



Graduate Student Council Constitution

As approved at May 1999 Meeting
Last amended May 6, 2009

ARTICLE I. OBJECTS AND PURPOSES

Section 1

The objects and purposes to which the Graduate Student Council ("GSC" or "Council") is dedicated are as follows:

- To serve as the official representative body of the students of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) at Harvard University.
- To provide a forum for discussion of issues internal and external of concern to graduate students.
- To represent graduate student interests before the Harvard faculty and administration.
- To organize, promote, and conduct activities beneficial to graduate student life.
- To disseminate information of interest to students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.
- To provide support and assistance to Graduate Student Organizations.
- To own and manage property and accounts which will assist in securing the above objectives.
- To select graduate students for appointment to faculty and university committees.
- To provide a common association among graduate students in all divisions and departments of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1

Membership in the Graduate Student Council is open to all registered students GSAS students who have paid their GSC fee.

Section 2: Students in Degree Programs

Students in advanced degree programs will automatically be members of the GSC unless they decline their membership in writing by waiving the annual Graduate Student Council Fee.

Section 3: Special Students

Special students are not automatically members, but may petition for membership through the GSAS Special Students Office.

Section 4: Traveling Scholars

Traveling scholars are not automatically members, but may petition for membership through the GSAS Student Affairs Office.

ARTICLE III. REPRESENTATIVES

Section 1: Composition

The Graduate Student Council shall consist of those students of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences elected or appointed as representatives to the Council by their respective division, department, committee, program, or officially-recognized student group.

Section 2: Representation

Each division, department, or committee associated with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (as listed in the GSAS Handbook) is entitled to direct representation on the Graduate Student Council. There shall be no more than three representatives per department. The number of representatives accorded to any division, department, or committee shall be dependent upon its total number of students registered within the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; programs with 1-35 students are entitled to submit one representative; 36-70 students, two representatives; more than 70 students, three representatives.

Section 3: Duties

Departmental representatives shall serve as voting members of the Graduate Student Council. Each departmental representative shall receive a single vote in the Council session. All departmental representatives shall represent the concerns of their constituencies before the Council and communicate the proceedings of the Council to their constituencies. Although departmental representatives bear particular responsibilities to the graduate students of their division, they shall also represent the interest of students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at-large.

Section 4: Proxies

If a departmental representative is unable to attend a meeting of the Council, he or she shall appoint a graduate student of that department as proxy, and shall provide the proxy with a signed statement of acknowledgment to that effect. Following the acceptance of the statement by the Chair, the proxy shall assume all duties and privileges of the representative for the duration of the meeting.

Section 5: Elections

Each division, department, committee, or officially-recognized student organization shall be responsible for coordinating its own procedures for selecting representatives. The Elections Committee shall inform all divisions, departments, and committees not currently represented on the Council of the opening of nominations. Selection procedures shall be as determined by the graduate students of the division, department, committee, or student organization.

Section 6: Term of Office

Representatives shall serve a term of office concurrent with the academic year. New representatives shall take office at the first meeting of the fall term and remain in office until the beginning of the next fall term.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS

Section 1: Schedule

Meetings of the Graduate Student Council shall be held once a month while courses are in session. Meetings may be scheduled, rescheduled, or cancelled by vote of the Council or at the discretion of the President.

Section 2: Procedure

Meetings will follow parliamentary procedure as defined in the By Laws. A motion may be proposed by any member of the Council, with the exception of the Chair. A motion may be seconded by any member of the council, with the exception of the Chair and the member proposing the action. Any duly seconded motion shall be passed upon receiving the affirmation of a majority of the members present, and shall be otherwise defeated. Each representative, with the exception of the Chair, may cast one vote. The Chair may not cast a vote.

ARTICLE V. OFFICERS

Section 1

The elected officers of the Graduate Student Council shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, who shall serve as official representatives of the Council.

