

Biology Graduate Students' Association: Constitution

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Biology Graduate Students' Association (BGSA), hereinafter referred to as The Association.

ARTICLE II – OBJECTIVES

The objectives of The Association are

- to promote social interaction between graduate students in biology
- to promote scientific discussion between graduate students in biology
- to represent our members as seen fit
- to promote conditions conducive to a healthy work/life balance

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

All graduate students and post docs currently registered in the Department of Biology at McGill University shall automatically be entitled to full membership of The Association. Aside from this stipulation, The Association shall not discriminate in any way deemed unlawful or inappropriate within the PGSS Constitution, McGill University ethics guidelines, or municipal, provincial and federal law. Students in other departments can attain membership through a vote at a General Meeting.

ARTICLE IV – EXECUTIVE

4a) There shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and a Treasurer.

4b) The duties of the executive shall be as follows;

All execs shall brief incoming replacements for their position when at the end of their term, between the announcement of election results and June 1st (the start/end date of the term).

The President, as chief executive, shall be the chairperson of The Association and shall represent the members at official occasions, or shall designate another executive or officer to represent the members. The President of the BGSA is required to have previously served at least one term as an executive or titled officer of the BGSA, prior to the start of the proposed term as president. If no eligible candidate is available, nominations for elections may be opened to any member (see Article VIII).

The Vice President shall represent The Association in the event the President is unavailable. Additionally, the Vice President shall temporarily assume the role of any other titled officers should they become unavailable. The Vice President shall obtain cheque signing authority.

The Secretary shall take minutes of general meetings of The Association and shall maintain records of The Association.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping records of all monies received and spent as authorized by The Association, and shall prepare the annual budget for submission to the first General Meeting of the academic year.

Financial transactions of The Association require two (2) members of Council with signing authority (the Treasurer and Vice President). (see Article IX).

ARTICLE V – OFFICERS

5a) The Officers shall consist of other titled members of The Association, and provide continuity and core organization to BGSA activities.

5b) The Officers shall be elected annually during general elections by the members of The Association.

5c) Two (2) Officer positions (“First Year Reps”) shall be reserved for new graduate students entering the program in September or January of each year, to be elected at the first General Meeting after September 1st (according to Article VIII).

5d) Each Officer shall be titled in relation to their role within the body. The make- up of the Officers each year can be changed by the Executive pending approval at a General Assembly. At the time of adoption (Feb 2017), the Officer positions are:

Molecular Officer
WIPS Officer
Neuro Officer
Organismal Officer
EEL Officer
International Student Officer
Post-doctoral Officer
First Year Officers (2)
Equity and Diversity Officer
ListServ Administrator
Website Administrator
Media Administrator
Intramural Administrator
Help Desk Administrator

5e) The Officers shall hold office for one year terms, beginning June 1st following general elections. Previous Officers will brief and report to incoming replacements.

ARTICLE VI – EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVES

6a) The BGSA Executives shall be in close contact with members committees to which biology graduate students are entitled to representation, holding meetings as seen fit with such representatives.

6b) Biology graduate students have representation on the following committees and associations (number of positions may change based on BGSA enrollment and are not determined by the BGSA) at the time of approval (Feb 2017), the positions are as follows::

Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM) – 1-2 positions

Safety Committee – 1 position Curriculum Committee – 1 position

Communications Committee – 1 position

Green Committee – 1 position

Graduate Training Committee (GTC) – 1 position

Post Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) – 2 positions

6c) Terms of office will be a maximum of 2 years in duration for departmental representatives, and 1 year for representatives on the Seminar Committee. Terms shall

end on June 1st, unless a person holding a position can no longer fulfill their duties. In this case, they must notify The Association one month prior to stepping down, to allow sufficient time for a by-election to select a replacement.

6d) Representatives will be elected by the members of The Association during general elections (see Article VIII).

6e) In addition to specific duties related to the particular committee, all departmental representatives shall:

Report at least to the BGSA Council, usually by attending regular

General Meetings when possible.

Brief and report to incoming replacements prior to stepping down.

6f) All biology graduate student representatives will be given an opportunity to report to the members of The Association at the regular general meetings. Representatives may also contact the council or members of the Association (e.g. via email) between general meetings.

ARTICLE VII – GENERAL MEETINGS

7a) There shall be at least one general meeting per semester, open to all members of The Association. Additional General Meetings can be called by decision of the BGSA Council. General Meetings are intended to facilitate communication between members of The Association, the Executive, its Officers, and associated Representatives, and to make decisions requiring the input of all Association members.

7b) A General Meeting must be called upon receipt of a petition signed by at least 10% of members of The Association. The meeting shall be called within 2 weeks of the decision by BGSA Council or receipt of the petition.

7c) Notice of a General Meeting shall be given by posting announcements on departmental notice boards and by e-mail (when possible) at least one (1) week before the meeting.

7d) Quorum for a General Meeting shall be 10% of Association members.

7e) All motions shall be passed upon a simple majority vote (>50%). All attending members may vote, and there shall be no proxy votes at General Meetings.

7f) Any changes to the Association's constitution and bylaws shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) within one month of their implementation.

ARTICLE VIII – ELECTIONS

8a) General Elections shall be held between February and May, via electronic ballot using the PGSS online voting system. The voting period for an election or referendum must be at least five (5) consecutive weekdays, which may not include a statutory holiday. There shall be no quorum for elections. Any appeal of election or referendum results must be made within seven (7) days following the close of the election or referendum period.

