

**Service Standards for
Ensuring Accessible Registration and Voting
Processes for Student Electors**

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Introduction

Student voters participating in the electoral process face unique challenges. Generally speaking, they are highly mobile and may be unfamiliar with registration and voting procedures. First, they must determine their place of ordinary residence. Secondly, they also need to decide which method of voting best suits their needs – by mail, at the local Elections Canada office, at the advance polls or on election day. Finally, they need to understand the different messages they hear about the federal electoral process and how a federal election differs from a municipal or provincial election.

Most of these challenges can be addressed by making students aware of the options they have for registering and voting.

Objectives

This document describes the activities Elections Canada carries out, and the standards we strive to meet, to make registration and voting processes more accessible to student voters. It outlines what election officers need to do to ensure that our services are accessible to students. It also informs our stakeholders of the initiatives Elections Canada is carrying out with respect to student voters.

The overall objectives of this document are to:

- facilitate student participation in the electoral process
- clarify and communicate our standards for student voting to our stakeholders
- ensure that our activities are consistent across electoral districts
- maintain the integrity of the electoral process

Our key stakeholders – students, student associations, administrators of post-secondary institutions, returning officers, field liaison officers, political parties and candidates – also need clear and consistent information about how we address the needs of student voters. By sharing this information with these groups, we are encouraging them to work together to help us achieve our objectives.

Guiding Principles

The following principles underlie our approach to facilitating student voting:

- Students should have the same access to the vote as other voters.
- Students are responsible for determining their place of ordinary residence.
- Outreach to students should be an ongoing effort between and during electoral events.
- A community relations officer for youth will be authorized for any electoral district with at least one post-secondary institution and/or 10 percent or more of its population aged between 18 and 24 years.
- Returning officers must recruit students to offer services to students, whenever possible.
- When political parties provide names of people to be hired as election officers, Elections Canada will continue to encourage them to recommend youth, including student voters, wherever possible.
- All stakeholders need to be aware of the options students have for registering and voting in a timely manner.

Key Concepts

To simplify this document, some definitions have been written in plain language. For example, the *Canada Elections Act* defines a person’s “place of ordinary residence” as:

8(1) ... the place that has always been, or that has been adopted as, his or her dwelling place, and to which the person intends to return when away from it.¹

The Act further states:

8(5) Temporary residential quarters are considered to be a person’s place of ordinary residence only if the person has no other place that they consider to be their residence.

Instead, this document describes *place of ordinary residence* as follows:

- *Address while attending school* refers to a student’s address during the academic year, whether he or she is living in a student residence or at another location.
- *Address while not attending school* refers to the address where a student’s family resides or another address that the student may use when not in school.

Students are responsible for determining which address is their place of ordinary residence.

¹ In case of a by-election, subsection 12(1) of the Act states: “No elector is entitled to vote at a by-election unless his or her place of ordinary residence on polling day is situated in the same electoral district that includes the polling division in which was situated the elector’s place of ordinary residence at the beginning of the revision period established by section 96.”

Voting by Special Ballot Under the Special Voting Rules

Students can vote at the advance polls or at their polling station on election day. Alternatively, they can register and vote by special ballot. A student who wishes to vote by special ballot can register with Elections Canada or at any local Elections Canada office by completing an *Application for Registration and Special Ballot* and supplying satisfactory proof of identity and address. The completed application for registration must be received by a returning officer or Elections Canada in Ottawa no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before election day.

Once the application has been accepted, a special ballot voting kit is provided to the student. The student is responsible for completing the ballot and returning it by the deadline. If a student is voting in his or her electoral district, the completed ballot must be received at the local Elections Canada office in that electoral district no later than the close of polls on election day. If a student is voting away from his or her electoral district, the completed ballot must be received by Elections Canada in Ottawa no later than 6:00 p.m., Ottawa time, on election day.

After a student applies and is registered to vote by special ballot, he or she cannot vote by any other means for that election.

Special ballot kiosks on campus, where students could apply and vote at the same time, **are not** permitted. Other initiatives that offer an opportunity to distribute special ballot application forms only, however, **are** permitted, such as registration desks on campuses for short periods of time, outreach initiatives with student groups, etc.

How This Document Is Organized

This document describes the activities that Elections Canada carries out to register students and explains their options for voting. It is divided into three main sections based on where they live:

- students living on campus
- students living in student neighbourhoods
- students not living on campus or in student neighbourhoods

As the timing of elections varies, an additional section describes the needs of students during a spring or summer election, when many students may not be attending school.