Section 2: Duties of the President

The President shall serve as Chair of the Graduate Student Council and shall preside at all of its meetings. He or she shall sit as a member of the Committee on Graduate Education, ex-officio. He or she shall serve as the official representative of the Council, and shall have ultimate responsibility for the proper observance of all responsibilities delegated to members of the Graduate Student Council or of any committee thereof.

Section 3: Duties of the Vice President

The Vice President shall serve as acting chair of the Graduate Student Council in the absence of the President, and during such time assume all the duties of that office. He or she shall assist the President in the proper observance of all responsibilities delegated to the members of the Graduate Student Council or any committee thereof. The Vice President shall have the responsibility for regular Council responsibilities including chairing the committees for GSAS Commencement Marshalls and Mentoring Awards. Along with the Secretary, the Vice President also co-chairs the committees for conference and summer research grants.

Section 4: Duties of the Secretary

The Secretary shall keep a record of the proceeding of all meetings of the Council, and shall distribute copies of that record to all representatives before the next meeting of the Council. He or she shall be responsible for all

other correspondence of the Council. He or she shall maintain a current file of all minutes of the meetings of the council, together with any additional documentation of interest to the Council. The Secretary shall keep a current list of the membership of the Graduate Student Council and its representatives to all internal and external committees, and shall inform the chairs of such bodies following selection of those representatives. Along with the Vice President, the Secretary also co-chairs the committees for conference and summer research grants.

Section 5: Duties of the Treasurer

The Treasurer shall serve as Chair of the Budget and Funding Committee. He or she shall keep a full account of money expended and received, and shall make a report of such account at such time as the Council may desire. He or she will coordinate University-administered receipts and all expenditures and financial responsibilities of the Council. He or she shall have charge of all accounts managed by the Council.

ARTICLE VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1: Composition

The Executive Committee of the Graduate Student Council shall consist of the Officers of the Council, the seven at-large representatives, and the Advisor to the Council as voting members. Appointed coordinators shall serve as non-voting members of the Executive Committee.

Section 2: At Large Representatives

One representative from each of the three divisions of the Graduate School (Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences), one representative from the Division of Medical Science shall be elected to serve as members of the Executive Committee, one representative for Interdisciplinary programs, one for terminal Masters degree students, and one for international students. Election of at large representatives will follow the same procedure as the election of officers (Article VIII).

Section 3: Advisor to the Council

Upon the request of the President, the Advisor to the Council will help maintain continuity of the GSC's agenda between administrations. Any previously elected officer (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer) may run for the position of Advisor to the Council. Election of the Advisor to the Council will follow the same procedure as the election of officers (Article VIII). This position may remain vacant if a suitable candidate is not found.

Section 4: Responsibilities

Members of the Executive Committee shall carry out the wishes of the Council between regular Council meetings and pursue the agenda approved by the Council. The Executive Committee shall meet regularly with the GSAS Administration and other University officials. The Executive Committee shall have the authority to fill vacancies in any position of the Council as stipulated in the Constitution.

Section 5: Internal Procedure

The Executive Committee will be chaired by the President of the Council, who shall only vote in the case of a tie. The Executive Committee may meet both in person or by electronic mail. At least one half of the Executive

Committee must be present for a quorum. A majority of the voting members must approve a motion of the Executive Committee for it to be passed. Except as noted, the Executive Committee will follow the same rules and procedures as the Council as a whole.

ARTICLE VII. APPOINTED POSITIONS

Section 1: Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator

The Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Executive Committee to be sure that the Council Constitution and By Laws are upheld. He or she shall also assure that the legislation approved by the Council is carried out by the officers and Executive Committee.

Section 2: Information Coordinator

The Information Coordinator shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Executive Committee. He or she shall be responsible for the information exchange and publicity of the Council, including the Council world wide web pages, electronic mailing list, electronic mail aliases, etc.

Section 3: Additional Positions

Additional appointed positions may be created by vote of the Council and insertion into the By Laws (i.e., Constitutional amendments are not required).

