

Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Student Association (SLSTGSA) Constitution

Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Students Association

Constitution & Guidelines

Fall 2015

The Purpose of this Constitution is:

1. To provide a general philosophy and rationale for the Graduate Student Association.
2. To provide a general orientation for the membership.
3. To lend stability and continuity to the Graduate Student Association.
4. To provide an understanding of the operations, practices and procedures carried on within the various parts of the Graduate Student Association.

Article 1: Name and Affiliation

The name of this organization shall be the Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Student Association (SLSTGSA) at York University (hereafter referred to as "York").

SLSTGSA is a non-profit organization representing all applicants (Masters and PhD) currently enrolled or all persons affiliated with the Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Program at York with an interest in Law and Society.

Article 2: Prime Directives

The SLSTGSA's mandate is to:

2.1 Represent graduate students' interests to the administration

The SLSTGSA represents the interests of graduate students in the Socio-Legal Studies graduate program at York University

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 SLST administration and faculty
- disseminating information from the York University administration and other sources relevant to all socio-legal studies graduate students

- when possible, electing members for SLSTGSA representation at other organizations/associations/committees and relevant bodies at the departmental and University wide level

2.2 Provide support for students to meet their academic and professional goals

The SLSTGSA helps graduate students meet their academic and professional goals by:

- providing opportunities for interaction between members of SLSTGSA and other professionals, academics, researchers and individuals interested in socio-legal issues
- fostering a wide student interest and participation in activities, by providing leadership, seminars, and service
- serve as a practical forum in which members may approach and discuss relevant law and society, and academic interests

2.3 Manage the finances provided by GSA (Graduate Students' Association)

The SLSTGSA 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

2.4 Facilitate social interaction in the department

The SLSTGSA facilitates social interaction within the department by:

- hosting a social event each September for incoming SLST graduate students
- 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

Article 3: Membership

SLSTGSA membership is open to graduate students (Masters and PhD) currently-enrolled at York University in the Socio-Legal Studies Graduate Program. All graduates students currently enrolled in the Socio-Legal Studies graduate program are automatically members of the SLSTGSA and by such status automatically hold voting rights and may be eligible for office-holding privileges. No fee is required for membership in the SLSTGSA.

The SLSTGSA Executive Committee ("GSA Executive") consists of those duly elected representatives as defined in Article 4 of this Constitution.

Article 4: SLSTGSA Executive Committee

4.1 Executive Committee

All SLSTGSA Executive positions equally share the duties and responsibilities of the SLSTGSA . 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 socio-legal studies graduate students.

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

All SLSTGSA Executives are expected to attend SLSTGSA meetings and to actively participate, to the best of their abilities, in the planning and implementation of SLSTGSA events.

4.2 Structure of the Executive Committee

The executive committee of SLSTGSA shall consist of:

4.2.1 Co-Chairs (maximum of 2 positions):

The Co-Chairs are responsible for ensuring that the SLSTGSA mandate is being met. At least one Co-Chair must be an existing PhD student to ensure the continuity of the SLSTGSA from year to year. The Co-Chairs are responsible for organizing and chairing SLSTGSA meetings. This involves setting the date and time of each meeting, preparing the agenda, and notifying all SLSTGSA 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 SLSTGSA (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 SLSTGSA . The Co-Chairs shall provide a written annual report of all activities carried out under the name of the SLST during their term.

4.2.2 Treasurer (1 position):

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping the accounts of the SLSTGSA up-to-date and in good order. The Treasurer must be an existing PhD student. This involves preparing a budget for the Graduate Students' Association at the beginning of each academic year, depositing funds into the SLSTGSA bank account, maintaining accurate banking and accounting records, recording disbursements of SLSTGSA funds and maintaining well-organized files for funding requests and fundraising efforts, as well as acting as a SLSTGSA 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 SLSTGSA finances at every meeting, from a brief update to a full accounting. The Treasurer shall provide a full financial report, including a Statement of Income and Expenditures and a Balance Sheet, at the end of the fiscal year.

4.2.3) Secretary (1 position):

The Secretary is responsible for recording the minutes of each SLSTGSA meeting. Minutes must be posted to the SLSTGSA Executive e-mail list within 1-week of a SLSTGSA meeting. Executive members have 2 days to request changes to the minutes. The minutes are to then be posted in the SLST graduate lounge (Ross South 752). The Secretary is also required to send an electronic version of the minutes to the Communications Coordinator for posting on the SLSTGSA website. The Secretary may also be requested to read minutes of previous meetings at the beginning of each SLSTGSA meeting, unless the Executive votes to waive the reading of the minutes. The Secretary is expected to keep a file of SLSTGSA meeting minutes in good order.

