

# GUIDE TO AMS ELECTIONS

## TIPS AND TRICKS

All you need to get started in your planning to run for election.

## QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Answering some of the most common questions about elections and the positions up for grabs.

## GUIDE CREATED BY

## SO, YOU'RE INTERESTED IN RUNNING FOR ELECTION?

That's awesome! I'm super happy to hear it. Elections for student leadership positions are how students make their voices heard by electing those special people they trust to advocate for and make decisions on their behalf. By having people like you interested in running for these positions we can ensure that the student movement at UBC is alive and well - and led by our best and brightest colleagues.



**COLE EVANS**

**AMS President  
2020-2022**

## What is the student movement?

The "student movement" is what many student leaders call the student or campus activism that has pushed for better student rights over the history of Canadian post-secondary institutions and beyond. The student movement influences all areas of university life, including political, economic, academic, and environmental changes that make student experiences better. In Canada, student unions like the AMS are usually at the forefront of this movement as the pinnacle organization that represents students. The student movement is alive in other groups as well - in undergraduate societies, clubs, student activist groups - the list goes on.

By running in an election for a student leadership position, you become an important part of the student movement regardless of the outcome of your race.

## But, what if I'm not experienced enough to run?

That's completely okay - you don't need experience to run. To me, these are the only qualities you need to jump into student leadership at the AMS:

- Be **passionate** about the work you want to do.
- Have the **right motivations** to lead and put in the effort.
- Be **ready to learn** a lot, and keep learning while you're in office.
- Really **care** about the work and your responsibility as a student leader.
- Have **goals and ideas** of what you want to accomplish if elected.

Experience can also mean many different things to many people. Just because you haven't been involved with the AMS doesn't mean you don't have other valuable life or career experiences that make you a good fit for the job. There are lots of stories of AMS Executives who have been elected with minimal AMS-related experience and went on to have very successful terms.

When people ask me why I got involved in student leadership, I always give the same cheesy answer. I truly believe in the impact that university experiences have on the lives of young people. Whether it be learning new things, making life long friends, or just discovering how to be an adult, post-secondary experiences are an important part of all our lives. University campuses are also ground zero for many society-changing movements - with many being led by students.

When I got to UBC, I wanted to get involved in a way that I could make positive and meaningful changes to make a difference for others. No matter what position I've been in, my motivator has always been how I can make UBC better for everyone. In my opinion, there is no better opportunity to do this than running for student leadership positions at the AMS, UBC, and in undergraduate societies.

Over the past four years at the AMS, I've had some of the best experiences of my life. I've had successes, failures, and everything in between. It's all apart of the journey of being a student leader, and it's a journey I hope you'll start this elections cycle.

# What positions are available?

There are TONS of different elections to run in, so you shouldn't have a problem finding the position that's right for you.

## President

*Full-time, paid. 35 to 45 hours per week.*

**Areas of focus:** *Pretty much everything. (executive leadership, student engagement, business management, university advocacy, government advocacy, strategic planning, equity and inclusion, indigenous student support and much, much more)*

As President you're not just the leader of the AMS, but also for the UBC student body as a whole. That's a whole lot of responsibility, and the position is as serious as it sounds. Don't let that intimidate you too much though, as this position is well suited for anyone with a desire to lead and a vision for student experiences at UBC. You'll be responsible for ensuring everything at the AMS is running smoothly, and you'll be the chief spokesperson for students to UBC, government, and the media.

## VP Finance

*Full-time, paid. 35 to 45 hours per week.*

**Areas of focus:** *financial planning, organizational budgeting, student fees and funds, business management, health and dental insurance, club and student group support, capital infrastructure planning.*

As VP Finance, you are the treasurer for the whole AMS. This means you're signing off on all expenses and making sure the organization stays financially on track. The VP Finance isn't all about numbers and spreadsheets though, as they play an important role in strategy and planning around student fees, AMS funds, the AMS/GSS Health and Dental Plan, business operations, and club support.

