

AMS Policy on Student Activity Fees

1. General

- A. In accordance with Section 3.03 of the AMS Constitution, student activity fees, insofar as they constitute dues or fees payable by Society members, shall be established or altered only via one of the following ways:
 - i. a campus-wide referendum
 - ii. a 2/3 vote of the total membership of the Assembly which shall become effective only upon confirmation by a vote of Society members at a Society Annual General Meeting or Society Special General meeting
- B. Student activity fees may be either mandatory or optional; may be collected for a designated period or until a specified monetary target is reached; and may be subject to automatic annual increases in accordance with some fixed percentage or index. Whether any of these conditions shall apply to a given fee shall be at the discretion of the group responsible for the fee. In all cases, any such conditions shall appear explicitly in the referendum question or General Meeting motion.
- C. Student activity fees shall normally fall under one of the following three categories:
 - i. reviewable optional fees – subject to both individual opt-out and triennial review
 - ii. reviewable mandatory fees - not subject to individual opt-out but subject to triennial review
 - iii. non-reviewable mandatory fees – not subject to either individual opt-out or triennial review
- D. AMS Assembly may designate certain fees as non-reviewable mandatory. Such fees shall be considered essential to student life and to have been established to sustain primary facilities/services that are provided for the use of all Queen's students and/or to provide students with athletic or health services. AMS corporate services shall not be subject to a review insofar as elected and appointed student representatives already provide extensive oversight of those fees via the AMS Board of Directors, and by extension, the AMS Assembly.
- E. Fees designated as non-reviewable are:
 - i. Queen's Student Health, Counselling and Disability
 - ii. Queen's Athletics
 - iii. University Centre
 - iv. Work-Study program
 - v. AMS Specific
 - vi. AMS Health & Dental Plans
 - vii. AMS corporate services
 - viii. Fees for capital projects with a specific monetary objective.
- F. The AMS Health & Dental Plans, although appearing on the student fee schedule as optional, are in fact mandatory unless specific conditions are met for opting-out. Therefore, for the purposes of this policy, these fees shall be considered mandatory and have been designated as non-reviewable.

2. Eligibility

- A. Eligibility for a group to receive a student fee shall be determined during the validation process for the establishment of the fee by the Vice-President Operations and the Commissioner of Internal Affairs and subsequently through triennial review where applicable.
- B. Where a fee is designated as non-reviewable, eligibility of the fee shall be reassessed at such a time where there is a significant change to the affiliation of the group that receives the fee or a substantial change to the mandate or usage of the fee. If such a situation arises, triennial review validation protocol shall be followed and the results shall be referred to Assembly for decision making.

- C. Eligibility shall be subject to conditions which fall under whichever of the following two categories is applicable:
- i. **Internal** – internal groups are defined as those groups which are formally ratified, approved or otherwise administered by the University, the AMS or its member societies. Such groups shall demonstrate the following through the validation process:
 1. Proof of ratification through provision of letter of ratification from the ratifying body or organization during the validation period.
 - ii. **External** – external groups are defined as those groups which are not formally affiliated to any of the above bodies irrespective of whether they have an on-campus presence. External groups shall demonstrate that they meet the following criteria through the validation process:
 1. That they are not replicating services provided by groups of the university or the AMS
 2. That the group is inclusive of all AMS members and all AMS members shall be eligible to be involved in the group or receive benefit from the group’s activities.

