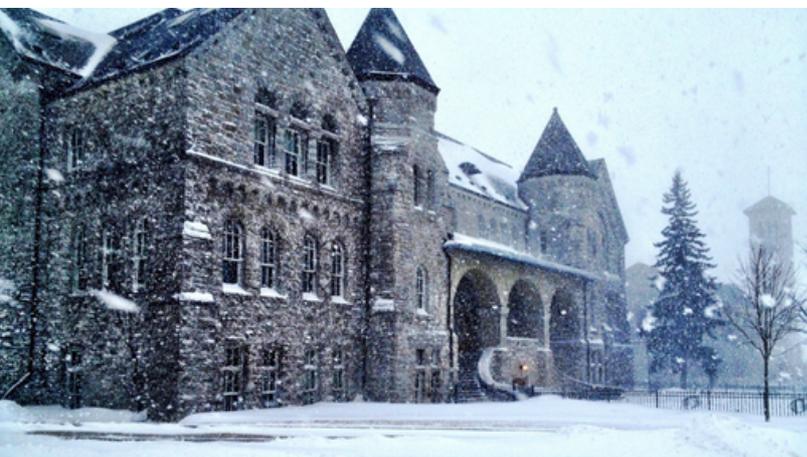
On the first day of the elections cycle, the Elections Office will host a mandatory All-Candidates Meeting in which vital information is shared with candidates about the process of running and being elected. If a team is unable to attend this meeting, please be sure to contact the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) within 24 hours of the meeting to set up an alternative meeting time. Please note that during this time nomination packages will be made available for you to review and familiarize yourself with the rules and expectations. Signature collection and packages submission is not permitted until the start of the nomination period.

Nomination Period (January 12th-18th)

The most important part of the nomination is gathering signatures. All signature collection will be done via an online form. For signatures to be valid they must include student name, Queen's email and student number. You will need 1% of the student body, which equates to roughly **200+ signatures**. Once signatures are collected they can be submitted via email to the CEO for review.

Validation (January 26th)

Once your signatures have been reviewed by the Elections Team you will be notified of your status via email. Once you have been approved, you will be invited to be introduced at AMS Assembly! Here, you will be asked questions about your campaign, your motivations for running, and any conflicts of interest will be identified. This is the official start of your candidacy! Immediately after assembly, there will be an all-candidates meeting where we will go over campaigning rules and voting days!



Parts of the Process (cont'd)

Campaign Period (January 29th - Feb 5th)

The most exciting part of the elections process is the campaign period! This is your opportunity to share your platform with the student body and tell them why you deserve to form the next student government. Exact rules pertaining to the campaign period will all be found in the AMS Elections and Referenda Policy. It is important that you follow all the rules as they are outlined in the policy. **Please carefully and thoroughly read over all elections policies at the beginning of your campaign to ensure that you understand them.** The onus falls on you to ensure that your campaign is in line with AMS Policy. Failure to comply may result in warnings, sanctions and, in some cases, disqualification.

Furthermore, there will be a debate during the campaign period where all candidates will have a chance to discuss their platforms and answer questions submitted by students. Each candidate will have one chance to have a rebuttal against the other candidates.

Voting days (February 6th and 7th)

Voting days take place online, through queensams.simplyvoting.com. Students can use this link to access their ballot, but there will also get an email to their inbox. The winning team will be contacted at 10 pm on the last day of voting. Congratulations, you've finished your campaign! Take this time to take a sigh of relief and be sure to thank your campaign team.

The following elections policy set out by the AMS is integral to running a successful and legal campaign. The Elections Office is happy to provide help with AMS policy and can answer questions that potential candidates may have!



Preparing To Run

Deciding to Run

In an election, it is essential to take the time to decide whether or not to run. Deciding to run involves taking on an increased workload outside of courses and can be stressful at times. To aid in the decision-making process, some helpful ideas to reflect on include; identifying why you wish to run, considering your strengths and weaknesses, and figuring out why you believe you are the best fit for the role.

Identifying why you wish to run in the election is a major first step in the process. This step allows you to make connections between the tasks and projects that the role takes on and your interests. Having a goal and a passion for the position you are running for can aid in building a cohesive campaign that you wholeheartedly support. A few questions you might ask yourself are; **what change do I want to see? Can I picture myself in this position? Is this a position that excites me?** In the end, you want to learn and be inspired through your involvement as an executive. If you are excited and driven to make a difference in the Queen's community, the 'why' you are running should come easily.

Being inspired and passionate, however, is only the first step. Considering your strengths and weaknesses is critical in deciding whether to run. It is essential to be organized and to have a plan and strategy when it comes to elections. Understanding how you work better prepares you for the tasks that will arise while running. As an AMS executive, you will be aiding in the operation of various moving parts, leading meetings, delegating tasks etc. Knowing how you work helps to ensure that you are a fit for the role and that you can accomplish what you set out to do in your platform.



