

York University Psychology Graduate Students' Association *Constitution*

Revised June 19th, 2005

I INTRODUCTION

The Psychology Graduate Students' Association (PGSA) exists to serve full-time and part-time students registered in the Masters or Doctoral Psychology Programme at York University. The purpose of this document is to define the roles and structure of the PGSA and to serve as a guide to its Executive in their efforts to represent the interests of its members.

II MANDATE

The PGSA's mandate is to:

- (1) represent students' interests to the administration
- (2) provide support for students to meet their academic and professional goals
- (3) manage the finances provided by GSA (Graduate Students' Association)
- (4) facilitate social interaction in the department

1) The PGSA represents the interests of graduate students in the York University Psychology Programme by:

- attending departmental and graduate students' association meetings and casting votes regarding changes in the department, and other issues, on behalf of students
- acting as liaisons between students and the Psychology department administration
- disseminating information from the York University administration and other sources relevant to all psychology graduate students

2) The PGSA helps graduate students meet their academic and professional goals by:

- providing funding to students for expenses related to thesis and dissertation preparation, presentations at academic conferences, and publication of academic papers. Priority for funding is given to those without outside scholarships (NSERC, SSHIRC etc)
- organizing an In-House Conference and thus providing a forum for presentation of faculty and students' work in the department each year

3) The PGSA manages its finances appropriately by:

- safeguarding the funds provided by the GSA in a registered bank account and ensuring accurate records are kept
- assigning signing authority to three members of the Executive and requiring a minimum of two signatures for every transaction
- augmenting GSA funding and accruing banking interest

4) The PGSA facilitates social interaction within the department by:

- hosting Orientation each September and organizing the buddy system for incoming students (see description in Annual Events for details)
- organizing end-of-term celebrations for faculty and students in December and April each year
- organizing social activities such as Pub Nights during the academic year

- wine and cheese reception following the In-House conference

III STRUCTURE OF THE PGSA

1) Membership:

All York University graduate students in the Psychology Programme are automatically members of the PGSA, and as such are entitled to attend all PGSA meetings and to vote on any motion or resolution. General members may request specific items be put on the agenda of any meeting they wish to attend as long as they contact one of the Co-Chairs through e-mail at least one week in advance of the meeting.

The active role of the PGSA, as defined in the constitutional mandate, is fulfilled by those members who are elected to an Executive position. The Executive is formed each year at either the last meeting of the academic year (September to May) or the first meeting of the next academic year. At this time, any outstanding business of the year is dealt with, and incumbent members may choose to run for re-election or resign. To stand for election or re-election, a member must meet the basic criteria required of Executive members (Section V).

2) Election Procedure:

The membership is notified at least one week in advance that election for all PGSA positions will be held at the beginning of a regularly scheduled meeting. All those interested in running for a position, voting, or observing are invited to attend. At the meeting, nominations for each position are taken, each candidate may choose to say a few words on their own behalf, and then a ballot is taken. In the case of a single candidate, a show of hands is sufficient. If there are several candidates for the same position, a secret paper ballot may be taken. Candidates must not be present in the room during voting for the position they are nominated for and are not permitted to vote for themselves. Results are to be announced during the meeting, the new Executive is welcomed and positions are transferred when the meeting ends.

In the event that a member of the Executive resigns before the end of the academic year, a special election may be held to engage a replacement.

In the event that there are not enough members interested in filling all of the Executive positions, the existing Executive members will share the duties among themselves as the need arises. If the need arises, new positions will be created to accommodate interests expressed by the general membership.

3) Dispute Resolution:

Although a democratic process, disputes amongst PGSA Executive members may arise. If required, the dispute must be resolved within a PGSA meeting, allowing both sides of the dispute a forum to discuss their differences. However, the content of the discussion must be limited only to the issue at hand. Resolution to any dispute must be amicable and fair for all involved parties.

To uphold the integrity of the PGSA Executive, disputes should not carry-over to future PGSA meetings, and/or be introduced without properly being tabled on the meeting agenda.

IV THE PGSA EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

All PGSA Executive positions equally share the duties and responsibilities of the PGSA. More specifically, the basis of the executive is a democracy, whereby no particular position or individual may assert power over another position or individual. This ensures the appropriate representation of all psychology graduate students.

All decisions and actions of the PGSA Executive must be made collectively. Thus, the main responsibility of each PGSA Executive member is primarily information-gathering; that is, to research and present the necessary information for the PGSA Executive to cohesively debate and vote upon the appropriate decision and/or action.

