

CONSTITUTION

for the

English Graduate Students' Association of York University

Effective: September 4, 2013

ARTICLE 1 - NAME

This association shall be known as the English Graduate Students' Association of York University, to be referred to hereinafter as EGSA.

ARTICLE 2 - OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF EGSA

A. The objectives of EGSA shall be as follows:

1. To represent the interests of all members in dealings with
 - a) the Graduate Program in English (GPE)
 - b) the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS)
 - c) the Graduate Students' Association (GSA)
 - d) the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
 - e) other organizations within or without York University
2. To represent the interests of all members regarding the quality and manner of education provided by the GPE.
3. To seek representation for the student body on all decision-making committees and councils within the GPE.
4. To encourage and to improve cooperation and understanding within the student body and between the students, faculty members, and staff members of the GPE.

5. To maintain a social atmosphere, friendship, and unity among members.

B. The principles of EGSA shall be as follows:

1. The Association shall be democratic and non-profit.
2. The Association shall be non-discriminatory with respect to age, race, creed, colour, national origin, language of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, religious or political affiliation or belief, sex, gender, marital or parental status, number of dependents, sexual orientation, gender orientation, personal appearance, mode of dress, place of residence, academic school of thought, record of offences, physical disability, physical or mental health, nor by reason of a member's affiliation with or activities in or on behalf of any association or coalition working on behalf or fights and privileges of a member or members of EGSA.

ARTICLE 3 - MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

EGSA belongs to the larger body of the York University Graduate Students' Association, which represents all students in all programs in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York. EGSA membership in the GSA determines its funding. A levy included in the tuition fees of all graduate students funds the GSA, and EGSA receives its funds in turn from the GSA. This (involuntary) financial contribution may be considered the official mark of one's inclusion in EGSA.

- A. Eligibility for membership: All students registered with the GPE—whether M.A. or Ph.D., full-time or part-time, occupying EGSA positions or not, attending EGSA meetings and events or not—have the right to participate in and/or to be represented by the EGSA.
- B. Privileges: Members may vote, hold positions on committees, and participate fully in the activities of the Association, including communicating with the membership by email via a dedicated listserv.
- C. Voluntary participation: The EGSA is by definition voluntary. This means that any and all influence the EGSA exercises depends on the free participation and contributions of time and energy made by students in the program; it depends on the sum-total of voluntary student participation. Without this participation, the EGSA would cease to exist.

ARTICLE 4 - DESCRIPTION OF POSITIONS OPEN TO EGSA MEMBERS

4.0 All EGSA Steering Committee members and all student representatives on committees attend EGSA meetings as part of their duties. All departing members are responsible for forwarding relevant information to and training incoming members.

4.1 The terms of office of the EGSA members will correspond with the EGSA fiscal year, which runs from September 1 to August 31.

4.2 POSITIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON EGSA COMMITTEES

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4.2.1 THE EGSA STEERING COMMITTEE.

The EGSA Steering Committee is composed of at minimum three members. The Steering Committee oversees the activities of the EGSA as a whole.

(At least) one member of the Steering Committee:

- a) Sets agendas for meetings of the EGSA, usually held at least twice per term.
- b) Ensures that meetings of the EGSA are scheduled and announced, and chairs those meetings.
- c) Attends all General meetings of the Graduate Program in English, raises issues relevant to members, and reports back results to the membership by email to the listserv.
- d) Sits on the GPE Executive Committee as an EGSA representative.
- e) Assumes responsibility for the external relations of the EGSA by speaking for all members to the Director of the GPE.
- f) Assumes responsibility for internal relations between members of the EGSA.
- g) Works to ensure that the EGSA is fully represented by students sitting on GPE committees.
- h) Assumes the role of the Custodian of the EGSA Constitution. It is the responsibility of this committee to update and send revisions to the membership to approve as required and to preserve the Constitution in electronic and hard copy (see Article 7).