## VP Academic and University Affairs

*Full-time, paid. 35 to 45 hours per week.*

**Areas of focus:** *university advocacy, academic policy, university policy, AMS/UBC relations, UBC tuition and budget, student support, student affordability, UBC capital projects.*

As VP Academic and University Affairs (sometimes called just VP Academic or VPAUA) you are involved with everything on the UBC institutional side of things. You'll meet frequently with senior members of the UBC administration to discuss student concerns and priorities on just about everything. You're also the AMS Executive that's pushing UBC to make student-friendly decisions, and advocating on behalf of students when changes need to be made.

## VP Administration

*Full-time, paid. 35 to 45 hours per week.*

**Areas of focus:** *clubs and student groups, sustainability, AMS Nest operations, AMS capital projects, Hatch Art Gallery, undergraduate societies, internal policies.*

As VP Administration you are responsible for many of the internal operations of the AMS. This includes things like ensuring clubs and student groups are properly supported, overseeing the operation of the AMS Nest, leading the Society's sustainability operations, and developing new capital projects. You also play an important role in developing rules and policies for the AMS, including club rules and building rules.

## VP External Affairs

Full-time, paid. 35 to 45 hours per week.

**Areas of focus:** municipal government affairs, provincial government advocacy, federal government advocacy, UPass and transit planning, student society relations, UBC and UEL community planning.

As VP External Affairs, you are the top advocate for UBC students to all three levels of government. You'll meet frequently with top government officials and push for student-friendly government policy. You'll also liaise often with partners at Translink to ensure students can efficiently travel across the lower mainland. The VP External is also the liaison between the AMS and other student unions across Canada.

## Board of Governors Representatives

2 positions

Part-time, volunteered with some benefits, 10 to 25 hours per week.

As a student representative on the UBC Board of Governors, you'll have a seat on the top non-academic decision making body at UBC. You'll discuss and vote on major UBC decisions, including the UBC budget, tuition increases, personnel management, new building proposals, and more. You'll also meet with many senior UBC personnel to represent students, all while attending Board of Governors meetings (committees and full Board) at least 5 times. You'll also work with other student leaders to push for student priorities throughout the year.

## Student Senators-at-Large

5 positions

Part-time, volunteered, 3 to 10 hours per week

As a student Senator-at-large on the UBC Senate, you'll have a seat on the top academic decision making body at UBC. You'll discuss and vote on major UBC decisions such as academic policy, new courses and curriculum, term dates, admissions policy, course delivery, and more. You'll also meet with many senior UBC personnel, and will attend meetings of the Senate on a monthly basis. You'll work with the Student Senate Caucus to advance student priorities collectively as a united front.

## Constituency positions.

There are also a ton of positions available at the undergraduate society level. Get in touch with your constituency to learn more about what opportunities there are.

### Constituency Executives

5 to 8 positions per constituency

Part-time, volunteered, 20 to 25 hours per week

Similar to the AMS, each constituency also elects its own team of executives. Generally, each constituency will have a President, VP Finance, VP Internal, VP External, VP Academic, and a VP Student Life, with variations from organization to organization. Elections for these positions usually occur in March and April (except the CUS, which holds elections in January), and follow a similar structure to the AMS General Elections. Constituency executive positions are a great way to take a leadership role that is more student life focused, and serves colleagues in your specific faculty or school

### AMS Council Representatives

Part-time, volunteered with some benefits 5 to 15 hours per week

Each constituency elects one or more (depending on the size of the faculty or school) individuals to serve on AMS Council, which is the Board of Directors for the Society. Although they're elected at the constituency level, these representatives are actually part of the AMS rather than the constituency that elected them. Sitting on AMS Council is a great way to get involved at the top of AMS decision making, setting the strategic direction for the Society.

### Faculty Student Senators

Part-time, volunteered, 3 to 10 hours per week

Each faculty also has its own student Senator on top of the at-Large positions mentioned above. Elections for these positions may be changing this year, so make sure you stay tuned to AMS and AMS Elections channels for information.

# Where do I start?

Running for election can seem like a daunting task, but in reality all it requires is just a bit of effort and you'll be well on your way. There's a lot to get into, so make sure you read this whole package to find the information you need. Here is a general checklist of how to get started:

1

## Get nominated.

Pick up a nomination form and collect the signatures you need to nominate yourself for the position you want to run for.