In addition, external groups shall make available one of the following:

 - i) a service or opportunity that is available to all AMS members,
 - ii) a have presence in the Queen’s community defined as using funds collected from student activity fees for projects on-campus or through awareness campaigns run on campus.
 - iii. In addition, eligibility is subject to the following provisionsAMS committees shall not be eligible for student activity fees.
 - iv. No athletic group or team shall be eligible to receive a mandatory or optional student fee insofar as they are funded separately by Queen’s University Athletics and Recreation.
 - v. No group or its mandated activities shall be funded by more than one student activity fee unless granted a specific exemption by the VPOPS who shall notify Assembly.
 - vi. Groups who collect a student fee must use the fee to contribute to and enhance student life or to provide services to Queen’s students that are not available on campus as outlined in the eligibility requirements above. No group may collect a fee under the pretext of establishing programming, opportunities and services for Queen’s students and donate that money to an external organization or charity.
 - vii. Student activity fees must overwhelmingly be used within the year they are collected.
 - viii. No commercial or otherwise for profit group or organization may be eligible for a student activity fee.
- D. Where a group has not clearly demonstrated through the validation period that they meet the eligibility requirements, they shall be deemed ineligible.
- E. Where a group does not meet eligibility requirements as determined by the VPOPS, Assembly shall be notified and may overturn that decision by a 2/3rds majority vote.
- F. The overriding priority of the Vice-President Operations and the Commissioner of Internal Affairs in the vetting or review of student fees through the validation process shall be to ensure that student fees requested fall within the eligibility requirements and to ensure that the funding will be expended in a manner that is transparent and accountable.

3. Establishing or Altering Student Activity Fees by Referendum

- A. For a new optional or mandatory student fee to appear on a referendum ballot, a group shall satisfy the following requirements:
- i. Submission of the question to be included on the referendum ballot in accordance with AMS policy on student fee questions
 - ii. Determination by the VP Operations that the group is eligible, as per Section 2 of this policy, to receive a student fee and has fully complied with the requirements set out in Section 3. This determination shall be made during validation period. Where the VP Operations has determined that a group is ineligible, Assembly shall be so informed.

- iii. Submission of a written description of the group or organization seeking the fee and the specific purpose(s) for which the fee revenue will be used. This description shall approximate but not exceed 300 words and shall be printed in the Queen's Journal during the campaign period.
 - iv. Submission of a detailed report to the VP Operations and the Commissioner of Internal Affairs answering the following questions:
 - 1. Why is your group seeking a student fee?
 - 2. Why did your group pick the fee amount stated in the question?
 - 3. When was your group established?
 - 4. What initiatives or efforts are you undertaking to ensure the long-term sustainability of your group?
 - 5. If you have collected a student fee in the past, what initiatives and/or opportunities have you provided the Queen's Community with the collected funds?
 - v. Submission of a budget and/or detailed financial information that clearly indicates how the student fee funding will be expended.
 - vi. Collection of signatures during the nomination period, in accordance with the Society's policy on referenda.
 - vii. Submission of a bond to be returned to the organization at the end of the referendum period provided all rules were followed as outlined in this policy.
 - viii. Attendance at the Assembly meeting immediately following nomination period.
 - ix. Reception of a 2/3 majority Assembly vote in favour of the motion to place the question on the referendum ballot.
- B. All new fees or fees seeking an increase shall be free to choose the referenda ballot on which they are to appear.
 - C. No fee-based question that is defeated may return to referendum or be eligible for approval through Assembly/AGM within the same academic year. For greater certainty, a question relating to the same/similar fee or purpose shall not be considered more than once in the same academic year.
 - D. For a question seeking to establish or increase to an existing AMS corporate service fee or Faculty Society Corporate Service to appear on a referendum ballot, it shall require both a motion in support from the AMS Board of Directors or the applicable Faculty Society Board of Directors/Advisory Board and a 2/3 majority Assembly vote in favour of placing the question on the referendum ballot..
 - E. A group receiving a student fee shall have the authority to decrease its fee or alter its mandatory fee to be subject to individual opt out without requiring external approval. For a decrease to take effect, the group's president or officially designated representative shall notify the VPOPs in writing no later than one week prior to the last Assembly meeting of the winter term. The VPOPs shall notify the Assembly of any such fee decrease.

