



# Ethical Elections

## Importance

- Fairness to candidates
- Members' democratic rights
- Legitimacy of organization
- Relationship with institution
- Legal challenges
- Personal consequences

# Ethical Elections

## Principles

- Fairness
- Independence
- Integrity
- Accountability

## Ethical Elections Challenges

- Reliance on institution
- Limited resources
- Limited powers
- Unethical candidates
- Outside parties

- Reliance on institution
  - Membership list, space, security, evidence
- Limited powers
  - Investigative
  - Enforcement

## Preparation

### Election Rules

- Bylaws, constitution, regulations, etc.
- Candidate handouts
- Ad-hoc rules
- Legislation

- No document should replace bylaws/regulations
- Make sure there are no contradictions
- All candidates should have bylaws/regulations
- Legislation
  - In BC, Societies Act.
  - E.g., criteria for directors

## Preparation

### Logistics

- Timelines
- Staffing
- Spaces
- Notice
- Membership lists
- Coordination with institution
- Legal counsel

- Timelines
  - Notices
  - Ensure there are no impediments (office closed on last day of nominations)
- Staff
  - Enough to ensure no single person is ever in a position to affect results
  - Coverage for breaks, etc.
- Membership lists
  - Ensure the list reflects the actual eligible voters & candidates

# Format

## Paper Ballot

### Advantages

- Control over voting space
- No technical barriers
- Transparent counting

### Challenges

- Polling staff
- Ballot security
- Multiple voting sites

## **Format**

### **Online Voting**

#### **Advantages**

- Simplified logistics
- Accessibility / turnout
- Instant results

#### **Challenges**

- Technical challenges
- Reduced transparency
- No control over voting site

- Logistics
  - Polling staff, Ballot security, Voter list
- Turnout
  - Online / part-time students
- Results
  - No need for recounts, Ranked ballots, Voting data
- Technical challenges
  - Implementing voter authentication, Potential for IT issues
- No control over voting site
  - Should have option to change your vote



## Complaints & Violations

### Process

- Complaint submission
- Initial review
- Response
- Reply
- Decision

- Complaints
  - Require all evidence with complaint
- Initial review
  - Dismiss if insufficient evidence provided or no apparent violation
- Reply
  - Limited to replying to what is contained in response

## Complaints & Violations

### Reaching a Decision

- Written decision
- Show your path of reasoning
- Avoid absolutes
- Legal counsel
- Releasing decision

- Show your path of reasoning
  - Balance of probabilities, Reasonableness
- Avoid absolutes
  - “I have formed an opinion that...”
- Release
  - Coordinate with security / management if warranted
- Decision
  - Presentation included sample decision. Recent ones are currently available at <http://kusa.ca/elections/>

# Bias

## Sources

- Personal interest in outcome
- Favouritism
- Unconscious bias
- Cognitive bias
- Real and perceived



- Perceived bias can be just as damaging to the credibility of the election as real bias. Don't give candidates a reason to believe you would have a bias against them.

# Bias

## Cognitive Bias

- Heuristics
- Confirmation bias
- Satisficing



- Representativeness heuristic: Making judgments based upon the similarity of one thing to its archetype
- Affect heuristic: Making decisions based on emotions, moods, and “gut feelings”
- Satisficing: selection of the first identified alternative that appears good enough

# Bias

## How to Handle It

- Outside party
- By-the-book & consistent
- Accountability measures
- Avoid rushed decisions
- Self-awareness
- Focus on evidence



- Best option is an outside party who has no interest in the outcome. If you can't get one to run the entire election, consider hiring one to handle complaints.
- By-the-book
  - Discretionary power vs. non-discretionary power
    - Election administrators have a lot of power. When you are exercising them, ask yourself whether you actually have discretion in the matter.
    - Don't exercise discretion you don't have. E.g., if rules say nominations have to be submitted by a certain time without providing exceptions, your power to reject the nomination is non-discretionary.
- Cost of error has been shown to increase accuracy in judgment and reduce effect of biasing factors
- Avoid rushed decisions
  - Time pressures increase biasing effects

## Results

- Release to candidates
- Preliminary results
- Final results

- Be very clear that any preliminary results you release are subject to change based on complaints, appeals, etc.

## **Administrator / Adjudicator Qualifications**

- Experience with elections
- Integrity
- Skilled at interpreting regulatory language
- Good judgment
- Disinterested third party