1) Co-Chairs (maximum of 2 positions):

The Co-Chairs are responsible for ensuring that the PGSA mandate is being met. The Co-Chairs are responsible for organizing and chairing PGSA meetings. This involves setting the date and time of each meeting, preparing the agenda, and notifying all PGSA members of the date, time and issues to be discussed. The Co-Chairs may work together or divide the duties between them. However, the Co-Chairs ultimately work in tandem, with agreement met between the Co-Chairs regarding their duties and actions regarding the PGSA (e.g., what will be on the agenda for the upcoming meeting). If agreement is not met, then the issue of concern becomes tabled for an upcoming meeting. When one is absent, the other is expected to fulfill all of these duties. Both of the Co-Chairs are also designated cheque-signing authorities. At least one Co-Chair must sign any cheque issued from the PGSA.

2) Advisor to the Co-Chairs (maximum of 2 positions):

The advisor must have held a co-chair position in the PGSA in the previous academic year. The advisor is responsible for offering guidance to the current co-chairs on the tasks and duties of the PGSA. This includes passing on resources from the previous year pertinent to PGSA tasks and duties.

3) Treasurer (1 position):

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping the accounts of the PGSA up-to-date and in good order. This involves preparing a budget for the Graduate Students' Association at the beginning of each academic year, depositing funds into the PGSA bank account, maintaining accurate banking and accounting records, recording disbursements of PGSA funds and maintaining well-organized files for funding requests and fundraising efforts, as well as acting as a PGSA cheque-signing authority. The Treasurer should arrange at the beginning of their term for all bank documents to be sent directly to them. The Treasurer is responsible for opening and checking the accuracy of all financial documents. The Treasurer is responsible for keeping *all original* financial documents.

The Treasurer may also be asked to give a report of PGSA finances at every meeting, from a brief update to a full accounting.

4) Secretary (maximum of 2 positions):

The Secretary is responsible for recording the minutes of each PGSA meeting. Minutes must be posted to the PGSA Executive e-mail list within 1-week of a PGSA meeting. Executive members have 2 days to request changes to the minutes. The minutes are to then be posted in the Psychology Graduate mailroom (BSB 205). The Secretary is also required to send an electronic version of the minutes to the Communications Coordinator for posting on the PGSA website. The Secretary may also be requested to read minutes of previous meetings at the beginning of each PGSA meeting, unless the Executive votes to waive the reading of the minutes. The Secretary is expected to keep a file of PGSA meeting minutes in good order and post them on the PGSA bulletin board in BSB 205.

5) Communications Officer (maximum of 2 positions):

The Communications Officer is responsible for disseminating information from PGSA meetings to the general membership of the PGSA. This involves sending e-mail to the psych_grads listserv regarding upcoming meetings and events, as well as general announcements of funding application deadlines and other relevant information. The Communications Officer

may be requested to create flyers, posters or other informative materials for specific events and may be involved in the updates of the PGSA Survival Guide and the annual programme for the In-House Conference. The communications officer is also responsible for maintaining the PGSA web page (currently at <http://www.psych.yorku.ca/pgsa>). The Communications Officer is responsible for maintaining ownership of the e-mail distribution list (currently at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PGSA_EXEC_GROUP/) and ensuring that the e-mail archives and web-site is backed up regularly. This includes ensuring proper security is maintained with regards to site passwords and server access within the executive. The communications officer is also required to post minutes from GSA and Departmental meetings that will be provided by the designated representatives.

6) GSA Representatives (minimum of 2 positions- max of 3):

The PGSA is required to have at least one, preferably two or three members in attendance at all GSA meetings. These meetings occur once a month and offer an interesting opportunity to be involved in the representation of York Psychology Graduate Students on a larger scale. The GSA representatives are empowered to cast their vote on behalf of the PGSA and are expected to report on issues of relevance to Psychology graduate students at the next PGSA meeting following a GSA meeting. For the PGSA to obtain full funding, the GSA representatives *must* attend the GSA orientation meeting, which is held in late September-early October. GSA representatives are also required to forward relevant information from the GSA Council listserv to the psych_grads listserv. The GSA representatives are also required to create minutes of GSA meetings that will be posted on the PGSA website.

7) Social Events Coordinators (maximum of 2 positions):

Social events coordinators are responsible for the planning of specific events, such as annual holiday parties, fundraising and social events. The coordinator is responsible for booking venues for Pub Nights and ordering food (that is decided upon by the PGSA Executive) for all events. Each event coordinator may take charge of a specific event and is empowered to request the involvement of other PGSA Executive and general members to carry out specific duties. Coordinators are expected to attend PGSA meetings and keep the Executive up-to-date regarding the planning of their events.

