

CONSTITUTION OF THE
University of Ottawa
Biology Graduate Students' Association
Current as of May 2022

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Article 1. Name of the Organization

The graduate students in the Department of Biology of the Faculty of Science of the University of Ottawa are hereby grouped in an association known as the Biology Graduate Students' Association (herein referred to as the BGSA).

Article 2. Aims of the BGSA

- i) To discuss problems common to Biology Graduate Students, and to assist in carrying these problems to the appropriate agency;
- ii) To provide a medium for organizing social, academic, and sports activities;
- iii) To act as an advocate for the general welfare of all Biology Graduate Students at the University of Ottawa.

Article 3. Interpretation of Terms

- i) A "Member" of the BGSA is defined as any registered graduate student in the Biology Department.
- ii) The "Executive" and "Regular Councilors" are defined as described in Section 5.01 and 6.01 respectively.
- iii) The "Council" of the BGSA is defined as the elected Executive and Regular Councilors.
- iv) "Quorum", or the gathering of the minimal number of members of an organization to conduct business, is defined as 10% of Members.
- v) "GSAED" is defined as the Graduate Students' Association des Étudiant(e)s Diplômé(e)s of the University of Ottawa.
- vi) "Majority" is defined as 50% + 1.

- vii) “TA” is defined as a Teaching Assistant, Lab Demonstrator, or Corrector.
- viii) “EDI” is defined as equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Article 4. Circulation of BGSA meeting minutes by the Executive

The VP-Communications shall distribute the minutes as per their duty defined in Section 5.03(d)ii).

Article 5. The Executive of the BGSA

Section 5.01 Composition

The Executive will be composed of six (6) elected Members: The President, Vice President-Internal, Vice-President-Finance, Vice-President-Communications, Vice-President Social Media, and the GSAED Councilor.

Section 5.02 Functions of the Executive

The Executive has the following functions:

- i) To meet regularly;
- ii) To oversee the daily administration of the BGSA and the management of its budget;
- iii) To issue notices of meetings and to propose the agenda for meetings;
- iv) To represent the BGSA at all relevant Departmental and Faculty meetings;
- v) To hold a minimum of one (1) General Meeting occurring either in the Fall or Winter terms as defined by Section 10.01i);
- vi) To review the Constitution annually;
- vii) To organize social events for the Members;

- viii) To each provide in person and/or written guidance to the respective executives-elect regarding the fulfillment of their position's functions, promptly following the election.

Section 5.03 Officer Duties

Each officer, in addition to their duties outlined below, shall provide a report summarizing their term in office and present it at the Fall or Winter General Meeting. In the event that the said officer is unavailable (i.e. they graduate), the newly-elected corresponding officer shall present the report.

(a) The President

The President shall:

- i) Serve as the official contact person for external inquiries;
- ii) Oversee progress of each VP;
- iii) Oversee progress of each ad hoc committee and Regular Councilors;
- iv) Serve as co-signer for BGSA cheques along with the VP-Finance;
- v) Serve as an alternate Student Support Advisor;
- vi) Uphold the functions of the Executive listed in Section 5.02.

(b) The VP-Internal

The VP-Internal shall:

- i) Be responsible to act as a liaison between the BGSA and the Department;
- ii) Attend departmental meetings;
- iii) Serve as an alternate signer of cheques in the event where the President or the VP-Finance is unavailable;

- iv) Be responsible for the nomination of the OCIB chair and/or co-chair within a month after the retirement of the present committee (in the event that the existing OCIB committee does not appoint a new chair/co-chair);
- v) Maintain contact with Faculty Representative.

(c) The VP-Finance

The VP-Finance shall:

- i) Keep financial records;
- ii) Report to the Council regarding the financial situation;
- iii) Ensure that the Council is in financial accordance with the will of the BGSA;
- iv) Serve as co-signer for BGSA cheques along with the President.