**AMS Elections:** Nominations for AMS Executives, UBC Board of Governors Representatives, and UBC Student Senators opens in early January and closes in February. Come to the AMS Offices on the third floor of the AMS Nest or visit [ams.ubc.ca](http://ams.ubc.ca) to get your form and find more information.

**Constituency Elections:** Each constituency, like the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS) or the Science Undergraduate Society (SUS), set their own election timelines. Stay tuned to their socials and webpages for more information, or reach out to one of their current Executives.

**Tip:** Get your nomination form out of the way early! That way, you can focus more on preparing for your campaign without worrying about submitting your form on time.

2

## Talk to the incumbent.

It's always a good idea to reach out to the person currently in the position you want to run for so you can learn more about the role. Not only will the incumbent be able to share more details about the job with you, but you'll also be able to gain some ideas for your platform.

**Tip:** If you don't feel comfortable talking to the incumbent, or think the incumbent might be running for re-election and won't be honest with you, you have options! You can talk to incumbents from previous years who are out of office, or you can reach out to another Executive you might be more comfortable with.

3

## Get a team.

When running in an election, there's nothing better than having an enthusiastic group of friends there to support you. For AMS Elections, a team of at least 3 to 4 is recommended (the more the better!), whereas for smaller constituency elections having one team member can be enough.

**Tip:** It can be awkward asking friends to volunteer their time to help you, but you'd be surprised by how many people are actually willing to support a campaign. From my experience, close friends who believe in you are always happy to volunteer on a campaign for nothing in return - just because they support you and what you stand for!

4

## Start writing your platform.

Now that you're ready to run, you need to let students know what you'll do if you're elected. A good platform can be what makes you stand out from other candidates, so make sure you spend some time on it.

**Tip:** *A good platform is progressive and outlines change, but it is also realistic. Candidates with good platforms spend lots of time reading and researching to make sure their promises are tangible and they know how they would go about making them happen.*

5

## Make your campaign material.

Now that you've outlined what makes you the best candidate, you need to get the word out! Spend some time making campaign material that looks nice and tells students why they should vote for you. Professional looking materials tell students that you will carry that same level of professionalism into the position you're running for.

**Tip:** *If you don't have skills in graphic design, there are lots of resources that make it easy to design great looking materials. Websites like Canva, Adobe Spark, Squarespace, and others come with templates that make it easy to produce great looking campaign material and what you stand for!*

**Tip:** *Make most of your campaign material before campaigning begins for your election. You'll want to spend more time campaigning, and less time designing.*

## Tips for campaigning.

**In-person canvassing.** Campaigning in its simplest, purest form. Take the time to walk around and talk to students and encourage them to vote for you. Allowing people to see you in person does wonders for gaining support. Many candidates also choose to distribute candy, treats, stickers, or campaign cards while they canvass.

**Classroom announcements.** If you've been at UBC for a couple years, you've probably seen a candidate do a classroom announcement. Classroom announcements at the start of lectures are a very effective way of getting your message out to many students at once. Prep a 60 to 90 second speech to make sure you say what you want to, and it's always a safer idea to reach out to instructors in advance rather than just showing up.

**Get endorsed.** Take time to reach out to different student groups and ask for their endorsement. While one endorsement may not seem like much, it could be enough to put you over the edge in a close race. It's important to remember that you need to earn an endorsement, so you'll see better success by putting in the effort to meaningfully engage with the groups you are seeking endorsement from.

**Social media ads.** Social media ads or post boosts are a great way to get your material seen by many people at UBC. If you take some time to learn how to use ad-managing tools, you can really target your ads to get the best value for your dollar. Heads up that Facebook has introduced new verification requirements for ads, so you'll want to create your ad accounts at least a few weeks in advance.

**Organic digital campaigning.** "Organic" means that your digital posts get seen without you spending money on ads or boosts. It can be just as effective to get your friends to share your campaign posts on their own social channels to reach a wider audience. Taking advantage of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Stories will only make your campaigning easier.

**Lawn signs.** Since the AMS removed the ability for candidates to freely poster around campus, the use of lawn signs has become more prevalent. Lawn signs, when placed strategically, can be a good way to generate name recognition. Lawn signs need to be approved by UBC, so make sure you get your placements approved well in advance.