4.2.2 SECRETARY

The secretary is a member of EGSA who performs administrative duties on behalf of the membership and:

- a) Keeps an up-to-date list of the names and emails of all EGSA members occupying committee positions; submits this list to the English Graduate Program Assistant when finalized, as well as the Undergraduate Curriculum committee members contact information to the Undergraduate English Program Assistant. Posts the list of committee members to the EGSA section of the York GPE website.
- b) Takes minutes at EGSA meetings. Reproduces and distributes minutes to all members of the EGSA via the listserv.
- c) Procures and maintains non-financial EGSA files and archives in good order in the folder provided in file cabinet devoted to MA and PH.D students in the English Graduate Office.

4.2.3 LISTSERV COORDINATOR

The listserv coordinator is a member of EGSA who performs administrative duties on behalf of the membership and:

- a) Maintains email listserv by adding incoming graduate students and deleting students wishing to be removed.
- b) Sends instructions annually to membership by email on how to manage the listserv.

4.2.4 TREASURER

The treasurer is a member of EGSA who, preferably a part of the Steering Committee, oversees the financial affairs of the EGSA, and:

- a) Submits bi-yearly applications (November and February) to the GSA for funds according to deadlines stipulated by the GSA.

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- b) Collects allocations of EGSA funds from the GSA and holds funds in EGSA's bank account(s).
- c) Distributes cheques to successful applicants for EGSA funding contributions towards conference travel, emergency funding, and for approved committee functions (e.g., social and colloquium events).
- d) Prepares the EGSA budget and keeps EGSA accounts in good order.
- e) Looks after banking administration.
- f) Provides membership annually with instructions for applying for conference research and emergency funding.

4.2.5 EGSA REPRESENTATIVES ON THE GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Positions open: 2 (elected)

The two positions open on this committee are members of EGSA--one primary member and one back-up member--who take up representative duties on behalf of the membership and:

- a) Attend monthly meetings of the GSA--the GSA stipulates that attendance is mandatory--to vote on policies that affect all graduate students at York. Failure to attend results in EGSA's loss of GSA funds—attendance is therefore mandatory.
- b) Distributes minutes from those meetings provided by the GSA to EGSA and communicates any further items of business relevant to the membership.

4.2.6 UNION STEWARDS

Positions open: 2

A good part of the EGSA membership belongs, by virtue of their holding teaching, research and graduate assistantships, to the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903 active at York.

The Union requires two (2) Union Stewards from its members in the Department of English. The Steward often makes reports at EGSA meetings to facilitate communication between those members of the Union who also belong to EGSA.

In particular, Union Stewards take a major communications role with respect to EGSA during contract negotiations and in the event of a 3903 strike, where Stewards function as liaisons between EGSA members and CUPE Local.

4.2.6 COLLOQUIUM COMMITTEE

See Article 6.1.

4.2.7 ACADEMIC COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE

Positions open: 3 (or more)

This committee fosters academic community for EGSA members by coordinating various events, including but not limited to pub nights, public lectures, mixers, and end-of-term parties. These communities include those among graduate students (both within the GPE and among various Graduate Programs) and between students and GPE faculty. In addition to the funds available for the two end-of-term parties, further EGSA funding is available for any events that fulfill these mandates, on the understanding that potential expenditures must be minimal and approved by the treasurer.

See Article 6.2.

4.3 REPRESENTATIVES ON GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENGLISH COMMITTEES

4.3.1 VOTING MEMBERS AT GENERAL PROGRAM MEETINGS

Positions open: 5, to be filled as needed.

The EGSA has six (6) votes in all GPE decisions taken by vote. The Steering Committee, when a voting situation arises, will solicit five (5) volunteers to cast votes at the GPE meeting or online; the sixth vote will be cast by a member of the Steering Committee.

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EGSA strongly encourages all members to attend General Meetings of the GPE regardless of whether one is an official voting member.

General Program Meetings constitute the ultimate decision-making body in the Program, with the final authority on policies, curricular offerings, degree requirements and regulations, recommendation on faculty appointments, and other matters critical to the program.

