Graduate Student Senate
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Bylaws

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Article I. Representation

A. The Graduate Student Senate for the University of Massachusetts Amherst (hereinafter referred to as the GSS) shall represent the graduate student body of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

B. All graduate students who are charged the Senate Tax (hereinafter referred to as fee-paying graduate students) have the right to vote at GSS general meetings and elections.

C. Constituencies shall be comprised of departments or programs as defined by the Graduate School Bulletin and represented by senators.

D. Representation of graduate students to the Senate shall be as follows:
   1. One (1) senator for every fifty graduate students or fraction thereof in each department or program;
   2. Election procedures must meet the minimum requirements as outlined in Article II Section C on election guidelines.

Article II. Senators

A. Senators shall be elected and serve a term of one academic year.

B. Candidates for senators should be full time graduate students in each constituency.

C. Election Guidelines:
   1. Senators shall be elected by their respective constituencies, but must follow these minimum guidelines
      a. Elections shall have a minimum one week nomination period, and a minimum one week campaigning period.
b. The election process must not exceed four weeks.
c. The winner is determined by simple majority.
d. Elections must have 5% or 5 grad students, which ever is more, voting in the
election.
e. Constituencies shall notify the GSS Elections Committee of the election results
within 2 working days.

2. The Elections Committee reserves the right to review the nomination and election
procedures of any constituency. If said procedure fails to follow the minimum
required guidelines, the Committee may require the constituency to hold a new
election that fulfills minimum requirements.

3. Special elections of senators shall be held to fill vacancies in a timely manner.

D. Rights and Responsibilities:

1. Bring the concerns, needs, and wishes of their constituents to the GSS and soliciting
input from graduate students in GSS business and activities.

2. Regularly attend all meetings of the GSS and meetings of its committees to which s/
he has been appointed, or arrange for alternate representation in the event of his/her
absence.

3. Disseminate information regarding GSS business, university-wide events, and issues
that affect graduate students to the students of his/her department or program.

4. Be familiar with the GSS Constitution, Bylaws, and procedures, as well as Robert’s
Rules of Order.

5. Have one (1) vote at GSS meetings.

E. Alternate Senators

1. Constituencies may additionally elect one alternate for each Senate seat to which they
are entitled, who shall hold all of the privileges normally held by the senator in that
senator’s absence.

2. The Alternate Senator succeeds the Senator in the event of the Senator’s inability to
serve in office for the remainder of the Senator’s term.

3. An alternate may not cast a vote unless acting on behalf of his/her sitting Senator.

F. Termination of Senators

1. Any constituency represented in the GSS may recall its representative(s) at any time
by simple majority vote of 5% of said constituency or at least 5 people, whichever is
greater; upon which notice shall be given to the GSS within 48 hours. Re-election shall
follow the guidelines as specified in the Bylaws Article II, Section C.

2. Senators who miss two consecutive meetings shall be notified by the Executive
Committee. In order to remain in good standing Senators must:
   a. Respond to notification within 10 working days;
   b. Attend the meeting following notification.

3. Senators who fail to attend a third consecutive meeting shall be terminated and
be replaced by the alternate senator. If the department does not have an alternate
senator, a replacement senator should be elected as per Election Guidelines under
GSS Bylaws Article II, Section C.
4. Terminated senators forfeit their positions on all GSS committees.

Article III. Officers

A. Elections
1. Elections shall be held in accordance with the GSS Elections Guidelines.
2. All full time graduate students at UMass Amherst who have paid the Senate Tax for the current semester are eligible to run for GSS Officer positions.
3. Nominations shall begin at least 6 weeks before the end of the Spring semester, and shall be open for two weeks.
4. Within seventy two (72) hours of the close of the nomination period, the Elections Committee shall publicly announce the qualified nominees as well as the voting procedure, as outlined by the GSS Elections Guidelines.
5. Elections shall be held no less than one week and no more than two weeks after the close of nominations.
6. There shall be one official open forum for candidate introductions prior to voting.
7. Elections shall be determined by simple majority vote. A minimum of 5% of fee paying graduate students must vote in order for the election to be valid. In the event of less than 5% vote, a special election shall be held in accordance with the GSS Elections Guidelines.
8. There shall be at least one regularly scheduled Senate meeting between the close of elections and the end of the academic year.