Section 4: Vacancies

If, for any reason, a vacancy occurs in an appointed position, nominations for that position shall be opened immediately by the President, and the vacancy shall be filled at any time by majority vote of the Executive Committee

Section 5: Officer Assistants

Each officer of the Council may, at his or her discretion, appoint a staff to assist in the performance of his or her duties. Staff members shall not be required to be Council representatives.

Section 6: Removal

Individuals serving in appointed positions may be removed from office for dereliction of duties or abuse of power by majority vote of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Section 1: Elections Committee

The Elections Committee shall be chaired by the Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator and shall have the responsibility of overseeing the election of officers and committee representatives.

Section 2: Nominations

Nominations for officers of the council shall be opened on March 1. All members (i.e., not only elected representatives) are eligible for nomination to any office of the Council. All nominations shall be delivered to the Elections Committee.

Section 3: Term of Office

The term of office for Council officers shall run from June 1 — May 31. All officers shall assume office on June 1 following the election, with the exception of officers elected to fill vacancies existing on or after June 1, who will assume office immediately.

Section 4: Term Limits

No member may serve as President of the Council for more than two consecutive terms.

Section 5: Procedure

Election of officers for the following year shall take place at the April meeting as the first item of business. Each representative (as defined in Article III, Section 2) currently in office and in attendance shall be entitled to cast one vote. To be elected, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes cast.

In the event that a candidate should seek a position unopposed, that candidate may be elected by hand count. In the event that two or more candidates should seek a single position, the election shall be conducted by secret ballot.

In the event that three or more candidates should seek a single position, the election shall be conducted by Instant Runoff Vote: all voters shall rank the candidates in order of preference, and each ballot shall be credited toward its first choice candidate. If no candidate should receive a majority of votes, the last place candidate shall be eliminated and ballots credited to that candidate redistributed to their respective next eligible choices. This procedure continues until one candidate receives a majority. In case of a tie for last place at any point in the count, that candidate shall be eliminated who was most recently behind in previous counts; if the tie dates back to the original count, it shall be decided randomly.

Section 6: Vacancies in the Office of President

If, for any reason (including change in student status), a vacancy occurs in the office of President, the Vice President shall become the President and the office of Vice President shall be considered vacant. If the office of Vice President is also vacant, the line of succession shall follow in the order of positions as listed in Article V.

Section 7: Vacancies in Other Elected Offices

If, for any reason (including change in student status), a vacancy occurs in an elected office other than President, the President shall inform the representatives and members of the vacancy and nominations for that office shall be opened immediately. If such a vacancy would cause hardship on the Council, the Executive Committee may select an interim officer until the next Council meeting.

ARTICLE IX. REMOVAL FROM OFFICE

Section 1

An officer can be removed from office for abuse of power or dereliction of duties.

Section 2: Initiation of Recall Procedures

Any member of the Council shall be able to initiate recall procedures by providing a petition signed by at least one-fifth of current representatives to the Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator, who shall verify the signatures. Such a petition must specify the reasons for the recall.

Section 3: Response

The subject of the recall shall have the opportunity to be notified of the charges and have the right to defend him/herself before the Council. He/she may further include a written defense to accompany the validated recall petition when it is distributed to the representatives.

Section 4: Recall Vote

At the next meeting of the Council, the petition will be presented by those initiating it (or their designate(s)) and the subject of the recall given the opportunity to defend him/herself. After a period of questions, the Elections Committee shall hold a recall election in which each representative present is afforded one vote. If two-thirds of those representatives present vote for recall, the office will be declared vacant.

Section 5: Exclusion

The subject of a recall shall lose their vote in the Executive Committee while the recall procedures are pending. If the President is the subject, he or she shall pass the role of Chair of the Council and Executive Committee to the Vice President while the recall procedures are pending.