4.2.4 Communications Officer (1 position):

The Communications Officer is responsible for disseminating information from SLSTGSA meetings to the general membership of the SLSTGSA . This involves sending e-mail to the SLST graduate 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. The communications officer is also responsible for creating and maintaining the SLSTGSA web page. The Communications Officer is responsible for maintaining ownership of the e-mail distribution list 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. The Communications Officer is also responsible for creating and distributing a quarterly graduate student newsletter to graduate students, faculty and administrators in the Program.

4.2.5 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 SLSTGSA Executive) for all events. Each event coordinator may take charge of a specific event and is empowered to request the involvement of other SLSTGSA Executive and general members to carry out specific duties. Coordinators are expected

to attend SLSTGSA meetings and keep the Executive up-to-date regarding the planning of their events. The Social Events Coordinators are jointly responsible for submitting a written annual report of all activities and events of the SLSTGSA including detailed budgets during their term.

4.2.6 MA Representative (1 position)

The MA Representative will be elected by the incoming socio-legal studies Master's students to ensure that the interests of MA students are adequately reflected in the SLSTGSA. The MA Representative will act as the liaison between the SLSTGSA and the Master's students. The MA Representative will ensure that Master's students are informed about the activities and events of the SLSTGSA.

4.3 GSA, Departmental, and FGS Representative

In addition to the above positions, the SLSTGSA will also require GSA, Departmental, and FGS Representative who can be elected as stand alone positions or be shared duties among the existing Executive positions.

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

The SLSTGSA 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 SLSTGSA on a larger scale. The GSA representatives are empowered to cast their vote on behalf of the SLSTGSA and are expected to report on issues of relevance to SLST graduate students at the next SLSTGSA meeting following a GSA meeting. For the SLSTGSA 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 listserve to the SLST graduate student listserve.

4.3.2 Departmental Representatives (up to 3 positions):

Departmental representatives are responsible for attending the monthly Graduate Executive meetings to represent the general membership of the SLSTGSA. 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 SLSTGSA members by gathering information formally and informally through discussion and use of the SLST graduate student e-mail list. Departmental representatives are also required to create minutes of the departmental meetings.

4.3.3 FGS Representative (1 position):

The FGS student representative is a member of the SLSTGSA executive, elected during the SLSTGSA 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 SLSTGSA and discuss any business on the FGS council meeting agenda that is relevant to Socio-Legal Studies graduate students. During the FGS meetings, the FGS rep is expected to cast their vote on behalf of the general membership of Socio-Legal Studies graduate students. Following an FGS council meeting, the FGS student representative is responsible for reporting on issues that pertain to Socio-Legal Studies graduate students to the socio-legal studies grads listserv and at the next SLSTGSA 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 SLST graduate student e-mail list, and through informal discussion with students.

Article 5: Terms of Office and Fiscal Year

The terms of office of the SLSTGSA Council will correspond with the SLSTGSA fiscal and academic year, which runs September 1 to August 31. The transfer of executive powers must occur within the first week of October of each new fiscal period.

Article 6: Meetings

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.

6.1 Definition of Attendance

"Attendance" requires engaged mental and bodily presence at the meeting or via telephone. Voting privileges are conferred upon "attending Members" only.

6.2 Types of Meetings

6.2.1 General Meetings:

General Meetings are open to all Members of the SLSTGSA. The Secretary shall give no less than two (2) weeks notice for all General Meetings via the SLSTGSA listserv. There shall be at least one (1) General Meeting held each year.

The dates and agendas for general meetings of SLSTGSA shall be determined by the Co-Chairs in consultation with the Executive Committee.

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.

6.2.2 Executive Meetings:

Executive Meetings are open to members of the Executive Committee. There shall be at least three (3) Executive Committee meetings held each year. General Members of the SLSTGSA may attend Executive Meetings and contribute to the discussions of agenda items if they choose, however, they may not vote on motions.

Executive and special meetings may be called by the Co-Chairs.

Meetings shall be chaired by one of the Co-Chairs, alternating chairing duties each meeting at their discretion.

