



## Student Association Purdah Guide

---

The purpose of this document is to provide a transparent election period guide for current E-boards, SA staff, the general student body and visitors that come to SA offices for various reasons. The SA offices need to be an impartial- electioneering free “SAFE” zone.

This guide is not intended to hamper any individual or party from exercising their rights as a candidate within the university community. This guide *is* intended to make sure that regular SA business moves forward and gets done in a positive manner, without being influenced by campaign politics.

- Once election petitions are announced SA Employees enter a period called Purdah. After the mandatory candidates meeting commences the official election period, only normal-course business carries on until the election process is certified as being completed and the winners are announced.
- It is called “Purdah,” which means the custom of going out under a veil or being in a state of isolation.

The Office of Elections and Credentials issues rules and regulations when the election is called and officers, coordinators as well as all staff should make sure they read and understand them. This is a quick guide for SA staff to utilize in carrying out their SA jobs – it is not a substitute for E&C committee rules.

### SA business during Purdah:

- Once the election is called the everyday business of the SA office does continue. The current President, Vice President and Treasurer are still in charge until the end of their term as defined by the SA Constitution, and business carries on.
- After new Officers are elected, current Officers should avoid committing SA to new, continuing or long-term obligations which may “tie the hands” of new Officers in ways which unnecessarily limit their discretion next year.
- Decisions on which a new E-Board might differ should be deferred UNLESS it would harm SA’s interest or waste student money.
- Staff should do nothing which would: interfere in the election process; call into question SA’s impartiality or amount to SA resources being used to support one particular candidate or party.

### E-Board & Staff should:

- Do everything possible to avoid competing with candidates for the public’s attention.
- Ensure they do not use SA resources in a way which would support one party over another.
- Do not announce anything that doesn’t need announcing. If it can wait until after the election without negatively impacting SA programming – it should wait.
- What might seem impartial and objective in normal times might attract criticism and excitement during an election period.

### In short:

- Don’t seek attention for yourself personally or for any candidate
- Don’t do what you can defer
- Do help promote regularly scheduled SA programs and services and help make sure that they succeed
- Be factual

- Consult as often as you need
- Be very, very careful

**Exceptional Announcements:**

- If there is a matter of immediate importance then staff can and should work on it but always seek guidance from the current Officers, professional staff and Elections & Credentials Committee.

**E-Board should avoid:**

- Using SA events, club events occasions or property for campaign purposes.
- Involving SA staff in activities which can be criticised as using them for party political purposes.

**Communications– Be “boring” when dealing with students and or the Press:**

- You can give factual explanations of current SA policy, statements and decisions – taking great care not to get involved in a partisan way in election issues. Again, above all be very careful.
- Provide factual information and refer to previously published material. Try as far as possible to use existing, uncontentious material.
- **The Future:** Any questions as to the future intentions of the SA should not be handled by current SA Staff – this is a matter for the future officers.

**Press, emails and use of listserv:** Should not be used except to promote regular SA business. If the current E-board decides that it is essential to issue information it should be:

- Reports of statutory bodies or committees that need to be published (EG Senate mtg. notices; Assembly mtg. notices; Finance Committee- Budgetary Hearing; etc.)
- No unnecessary gloss – Just the facts (except, of course, we should effectively market regular SA events)
- Avoid background notes listing SA’s achievements
- Use non-controversial language
- Judge each situation on its merits and defer to judgment of the E&C committee regarding anything election-related
- **Interviews:** Candidates for elective office should generally refrain from being interviewed in their capacity as a current SA employee/officer during the campaign period, so as to avoid any confusion as to whether they are speaking as a current SA employee/officer or as a candidate There may be some exceptions but interviews will inevitably be strongly political and best handled through Elections and Credentials Committee.
- **Publishing Information:** Take greatest care to be impartial and objective.
- **Party color or attire:** you will not be allowed to wear any campaign materials or colors used by any parties or affiliates of parties running within the boundaries of the SA offices located on the third floor of the Student Union.
- **There is absolutely no campaigning in the SA Office.**
- **There is absolutely no use of SA equipment, supplies or resources to promote a campaign.**

\* The Election rules provide for, and the E&C Committee supervises, certain neutral forums designed to “level the playing field” between candidates and allow all candidates equal access to promotional resources (in other words, to ensure that a particular candidate or party does not have an advantage or disadvantage based upon their current position in SA or lack thereof).

\* The SA Professional Staff will remain completely neutral between parties, as has been the case every year in the past. It is the job of the Professional Staff to help the E&C Committee ensure a fair and neutral process, and to make sure SA’s interests as an organization are protected for the long-run.

**ABOVE ALL:** Consult Elections and Credentials if you are at all unsure or concerned. They will be able to advise and, in complex cases, will take further advice from the current E-Board or professional staff.