B. Pro Tem Officer Elections and Replacement
1. In the event of vacancy of the President, the Vice President shall assume the office of the President and rescind his/her role as Vice President.
2. In the event of vacancy of the Vice President or Treasurer positions, a general election shall be held if the vacancy occurs prior to February 1. If the vacancy occurs between February 1st and April 1st, the Senate shall decide within 14 days by simple majority on the method of a special election: general election, senate vote, or executive committee appointment. If the vacancy occurs on or after April 1st, the Senate shall decide whether or not to fill the vacancy through general election, senate vote, or executive committee appointment.
3. An officer pro tem shall be entitled to the appropriate proportion of the salary allocated for the post. A recalled officer shall not receive any payment from the Graduate Student Senate subsequent to the date of the recall vote.

C. Terms and Payment
1. The term of all officers shall be from June 1 to May 31 of the following year.
2. The officers shall serve as full-time equivalent staff for the academic year and shall receive a stipend equal to the minimum hourly rate of full-time equivalent graduate employees as determined by the Graduate School Assistantship Office.
3. All officers shall serve 10 hours per week as paid staff during the summer at the minimum hourly rate of full-time equivalent graduate employees. Officers may work
up to 20 hours per week as needed, and if allowable by budgetary constraints.

D. Rights and Responsibilities

1. President: Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:
   a. Serves as chief administrative officer of the GSS.
   b. Supervises GSS staff and moderates staff meetings.
   c. Maintains regular office hours.
   d. Oversees graduate student representation on committees and commissions within the GSS and the Faculty Senate.
   e. Chairs Senate meetings and general meetings of graduate students.
   f. Serves as liaison with the university administration.
   g. Serves on committees including but not limited to:
      i. Executive Committee as chair
      ii. Hiring Committee as chair

2. Vice President: Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:
   a. Serves as President in the absence of the President.
   b. Attends all Executive committee and Senate meetings.
   c. Maintains regular office hours.
   d. Serves on committees including but not limited to:
      i. Childcare Committee as chair
      ii. Election Committee as chair
      iii. Finance Committee as vice-chair
      iv. Executive Committee
      v. Hiring Committee

3. Treasurer: Responsibilities will include but are not limited to:
   a. Serves as chief financial officer of the Senate.
   b. Manages the Graduate Student Senate Trust Fund in conjunction with the Finance Committee and at the direction of the Senate.
   c. Controls purchasing and expenditure of funds.
   d. Oversees distribution of Line Item and Ad Hoc funding.
   e. Develops the budget with the Finance Committee and the Center for Student Development.
   f. Maintains regular office hours.
   g. Attends all Executive committee and Senate meetings.
   h. Oversees Graduate Student Organizations: registration, re-registration, and other events.
   i. Serves on committees including but not limited to:
      i. Finance Committee as chair
      ii. Childcare Committee
      iii. Executive Committee
      iv. Hiring Committee

E. Discipline and Resignation

1. Discipline of Officer:
a. Upon the substantial failure of an officer to perform the duties assigned to
that office or the violation of the GSS Code of Conduct, the senate, by simple
majority vote, may open a disciplinary or recall procedure by issuing a formal
written warning to the offending officer. A motion for opening the disciplinary
recall procedure shall be added to the meeting agenda either upon submission
of a letter written by the Executive Committee, or a petition signed by no fewer
than ten (10) senators in good standing.
b. If the offending officer fails to correct the mistakes or improve his/her
performance, the Senate may vote to either censure or recall the officer by a
two-thirds vote of the Senate in the subsequent meeting. Officers may also be
recalled or censured by a simple majority vote in a general meeting.
c. A censured officer may be recalled by two-thirds (2/3) vote at any subsequent
senate or general meeting.
d. The Discipline or Recall procedure is subject to the just cause provision of the
Graduate Employee Organization Contract.

2. The President shall receive the resignations of other officers. The President shall
resign to the Vice-President.

Article IV. Committees

A. The Senate shall have the power to establish and/or appoint standing and ad hoc committees
to the Senate as are deemed necessary for the successful conduct of its business.
   1. Committees shall function collectively according to principles of maximum
      participation of the membership.
   2. All committee members shall recuse him/herself from committee actions that may
      present a conflict of interest.
   3. Committees shall keep accurate written minutes of their meetings.
   4. The election of senators to standing committees shall be on the agenda of the first
      Senate meeting of the academic year.
   5. The Senate shall have the right to recall its representatives on any Senate committee
      by two-thirds (2/3) vote.