4. Establishing or Altering Student Activity Fees by General Meeting

- A. To establish or alter an optional or mandatory student fee by General Meeting requires:
 - i. A 2/3 vote of the total membership of the Assembly which vote shall have occurred a minimum of two regularly scheduled Assembly meetings before the new fee is confirmed at a Society Annual General Meeting or a Society Special General Meeting. This period is to ensure that Society members may be properly consulted and informed of the creation of the new fee by General Meeting.
 - ii. Confirmation of an affirmative Assembly vote by a simple majority of Society members at a Society Annual General Meeting or Society Special General meeting,
- B. Groups seeking to establish or raise a student fee via referendum shall submit a 300 word statement with the motion at the Assembly meeting and at the AGM to be circulated with the agenda and kept

on file. Groups (excluding AMS or Faculty Society Corporate services) may only use their student fee allocation for the specific purpose(s) outlined in that description.

- C. For a question seeking to establish or increase an existing AMS corporate service fee or Faculty Society Corporate Service in accordance with this policy also requires a motion in support from the AMS Board of Directors or the applicable Faculty Society Board of Directors/Advisory Board or equivalent board a minimum of two meetings before a Society Annual General Meeting or a Society Special General Meeting.

5. Triennial Review

- A. All student activity fees, unless designated as non-reviewable mandatory fees by AMS Assembly, shall be subject to a review via referendum the third year after each has been established. Thus no student fee shall be collected beyond three years without having been re-approved via a triennial review through referendum. The intent of the triennial review is to provide an assessment of the continuing viability of the fee and/or group where there otherwise exists no such student oversight.
- B. The Commissioner of Internal Affairs shall be responsible for identifying which fees are facing triennial review and shall be responsible for notifying each group in advance of the fall referenda period. However, each fee recipient ultimately bears responsibility for ascertaining the year of its triennial review. In the event that a group's fee fails to appear on the ballot for reasons related to a lack of notification or awareness, it shall be at the discretion of the Assembly as to whether the fee in question shall continue to be collected with the review deferred to the following year.
- C. The Commissioner of Internal Affairs shall attempt to accommodate the preference of each group but shall retain the final authority regarding on which ballot these triennial review fees shall appear. This shall be done with the priority of ensuring that the ballots of each referendum period are of a manageable size for the elections team and that the student electorate is not unnecessarily overwhelmed with student fee questions in a single referendum.
- D. Should a fee be discontinued as a result of its triennial review, it may not return to referendum within the same academic year.
- E. In the event a reviewable optional or mandatory fee successfully seeks an increase prior to its triennial review, that shall be regarded as students having approved that fee and thus it shall not be subject to review for an additional three years from the year of the approved increase. A fee may seek an increase within the same academic year as its triennial review as long as it occurs during the first referendum period. Should the question to raise or alter the student fee fail, it may return for triennial review in the winter referendum period.
- F. Any fee that unsuccessfully seeks an increase shall continue to be collected and shall be subject to its triennial review as determined by the original time period of its establishment/last review.
- G. For a triennial review question to appear on a referendum ballot, a group shall satisfy the following requirements:
 - i. Submission of the question to be included on the referendum ballot in accordance with AMS policy on student fee question.
 - ii. Determination by the VP Operations that the group is eligible, as per Section 2 of this policy, to receive a student fee and has fully complied with the requirements set out in Section 3. This determination shall be made during validation period. Where the VP Operations has determined that a group is ineligible, Assembly shall be so informed.
 - iii. Submission of a written description of the group or organization seeking the fee and the specific purpose(s) for which the fee revenue will be used. This description shall approximate but not exceed 300 words and shall be printed in the Queen's Journal during the campaign period.
 - iv. Submission of a detailed report to the VP Operations and the Commissioner of Internal Affairs answering the following questions:
 - 1. Why is your group seeking a student fee?

