

Biology Graduate Student Council (BGSC) Constitution 2015-16

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Section 1- Name of the Society

The name of the Society is the Biology Graduate Student Council, “BGSC” herein referred to as “the Society”.

Section 2- Purpose of the Society

The Society aims to represent the interests and needs of biology graduate students and to keep them informed about university and departmental issues. The Society provides a forum for all biology graduate students to voice their opinions on matters important to them through monthly meetings: consensus-based decisions are then carried forward by Society-elected and appointed representatives to the relevant university bodies. The Society also seeks to foster interactions between biology graduate students on both social and academic levels.

Section 3- Membership

Membership in the Society will be limited to graduate students of the Biology Department. All graduate students currently registered (full and part-time) in the Department of Biology are automatically considered members of the Society.

Section 4- Members of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will consist of three administrative positions, eight elected representatives, five Standing Committee coordinators, and any appointed coordinators of Ad hoc Committees.

Elected positions consist of the following:

Administrative Positions

- 1) Council Chair
- 2) Council Co-Chair/Secretary
- 3) Treasurer

Elected Representatives

- 1) Two SGPS Representatives
- 2) Staff and Faculty Representative

- 3) RTP (Re-appointment, Tenure and Placement) Committee Representative
- 4) Graduate Committee Representative
- 5) QUBS Representative
- 6) Alumni Representative
- 7) Union Representative

Standing Committee Coordinators

- 1) Two Social Coordinators
- 2) Two Academic Coordinators
- 3) One Sports Coordinator

Section 5- Duties of the Executive

Members of the Executive fulfill specific needs within the Society. These members are expected to attend regular Society meetings and always have the interests of the entire Society at heart. If the Society feels a member of the Executive is not fulfilling his/her obligations, he/she may be removed by the Society by a motion as outlined in Section 7.

Administrative Positions

Administrative members ensure the smooth running of Society operations as well as schedule, organize, and mediate monthly meetings. Their duties are:

1) Council Chair

- Attends and moderates the Society monthly meetings, and calls special meetings as requested by members.
- Collects correspondence and delivers opinions/statements from absentee members at Society meetings.
- Ensures that consensus-based decisions reached at Society meetings are carried out by the relevant representatives/committees.

2) Council Co-Chair/Secretary

- Replaces the Chair at meetings where he/she is unavailable.
- Announces upcoming meetings and circulates agenda.
- Compiles meeting minutes and posts these on the Society website.
- Updates the Society's website.

3) Treasurer

- Performs monetary transactions as directed by the Society.
- Keeps accurate records of receipts and expenditures.
- Prepares and presents and Annual Report of the Society's finances, including a budget for the following year.

Elected Representatives

The main responsibility of elected representatives is to carry forward the decisions made by the Society to their relevant bodies. Elected Representatives should actively seek out the input of Society members on important matters, both in and outside of Society meetings, and seek to fairly represent the consensus of the group.

1) SGPS Representatives:

- Act as a liaison between the SGPS council and the Society
- Represent the Society's concerns at monthly SGPS council meetings
- Submit written reports to the SGPS council consisting of updates on recent activity within the biology department
- Seek support and advice from the SGPS executive and other departmental representatives on biology-related matters

2) Staff and Faculty Representative:

- Acts as a liaison between Biology Staff and Faculty and the Society
- Represents the Society's concerns at monthly Biology Faculty and Staff meetings
- Is entrusted with a full vote on behalf of the Society on matters of debate (stipend increases, TA workload, etc...)

3) Re-Appointment, Tenure, and Placement Review Committee Representative:

- Represents the Society on matters pertaining to renewal, tenure and promotion of faculty members
- Responsibilities include sitting on RTP meetings, reading and ranking application files, and being familiar with the collective agreement governing academic professionals at Queen's
- Equity training is required and provided by the Department of Biology
- Is entrusted with a full vote on behalf of the Society at RTP meetings
- Only Society members with no conflicts of interest (*e.g.*: a candidate's supervisor is up for tenure or review) during the following year are eligible

4) Graduate Committee Representative:

- Represents the interests of the Society on the Graduate Committee (GC)
- Responsibilities include initial ranking of graduate student applications for external awards (*e.g.*: NSERC, OGS, CIHR, travel grants) and final ranking of internal award applicants (*e.g.*: thesis awards, completion bursaries)
- Attends GC meetings at which he/she discusses departmental and university policies affecting graduate students including funding sources (*e.g.*: changes to TA, RA, and QGA policies)
- Is entrusted with a full vote on behalf of the Society at GC meetings.

5) QUBS Representative

- Attends QUBS committee meetings, at which matters pertaining to the management and operation of the station are discussed
- Is entrusted with a full vote on behalf of the Society at QUBS committee meetings

6) Alumni Representative

- creates and maintains a database of former Biology MSc and PhD students
- organizes/hosts events aimed at fostering discussion on career opportunities following graduation

7) Union Representative (PSAC Steward)

- Acts as a liaison between the Society and the TA Union (PSAC 901)
- Attends monthly Stewards Council meetings on behalf of the Society and is entrusted with a full vote on behalf of the Society at these meetings
- Ensures the Stewards Council and the PSAC 901 Executive are informed about the concerns and issues of Biology graduate students, particularly during collective bargaining
- Attends all Society meetings and updates Biology graduate students on events and issues raised at Stewards Council meetings
- Informs all Biology grad students about details of collective bargaining and other union events and issues

Standing Committees

The primary function of the standing committees is to improve communication and collaboration between Society members, at both the academic and social levels. These committees should seek to foster cohesiveness within the department, while serving the diversity of interests present. While the committees may consist of multiple interested Society members, they are steered by elected Coordinators.