Students Living on Campus

Students living on campus are any students living in traditional or apartment-style residences. For the purpose of this document, these residences also include those that are run, owned or mandated by the college or university whether or not they are located within the campus boundaries.

Registering Students

Targeted revision must be completed in each residence on campus. Revising agents explain to each student what the registration rules and voting options are and will register students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school. Students registered as part of targeted revision do not need to show identification documents or proof of address, if present at the time revising agents show up at their door. However, to vote, electors will have to show satisfactory proof of identity and address.

To make it easier for students to decide which voting option to choose, the revising agents bring special ballot application forms with them and distribute them on request. They explain the basic process of voting by special ballot to any student who considers his or her address while attending school to be in another electoral district. Revising agents do not complete the application forms or collect completed forms.

If the location of the polling site is known by then, the revising agents may tell the students where it is, noting that it is subject to change. The revising agents encourage the students to confirm the location either by checking the voter information card (VIC) when they receive it or by visiting the Elections Canada Web site.

If revising agents cannot contact a student, they leave a *Your Name May Not Be on the Federal Voters List* brochure and a mail-in registration form, but not the special ballot application form. If it is not possible or practical for revising agents to visit each room in a residence, the returning officer may decide to set up a revision desk in the lobby of the residence.

Students who have not registered before election day can register at the polls after providing satisfactory proof of identity and residential address, or by taking an oath and being vouched for by an elector from the same polling division who has satisfactory proof of identity and address. To minimize delays at the polling station, returning officers are encouraged to request extra resources, such as information officers and registration officers, as required.

To improve Elections Canada's understanding of students' registration and voting needs, the revising agents collect statistics on the number of special ballot application forms and mail-in registration forms they distribute.

The returning officer or community relations officer will contact the main student associations during the first week of the election calendar. This information call or meeting will be used to inform the student association of the polling sites selected for the election period and the targeted revision plans for the residences. The returning officer or community relations officer will also contact the administrators of post-secondary institutions at this time to inform them of the planned outreach activities on campus and to review student voting options.

Informing Students of Their Options

The main sources of information for these students are the VIC as well as Elections Canada's targeted advertising campaigns, e-bulletins, toll-free inquiries number and Web site. Also

important are information kiosks (set up where applicable), where students can obtain information about the electoral process and special ballot application forms.

The community relations officer will be an indispensable resource for communicating information about the electoral process by contacting student associations, setting up information kiosks and making class presentations. The community relations officer will also make the returning officer aware of challenges that student electors in the electoral district may face.

Students who are registered at their address while attending school receive a VIC at that address. Reminder cards are sent to all households to encourage students who have not received a VIC to contact Elections Canada to ensure that their names appear on the voters list.

Elections Canada's advertising campaign in print and audiovisual media targets students – for example, with ads in student newspapers. Elections Canada also distributes handouts explaining students' voting options to student organizations, returning officers, political parties and other stakeholders. All of these materials are based on the guiding principles set out earlier in this document. This information is also posted on the Elections Canada Web site.

During the election period, e-bulletins are sent to the administrators of post-secondary institutions as well as returning officers. Returning officers will then forward the e-bulletins to local student associations. Students can also obtain information by visiting the Elections Canada Web site or calling the toll-free inquiries number.

Voting Options for Students Living on Campus

Students are responsible for determining their place of ordinary residence. Students who determine their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school can vote at the advance or ordinary polls in the polling division in which they reside, or they can vote by special ballot. Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while not attending school can vote by special ballot, or should they visit their home electoral district at the appropriate time, they can vote at the advance or ordinary polls for that address.

To ensure students' access to the vote, returning officers are expected to set up polling stations for election day in the lobbies or meeting rooms of student residences. If this is not feasible, they should establish polling stations elsewhere on campus. The best location is one that is convenient but not in a high-traffic area; otherwise, students not living on campus may think that it is set up for all students when it is actually set up only for students living on campus.

Returning officers must also consider the needs of student voters when selecting locations for advance polls. Because advance polls contain more than one polling division, they can be located off campus and still address the needs of all voters in the advance polling district.

At the same time, returning officers must select polling station locations that serve the needs of all voters in a polling division; Elections Canada provides guidelines for this. These guidelines stipulate, among other things, that polling stations should be centrally located, have level access and provide a certain amount of parking. Poll officials must receive training to ensure that they fully understand who is allowed to vote.