6.3 Quorum

Quorum for General Meetings shall be determined by two thirds (2/3) of the number equal to the number of SLSTGSA members, at least two (2) of which must be members of the Executive Committee. 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.

Quorum for Executive Meetings shall be determined by two thirds (2/3) of the SLSTGSA Executive Committee.

Article 7: Elections

7.1 Regular Elections:

Regular elections for the Executive Committee shall be held during the first month of regular classes of the fall session as per the Graduate Program schedule. Notice of the election must be given at least two (2) week before the date of the election.

Nominations for Executive Committee and Representative positions shall open the date of the election call and shall close on the day prior to 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.

At the meeting, 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 there are not enough members interested in filling all of the Executive positions, the existing Executive members may 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.

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

7.2 By-elections:

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

(1) If positions remain unfilled after General Elections

- (2) If new positions have been created under the auspices of the constitution
- (3) In the event of a tie or electoral irregularity
- (4) In the event a sitting Executive 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 as Regular Elections.

Article 8:

Members of the Executive Committee of SLSTGSA shall have power to authorize expenditures on behalf of SLSTGSA. The Executive Committee shall consider and authorize, by majority vote, all expenditures.

Article 9: Resolutions

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

Article 10: Committees

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

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

There shall be, as Standing Committees of Executive Committee:

11.1 Curriculum or Academic Committee

Duties: to oversee coordination, funding, and execution of the Program's annual academic conference, as well as advise students on academic issues and concerns.

11.2 Social or Student Affairs Committee

Duties: to oversee coordination and execution of all social events or fundraisers sponsored by the SLSTGSA.

11.3 Symposium Committee

Duties: to oversee funding, coordination and execution of the graduate student symposium. Funding for the symposium will be administered through the SLST GSA account and the SLST Co-Chairs and Treasurer will approve the budget. It is the symposium committee's responsibility to ensure that they keep track of all expenses and provide receipts for reimbursement. The SLST treasurer and Symposium committee treasurer will handle all financial interactions. The Symposium Committee must consist at a minimum of a Chair, a treasurer, and logistics officer.

Article 11 Vacancies

If one or more officers are unable to assume or continue with their duties, the remaining officers may hold a by-election to fill those vacancies under the guidelines listed in Article 7. In the event that such an election cannot be held within a reasonable amount of time, the Co-Chairs with the recommendation of the Executive, have the power to appoint external representatives on an ad-hoc basis.

Article 12 Removal from Office

12.1 Withdrawal from Program

All members of the SLSTGSA Executive must maintain good standing in the York University Socio-Legal Studies graduate program. A lapse of full-time or part-time status in the department, without an approved academic or personal leave, will be considered legitimate grounds for an automatic suspension of SLSTGSA Executive membership.

In the event of re-establishment of the full-time or part-time status a suspended Executive member may apply for reinstatement. Applications for reinstatement will be assessed and voted upon by the current SLSTGSA Executive Committee.

12.2. Misconduct or Mismanagement of Funds

An Executive Committee Member may be removed from office by a majority vote of the General Membership due to the following reasons:

- formal charges of sexual harassment, abuse of power, academic dishonesty, or other improper conduct
- mismanagement of SLSTGSA funds

12.4 Non-Participation

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

- failure to attend three consecutive SLSTGSA meetings without just cause
- failure to participate in at least two SLSTGSA events without just cause
- failure to fulfill participation commitments without just cause
- failure to follow the SLSTGSA's guidelines as outlined in the current constitution

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

Article 13: Conflict of Interests

Executive Committee members will refrain from voting on matters where they have a conflict of interest resulting in personal gain.

Article 14: Dispute Resolution

Although a democratic process, disputes amongst SLSTGSA Executive members may arise. If required, the dispute must be resolved within a SLSTGSA 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 SLSTGSA Executive, disputes should not carry-over to future SLSTGSA meetings, and/or be introduced without properly being tabled on the meeting agenda.

Article 14: By-Laws and Amendments

The constitution is to be reviewed by the Executive Committee, amended as necessary, and dated on an annual basis.

By-laws or amendments to the constitution may be created by any member of the SLSTGSA.

By-laws or amendments to the constitution must be sponsored by at least two persons on the SLSTGSA.

Approval of amendments to the Constitution or By-laws shall occur at a general meeting and must receive two-thirds (2/3) of the votes of members eligible to vote in attendance (or through proxy) in order to pass.