

Holding a FAMF Referendum

This is a resource for Faculty Associations looking to implement a Faculty Association Membership Fee, which is a fee that the SU collects on behalf of the FA with their members tuition, and is then distributed to the FA for their use.

DISCLAIMER

Where this document contradicts Students' Union Bylaw or Operating Procedure or University regulations, the Bylaw or Policy will be considered the authority – NOT this document.

It is the responsibility of each respective Faculty Association to ensure that their practices conform to the requirements of Students' Union and University regulations. This document is not a comprehensive summary of those regulations.

History and Purpose of FAMFs

The Faculty Association Membership Fee was created in 2002 to address a proposal submitted by the Engineering Students' Society working in conjunction with SU Engineering Councilors. The proposal was meant to provide financial stability to faculty associations by giving the groups a regulated method of collecting a membership fee with an opt-out mechanism. The fee is opt-out to recognize that the membership structure of FAs (i.e. that they represent all students enrolled in their faculty) is not adequately reflected in the opt-in membership fees used by most student groups.

Collection of FAMFs

A FAMF is collected by the Registrar at the same time as students' tuition, and is then transferred to the Students' Union to be distributed to the FA. It must go through SU because the SU and the U of A itself are the only bodies that can legally collect mandatory fees from the students.

Organizations that collect a FAMF must conform to the reporting requirements of the Students' Union before their FAMF will be disbursed. Once SU Audit Committee has approved the financial report submitted by the FA, the funds will be disbursed. A FAMF can be terminated by a vote of Audit Committee if the FA is being fiscally irresponsible.

Passing a FAMF Referendum

1. A letter of intent to the SU Vice President Academic

Don't overthink it! Your letter of intent can be as simple as a one-line e-mail that says, "Our FA would like to inform you of our intent to run a FAMF referendum question in the next General Election."

2. Consultation

At minimum, you should consult any departmental associations or faculty-specific clubs that you have some oversight of, and you should consult your membership through a general meeting, a faculty-wide survey, or both. Consultation materials should include the purpose(s) of the FAMF, the amount, and how long it will be collected for. The maximum amount of time is five years. If relevant, you can also consult your Dean's office or other administrators you work closely with.

Document who you consulted, how, when, what their reactions were, and any changes to your proposal that you made as a result of the feedback you collected.

3. Approve your FAMF proposal

Your final proposal should be approved through your own governance processes. This usually means a vote of your Executive Committee and/or Council, and for some it may also mean a vote at a General Meeting.

4. Submit your FAMF proposal to Students' Council

You can submit your approved proposal through your Faculty Councilor, or through the VPA. Send them your final proposal and ask them to put it on the next agenda of Students' Council. Students' Council will then vote on your proposal. If they vote in favour, it will be sent to Bylaw Committee, who will write up a referendum question and send it to the SU Elections Office to be included on the ballot. If they vote it down, then you either have to resubmit a new proposal, or you can't hold the referendum. This is why it's a good idea to present to Council on your proposal in the meeting before they will be voting on it, so that they have a chance to ask you questions and give you feedback.

5. Campaign for your FAMF

Your FA can run the "Yes" side of your referendum if you want, or you can assign that job to one person from your FA or your membership. You must also provide an opportunity for someone from your membership to run a "No" campaign if they want to. Both the "Yes" and "No" sides are similar to Executive candidates in your own elections, and their campaigning should follow the same rules you would apply during an Executive election of your FA, and should adhere to the same budget limitations. Make sure you have an Elections Officer appointed in time to oversee campaigning during the SU General Election.

Timeline

You need to work out a timeline to get your proposal together, based off of when the next election is and how long you think it will take to complete all the steps involved.

Action Required	Deadline*
Notify the SU of your intent to collect a fee	November 15
Submit your proposal to Students' Council	December 15
Council votes on proposal	At least 30 days before the election
Bylaw Committee creates a question	As soon as the proposal is approved
FAMF question forwarded to CRO	As soon as Bylaw has drafted the question

** These are hard deadlines set out in bylaw, and extensions will not be provided.*

If you want a referendum or plebiscite question to appear on the next general election ballot, you will need to start the process a minimum of two months before that election, though you probably want a little more time than that to allow for additional Council readings and the collection of signatures.

FAMF Proposals

Your FAMF proposal to Students' Council should contain, at minimum, the following items:

- The purpose of the fee;
- The amount that will be charged per student, per term;
- The scope of the fee – that is, which students will be charged which amounts?
 - Some groups do not charge off-campus students, or have different fee levels for full-time and part-time students.
- The dates the fee will begin and cease being collected;
 - The maximum is five years.
- The refund mechanism for members who wish to opt-out;
- The allocation of the fee, or what percentage of the fee will go to where;
- The financial oversight of the fee, which means your bylaws or policies that will be implemented to govern how the fee is used and who can approve it;
- Proof of consultation with your membership, departmental associations, and clubs;
- Endorsement by the Association, which can be in the form of the meeting minutes from the meetings where the proposal was approved.