ARTICLE X. COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

Section 1: Standing Committees

The Graduate Student Council shall have several standing committees:

- Budget and Funding Committee: 5 members plus Treasurer, as ex officio chair and having the responsibility for awarding funds for student organizations and for proposing and overseeing the annual budget of the Council
- Constitutional/By Laws Committee: unlimited membership, chaired by the Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator and having the responsibility for overseeing Council procedure and recommending any structural changes to enhance the efficiency of the Council
- Election Committee: 5 members, chaired by the Parliamentarian/Ombuds Coordinator and having the responsibility for overseeing the elections of the Council
- Graduate Student Health Advisory Committee: unlimited membership and with the responsibility for addressing the health concerns of GSAS students and communicating with University Health Services or other University officials in this regard
- Representative for International Students: one Representative for International Students shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Executive Committee. He or she shall represent international students at GSC meetings and meetings with the university administration.
- Social Committee: unlimited membership and having the responsibility for planning and organizing the social activities of the Council in communication with the staff of Dudley House

Section 2: Ad Hoc Committees

The Council may establish ad hoc committees at any time by majority vote of the Council or of the Executive Committee. Ad Hoc committees shall have the same legitimacy of standing committees, but may be disbanded by majority vote of the Council or of the Executive Committee or upon completion of duties.

ARTICLE XI. SELECTION OF COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Section 1

The Graduate Student Council shall appoint representatives to internal Council and external Faculty and University committees.

Section 2: Eligibility

All members (i.e., not only elected representatives) are eligible to serve on internal and external committees.

Section 3: Election

Members must communicate their interest in serving on an internal or external committee when nominations are opened and/or a vacancy occurs. Committee representatives will be elected by majority vote of the Council. Interim committee representatives may be approved by the Executive Committee under the recommendation of the President and subject to the approval of the Council.

Section 4: Responsibilities

Representatives to committees shall report to the Council on the activities of their committee and represent the concerns of GSAS students to that committee. Representatives must attend all meetings of their committee. All absences must be reported to and approved in advance by the President of the Council

Section 5: Removal from Office

Representatives who do not uphold their duties are subject to recall by majority vote of the Council or Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XII. FINANCES

Section 1: Preparation of Budget

The Budget and Funding Committee shall be responsible for preparing the budget for all Council activities preceding the academic year in which the budget shall take effect. All proposed budgets must be balanced.

Section 2: Financial Records

The Treasurer shall keep a record of all receipts and expenditures of the Council over the course of the year and report on finances to the Council each month.

Section 3

The Budget and Funding Committee shall be further charged with providing support for the basic operating and programming expenses of GSAS student organizations

Section 4: Staff

The Executive Committee or Council may approve the creation of paid staff positions where appropriate and as enumerated in the By Laws.

ARTICLE XIII. BY LAWS

Section 1: Existence of By Laws

The Council shall have an accompanying statement of By Laws which shall serve as the operational document of the Council.

Section 2: Approval

The By Laws shall be adopted by a majority vote of the representatives present.

Section 3: Amendments

The By Laws may be amended in the following manner. An amendment may be proposed by any representative to the Council as a duly seconded motion. If the motion is passed by the vote of the majority of the Council members present, the secretary shall then submit a text of the proposed amendment to all the members of the Council. Ratification by one-half of the representatives in attendance shall be required for adoption. Ratification shall be in writing, and shall be completed at the next meeting of the Council.

Section 4: Suspension

Individual statements of the By Laws may be temporarily suspended by a vote of two-thirds of the representatives of the Council in attendance at a meeting. This suspension shall only be in effect until the beginning of the next meeting of the Council.

ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

Section 1

This Constitution may be amended in the following manner. An amendment may be proposed by any representative to the Council as a duly seconded motion. If the motion is passed by the vote of the majority of the Council members present, the secretary shall then submit a text of the proposed amendment to all the members of the Council. Ratification by two-thirds of the representatives in attendance shall be required for adoption. Ratification shall be in writing, and shall be completed by the second Council meeting after the proposal of the amendment.

ARTICLE XIV. ADOPTION

Section 1

This Constitution shall be effective immediately upon passage.