8) Departmental Representatives (3 positions):

Departmental representatives are responsible for attending the monthly Graduate Executive meetings to represent the general membership of the PGSA. The Departmental Representatives have 3 voting seats at the Graduate Executive meetings. Thus, Departmental representatives are required to liaison with the Graduate office and Administration to ensure that they are aware of upcoming issues. Further, Department Representatives should ensure that they are aware of issues that pertain to PGSA members by gathering information formally and informally through discussion and use of the PSYCH_GRADS e-mail list. Departmental representatives are also required to create minutes of the departmental meetings that will be posted on the PGSA website.

9) International Students' Coordinator (1 position):

The international students' coordinator is responsible for passing on relevant information to all international students in the department. The international students' coordinator is responsible for assisting students, either personally, or through directing them to the appropriate authority on campus. Current students should be added to an e-mail mailing list whereby the international students' coordinator can communicate to the group. International students will contact the coordinator throughout the year with questions concerning immigration, CUPE, scholarships and bursaries. The coordinator must have the ability and resources to help these students personally. It is not appropriate to direct students to York International for everything.

10) FGS Representative (1 position):

The FGS student representative is a member of the PGSA executive, elected during the PGSA elections, and holds the position with FGS from October 1 to September 30. The rep is required to attend all of the meetings of the Council of Faculty of Graduate Studies, which are held once a month. Prior to these meetings, the FGS rep will meet with the PGSA and discuss any business on the FGS council meeting agenda that is relevant to psychology graduate students. During the FGS meetings, the FGS rep is expected to cast their vote on behalf of the general membership of Psychology graduate students. Following an FGS council meeting, the FGS student representative is responsible for reporting on issues that pertain to psychology graduate students to the psych grads listserv and at the next PGSA meeting. The FGS rep should also ensure that they are aware of the attitudes of the students in the department, by gathering information through use of the PSYCH_GRADS e-mail list, and through informal discussion with students. The FGS rep is also required to be in attendance for the Psychology Departments Graduate Executive meetings (approximately once a month).

11) Academic Facilitator (2 positions):

The primary purpose of this position is to disseminate academically-related information to the graduate students in the Psychology department. This information is intended to assist students in achieving their academic goals, and can be distributed via pamphlets, information sessions, guest speakers, and postings on the PGSA website.

Academic matters within the scope of the academic facilitator's role include (but are not limited to):

- Course requisites for advancement through the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees
- Thesis/dissertation requirements for advancement through the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees
- External and internal funding opportunities
- Practicum and internship requirements
- Enhancing skills to write proposals for scholarships, grants, etc.
- Enhancing skills for conference/classroom presentations
- Any other duties that the PGSA collectively agree to be included in the role of the academic facilitator

V BASIC CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP ON THE PGSA EXECUTIVE

1) All PGSA Executives are expected to attend PGSA meetings and to actively participate, to the best of their abilities, in the planning and implementation of PGSA events. To maintain an effective PGSA Executive, the following resolutions may be enforced by a majority vote*:

* a majority of members in attendance at a given meeting is sufficient to pass motions or resolutions and thus it is in the best interests of all members to attend each meeting.

2) All members of the PGSA Executive must maintain good standing in the York University Psychology Department. The following will be considered legitimate grounds for suspension of PGSA Executive membership:

- lapse of full-time or part-time status in the department
- formal charges* of sexual harassment, academic dishonesty, or other improper conduct.

* as a result of an official internal or external investigation into any form of misconduct.

In the event of re-establishment of the full-time or part-time status, or the clearing of all charges of misconduct, a suspended Executive member may apply for reinstatement. Applications for reinstatement will be assessed and voted upon by the current PGSA Executives.

3) All members of the PGSA Executive must maintain a minimal level of active participation in meetings and events. The following will be considered grounds for suspension of PGSA Executive membership, as based on committee vote:

- failure to attend three consecutive PGSA meetings without just cause*
- failure to participate in at least two PGSA events without just cause*
- failure to fulfill participation commitments without just cause*
- failure to follow the PGSA's guidelines as outlined in the current constitution
 - *just cause is defined as short-term personal emergencies

Members suspended for non-participation may apply for reinstatement if they can demonstrate a significant change in their ability to participate in the PGSA meetings and events. Applications for reinstatement will be assessed and voted upon by the PGSA Executive.