Deciding to Run (cont'd)

Why are you the best fit for the role? What makes you stand out? These questions are daunting but important. Highlight the traits that you have which are relevant to the position. Think of past accomplishments or experiences that have helped prepare you for a role like this. Understand the commitment of the role. Believe in yourself and be true to yourself.

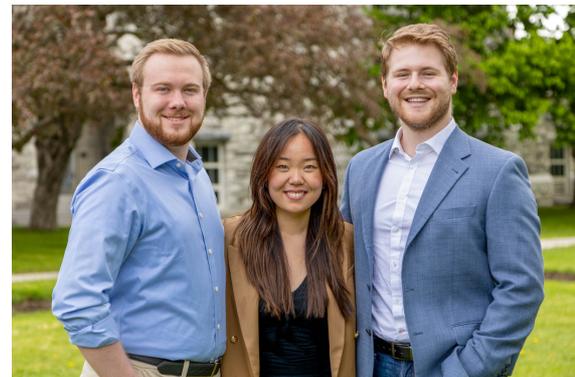
Is there more information about the positions that you want to know before deciding to run? Use your campus resources. Reaching out to past and present students is a great way to make connections and to gain first-hand knowledge about positions. There will also be information sessions during the lead-up to elections which provide further insight into the entire process and what to expect. These will make the process much easier and provide a chance to ask any questions before deciding to run and the campaign period.

Choosing Your Team

Your team is the backbone of your campaign, helping with all things elections. In building your team you must consider what is important to you in a collaborative environment. Your team should be made up of two parts: (1) the candidates and (2) your campaign team and volunteers. You will be working closely with all these people to facilitate your campaign for the executive. Prior to building the team, start by defining your purpose, determining your aspirations and then making sure to monitor and review. These steps will aid in clarifying what you wish to accomplish and ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Skills that are important for the campaign team include;

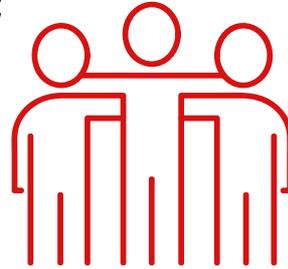
- Communication
- Volunteer management
- Website management & programming
- Budgeting
- Strategy
- Media & photography
- Events & logistics
- Policy



Assigning Roles

Running a campaign is a lot of work, make it easier on yourself by creating different portfolios for your campaign team and spreading out the workload. Here are some commonly found positions within campaign teams;

- Campaign manager
- Media Team
- Logistics
- Rules and Policy
- Platform Strategist



Support

Find people that will support and challenge you. Having a good support system within your team creates a positive environment that will benefit your overall campaign. Find similar-minded people to you who will understand your perspective and be willing to listen and provide constructive help.

Aligned Goals

Make sure your goals are aligned and that roles are well-defined with responsibilities and desires. Being aligned in goals encourages productive and efficient work as everyone is striving for the same thing. Well-defined responsibilities and desires create a sense of trust within a team that everyone has a role to play. This trust also builds incentive to do work which increases the accountability of each team member and improves overall efficiency.

Appreciation

Your team is there for you but don't forget to show them some appreciation! They are part of your campaign and their hard work should not go unnoticed.

Building a Platform

When running in an election, your platform is arguably the most important aspect of your campaign. It is important that your platform reflects initiatives and priorities that you believe the general student body can align themselves with, as well as issues or concerns that you find yourself passionate about here at Queen's. After all, you will be more successful in defending or arguing the importance of the elements of your platform if you are passionate about them. These issues can range from financial accessibility, environmental sustainability, gender and racial representation, and many more.

Building a Platform (cont'd)

When thinking about your platform, the most important step is outlining the core values and beliefs of your campaign. This will allow students to get a sense of what your platform and team stand for, and makes it easier for students to make their decision on voting days. When choosing what to base your platform on, it is important to ask yourself questions such as; **is this a prolonged issue? Can this issue be solved with the level of power I have in this position? Do others care about this issue as much as I do?** This will allow you to narrow down your platform priorities and promises, and ensure they are not only tangible but are a commonality amongst students.

Many candidates choose to structure their platform through the usage of pillars, this being three or four core beliefs that themselves and the rest of their team find to be pressing, or relevant. While this structure is clear and efficient, don't confine yourself to this structure! If you find yourself passionate about multiple broad issues, don't be afraid to include them in your platform.

