

# Communication & Culture Graduate Student Association Constitution

Updated September 2015

## Preamble

We the Members of the ComCult GSA, having understood the privilege conferred upon us by our position as graduate students, promise to uphold the principles of fairness, equality and integrity. We pledge to advocate on behalf of our Members in order to improve our program and our host institutions, York University and Ryerson University. By this standard we will represent our interests positively and proactively in order to advance the common goals of our Members. Under these principles we do establish this Communication & Culture Graduate Association Constitution.

## Article 1: Name and Affiliation

The name of this organization shall be the Communication & Culture Graduate Student Association (ComCultGSA) at York University (hereafter referred to as "York") and Ryerson University (hereafter referred to as "Ryerson").

ComCultGSA is an organization representing all applicant, currently and formerly enrolled of all persons affiliated with York and Ryerson (within the context of the Joint Programme) with an interest in Communication & Culture, and in particular, students of the Joint Programme in Communication & Culture.

Whereas those members of ComCultGSA who are currently enrolled at York and Ryerson with an interest in Communication & Culture have general voting rights in ComCultGSA, this group will herein be referred to as the 'Members' of ComCultGSA.

## Article 2: Principles

1. To act as the official liaison and advocate between the members of ComCultGSA and the Communication & Culture faculty and administration.
2. To serve as a practical forum in which members may approach and discuss relevant ComCult academic and social interests.

3. To provide an opportunity for members of ComCultGSA to meet each other on a social basis.
4. To provide opportunities for interaction between members of ComCultGSA and professionals in both the private and public sector of communications and cultural industries.
5. To foster a wide student interest and participation in activities, by providing leadership, seminars, and service.
6. When possible, to elect members for ComCultGSA representation at other organizations/associations/committees and relevant bodies.
7. When possible to apply for awards and honours outside of the ComCultGSA not necessarily tied to financial gain such as course union of the year awards.
8. To facilitate the organization of an annual graduate student conference and creative exhibition (Intersections/Cross-Sections.)

## **Article 3: Relationship to RSU Grad Council**

RSU (the Ryerson Students' Union) Grad Council will not normally interfere in the activities and operations of the organization. It does however, have the power to investigate complaints made by any member of the organization concerning alleged violations of this constitution.

## **Article 4: Membership**

ComCultGSA membership consists of the whole York and Ryerson community currently enrolled in the Joint Communication & Culture Programme.

Communication & Culture Graduate Programme students hold voting and office-holding privileges.

Graduate students enrolled within the joint program in Communication & Culture are strongly encouraged to become active members of ComCultGSA. No fee is required.

### **ComCultGSA Council**

The ComCultGSA Council consists of those duly elected representatives as defined in Article 4.1-3 of this Constitution.

All members of the ComCultGSA are welcome and have voting rights at General Meetings as outlined in Article 6 of this Constitution.

## 4.1 Executive Committee

The executive committee of ComCultGSA shall consist of one (1) of each of the following for each university (York and Ryerson):

- President
- Vice-President

As well as one (1) of each from either university (York or Ryerson)

- Vice President of Finance
- Vice President of Communications

The above positions will be filled via the electoral process outlined in Article 7 of this Constitution.

## 4.2 Duties of the Executive Committee

### **President:**

To call, schedule and preside at Executive Committee and General Meetings; appoint special committees with the recommendation of the Executive Committee. To attend to all correspondence of ComCultGSA. Shall be one of the signing officers of the association's funds.

Unless otherwise agreed upon, it will be the Presidents' responsibility to organize and hold a formal Hand Over Meeting in the Fall Term for the incoming GSA (usually the new GSA's first meeting of the new school year). If the Presidents cannot put this package together, one or more members of the Executive will take on this responsibility.

### **Vice Presidents**

To preside in the President's absence and perform as outlined above. Plan and organize term parties, publicity and fundraising for activities and special events. To record and disseminate minutes from ComCultGSA meetings to the student body. To liaise with other graduate student associations regarding external graduate student issues.

### **Vice President of Finance**

To supervise the financial administration of the ComCultGSA account periodically and report to the Executive Committee and membership on the financial condition of the organization, as well as perform other such duties as may be required. Shall be one of the signing officers of the association's funds. To keep all receipts for future recording and oversee all funding applications (ex. Ryerson's PFACS fund). The VP of Finance will only be a part of the application

process, not necessarily the initiative seeking funding.

The VP of Finance must have or will develop a working knowledge of different funding opportunities, which will provide financial support for new student events and projects that benefit the Communication & Culture community.