(d) The VP-Communications

The VP-Communications shall:

- i) Be responsible for the keeping of minutes at General and Executive Meetings;
- ii) Distribute the Meeting minutes via email to Members;
- iii) Communicate with Members in an appropriate manner (email, newsletter, maintained website, posters, announcements at seminars, etc.);
- iv) Translate all outgoing BGSA communications into both English and French (e.g. email, newsletter, maintained website, posters, announcements at seminars, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and other social media posts);
- v) Forward external, non-translated communications to Members with a brief attached summary of the message in both English and French.
- vi) Work with Bilingualism Officer to translate all outgoing BGSA communications into

both English and French (e.g. email, newsletter, maintained website, posters, announcements at seminars, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and other social media posts)

- vii) Work with Bilingualism Officer to forward external, non-translated communications to Members with a brief attached summary of the message in both English and French

(e) The VP-Social Media

The VP-Social Media shall:

- i) Be responsible for maintenance of the BGSA Facebook group, BGSA website, BGSA Instagram feed, and/or other social media accounts in use by the BGSA.

(f) The GSAED Councilor

The GSAED Councilor shall:

- i) Represent the BGSA at GSAED Council Meetings;
- ii) Attend a minimum of 80% of GSAED Council Meetings;
- iii) Report regularly to the Executive;
- iv) Report to the Members if necessary;
- v) Be responsible for relaying GSAED communications.

(g) The Bilingualism Officer:

The Bilingualism Officer shall:

- i) Liaise closely with VP Communications and VP Social Media to make sure that all outgoing BGSA communications are translated into French, as well as minutes at General and Executive Meetings

Article 6. Regular Councilors

Section 6.01 Composition

The Regular Councilors will be composed of six (6) elected Members: two (2) Social Coordinators, three (3) CUPE Representatives, a Student Support Advisor, and an EDI Coordinator, and shall also include two (2) OCIB Symposium Co-Chairs, who shall not normally be elected but chosen through a selection process internal to the OCIB committee.

Section 6.02 Functions of the Regular Councilors

The Regular Councilors have the following functions:

- i) To meet regularly with the Executive;
- ii) To aid the Executive in carrying out their regular duties outlined in Section 5.02

Section 6.03 Officer Duties

Each officer, in addition to their duties outlined below, shall provide a report summarizing their term in office and present it at the Fall or Winter General Meeting. In the event that the said officer is unavailable (i.e. they graduate), the newly-elected corresponding officer shall present the report.

(a) The Social Coordinators

The two (2) Social Coordinators shall:

- i) Contact Members in the last weeks of August and December with details of intramural team sports offered by the University;
- ii) Encourage graduate students to participate in sports and inform them of the registration deadline;
- iii) Offer to take care/organize the creation of teams, collection of registration forms, and cheques/cash for registration;
- iv) Ensure that Biology Graduate sports teams are registered at the designated place and time specified in the University of Ottawa Intramural Guide;
- v) Compile a list of graduate students interested in playing an individual sport (e.g. squash) and encourage them to contact each other;

- vi) Offer to take the lead in planning, organising, preparing, and delegating preparatory tasks for social events.

(b) The OCIB Symposium Co-Chairs

The two (2) OCIB Symposium Co-Chairs shall:

- i) Initiate the organization of the OCIB Symposium for the academic year by contacting Biology Graduate Students at Carleton University (or the Carleton University Co-Chair);
- ii) Strike an ad hoc OCIB Symposium Committee in conjunction with Carleton University comprising students from both universities;
- iii) Oversee the progress of the OCIB Symposium Committee. The objective of the OCIB Symposium is to invite exceptional biologists to come and present their research and experience in science to graduate students from the University of Ottawa and Carleton University.

(c) The CUPE Representatives

The three (3) CUPE Representatives shall:

- i) Provide information to Biology TAs from the union (e.g. upcoming meetings, changes, etc.);
- ii) Act as an initial contact between the union and any Biology TA as required;
- iii) Attend meetings between TAs and supervisors/employers if deemed necessary;
- iv) Attend Stewards' Council Meetings and report to Members if necessary;
- v) Assist employees in preparing and presenting a grievance (in accordance with the Collective Agreement).

(d) The Student Support Advisor

The Student Support Advisor shall:

- i) Serve as a resource for graduate students if they encounter a non-academic, non CUPE problem;
- ii) Serve as a potential mediator and support between students and supervisors/grad chair if asked;
- iii) Answer anonymously submitted questions through the website.

