

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 – OBJECTS

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

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.

ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS

4a) There shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and a Treasurer. There shall be no other titled officers of The Association.

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

All officers 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 officer, shall be the chairperson of The Association and shall represent the members at official occasions, or shall designate another officer of the executive 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 other Executive members (see Article IX).

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 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 (see Article 10d).

ARTICLE V – EXECUTIVE

5a) The Executive shall consist of the non-titled officers of The Association, and provide continuity and core organizers to BGSA activities.

5b) The Executive shall be elected annually during general elections by the members of The Association, and candidates for titled Officers shall be drawn from among the elected executive (see Article IX).

5c) Two (2) Executive positions shall be reserved for new graduate students entering the program in September of each year, to be elected at the first general meeting after September 1st (according to Article IX).

5d) The Executive shall hold office for one year terms, beginning June 1st following general elections.

ARTICLE VI – COUNCIL

6a) The BGSA Council shall be the working body of The Association between General Meetings.

6b) The Council shall be comprised of all members of the Executive committee of The Association (titled Officers and members of the Executive). A maximum of 20 people, including Executive and titled Officers, shall sit on the Council.

6c) The President shall call meetings of Council as needed. Council meetings may serve as a setting for handling business not suited for open General Meetings, where input from general members is not necessary or cumbersome. For example, this may include mundane business related to event planning or post-analysis, discussions of issues related to general meetings, how to present issues at general meetings, or issues requiring urgent decisions more easily addressed by the presumed experience or specialized knowledge of council members. While the majority of representation and decision-making should occur at regular General Meetings (see Article VIII), Council meetings provide an alternate framework for specialized business and discussions.

6d) Quorum shall be two thirds of filled seats of Council members.

6e) Council meetings are open to all members of The Association, though only Council members may actively participate or vote at a Council meeting.

ARTICLE VII – REPRESENTATION

7a) The BGSA Council 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.

7b) Biology graduate students have representation on the following committees and associations:

- Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM) - 1 position
- Safety Committee – 1 position
- Curriculum Committee – 1 position
- Graduate Training Committee (GTC) – 1 position
- Seminar Committee – 1-2 positions (one organismal, one molecular)
- Post Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) – 3 positions

7c) 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.

7d) Representatives will be elected by the members of The Association during general elections (see Article IX).

7e) 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.

7f) 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 VIII – GENERAL MEETINGS

8a) 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.

8b) 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.

8c) 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.

8d) Quorum for a General Meeting shall be 10% of Association members.

8e) 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.

8f) Any changes to the Association's constitution and bylaws shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) within one month of their implementation.

ARTICLE IX – ELECTIONS

9a) General Elections shall be held during the month of February, by closed ballots either at a General Meeting, or via electronic ballot (online voting system or email system) if available.

Executive members (see Article V) and Departmental Representatives (see Article VII) shall be elected at General Elections. Officers of The Association (see Article IV) shall be elected by closed ballots from among the Executive members at a General Meeting held before March 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 March 1st.

9b) Notice of open positions shall be given at least three (3) weeks in advance of the General Meeting by means laid out in Article VIII of the BGSA constitution.

9c) Any regular member of The Association may seek election for open positions, providing they acquire the nomination of three (3) other regular members of The Association. 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 position 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.

9d) In the event that 20 people or less run for Executive positions (see Article V), all shall be acclaimed. If there are more nominations than positions on the Council, members of The Association shall vote by selecting 20 nominees from among the list of Executive candidates presented on the ballots.

9e) Ballots shall be secret, and shall be counted in the presence of at least two non-candidate members. Election results (successful candidates for each position) shall be announced to all members of The Association (via email or notice board: see Article VIII) within one week of the closing of elections.

9f) The Officers of The Association shall be elected from among the elected members of

the Executive, at the first General Meeting following the election (or the same meeting if results are available).

9g) The list of the elected officers for The Association shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) within one week of any changes.

9h) 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 IX of the BGSA constitution.

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, both of whom must be members of the BGSA Council, preferably titled Officers. These shall be chosen by Council members, with the expectation that such individuals will run for executive positions over multiple terms (to avoid the difficulty of changing names on the account). The name and contact information of these two (2) signing officers shall be forwarded to the PGSS VP (Finance) no later than September 1st.

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.

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

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 VIII of the BGSA constitution.