2. Why did your group pick the fee amount stated in the question?
 3. When was your group established?
 4. What initiatives or efforts are you undertaking to ensure the long-term sustainability of your group?
 5. If you have collected a student fee in the past, what initiatives and/or opportunities have you provided the Queen's Community with the collected funds?
- v. Submission of a budget and/or detailed financial information that clearly indicates how the student fee funding will be expended.
 - vi. Submission of a bond to be returned to the organization at the end of the referendum period provided all rules were followed as outlined in this policy.
- H. Where a student fee under review is found to be eligible by the VPOPS, the placement of that question on the ballot shall *not* be subject to Assembly approval as the Assembly has already voted on the legitimacy of the fee during its establishment. The Assembly shall only vote (in accordance with policy on establishing or changing fees) to place a triennial review question on the ballot where the VPOPS has determined one of the following through the validation period
- i. The status of ratification or affiliation of the group has substantially changed,
 - ii. The mandate or operations of the group has substantially changed,
 - iii. The way the fee is expended by the group has substantially changed or,
 - iv. There has been a significant change to AMS policy on eligibility requirements for student fees which would affect that fee.
- I. All fees deemed not to be compliant with any of the above requirements during validation shall be presented to Assembly with justification and the Assembly may overturn that decision with a 2/3rds majority vote.

6. Release of Funds to Student Activity Fee Recipients

- A. Before the VP Operations authorizes the release of fee money, he/she shall determine that the group's expenditures of student fee funds and activities are congruent with the conditions established in the group's referendum question and submitted 300 word write-up and that the group still satisfies student fee eligibility requirements as per Section 1 of this policy.
- B. Any group or organization that receives funding from a student activity fee may be required to submit detailed financial records to the AMS VP Operations as a precondition for the release of their funds. These records may include a financial statement for the past year, a proposed budget for the coming year, and a description of the services that they provide to the student body. It shall be at the discretion of the VP Operations to request such documentation. All documents that are submitted shall be considered public, and may be made available to any member of the Queen's Community who wishes to see them.
- C. In reviewing the fee recipient's financial records, should the VP Operations determine that the recipient is using its student fee funding in a manner inconsistent with the intent of the original fee question or that the recipient simply has not been spending its student fee funding in the year in which it was acquired, the recipient's fee money may be withheld and its' fee removed from the fee slate. This decision shall be subject to approval by the AMS Assembly.
- D. Each year, the VP Operations shall audit a minimum of 5% or 10 groups on the student fee slate, whichever is less. There shall be no distinction between groups receiving mandatory fees and groups receiving opt-out fees.

7. Opt-Out Process

- A. The AMS shall schedule an opt-out period each year at the beginning of the fall term when AMS members may opt-out of paying optional fees and the AMS health and dental plans. This period shall be a minimum of two weeks and shall be completed prior to the end of September. The dates shall be

published in the official university fee schedule, on the AMS website and in the Queen's Journal well in advance of the opt-out period.

- B. Opt-out procedures regarding the optional fee slate, including the AMS health and dental plans, shall be determined each year by the AMS VP Operations and may vary somewhat from year to year. They shall be published in the official university fee schedule and made available on the AMS website and in the Queen's Journal.
- C. The costs of the opt-out process shall be shared proportionately by fee dollars received, by groups receiving optional student interest fees. These costs shall not exceed 1% of the group's funds.

8. Assessment

- A. Undergraduate students registered in AMS member faculty societies who are registered in 9 or more units during the Fall term are assessed full mandatory and optional student activity and faculty society fees. Students registered in 9 or more units, and attending Queen's University only in the fall term, are assessed full student activity fees but may have their mandatory fees reduced by 50% upon bringing their student card to the Office of the University Registrar prior to the final add/drop date for courses in the winter term and having their access sticker appropriately altered. Students enrolled solely during the winter term are automatically assessed 50% of mandatory student activity fees. Students enrolled solely in the winter term are not assessed optional fees. MBA students are also assessed undergraduate student activity fees.
- B. Undergraduate students registered in AMS member faculty societies, who would not normally be charged AMS student activity fees, may opt-in at registration or at a later point in a term if they wish to participate in, and have access to, undergraduate student government activities and services.
- C. Exemptions from student fees shall be granted to:
 - i. Students 65 years or old;
 - ii. Students registered exclusively in correspondence, off-campus or evening courses.