All documents proving identity and address must be obtained from a third-party, validated source. Students who are unsure what constitutes adequate documentation can visit the Elections Canada Web site, call the toll-free inquiries number or contact the returning office. In accordance with the *Canada Elections Act*, deputy returning officers have the authority to accept or refuse a document offered as proof of identity or address. This applies only to registration on voting day and voting.

Since students may not change their usual proof of address documentation during the academic year – because of its short duration – they may not have the necessary documentation to provide proof of address. To facilitate this requirement, while maintaining the integrity of the electoral process, the Chief Electoral Officer has designated a letter from the administrator of the post-secondary institution as satisfactory proof of identity and address, the *Attestation of Residence*. In addition, students will still need to provide a second document showing their name.

In this vein, community relations officers will determine whether the administrator of each residence is willing to issue letters attesting to the address of the students living there. (An *Attestation of Residence* is attached for this purpose.) If the university or residence provides students with identification cards that include their address, this form is not required. The administrator of a residence must give the community relations officer a list, and a copy of the signatures, of the persons who may sign these letters on his or her behalf. (If the letters bear the seal or official stamp of the university, this list is not required.)

Should there be a spring or summer election, the returning officer must contact the administrators of each residence to determine the occupancy rate and to ascertain whether the residence contains mainly students of that institution or whether it is used for other purposes (hostel, residence for students of second-language courses, etc). Should the residence be used as a hostel, targeted revision may still be required, based on the returning officer's discretion. If the residence is used for students attending short-term courses or workshops, the returning officer will send the community relations officer there to discuss the options of voting by special ballot. If the residence contains students who may consider that location as their place of ordinary residence, the returning officer is still expected to carry out targeted revision.

If the residence serves mainly students who may consider this their place of ordinary residence, the returning officer should set up a polling station in the residence lobby or other suitable location on campus. The returning officer must meet with the student association in the first week of the electoral calendar to determine the requirement for a polling station on campus. The returning officer or community relations officer will also contact the administrators of post-secondary institutions at this time to discuss the planned outreach activities on campus and to review student voting options.

If student newspapers are not printed during the spring or summer, or on a less frequent schedule, Elections Canada's advertising campaign in student newspapers may be affected. Therefore, the returning officer must use information kiosks and other methods to engage youth in the electoral process. The returning officer must examine the appropriateness of each outreach activity on campus based on the number of students in attendance.

Students Living in Student Neighbourhoods

Student neighbourhoods are areas where many students live; they are usually located close to campus.

Registering Students

Student neighbourhoods tend to be high-mobility neighbourhoods and are therefore areas where targeted revision would normally be carried out. Returning officers identify high-mobility areas during their pre-event assignments, and they conduct targeted revision there during the election period. This enables them to ensure that qualified voters are on the voters lists and to make any necessary changes to the lists of electors.

Returning officers must consult the community relations officer and revision supervisor to ascertain whether any other neighbourhoods should be targeted. Before targeted revision begins, the returning officers must discuss their plans with the local student union(s) and/or student association(s). The returning officers will inform the candidates and/or their representatives about the locations of student neighbourhoods during the candidates' meetings and highlight the targeted revision activities that were undertaken.

Revising agents explain to each student the registration rules and what the voting options are as well as which documents are satisfactory proof of identity and address. The revising agents register students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school.

Revising agents explain the basic process of voting by special ballot to any student who considers his or her place of ordinary residence to be in another electoral district. They do not distribute the application forms, but instruct students on how to obtain them.

Revising agents must make at least two attempts, at different times and on different days, to contact a student. If they still cannot make contact, they leave a *Your Name May Not Be on the Federal Voters List* brochure, which includes a mail-in registration form.

Informing Students of Their Options

The main sources of information for these students are the VIC as well as Elections Canada's targeted advertising campaigns, e-bulletins, toll-free inquiries number and Web site. Also important are information kiosks (set up where applicable), where students can obtain information about the electoral process.

Students who are registered at their address while attending school receive a VIC. Reminder cards are sent to all households; they encourage students who have not received a VIC to contact Elections Canada to ensure that their names appear on the voters list.

Elections Canada's advertising campaign in print and audiovisual media targets students – for example, with ads in student newspapers. Elections Canada also distributes handouts explaining students' voting options to student organizations, returning officers, political parties and other

stakeholders. All of these materials are based on the guiding principles set out earlier in this document. This information is also posted on the Elections Canada Web site.

Voting Options for Students Living in Student Neighbourhoods

Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school can vote at the advance or ordinary polls in the polling division in which they reside, or they can vote by special ballot. Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while not attending school can vote by special ballot, or should they visit their home electoral district at the appropriate time, they can vote at the advance or ordinary polls for that address. Students are responsible for determining their place of ordinary residence.