(e) The EDI coordinator

The EDI (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Coordinator shall:

- i) Lead and organize regular meetings of the Biology EDI Committee, a group open to all Biology graduate students and post-doctoral fellows with the aim of supporting all equity-seeking groups. See Section 11.02 Biology EDI Committee for details;
- ii) Attend Faculty EDI Committee (EDIC) meetings;
- iii) Serve as a resource for graduate students if they encounter an equity, diversity or inclusivity-related problem;
- iv) Work with the Student Support Advisor to act as mediator and support between students and graduate chair/department on EDI-related incidents if asked;
- v) Work with the CUPE representative to bring harassment concerns to CUPE Equity and Education Officer;
- vi) Work with VP Social Media to update EDI Committee events and initiatives on the website.

Article 7. Invited Officials

Members or Non-Members who have been selected/elected for the below positions shall be appointed as Invited Officials, with the following suggested responsibilities, for the duration of the respective terms of their respective position.

Section 7.01 Faculty Council Representative

It is suggested that the Faculty Council Representatives shall:

- i) Attend the soonest Executive Meeting following a Faculty Council Meeting and present a short (<1 page) summary of non-confidential meeting conclusions;
- ii) Submit above summary to Vice-President Social Media and/or Vice-President Communications for dissemination to Members and publication to the website/social media;

Section 7.02 Ad-Hoc Invited Officials

When the Biology Department asks for a representative to sit on committees (e.g. Hiring Committee or Seminar Planning Committee), the Council shall chose the representative using the process below. The Ad-Hoc Invited Official will only represent the BGSA on the specific committee they are assigned to, until the specific committee has finished its task, or the election and voting process outlined in Section 8.02 is completed. Ad-Hoc Invited Officials can apply to as many positions as are available, but cannot transfer to another position without following the process below.

- i) Where possible, the call for applications will occur at least 2 weeks before the deadline for applications, in the middle of the application period, and a day before the deadline.;
- ii) The application package will consist of a 500 word maximum summary of why the applicant is the best for the position;
- iii) After the deadline for applications, a three (3) business day voting period will commence;
- iv) During the three (3) day voting period, the applicant's summaries will be read by all the Council. The Council will vote on each position with each member having a

single vote. If only one individual applies for the position, a vote of confidence/ no-confidence will occur following the same rules as outlined in this section;

- v) Voting shall be by use of physical or online secret voting system;
- vi) In the case of a tie, the President will have the tie breaking vote;
- vii) In the event that the elected individual is not available to fulfill their position, or if no individual applies, the position will be assigned at the discretion of the Council.

Article 8. Elections

Section 8.01 Nominations

- i) Three (3) days prior to the nomination period, an announcement of the upcoming nomination period shall be made by the presiding Executive including the duties of each office;
- ii) The nomination period will open with a clear closing date of seven (7) days;
- iii) Nominees must meet the criteria set forth in Article 3.i);
- iv) The Candidates shall be announced and introduced with each Candidate's paragraph of introduction to all Members in alphabetical order;
- v) A minimum of three (3) days later, the voting process may begin according to Section 8.02;
- vi) The entire election and voting process must be completed prior to the first GSAED Council Meeting of the year beginning in September.

Section 8.02 Elections

- i) Each Member shall have one vote.
- ii) Voting shall be by secret physical ballot or by the use of an online secret voting system;

- iii) Voting shall take place over a one (1) week period following the start of the voting process;
- iv) In the event that only one (1) Candidate is running for an office, a vote must still take place (i.e. a vote of confidence);
- v) An unbiased Member (i.e. a Member not running for a Council position) or ad hoc Election Committee shall preside over the voting process;
- vi) Voting by secret physical ballot must take place during a minimum of two (2) time periods, with at least one (1) occurring during a regular school day. Online secret voting systems must be open during the whole one (1) week voting period;
- vii) The Election Committee shall advertise and oversee the locations and times where the polling stations will be, or where and when the online voting system can be accessed, and record who has voted;
- viii) Voting by proxy may be done by notifying the Election Committee prior to the beginning of the second (2nd) voting time period;
- ix) Upon completion of the second (2nd) voting time period, which may take place at a party (i.e. the ballot box in the corner overseen by the Election Committee), the Election Committee shall tally the votes and report to the presiding President;
- x) In the event of a tie, a re-vote will occur at a time specified by the Election Committee between the candidates involved in the tie. The presiding President shall announce the newly elected Council.