4.3.2 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

Positions open: 2

The two positions open on this committee are members of EGSA who take up representative duties on behalf of the membership. The GPE Curriculum Committee is responsible for planning and administering the curriculum for the Program and:

- a) Evaluates and recommends proposals for new courses.
- b) Considers long-term needs for curricular planning and development.
- c) Assesses coverage, rotation, and scheduling of annual course offerings.
- d) Solicits new courses and encourages faculty who have not previously taught in the Program to offer courses.
- e) Submits recommendations for new courses at General Program Meetings for vote.

4.3.3 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

Positions open: 2 (elected)

The two positions open on this committee are members of EGSA who take up representative duties on behalf of the membership. One member sits on the EGSA Steering Committee and both members have passed the first major field examination and are at minimum well on the way to passing the second dissertation-related exam.

The GPE Executive Committee:

- a) Advises the Graduate Program Director on all matters concerning policies and operations of the program.
- b) Considers the policy and general status of the Program within York's Faculty of Graduate Studies and with respect to York's other Graduate Programs.
- c) Assesses applications of members to the GPE and conducts periodic reviews of GPE members' continued meeting of the terms of their appointment to the GPE.
- d) Considers issues of future planning, including anticipation of periodic review of the Program by the university and/or external bodies and considering of ideas for Program and curriculum change.
- e) When necessary, submits recommendations at General Program Meetings for vote.

4.3.4 GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

Positions open: 2

The two positions open on this committee are members of EGSA who take up representative duties on behalf of the membership. Both members have passed the first major field examination and at minimum have their list for the second dissertation-related exam approved. In order to ensure breadth of disciplinary knowledge, the two members are, whenever possible, not in the same area of specialization.

The GPE Graduate Study Committee:

- a) Receives and assesses for approval, modification, or rejection all proposals for Directed Reading courses (M.A. and Ph.D.), M.A. theses, and M.A. research papers.
- b) Receives and assesses for approval, modification, or rejection all reading lists for major field and dissertation-related examinations.
- c) Considers petitions for exemptions from language exams.

4.4 UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Positions open: 1

The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee is responsible for planning and administering the curriculum for the Undergraduate Program in English. It reviews all new course proposals and proposes changes in programs and courses such as deletions and additions to the calendar.

The EGSA member who sits on this committee:

- a) Attends all meetings of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (the number of meetings is determined by the amount of business before the committee in any given year).
- b) Reads and assesses for approval, modification, or rejection, all proposals for new and revised undergraduate courses.

4.5 APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

Positions Open: 1

This is an Ad Hoc position, to be filled as necessary when a faculty position is being filled. The committee member takes up representative duties on behalf of the membership, and will be selected from interested applicants whose field of study correlates with the position being filled. The Appointments Committee is responsible for selecting the most qualified applicant to the GPE, and:

- a) Attends all interviews of prospective instructors.
- b) Attends all meetings of the Appointments Committee, and attends to all communication regarding the selection of new instructors.

4.6 ADJUDICATION COMMITTEE

Positions Open: 1

This committee handles faculty applications for tenure and promotion.

The EGSA member who sits on this committee:

- a) Attends to all communications regarding a faculty member's tenure or promotion.
- b) Makes recommendations about faculty promotions and tenure in keeping with GPE guidelines.

4.7 TEACHING COMMITTEE:

Positions Open: 1

The EGSA member who sits on this committee:

- a) development of new unit-level recognition of teaching excellence
- b) implementation of the new Faculty-level teaching excellence prize competition
- c) oversight and rationalization of our internationalization work (exchange programs, teaching abroad endeavours, etc.)
- d) participation in the Faculty-level revamping of the course-evaluation system
- e) development of an Experiential Education policy/plan for the unit
- f) coordination of the unit's development of "first year planning" and "transition year pedagogy" for new students
- g) cooperation with the national survey of student engagement
- e) statistical evaluation of English students' experience in our degree programs

ARTICLE 5 - PROCEDURE AND POLICIES

5.1 APPOINTMENT AND TENURE OF EGSA and GPE COMMITTEES, INCLUDING THE STEERING COMMITTEE

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5.1.1 The Steering committee shall issue an open call to EGSA members, advertising the positions available, as soon as possible in September preceding the first EGSA meeting of the year. This meeting should be held no later than 30 September. EGSA members interested in volunteering for a given position should contact a member of the Steering Committee and inform him or her of the position desired; students can also volunteer for committees at the first EGSA meeting.