Students who have not registered before election day can register at the polls after providing satisfactory proof of identity and address or by taking the appropriate oath and being vouched for by an elector from the same polling division who has satisfactory proof of identity and address. Returning officers are encouraged to request extra resources, such as information officers and registration officers, to ensure timely service at the polls.

All documents proving identity and address must be obtained from a third-party, validated source. Students who are unsure what constitutes satisfactory proof of identity and address can visit the Elections Canada Web site, call the toll-free inquiries number or contact the local Elections Canada office. In accordance with the *Canada Elections Act*, deputy returning officers have the authority to accept or refuse a document offered as proof of identity or address.

Returning officers must select polling station locations that serve the needs of all voters in a polling division; Elections Canada provides guidelines for this. These guidelines stipulate, among other things, that polling stations should be centrally located, have level access and provide a certain amount of parking. Returning officers must also consider the needs of student voters when selecting locations for advance polls.

If there is a spring or summer election, targeted revision plans should not be changed for these high-mobility neighbourhoods.

Students Not Living on Campus or in Student Neighbourhoods

Some students do not live on campus or in a student neighbourhood.

Registering Students

Unless these students happen to be living in a high-mobility area or new development, no targeted revision is carried out in their area. Any student, student association or political party that is not sure whether a neighbourhood is targeted for revision can contact the local Elections Canada office. A student can also contact the office to find out whether his or her name is on the voters list for that electoral district.

Informing Students of Their Options

The main sources of information for these students are the VIC as well as Elections Canada's targeted advertising campaigns, e-bulletins, toll-free inquiries number and Web site. Also important are information kiosks (set up where applicable), where students can obtain information about the electoral process and special ballot application forms.

Students who are registered at their address while attending school receive a VIC. Reminder cards are sent to all households; they encourage students who have not received a VIC to contact Elections Canada to ensure that their names appear on the voters list.

Elections Canada's advertising campaign in print and audiovisual media targets students – for example, with ads in student newspapers. Elections Canada also distributes handouts explaining students' voting options to student organizations, returning officers, political parties and other stakeholders. All of these materials are based on the guiding principles set out earlier in this document. This information is also posted on the Elections Canada Web site.

During the election period, e-bulletins are sent to the administrators of post-secondary institutions as well as returning officers. Returning officers will then forward the e-bulletins to local student associations. Students can also obtain information by visiting the Elections Canada Web site or calling the toll-free inquiries number.

Voting Options for Students Not Living on Campus or in Student Neighbourhoods

Students are responsible for determining their place of ordinary residence. Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while attending school can vote at the advance or ordinary polls in the polling division in which they reside, or they can vote by special ballot. Students who consider their place of ordinary residence to be their address while not attending school can vote by special ballot, or they can vote at the advance or ordinary polls for that address, should they be visiting their home electoral district at the appropriate time.

Students who have not registered before election day can register at the polls set up for their polling division of residence after providing satisfactory proof of identity and address. All documents proving identity and residence must be obtained from a third-party, validated source. Students who are unsure what constitutes satisfactory proof of identity can visit the Elections Canada Web site, call the toll-free inquiries number or contact the returning office. In accordance with the Chief Electoral Officer's instructions and the *Canada Elections Act*, deputy returning officers have the authority to accept or refuse a document offered as proof of identity or address.

If there is a spring or summer election, the approach to ensuring accessible registration and voting procedures for these students will not be changed.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Elections Canada and the returning officers are responsible for ensuring that the standards described in this document are achieved to the fullest degree possible.

Returning officers are responsible for:

- Raising awareness among young people and engaging them in the electoral process.
- Ensuring that targeted revision takes place on campuses and in student neighbourhoods.
- Setting up polling sites on campus or, when this is not possible, nearby.
- Hiring community relations officers to convey information to students about the electoral process and address the needs of student voters.
- Wherever possible, hiring students as poll officials and revising agents for student residences and neighbourhoods.
- Ensuring that special ballot kiosks (where students can apply to vote, and vote at the same time), special voting days and similar initiatives **are not** carried out.

Political parties and candidates are encouraged to give returning officers the names of students or young people who can serve as poll officials or revising agents.

Conclusion

Students can participate in the electoral process only when they are aware of their options for registering and voting. Elections Canada is dedicated to creating an electoral environment that is accessible to them. This document describes their options as well as the strategies developed to inform them of these options and to provide services to these electors.