Section 8.03 GSAÉD Councilor Election

- i) In compliance with the GSAÉD Elections and Referenda Policy, the GSAÉD Councilor will be elected each year for a term from May 1st to April 30th.
- ii) The BGSA will inform the GSAÉD Chief Returning Officer of their intention to have GSAÉD facilitate the GSAÉD Councilor election by February 1st of every year.

- iii) The BGSA membership will be informed of the nomination and election periods through BGSA communications.

Article 9. Resignation or Vacancy of an Officer

- i) In the case of resignation or vacancy of an Executive or Regular Councilor position, excluding the GSAÉD Councilor position, the Executive may choose either to hold a by election as per Section 8.02 or to leave the position vacant until the subsequent month of September.
- ii) Vacancies to the GSAÉD Councilor position will be filled according to the GSAED Elections and Referenda Policy 18.2.
- iii) The BGSA membership will be informed of any vacancies or resignations within a timely manner.
- iv) In the meantime, all functions from this vacant position shall be fulfilled by the Executive until the position is filled. Monthly GSAÉD Board of Director meetings will be attended in a Board Observer capacity, as per GSAÉD By-laws 6.8.
- v) In case a Member applies to fill in the vacant position, a vote of confidence/no-confidence shall take place.

Article 10. Meetings

Section 10.01 General Meetings

- i) A minimum of one (1) General Meeting shall occur in either the Fall or Winter terms at a time and location designated by the Executive;
- ii) Meetings shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order;
- iii) The Chair of all General Meetings shall be either a Member familiar with Robert's Rules of Order, OR;

- iv) In the event that no Member familiar with Robert's Rules of Order is available, a non-Member familiar with Robert's Rules of Order shall act as Chair of the General Meeting;

Section 10.02 Council Meetings

- i) The Council shall meet regularly;
- ii) The President shall Chair the Council Meetings.
- iii) Each Member of the Council shall have one vote. In the event of absenteeism from a Meeting, a Member may proxy their vote by contacting the President prior to the Meeting;
- iv) The Chair of the Meeting shall vote only in the event of a tie and only if a Member. If the Chair is not a Member, the motion shall fail;
- v) Voting shall be by use of physical or online secret voting system.

Article 11. Committees

Section 11.01 Ad hoc committees

Ad hoc committees comprising Members and non-Members may be struck for events including, but not limited to, social events, election periods, and academic events. A Member must Chair such a committee and report to the Executive and/or the Members, if necessary.

Section 11.02 Biology EDI Committee

The Biology EDI Committee will be a permanent committee of the BGSA, open to all members of the Biology department (including post-doctoral fellows, faculty, staff, and undergrads), and will operate under the direction of the EDI Coordinator (See Section 6.03e EDI Coordinator). The EDI Coordinator will be responsible for dividing and delegating responsibilities among the group as they see fit.

- i) The group will:

- a. Promote EDI discussion in the department, e.g. through SciLunches, Biomatters magazine articles, seminars, workshops.
- b. Maintain transparency of, and accountability to, the department's EDI efforts.
- c. Advocate for more equitable practises and policies in the department (including for hiring and recruitment, course material that include contributions and features of scientists from underrepresented groups, etc.).
- d. Identify equity, diversity, or inclusivity related concerns in classrooms, labs, supervision, teaching and other academic activities that impact graduate students' academic success and well-being (e.g. through anonymous student surveys, dedicated submission box on BGSA website), and bring these concerns forward to the BGSA and department to solve.
- e. Provide resources to graduate students related to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- f. Provide resources on graduate studies to prospective students, (e.g. liaise with SSA to hold yearly Graduate Information Session to Science undergraduate students, ensure the "Applying to grad school" guide is kept up-to-date).

Article 12. Amendments to this Constitution

- i) A Majority vote of the Members shall be necessary to pass an amendment and/or addition to this Constitution, a regular Quorum being observed;
- ii) Proposed amendments shall be circulated with the proposed agenda of the General Meeting prior to the General Meeting;
- iii) If a Majority cannot be achieved, due to attendance, during the General Meeting the proposed amendments may then be passed by the use of an online secret voting system while still respecting achievement of a Majority vote of the Members to pass the amendment. This online voting must begin within 2 weeks of the General Meeting and the voting period must constitute 7 full, consecutive days.

Article 12. Initiation of this Constitution

This Constitution shall come into effect on May 6th 2022.