### **Vice President of Communications**

The VP Communications is in charge of the ComCultGSA websites (comcultgsa.com, iscs-conference.com). The VP Communications is responsible for the management and upkeep of these websites, and to make sure that it represents recent and relevant information for the ComCult student body's access. The GSA will administrate and maintain a listserv, to facilitate communication among Communication & Culture students, as well as a social media presence. These accounts will be managed by the VP Communications. The responsibilities of the VP Communications involves ensuring that the next individual elected into this position is provided with the appropriate login information so that the new VP Communications can manage the list. Further, to coordinate with the Programme to advise on changes and requirements for the Programme website.

## *4.3 Representatives*

The following positions will be filled via the electoral process outlined in Article 7 of this Constitution:

- Equity Officer (One from either York or Ryerson)
- Ph.D Representative (One from York, One from Ryerson)
- Part Time Representative (One from either York or Ryerson)
- MA Representative (One from York, One from Ryerson)
- Representative to Student Unions (One from either York or Ryerson)
- Alternate Representative to Student Unions (One from either York or Ryerson)
- Representative to Faculty of Graduate Studies (from York)
- CUPE 3903 Steward (from York)
- CUPE 3904 Steward (from Ryerson)
- OPSEU 596 Steward (from Ryerson)
- Intersections Chair (from either York or Ryerson)
- Cross-Sections Chair (from either York or Ryerson)
- Communication & Culture Journal Representative (from either York or Ryerson)

The Presidents, with the recommendation of the Executive, have the power to appoint external representatives on an ad-hoc basis. Positions that become permanent (exist for one year or more) shall be written into the Constitution

during the annual review.

The GSA Executive must participate in each Orientation period proposed by the Communication & Culture Programme, in an effort to participate with the welcome of incoming Master's and Doctoral students.

The Hand Over Package will include: an *updated* document describing each position of the GSA; meeting agendas and minutes from the previous year; a box of the VP Finance's receipts; minute template; conference documentation; logistical and administrative information such as passwords, etc.

## *4.4 Duties of Council Representatives*

### **Equity Officer**

To address students' concerns regarding matters of equity. To ensure that the needs of our diverse group of students are accounted for in student initiatives and meetings, and that students treat each other with respect when participating in academic or volunteer work. In the case that a problem arises between students or between students and staff, the equity officer is the first point of contact for students to voice their concerns. The equity officer may then be involved in the conflict resolution process as either a mediator or student representative.

### **Ph.D Representative**

To represent the interests of PhD students enrolled in the Programme. To act as representative of Communication & Culture students on the Programme Executive committee; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of the Programme Executive.

### **Part Time Representative**

To represent the interests of students enrolled in the program on a part-time basis.

### **MA Representative**

To act as a representative of Communication & Culture students on the Programme Executive committee; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of the Programme Executive. To represent the interest of MA students enrolled in the program.

### **Representative to Student Unions**

To act as representative of Communication & Culture students in the YUGSA; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of YUGSA of interest to its Members. To act as representative of Communication & Culture

students on the RSU Grad Council; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of the RSU of interest to its Members.

#### **OPSEU Representative**

To represent members of the GSA on all matters relevant to OPSEU Local 596. The OPSEU Representative is responsible for informing GSA members of their rights and responsibilities as union members, as well as providing an orientation that introduces members to the collective agreement, grievance procedures, and any other information that might be deemed necessary for active and informed participation in the union. The OPSEU Representative will act as liaison to the Local 596 Steward for Graduate Studies and will work with GSA members to relay any questions or concerns to the steward. They will also be responsible for providing GSA members with up-to-date information on Local 596 events and procedures, including contract negotiations, elections, general meetings, and social events.

#### **Alternate Representative to Student Unions**

To fulfill the duties of the Representative to Student Unions when necessary. To act as representative of Communication & Culture students in the YUGSA; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of YUGSA of interest to its Members. To act as representative of Communication & Culture students on the RSU Grad Council; to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of the RSU of interest to its Members.

#### **Representative to Faculty of Graduate Studies**

To act as a representative of Communication & Culture students to the FGS, to report back to the ComCultGSA regarding meetings and resolutions of the FGS of interest to its Members.

#### **Representative to the Communication & Culture Journal**

To represent the GSA as an Editor on the Communication & Culture Journal (name pending as of July 2015). To report to the GSA on the activities, meetings and resolutions of the Communication & Culture Journal.