The next most important step in building your platform is ensuring it is digestible, after all, you want to ensure your voters can understand the issues you want to tackle and learn more about yourself and your team! Try to steer clear of complicated wording in your platform manifesto, or your promotional materials, it's easier to reach larger audiences when everyone can understand what you're trying to say!



Campaign Period

Devising a Strategy

The strategy for your campaign can be as simple or complex as you and your team decide. The campaign period, if your opportunity to market yourself, your platform, and to build relationships with your audience. Whatever strategy you choose, should ultimately communicate your theory of changes, the social context you are working in, problems, your goals and a timeline.

Here are some preliminary questions that you can use when first thinking about how to approach your campaign:

1. What are my goals?
2. Who is my audience? What specific groups am I trying to reach?
3. What do they need to hear?
4. How do I get them to hear it? What materials am I going to use?
5. What resources and strengths can I leverage?
6. What are my weaknesses, where are my knowledge gaps and what challenges will I face?
7. How will I know what is and isn't working?

Understand the Context

When thinking about your campaign strategy, consider the context and the current climate that exists on campus. Try your best to understand voters' thoughts on certain issues and what narratives may dictate or undermine them. Once you've done this, think of ways to use campaign messaging to respond to these issues. Doing this will give you a much better base from which to develop your strategy.



Devising a Strategy (cont'd)

Identify Campaign Stakeholders

Stakeholders are people, groups, organizations or institutions that have unique connections to the issues you are trying to solve. Stakeholders have the power to influence the outcome of your campaign as they may be adversely affected by your target issue, responsible for the issue, or have a unique power to affect the situation. Regardless of their position, identifying and learning about your stakeholders is one of the most important parts of designing a campaign.

Here are some key questions to ask when identifying stakeholders:

1. What is their relationship to my problem and proposed solution?
2. What are the different relationships between stakeholders
3. To what extent can/will they help or hurt my campaign
4. Which stakeholder(s) should I focus on to achieve my goals



Create a Marketing Timeline

Social media can be a powerful tool to reach large groups of people, and staying active on your campaign socials can help you maintain consistent communications with your audience. Planning your social media post in terms of what day and time you will post certain information will not only help keep you accountable but will also keep you engaged with voters. Posting often and multiple times throughout the day or week ensures that voters keep you on their minds and that they are updated on your campaign.

Fact-Check

All eyes will be on you during your campaign, it is important to take a proactive approach towards misinformation. Be wary of all statements you make during your campaign as they can affect the way voters perceive you. False claims and misinformation are difficult to contain once they've been made and voters will hold you to any promises you make during your campaign. Be sure to double-check your facts/sources and implement an approval process to avoid letting anything slide.

Devising a Strategy (cont'd)

Stay Engaged and Be Transparent

Students don't just want to know about your campaign, they want to know who you are both within and outside your campaign. You must embody your campaign persona while also being authentic and staying true to yourself. Additionally, you can further build this rapport by consistently asking and answering questions. Talking to and relating to voters helps build connections and trust, which will help you significantly come voting day.

Additionally, when running for executive, students are looking to you to represent their interests, and this is a huge responsibility. They want to feel confident that, if elected, you will support them. Being transparent with students throughout your campaign will help build trust with your audience and help you gain their support. By doing both of these things, you will be able to show students your willingness to maintain open and honest communication with them.

How to Debate

Whether you are an expert or a newbie when it comes to debates, below are a couple of tips and tricks to help guide you through the process!

Understand the Ins and Outs of Your Platform

This is probably one of the most important things to keep in mind when preparing for the debate. The debate is where students will be able to better understand your platform, and how their interests fit within it. The more you understand your campaign, the more prepared you will be to explain your position and answer questions.

Address All Questions Head-On

Some questions you may be asked during the debate might be complex and, as such, may require complex answers. When necessary, take a pause, think about the question, and answer to the best of your ability. Glossing over or not fully answering questions can come across as disingenuous and looks worse than attempting to answer or stumbling over your words a bit. When you take your time to think about your answers it shows students that you care about the answers you give.



How to Debate (cont'd)

You Don't Have to Disagree with Everything Your Opponent Says

Many issues on campus are not black and white, many are intersectional and overlap with other considerations. Although you are running against each other it's important to remember that you are fighting for the same goal: to improve the student experience. As such, don't be afraid to acknowledge when your opponent makes a good point, maybe add something you think is relevant that they left to put out, explain an alternative/additional approach or even incorporate it into your platform.

Anticipate Opposition

Although some issues might converge, your opponents will be looking for potential gaps and weaknesses in your campaign. Similarly, not everyone is going to agree with your plans or think they are feasible. The best way to deal with it is to be as transparent as possible. Don't just state your ideas, explain them as well. Explain why you came up with them, why you think they are important, how you will implement changes and how you will deal with any barriers that manifest. Doing so will give them a better idea of where you are coming from.

