

Reasoning for Proposed AMS Code Suspensions

Written by Isabelle Ava-Pointon, Chief Electoral Officer of the AMS for discussion at the AMS Council on December 2, 2020.

1. What is proposed for suspension:
 - a. The requirement for physical nomination forms that need to be submitted in person to the AMS Office [Section IX A, Article 2(2)(c)].
 - i. Reasoning: Many students either cannot or do not feel comfortable, physically going to the AMS Offices at this time, and that should not be a barrier to participation as a candidate.
 - b. The requirement for physical polling stations in the Nest and elsewhere on campus, and the hiring and training of Poll Clerks [Section IX A, Article 1B(2)(i) and (j), Article 1C(2)(a)-(d), Article 1C(5)(c) and (d), Article 2(6)(i), Article 5(2), (5), and (8), along with the phrase in Article 5(1) requiring the establishment of polling stations)].
 - i. Reasoning for Polling Stations: The usefulness of physical polling stations has already been in decline over the past few years, since all voting is conducted online. Poll clerks and polling officers have reported few interactions with voters, let alone people actually voting at polling stations. Thus, the main purpose of polling stations over the past few years has been awareness and visibility – they are physical and visual reminders to students that there is an ongoing AMS Election. However, because the vast majority of UBC classes will be online in Term 2, very few students will be physically present on campus to see these polling stations. Based on my experience, I anticipate that the effort required in organizing and setting up polling stations around campus would have a negligible effect on voter turnout.
 - ii. Reasoning for Poll Clerks: The duties of Poll Clerks are to work at voting stations (Article 5.8). Since I do not recommend having polling stations, there will be no need to hire Poll Clerks. However, the decision to hire or not hire Poll Clerks is already under the purview of the Election Committee, so this will not require a Code suspension (Article 1.B. 2(i)).
 - c. The possibility for in-person forms of campaigning: I am recommending the official suspension of all forms of in-person campaigning listed in Article 2.6(f). Current provincial health guidelines recommend that all people not in the same household keep a physical distance of two metres from each other. This is impossible to do when handing out leaflets, buttons, or t-shirts (Article 2.6(f)(i)(ii)(vi)). These campaign objects also have the potential to carry the virus on their surfaces, and there is no practical way to ensure that every campaign button is disinfected prior to distribution. It is also difficult to follow health guidelines related to the distribution of food and non-alcoholic drink in a campaign context (permitted in Article 2.6(f)(v)).

Sources on Public Health Guidelines:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/physical-distancing>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/cleaning-and-disinfecting>

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/food-safety>