## ***4.5 Chair Positions***

#### **Intersections Chair**

To coordinate and facilitate the activities and initiatives of various conference subcommittees, including submissions process, venues, funding, scheduling, promotion, logistics, budget and publication.

#### **Cross-Sections Chair**

To coordinate and facilitate the activities and initiatives of various gallery subcommittees, including submissions process, planning timeline, venue, funding, tech requirements process, scheduling, promotion, logistics, and budget.

To build and maintain relationships with the various local artistic communities.

### **Expanded Obligations**

No less and no more than 2 Chairs are elected to serve a 1 year term. At least one member of the Intersections/ Cross-Sections committee is encouraged to commit to 1 further year in an advisory capacity. The advisory position is strictly a mentor role and carries no voting privileges or power over the elected Chairs. The advisory position can be held by a graduated student or non-Member.

The Chairs are jointly tasked with forming a conference Committee. The Chairs are encouraged to form a Committee of at least 6 members.

The Conference Chairs and Committee must present to the active Communication & Culture student body in a General Meeting, to be held in the fall term, wherein senior conference volunteers may be recruited and the Intersections conference theme is approved by the voting process as outlined in Article 6.2.

The Conference Chairs and Committee are encouraged to follow the established event planning templates available and are required to provide regular updates to the executive and membership of the GSA.

The Chairs and Committee are further encouraged to develop and maintain a budget surplus. Requests to use reserve funds of the GSA shall require a vote of no less than 2/3 of the membership to pass.

Failure to form a committee as proscribed, meet basic fundraising targets, or provide regular updates to the membership may result in impeachment as outlined in Article 12.1.

## **Article 5: Terms of Office and Fiscal Year**

The terms of office of the ComCultGSA are from the date of the annual general election (no later than the first week of October) until the subsequent election in September of the following year. The transferal of executive powers must occur no later than the first week of October.

## **Article 6: Meetings**

### *6.1 Scheduling*

The dates and agendas for general meetings of ComCultGSA shall be

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determined by the Presidents and the Executive Committee. Executive and special meetings may be called at any time by the Presidents.

The President(s) shall give no less than two weeks notice for all General Meetings via the ComCultGSA listserv and other social media generally used by Members.

If online scheduling, such as Doodle, is used “notice” is considered to be the day that the link to the poll is sent to members. The final meeting date must be communicated to all Members no less than one week prior to the meeting.

## *6.2 Voting Procedures, Quorum and Attendance*

At all meetings, all motions shall be passed by a simple majority of the votes cast by the attending members (50% + 1), unless otherwise required by law or by this Constitution.

“Attendance” requires engaged presence at the meeting or via telephone or online video messaging such as Skype. Voting privileges are conferred upon “attending Members” only.

Quorum shall be determined by two thirds (2/3) of the number equal to the number of elected ComCultGSA Council members, at least two of which must be members of the Executive Committee.

Although there may potentially be multiple chairs and committee members elected to both Intersections and Cross-Sections, there shall be a limit of one voting representative counted towards quorum for each Intersections and Cross-Sections.

Although there are three elected Editor positions on the Communication & Culture Journal (name pending as of July 2015) there shall be a limit of one voting representative counted towards quorum for these positions.

In the event that quorum is not reached, the meeting and discussion shall follow the existing agenda but all motions or resolutions shall be tabled until the following meeting.

## *6.3 Types of Meetings*

### **General Meetings:**

Open to all Members of the ComCultGSA. Updates from representatives and resolutions shall be discussed. Meetings shall be chaired by one President, alternating chairing duties each meeting at their discretion. Rules of procedure shall be determined generally by *Robert’s Rules of Order*. General Meetings shall



be called once per month during the Fall and Winter semesters. During the Summer semester at least one General Meeting is required.

**Executive Meetings:**

Open to members of the Executive Committee. The President(s) shall call Executive Meetings on a discretionary basis. Any resolutions created during an Executive Meeting must be brought forward at the next General Meeting to be voted upon by the Members of the ComCultGSA before being officially passed.

**Emergency Meetings:**

Open to all Members of the ComCultGSA. If a situation arises in which decisions that would normally be subject the approval of the council are required to be made in a time frame that does not accommodate normal scheduling an emergency meeting can be called.

Emergency meetings can only be called at the sole discretion of both Presidents. Should the topic of the meeting be in regards to the integrity or status of a current president, a meeting can alternately be called through consensus between one president and the two vice-presidents.

Rules for attendance and quorum as outlined in Article 6.2 of this Constitution must be followed regardless of time restrictions or other circumstances.