5.1.2 Students who are already on EGSA committee(s) have right of first refusal for their positions for two years; students should signal their desire to retain that position as early as possible after the communication of open positions.

5.1.3 In cases where the number of EGSA members interested in filling the positions for a given committee exceeds the number of EGSA representatives required, representatives will be randomly selected from among the volunteers by drawing names from a hat, with modifications for those positions with specific requirements (Executive Committee and Graduate Study Committee: see sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). Any such selections will take place at the first meeting of the year.

5.1.4 If the EGSA is in an active state, no EGSA member should occupy more than two positions, excluding the Steering Committee, the members of which may sit on (up to) three committees.

5.1.5 In cases where committee positions remain vacant even after mid-October due to lack of volunteers, the limits to participation (item 5.1.4) will be waived. The Steering committee should attempt to solicit volunteers and delegate any consenting volunteers to committee positions throughout the year.

5.1.6 The EGSA Secretary should keep an up-to-date list of all EGSA members occupying committee positions. The list should be submitted to the GPE Program Assistant when finalized, as well as posted to the EGSA section of the York GPE website.

5.2 VOTING POLICY FOR REPS ON EGSA AND GPE COMMITTEES

5.2.1 EGSA representatives on committees function as a caucus; that is, they will vote as a group for or against any given motion. However, this stipulation is not binding: if after discussion,

members cannot agree, they are free to vote according to what they perceive to be in the EGSA's best interest.

5.2.2 In cases where there is no consensus among the caucus, and voting of EGSA representatives is split, this disagreement and/or lack of unity may point to potential disruptions or conflicts of interest among EGSA members.

Therefore, all such disagreements or potential conflicts should be communicated by one or both of the committee reps to the EGSA membership and/or Steering Committee at the EGSA general meeting immediately following the committee meeting in question. This should help ensure the membership's awareness of how committee members are perceiving and representing the interests of the EGSA as a whole.

In many cases, the disagreement may relate to something inconsequential. Nevertheless, any other policy risks a lack of representation and communication of the interests of the whole student body on GPE committees.

5.3 EGSA REPRESENTATION AND VOTING AT GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE GPE OR ONLINE GPE VOTES

5.3.1 EGSA representatives voting at GPE meetings, or GPE votes held online, function as a caucus; that is, they will vote as a group for or against any given motion. EGSA is granted six (6) votes at general GPE meetings. The Steering committee will present the motion to the EGSA membership via email at least one (1) week prior to the vote; students will have at least a week to submit their vote, along with any comments, questions, or concerns, to the Steering committee via email. The Steering committee will tabulate the votes and determine the majority. A 2/3 majority is required to determine which direction the vote will take.

5.3.2 The Steering committee, when a voting situation arises, will solicit five (5) volunteers to cast votes at the GPE meeting or online; the sixth vote will be cast by a member of the Steering committee.

5.3.3 In cases where there is no consensus among the EGSA members who submit their votes to the Steering committee (i.e. there is a 50/50 split), the Steering committee will call an EGSA meeting to discuss the issue and hold a second vote; the votes cast at the meeting will overturn the votes submitted by email. Again, a 2/3 majority must be reached to determine which

direction the ESGA will vote at the GPE meeting. If a consensus still cannot be reached, the six (6) EGSA votes will be split—i.e. three yea votes and three nay votes will be cast.

5.4 FINANCE

5.4.1 All monies accruing to the EGSA shall be held in bank accounts in the name of the English Graduate Students' Association.

5.4.2 All bank accounts and outgoing cheques shall require the co-signature of two (2) members of the EGSA Steering Committee, preferably the treasurer and another member of the Steering Committee. All signing authorities are to be elected.

5.4.3 The organization's fiscal year shall run from 1 September until 31 August. Each year's proposed budget shall be circulated prior to the first EGSA meeting of the year and approved by the membership at the first meeting.