**Debate prep.** If you're running for an election, you're going to have to participate in one or more debates. Make sure you spend time with your team preparing for your debate. Know your platform, have expertise for the position you're running for, and anticipate what your opponents might talk about

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Do AMS Executives get paid?

Yes, they do! All AMS Executives work full-time (40 hours/week) and make an annual salary of approximately \$39,000 plus benefits.

## How long am I in office?

AMS Executives, like most positions, are elected to one year terms. Your term will start on May 1st and last until April 30th of the following year.

## Can I take courses at the same time?

Yes, you can - however it is strongly suggested that you take a reduced course load. Even 3 courses feels overwhelming when you're already working full time, so it is recommended that AMS Executives only take 1 to 2 courses per term.

## If I'm elected, will I get training?

Yes of course! All new AMS Executives go through an extensive transitional and orientation period with their predecessor. You will feel ready to take over your position the day you officially take office.

## How hard is it to win an election?

It depends! First of all, every election is different depending on how many people are running and how competitive the other candidates are. Secondly, and most importantly, it depends on how much effort you put into campaigning. Even the strongest candidate on paper can be out-campaigned if you work hard enough. The bottom line is that you are in control of your own success in student elections, and nothing is impossible.

## Do I have to pay for campaign materials?

No, you don't. The AMS reimburses the full amount each candidate spends on materials at the conclusion of the election. The Elections Committee also sets an expenditure cap so all candidates spend the same amount of money.

# What are some things to avoid/ be aware of during elections?

This is an important question. While most candidates will have a campaign without issues, they do sometimes come up. Here are some things to look out for during your candidacy so that you can have the best experience possible:

**Read the rules.** Make sure you carefully read all relevant rules for the election you are running in to avoid any unnecessary penalties. Contact the elections official responsible for your election for more information.

**Ignore the negativity.** Elections can sometimes bring out the worst in people, especially online. If you find yourself being subjected to online negativity, the best strategy is to ignore it (as hard as that may be). While it's important to engage with students who have genuine questions, concerns, or critiques, you can never win with someone who has taken it upon themselves to be a jerk. This can be especially prevalent on anonymous forums such as Reddit or "confession" submission pages.

**Avoid the mud.** Campaigns for anything are inherently political, even when we try our best to keep things as clean and apolitical as possible. Don't be tempted into dirty tactics with other candidates, ever. Even when others go low, it is always better to take the high ground as it always works out better in the end.

**No quid pro quos.** This is when someone expects something in return as a result of helping you with something. In student elections, individuals or groups will sometimes request that you give them preferential treatment in exchange for their support or assistance. Decline these propositions in all cases. It's always a safe answer to say "If I'm elected, I will treat you the same as I would anyone else".

**Take care of yourself.** Elections can be very draining both emotionally and physically, so it's important that you have a plan to take care of your own wellbeing. Schedule dedicated time off, ask for extensions on assignments, and ensure you are eating and drinking consistently. Make sure you also have someone to talk to if you need support.

# What if I'm not interested in politics or government?

That's perfect! In fact, it's probably better you come into these roles viewing them as a leadership role rather than a political role. I've always disliked the term "student government", as the AMS functions like a nonprofit organization rather than a government. As long as you enjoy being a leader, you're all set.

# Wrapping Up.

## NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS RUN!

If you've made it this far, there's a good chance that you're seriously interested in running for student leadership. I know that making that big decision to *actually* run is challenging, but trust me, you've got this! If you need to trust something more than just me, trust your gut - it's usually always right.

I wasn't able to touch on *every* aspect of elections in this guide, but hopefully you've found it helpful to get started.

I love talking about elections with prospective candidates, and this year I'm setting aside extra time to chat with people like you who are considering running. No matter what position you're running for, I'd love to talk to you!

If you're interested in meeting with me to talk about elections, feel free to book a time using my Calendly link below. You can also always send me a quick email too.

Best of luck, and I hope to see your name on a ballot soon!

Cole



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Book an elections chat: [calendly.com/amspresident](https://calendly.com/amspresident)