## *6.4 Minutes*

The Vice Presidents alternate responsibility for recording and disseminating meeting minutes. Following ComCultGSA meetings, the Vice President send minutes to ComCultGSA Executives, Representatives, and Chairs for revision and approval.

Members can only revise, edit, and approve their own updates, using 'Track Changes.' Revisions and approvals must be conducted in no more than seven (7) days following the date of the relevant meeting.

The Vice President disseminates meeting minutes to the ComCult student body no more than 14 days following the relevant meeting.

The Vice President of Communications formats the minutes for online and adds them to the ComCultGSA website.

## *6.5 Other Meeting Requirements*

The ComCultGSA will do everything in its power to be more eco-friendly at each meeting.

The ComCultGSA has a yearly budget of \$450 to provide refreshments at monthly General Meetings.

If the ComCultGSA wishes to spend in excess of \$450, the Executive Committee shall consider and authorize, by majority vote, all new expenditures.

## **Article 7: Elections**

### **Regular Elections**

Regular elections for the Executive Committee and for internal and external representatives shall be held no later than October 15. Notice of the election must be given at least one week before the date of the election.

Nominations shall open the date of the election call and shall close at the discretion of the Election Officer during the election meeting. Nominees who do not attend the election or do not send a proxy representative will not be permitted to run for the position.

All candidates will be able to address the assembled voters for approximately two to five minutes. Voting shall be by private secret ballot. Vote counting and reporting duties shall be carried out by the Election Officer ("EO"), appointed by the President with the recommendation of the Executive. The EO may not be a serving member of the Executive, nor may hold candidacy for any position being filled at the election. The EO does not vote in the elections. In the event of a tie, if more than two candidates are on the ballot, the person with the fewest votes shall be dropped from the ballot and another electoral round will be conducted. If there are only two candidates on the ballot, the decision will be deferred to a by-election.

### **By-elections**

By-elections may be held for Executive positions or for External Representatives in the event of the following situations:

- If positions remain unfilled after General Elections
- If new positions have been created under the auspices of the constitution
- In the event of a tie or electoral irregularity
- In the event a sitting Executive or External Representative is unable to continue in their position for the remainder of the electoral term.

By-elections may be called at any time of the academic year by majority vote of the Executive Committee. By-elections must follow the same electoral process, including the appointment of an Election Officer, as Regular Elections.

### **Communication & Culture Journal Election**

Working in conjunction with the newly established Communication & Culture

Journal (name pending as of July 2015) the GSA will help facilitate the selection of representatives to that entity's board.

Elections for the Student Journal Chairs shall occur every two years during the first General Meeting of the year starting in 2017. No less and no more than 3 Chairs are elected to serve a minimum 2-year term in the positions of Managing Editors (2) and Coordinating Editor (1).

Nominations for the Student Journal Chairs will come from members who have been interviewed and approved by the previous year's editorial team (or the Advisory Board).

The Chairs are jointly tasked with ensuring that all other editorial positions on the masthead are filled for 2-year terms. Additionally, the Chairs are responsible for following the rules and regulations outlined in the Constitution of the Communication & Culture Journal.

One of the elected chairs will be responsible for attending all GSA General Meetings and informing the GSA of the activities, meetings and resolutions of the Communication & Culture Journal. Though there are multiple elected editors only one will count towards quorum as outlined in Article 6.2.

## **Article 8: Financial Operations**

### *8.1 General Expenditures*

The ComCultGSA members shall consider and authorize, by majority vote, all expenditures. Signing Authorities of ComCultGSA shall have power to authorize approved expenditures on behalf of ComCultGSA.

### *8.2 Intersections/ Cross-Sections Funding*

Provided that the ComCultGSA's annual operating budget exceeds two thousand dollars (\$2000.00 CAD), twenty per cent (20%) of the ComCultGSA's annual operating budget, as determined at the January General Meeting, shall be dedicated as a funding source for the Intersections and Cross-Sections events of that academic year. Any un-used portions of this revenue stream shall be returned to the ComCultGSA's annual operating budget.

### *8.3 Student Emergency Fund*

The ComCultGSA shall maintain a fund for emergency use by Members under

extraordinary circumstances. This fund is to be separate from the standard operating funds of the ComCultGSA in accounting practices.

Access to the Student Emergency Fund is limited to Members of the ComCultGSA. Requests for the fund cannot be in excess of one hundred dollars (\$100.00CAD) and are limited to one request per student per fiscal year as outlined in Article 5 of the Constitution.