9. Student Activity Fee Refund Policy

- A. Students who formally withdraw from the University must submit their student card to the Office of the University Registrar in order to obtain a refund of student activity fees. Students who withdraw or otherwise alter their student fee assessment threshold may receive a 100% refund prior to the final add/drop date for courses in the fall term, and a 50% refund between that date and the final add/drop date in the winter term. No refunds shall be available after the final add/drop date in the winter term.
- B. The AMS Health and Dental Plans are non-refundable after the opt-out period. Optional fees are not prorated/ reduced. The AMS VP Operations may grant a full refund on any student fee assessment where special circumstances are determined to so warrant.

10. Activity Fee Refunds for Deceased Students

- A. In the event a member of the Alma Mater Society becomes deceased at any time during the academic year, all student activity fees paid by the student in that year, will automatically be refunded.
- B. The sole exception will be the AMS Health Plan fee which shall not be refunded. Any student who paid this fee, and thus was enrolled on the plan, is entitled to having a death benefit paid out to his/her family. Insofar as the amount of that benefit would obviously exceed that of the levied fee, it is clear to preserve the family's entitlement.

11. Notification of Student Fee Recipients

- A. The AMS shall seek to make available each recipient's funding as soon as possible in the fall term, subject to the terms of the AMS agreement with the Office of the University Registrar on student fee transfers. Recipients shall normally receive their funding in instalments, with most of their funding made available in the fall term and the remainder in the winter term.
- B. Student fee recipients shall be notified by the AMS to pick up their cheques from the AMS office, or otherwise arrange for collection, as soon as the cheques become available. A group failing to pick up

its cheque at that time shall be given a final notification during the last week of classes in the fall term. Groups shall also be notified in the fall when to pick up their remaining funding in the winter term. Recipients bear ultimate responsibility for collecting their student fee funding.

- C. AMS members should expect that any services/programs/activities for which their student fees are directed, are available as early as possible each academic year. Therefore, in the event a student fee recipient has failed to collect its fee money by Friday of the first week of classes in the winter term, it forfeits its right to that money and its' fee shall automatically be removed from the student fee slate.
- D. If it is determined by the VP Operations that a student fee recipient has become defunct or otherwise inoperative, its funding will be withheld and its fee shall automatically be removed from the student fee slate.

12. Uncollected, Withheld or Otherwise Un-disbursed Student Activity Fee Funds

- A. The normally very small amount of most individual student activity fees and the University's timelines for payments, make it logistically impractical to simply return fee payments by crediting each individual student account. Therefore, student activity fee funding that has been withheld from a recipient, for any reason, shall normally be reallocated by the VPOPs to the AMS Membership Bursary Fund. Where the VPOPs determines this need has been satisfied and/or there is simply additional funding available, the VPOPs shall have the discretion to reallocate any remaining monies to an existing AMS granting committee(s) or to address another area of acute financial need. Any recommendation by the VPOPs for reallocation other than to the AMS Membership Bursary Fund shall be subject to the approval of the Assembly Finance Committee.
- B. The following schedule will be followed:
 - i. Student Fee Cheque Pick Up: All student activity fee cheques must be picked up within one month from the date the cheque has been issued. Any cheque that has not been picked up within one month will be reallocated by the VPOPs to the AMS Membership Bursary Fund. The student group shall then be automatically removed from the student fee slate unless the VPOPs determines there to be special mitigating circumstances.
 - ii. Student Fee Cheque Deposit: Any student activity fee cheques that become stale dated will be reallocated by the VPOPs to the AMS Membership Bursary Fund. A stale dated cheque is any cheque that has not been deposited within six months of being issued. The student group will then be removed from the student fee slate the following year.
- C. The VP Operations shall notify the AMS Assembly of all such transfers and any fee removals.