The Returning Officer shall be one of the Executive members that is not running for reelection. If no such member is available, the Returning Officer shall be a BGSA member who is not running for election, chosen by lottery from a list of volunteers.

Officers (Article V), Executive members (see Article IV) and Departmental Representatives (see Article VI) shall be elected at General Elections during a General Meeting held before June 1st. All members of The Association are eligible to vote in all elections of The Association. The list of elected officers shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) no later than June 1st.

8b) Notice of open positions shall be given at least three (3) weeks in advance of the General Meeting by means laid out in Article VII of the BGSA constitution.

8c) Any regular member of The Association may seek election for open positions. Nominations shall close three (3) days before the start of the election period (or General Meeting), unless no candidates have been nominated for a position, in which case nominations for these free positions shall remain open until the start of the election. The members must be notified at such time (3 days prior to elections) of the closed nominations and candidates for each available position.

8d) In the event of two or more applicants for a single Officer or Executive position, those applying will be notified of each other's candidacy. If jointly agreed, the position can be split by up to three (3) individuals. If any candidate prefers not to split the position, the election of that position will be assigned as Contested and proceed to Closed Ballots. Representative Positions cannot be split (as per external organization rules), and therefore are automatically considered Contested unless applicants decide to step down.

8e) The list of the elected officers for The Association shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) within one week of any changes.

8f) Vacancies during the course of the year shall be filled through by-elections, to take place at a General Meeting. Notice of position, nomination, and voting shall take place as stipulated in Article VIII of the BGSA constitution.

ARTICLE IX – REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

9a) Any member of the BGSA executive, the officers, and the external representatives, hereinafter referred to collectively as the Council and individually as councilors, may be removed from office for impropriety, violation of the provisions of this Constitution, delinquency of duties, or misappropriation of funds by way of a resolution adopted at a meeting of the Council, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the councilors present.

9b) A motion to remove a councilor must be presented in writing to a councilor and signed by at least three (3) of the members of the Council, or ten (10) members of the Society and distributed to all members of the BGSA Council. This motion will specify the position(s) from which the councilor should be removed, as well as the reason(s) as per article 9a for the removal.

9c) The councilor against whom a request for removal from office is directed shall be notified of the place, the date, and the time of the meeting called to remove them at least a week in advance of the meeting. Such councilor must be given the reasonable opportunity to attend and to address the meeting or, in a written statement if they so choose, to put forth the reasons why such councilor opposes the proposed removal from office. Such councilor shall not have the right to vote on their own removal.

9d) Quorum for a motion to remove someone from office shall be 50% of the Council.

9e) If a petition to remove a councilor receives a majority support of total BGSA membership, with a majority defined as 50% plus one vote, that councilor shall be removed immediately upon delivery of the petition to the Council. This petition will specify the position(s) from which the councilor should be removed, as well as the reason(s) as per article 9a for the removal.

9f) Anyone removed from office shall have the right to appeal to the PGSS Judicial Board.

ARTICLE X – FINANCES & MEMBERSHIP FEES

10a) The Association shall conduct fundraising for such programs or activities as it sees fit.

10b) The Association may seek funding from the PGSS in accordance with the PGSS funding program guidelines.

10c) The financial year of The Association shall be from June 1st to May 31st of the following year.

10d) There shall be a bank account under The Association's name with at least two (2) joint signing officers (Vice President and Treasurer) The name and contact information of these two (2) signing officers shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) no later than September 1st. If either the Vice President or Treasurer is unable to obtain cheque signing authority, the President may select any society member willing to replace them.

10e) Both the budget and the final annual financial statement shall be approved annually by The Association at the first General Meeting following the start of the fiscal year. The approved budget and final annual financial statement of the previous year shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) no later than September 1st Amendments to the budget can be approved at subsequent General Meetings.

10f) Membership fees shall be approved by a referendum of the regular members of The Association at a General Meeting. Quorum for the referendum shall be 10% of Association members. Voting for the referendum shall take place by open ballot (i.e. a show of hands). The referendum shall be passed upon a simple majority vote (>50%). All attending members may vote, and there shall be no proxy votes. Votes shall be counted by the Secretary of The Association, or a designated representative. Results of the referendum, including the number of votes for and against the referendum question and the referendum question as read, shall be announced publicly and forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) in a letter signed by the vote-counter, no later than March 1st preceding the start of the financial year in which the fee will be levied. The approval of this fee shall be renewed at least once every three (3) years even if an increase is not sought.

ARTICLE XI – AFFILIATION

11a) The Association shall be affiliated with the Post Graduate Students' Society of McGill University (PGSS) as outlined in the PGSS Constitution.

11b) The Association may choose to be affiliated with other bodies as its membership sees fit.

ARTICLE XII – ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

12a) This constitution was adopted by Lisa Jones, Jonathan Whitely, Jessica Ward, Heather McFarlane, Erin Reardon, Erin Maxwell, Shawn Leroux, Georgina O'Farrill, Zofia Taranu, Richard Feldman, Erika Crispo, Rajee Rajakumar.

Amendment History:

November 28, 2007 – Amendments to Article III, VI, VIII, IX, and X accepted February 21st
2017 – Many amendments clarifying nomenclature, election procedure and abolishing council

January 14, 2019 – Amendments to Articles VIII and IX accepted January 30th, 2019 moving to an electronic voting system and instituting procedures for impeachment.

12b) Amendments to this constitution shall be voted on (and approved / rejected) by open ballot at a General Meeting (see Articles 8d & 8e).

12c) Notice of proposed amendments shall be posted at least one (1) week before the General Meeting, in the manner stipulated in Article VII of the BGSA constitution.