Requests of the Student Emergency Fund seeking funding for conference travel or registration, tuition or other fees that are traditionally funded by other sources shall not be considered for funding via the Student Emergency Fund.

The Student Emergency Fund will be funded via charitable donations from Members of the ComCultGSA. All student social events shall have a place for donations to be made to this emergency fund.

When a request to the Student Emergency Fund is made charitable donations can be collected by the ComCultGSA to supplement the one hundred dollar (\$100CAD) maximum.

If the Student Emergency Fund is depleted it shall be funded in the amount of \$100 by the standard operating funds of the ComCultGSA if both of the following are true: there is an outstanding request on the fund and the standard operating funds of the ComCultGSA are in excess of two thousand dollars (\$2000.00CAD).

Members wishing to apply to the fund may request to be included on the agenda of the next General Meeting. Members are required to apply for the fund anonymously through the Equity Officer. The Member is allowed but not required to provide a written statement to be read by the Equity Officer. The Equity Officer will speak on behalf of the Member at the next General Meeting.

Any expenditure from the Student Emergency Fund will be voted on and authorized as outlined in Section 6.2. Voting procedures for the Student Emergency Fund will be completed by secret ballot.

Two signing authorities will sign off on expenditures that are approved by the ComCultGSA. The Equity Officer will deliver the funds to the Member.

Funds received from the Student Emergency Fund are not required to be repaid to the ComCultGSA.

Initial funding of the Student Emergency Fund shall be undertaken by the ComCultGSA in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100CAD) in July 2015.

## **Article 9: Constitution**

This Constitution may be amended as required by majority quorum vote, in the agenda of any General Meeting, provided due notice of no less than one week is given. The Constitution is to be reviewed by the Internal Review Committee, amended as necessary, and dated on an annual basis. Recommendations to the Council and the approval of the Constitution shall occur at a General Meeting following the Regular election, to be held no later than October 15.

## **Article 10: Resolutions**

Resolutions of the ComCultGSA are to be adopted at the monthly General Meetings. Resolutions are adopted by majority vote. Voting on resolutions will be by show of hands or secret ballot by request. In the event of a tie, decisions will be made by the Presidents with the advice of the Executive Committee. Special Committees of the ComCultGSA must have their resolutions adopted in General Meetings.

## **Article 11: Committees**

To facilitate the execution of its duties, the Presidents, with the recommendation of the Executive, may from time to time create and dissolve committees and sub-committees of the ComCultGSA.

*There shall be, as Standing Committees of Council:*

### **An Internal Review Committee**

Duties: to review and make recommendations to Council on all aspects of the structure of the Council, including the Constitution, policies, committees, membership and other matters of internal reform.

### **A Student Affairs Committee**

Duties: to oversee coordination and execution of all social events or fundraisers sponsored by the ComCultGSA, including, Student Orientation, and Awards events.

### **An Academic Affairs Committee**

Duties: to oversee SSHRC preparations and advise students on academic issues and concerns.

Committee membership will be determined on a volunteer basis and is open to all Members of the ComCultGSA.

## **Article 12: Impeachment and Vacancies**

### *12.1 – Impeachment of Elected Representatives*

Charges may be brought against an elected representative by any member of the organization. It will take a 2/3 vote of the Executive Committee, excluding the accused elected representative, to initiate an impeachment vote.

The Elected Representative in question shall then be provided with due opportunity for defense. A 2/3 vote of the ComCultGSA Members at a General Meeting is then required to effect the resignation of the officer.

### *12.2 – Filling Vacancies*

If one or more officers are unable to assume or continue with their duties, the remaining officers shall hold a special election to fill those vacancies under the guidelines listed in section 7. In the event that such an election cannot be held within a reasonable amount of time, the Presidents, with the recommendation of the Executive, have the power to appoint a ComCultGSA Member as a representative on an ad-hoc basis (as noted in section 4.3).

## **Article 13: By-Laws and Amendments**

By-laws or amendments to the Constitution may be created by any member of the ComCultGSA Membership.

By-laws or amendments to the Constitution must be sponsored by at least two persons on the ComCultGSA Council.

By-laws shall be adopted by a 2/3 vote of the voting body. Amendments may be made with consent of 2/3 of the ComCultGSA Members.

By-laws and amendments that are passed by an outgoing ComCultGSA must be ratified by the incoming ComCultGSA during the handover meeting to be held no later than October 15.

All articles tied to dollar values, such as conference funding and the Student Emergency Fund, are encouraged to be revisited each calendar year.