It's Ok to Admit You Don't Know Everything

With so many issues, perspectives and procedures to consider, it is very likely that during the debate you will get a question you don't know the answer to. Maybe it's an issue you never considered or a procedure you didn't know existed. Regardless of what comes up, you don't have to have all the answers and no one expects you to. It's better to admit you don't know than to make something up and say something that may not be true. But rather than simply admitting this gap, express your determination to learn. Doing this will show viewers that you are actively trying to educate yourself on the issues that matter most to them and are trying your best to represent their interests.



Harsh Realities

As we've said before, elections season is a very exciting time, but it also holds its own unique set of challenges. Below are some harsh realities of the campaigning process and ways to manage them.

Dealing with Stress

Election season is a very busy time, a lot goes down in a very short period of time. People can be quite competitive and the campaign can be quite polarizing. Some might even go out of their way to speak out negatively about you and your ideas. This might cause significant tension between candidates and even within your team. This can have profound effects on your mental health, and may negatively impact your enthusiasm for your campaign. It is important to remember to prioritize yourself and your well-being throughout this process. You perform the best when you feel the best. Don't be afraid to delegate tasks when you feel overwhelmed or take time to rest and recuperate as needed. Practice self-care and make time for the things that bring you joy and help ease your mind.

The elections team will always be here to support you and aid you in any way we can throughout this process. If you need more support, please don't hesitate to reach out to on-campus mental health support resources. As the stress and tension build, it's easy to lose sight of why you started. When needed, take a step back and remind yourself why you chose to run and why it is important to you!



Harsh Realities (cont'd)

Handling Discrimination and Biases

Queen's exists in a society where discrimination based on race, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability do exist. In our current climate, these issues have become a crucial part of the conversation. In addition to being judged on your platform and personality, you may also be judged for factors irrelevant to the position you are vying for. During your campaign, regardless of your personal identity, you might find yourself in a situation where you will need to challenge and fight back against these stereotypes.

The student body at Queen's is tremendously diverse in that it is made up of students from different cultural and racial backgrounds, various gender and sexual identities, and physical abilities. Because of this, there is immense value in seeing this diversity represented in their student government. Regardless of what obstacles you face during your campaign, remember that you have a right to occupy these spaces. Students look up to you and your presence is not only valuable but is needed. Your identity provides you with the unique experience, perspective and ability to facilitate a more inclusive environment on campus.

In contrast, it is important to self-reflect and analyze potential biases you may have. What social and cultural blind spots do you have? In what ways might this negatively impact certain groups on campus? Should you be elected, you will be entrusted with representing the interests of all students, including those belonging to marginalized groups. Make sure that both you and your team educate yourself on the issues they experience and how you can best serve them.



Contact Information and Resources

The AMS Elections Team is responsible for facilitating the elections, as well as enforcing any elections rules and regulations. The team is led by the AMS Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

Nate Feldman, Chief Electoral Officer

The CEO is responsible for organizing the logistics, marketing, facilitating the nomination and campaign periods, hearing complaints from teams during the Elections process and responsible for issuing any rulings and/or sanctions about elections. Nate can be contacted at ceo@ams.queensu.ca

Elections Deputies

The election deputies work under the CEO and aid them in facilitating the elections process. Deputies operate under the following three portfolios:

- Caroline Abouchar, Disputes Deputy; disputes_deputy@ams.queensu.ca
- Calder Bryson, Logistics/Finance Deputy; logistics_deputy@ams.queensu.ca
- Sylvia Kathirkamnathan, Marketing Deputy; marketing_deputy@queensu.ca

Amir-Ali Golrokhian-Sani, Secretary of Internal Affairs

The AMS Secretary is responsible for overseeing the administration of the Elections Team, and for ensuring that the process abides by AMS Policy. If you have questions related to elections policy or eligibility, contact Amir at secretariat@ams.queensu.ca

AMS Staff Contact List

If you would like to know more about how a particular service or commission does inquire with those within it! The full contact list for 2022-23 can be found [here](#).



Resources

Policy

- Click [here](#) to view AMS Elections policy

Platform Guide

- This guide will be an important resource during the election period. Please consult this document for rules related to nominations and campaigning. It will be thoroughly reviewed at all information sessions so be sure to attend!

Student Wellness Services

- SWS provides a full range of health and counselling services, including appointments with doctors, nurses and counsellors!

Peer Support Center

- The Peer Support Center (PSC) is comprised of a dedicated group of trained student volunteers, here to offer social and personal peer-based support to students at Queen's. They provided safe and confidential environments where you are encouraged to speak with one of their empathic volunteers



Good Luck !



AMS