1) Social Committee Coordinators:

- Organize student-centered social events within the Department
- Responsibilities include organizing events such as September Orientation, the “Welcome Back” BBQ, QUBS weekend, and the Holiday Party
- Should be familiar with Queen’s Events Services regulations pertaining to the consumption of food and alcohol on University premises

2) Academic Committee Coordinators:

- Fosters academic collaboration and discussion between Society members
- Responsibilities include maintaining the graduate student Technical Resource Database and the TA Notes Exchange
- Maintain the Biograds Moodle site; a forum for Biograds to discuss tips for teaching various courses, advertise academic events, etc.
- Organize the graduate teaching award; distribute surveys, tabulate results, present the award

3) Sports Coordinator

- Disseminates information from Athletics Services about sport team registration and deadlines
- Maintains a departmental contact list for all intramural sport teams
- Coordinates Society participation in BEWICS sports day
- Coordinates intradepartmental sports activities

Ad hoc Committees

Ad hoc Committees may be struck by the Society on areas of special interest to members that are not covered by the Standing Committees, or in which the Society feels a dedicated committee would be more effective. As these committees are primarily interest driven, its directors are appointed by the Society at general meetings on a case-by-case basis. Areas of special interest could include: community outreach, sustainability-related issues, and hobby-related groups. As

with elected positions, ad hoc committees are expected to represent the interests of the Society and committee directors will be considered members of the Executive.

Section 6 – Electoral Process

- 1) By March 1st of each year, the Secretary will provide notice of elected positions available for the following year. All positions are for one-year terms.
- 2) To be considered for a position, candidates will submit a written notification of their candidacy along with a minimum of five signatures from Society members supporting their nomination no later than 10 working days from the time that the election notice is served. Candidates cannot be nominated for more than one position simultaneously.
- 3) Immediately following the end of the nomination period, a meeting of the Society will be called where the candidates will answer questions from Society members and present their reasons for seeking nomination. Candidates will also submit a written statement, which will be posted in the Society website.
- 4) At the Nomination meeting, the Society will appoint an Elections Officer, who will not be on the slate of nominees.
- 5) Elections shall be held by secret ballot. Ballots will be rank-preference and will be scored using the standard Borda count method. The location of the polling station will be announced during the first week of the nomination period, and be open for the day following the Candidate's Meeting. For positions requiring more than one person, the top ranked candidates will be considered the winners. If there are only as many nominees as positions available for a role, a simple yes/no (alternatively 1/0 ranking) vote will be listed on the ballot to determine the outcome of the election for that role.
- 6) Ballots will be counted and scored by the Elections Officer in the presence of a Biology Department staff or faculty member.
- 7) Election results will be announced to the Society by the Secretary the day following the election.
- 8) Elected executive members will begin their term on May 1st. During the month of April, they will be considered the executive-elect and will meet with the current executive members to discuss the requirements of their positions and receive a yearend report.

Section 7 – Society Meetings

Society meetings serve as the primary forum for establishment of Society policies, positions and discussions and are crucial for its continued wellbeing. It is during these meetings that members of the Executive report on their activities, new concerns are brought forward, and future directions are discussed.

- 1) Society meetings are held monthly. Meeting location, times, and agendas are advertised to the Society by the Secretary, and are open to all members.
- 2) Decisions made by the Society are primarily consensus-based. In the event that substantial consensus cannot be reached, the Chair may call for a vote at the next meeting. Motions will be considered accepted if passed by a 2/3 majority. Each Society member will receive one vote. Proxy votes may be cast with written permission from the absentee members in the event that they are unable to attend a meeting.
- 3) A quorum shall consist of 3/4 of the elected members of the Executive.

Section 8 – Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the Constitution can represent fundamental shifts in the operation of the Society. As such, every step should be taken to ensure that the entire society membership is aware of proposed changes and has a voice in deciding their fate.

- 1) Proposed amendments to the Constitution must be brought to the Chair at least 15 working days before a Society Meeting, and be signed by at least 10 Society members.
- 2) No later than 10 working days prior to the Society Meeting, the Secretary will circulate a notice of the proposed amendment.
- 3) During the Meeting, time will be allotted to discuss the proposed amendment and a vote will be held according to the guidelines in Section 7.

Section 9 – Adoption of This Constitution

This Constitution will come into effect as of March 31st, 2008, contingent on acceptance by a 2/3 majority of Society members. The Constitutional referendum will be held according to the same procedure as outlined in Section 6, with the exception that the ballot will be a Yes/No question and no nominations will be held.

Section 10 – Dissolution of the Society

The Society can be dissolved by a 2/3 majority of Society members, following the guidelines of Section 9.