5.4.4 Throughout the fiscal year, the Steering committee, usually represented by the treasurer, shall update the membership on all EGSA financial matters by means of:

- a) A detailed written report, tabled at a general membership meeting in September (or October), outlining all revenues and expenditures from the previous year; and
- b) Oral reports at EGSA executive and general membership meetings, as required.

5.4.5 The Steering Committee shall ensure that sufficient funds are on hand to fulfill the financial obligations of the EGSA between the semi-annual receipt of funds from the Graduate Students' Association.

5.4.6 Any expenditure of funds which fall outside customary expenses, or any alterations to the budget which was approved at the beginning of the year, shall be approved by the general membership.

5.5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A member will abstain from voting on any motion resulting directly in personal gain.

5.6 ALLEGATION OF WRONG-DOING AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

5.6.1 Elected representatives may be removed from their positions by two-thirds majority vote, via a vote held via the email list.

5.6.2 If there are no volunteers to fill vacated positions, a member of the Steering Committee (unless the Steering Committee has been removed) shall assume their duties until they can be filled.

5.6.3 If a member of the Steering Committee is removed, the Committee shall continue functioning without that member until a volunteer for the position can be found, or, until a new Steering Committee is struck at the September EGSA meeting.

ARTICLE 6 - ACTIVITIES OF THE EGSA

6.1 THE EGSA COLLOQUIUM

This forum is usually held in May each academic year. EGSA members volunteer to be organizers and/or editors of the student colloquium; the colloquium committee will be formed at the first EGSA meeting of the year. The Colloquium Planning Committee is responsible for: identifying the colloquium topic; announcing deadlines for submissions (January or February); recruiting a keynote speaker. Students submit papers to the Planning Committee who organizes them into various sessions to be delivered over two or three days.

6.2 EGSA PARTIES

The EGSA has traditionally sponsored at least three parties per year, two of which are funded by the committee. One informal welcoming event is held in September to greet returning students and welcome new ones; this is typically a pub night where members purchase their own refreshments. EGSA provides funds for food and beverages at the two end-of-term parties, one held in December, and one in May or early June. It is recommended informal social events be

held a minimum of once per month; these often include pub nights, attending lectures, coffee hours.

6.3 FINANCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH THE EGSA

6.5.1 EGSA maintains an emergency fund of \$100.00. This fund is available to one (1) student who finds him- or herself in financial straits and requires immediate assistance; these funds do not need to be repaid by the student. An application form and information about application procedures will be sent to EGSA membership by the Treasurer at the beginning of each academic year. A copy can also be found in the EGSA folder in the student filing cabinet in the GPE office.

6.5.2 Nine (9) Conference and Research Funds are available to EGSA students in order to help cover the costs of conference or research trips. Three (3) CRFs will be distributed each of the fall, winter, and summer terms, on a first come, first served basis. Amounts of the awards are determined annually. Students are limited to one successful Conference and Research Fund application per year (September - August). Students may not submit an application for less than the full amount of the award. Students may not claim course fees or travel expenses related to attending courses. Students may only apply for conference funding after they have presented at a conference or undertaken the research trip. The application must be received no more than four (4) months after the date of the conference or research trip. An application form and information about application procedures will be sent to EGSA membership by the Treasurer at the beginning of each academic year. A copy can also be found in the EGSA folder in the student filing cabinet in the GPE office.

ARTICLE 7.0 - AMENDMENT OF THIS CONSTITUTION

7.1 Any member may propose amendments to this Constitution through the following procedures:

- i) Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be communicated to the Steering Committee, as well as to the general membership, via the listserv; these proposals should highlight the sections of the Constitution that the member desires amended, and provide a rationale for the amendment.
- ii) A meeting at which proposed amendments are considered shall be held no sooner than fourteen days, and no later than twenty-one days, after they are communicated to the Steering Committee and to the general membership.

iii) In order for an amendment to pass, two thirds of members present must vote in favour of it. Abstentions shall count as votes against the amendment.