B. Standing Committees
   1. Executive Committee
      a. Membership of the Executive committee shall consist of the President as chair,
         Vice President, Treasurer and two representatives elected from the senate.
         The senators shall be elected to seats on the Committee at a regular or special
         meeting of the Senate by simple majority vote. Such elections must have been
         previously included as agenda items for those meetings.
      b. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be called by the President as
         required for the conduct of necessary business. A quorum for all business shall
         be three members of the Committee. Meetings shall be open to all who wish to
         attend except during closed session.
c. The Committee shall be charged with the following tasks:
   i. To fulfill those functions required of it under the Constitution and By-Laws.
   ii. To discuss and approve GSS priorities, plans, policies, and actions, and proposing and recommending such to the Senate for approval.
   iii. To review motions submitted for inclusion on the agenda of a regular or special meeting of the Senate. No such motion submitted may be omitted from the agenda.
   iv. To organize and to execute efficient day-to-day functioning of GSS. Such duties may include but are not limited to purchase of necessary materials, maintenance of files and archives, disbursement of wages and issuance of Senate documents.
   v. To hire and evaluate staff in accordance with the Graduate Student Senate Hiring Policy.
   vi. To ensure an accurate and current record of income and expenditure of Senate funds, which shall be open to inspection by any graduate student during advertised office hours.
   vii. To act in full, on behalf of the Senate, in such areas and for such terms as the Senate may determine (e.g., Intersession, Summer Vacation).

d. All actions of the Executive Committee shall be strictly subject to review and amendment or repeal by a regular or special meeting of the Senate, or by a general meeting of graduate students.

2. Finance Committee
   a. Membership of the Finance Committee shall consist of the Treasurer as chair, the Vice-President as vice chair, and three elected Senators in good standing. The senators shall be elected to seats on the Committee at the regular or special meeting of the Senate in September of each year, or whenever vacancies arise, and shall serve until the close of the academic year. Such elections must have been previously included as agenda items for those meetings.
   b. Committee meetings shall be called as required for the conduct of necessary business. A quorum for all business shall be three members. Meetings shall be open to all those who wish to attend.
   c. The Committee shall be charged with the following tasks:
      i. To propose an annual budget for the following academic year to the Senate for approval. With approval of the Senate, the Finance Committee may approve revisions to the annual budget at any time during the year.
      ii. To review requests to the Senate for funds submitted by any organization.
      iii. To advise all Graduate Student Organizations (GSO) for funds on the budgets they have submitted and their supporting documentation, clarifying where possible problems in funding requests, according
to guidelines laid out in the Graduate Student Organization Funding Policy.

iv. To recommend to the Senate for approval such regulations, policies and documents as shall be considered necessary to the efficient conduct of their charge.

d. The Graduate Student Senate shall reserve the power to investigate evidence or accusations of malfeasance or misconduct by groups funded by the GSS. This may result in the suspension of payments or assignments of money to said group until the accusations are investigated and their credence established. This investigation is to be carried out by an ad hoc committee convened for that purpose. If such accusations are found to be true no further funding will be forthcoming until such time as the Senate is satisfied that it will be well spent. The Senate also reserves the right to demand the return of misspent funds.

3. Childcare Committee
   a. Membership of the Childcare Committee shall consist of the Vice President as chair, the Treasurer as vice chair, and three graduate students appointed by the Vice President.
   b. A quorum for business shall be three members.
   c. The Committee shall be charged with the following tasks:
      i. Create and process applications for childcare funds.
      ii. Determine the allocation of the Childcare fund among applicants according to Childcare Assistance Program Distribution Policy.

4. Elections Committee
   a. Membership shall consist of five members including the Vice President as Chair. If the Vice President is running for Office then the committee shall elect a new Chair person.
   b. Candidates running for office may not stand on the elections committee.
   c. A quorum for all business shall be three members.
   d. The Committee shall be charged with the following tasks:
      i. Conducting elections of executive officers according to the Graduate Student Senate Election Guidelines,
      ii. Calling for special elections when needed in accordance with the Graduate Student Senate Election Guidelines.
      iii. Report the results of elections to the Senate.
      iv. Reviewing, if necessary, the senator election procedures of each constituency as stated in these By laws under Article II, Section C.

C. Ad Hoc Committees
   1. The senate and Executive Committee shall have the power to establish ad hoc committees for specific purposes as the needs of the GSS require. The ad hoc committees shall be responsible for electing their own chairpersons as required.
   2. Ad hoc committee shall exist until fulfillment of the purpose for which it is established or until otherwise dissolved by the Executive Committee.
3. An ad hoc committee may become a standing committee upon the passage of an Amendment to these bylaws, as outlined in the constitution, establishing it as such.

**Article V. Meetings**

A. All regular senate meeting dates shall be set within the first two weeks of each semester. Meeting times and locations shall be determined by the executive committee and published at least 48 hours in advance.

B. The President shall preside over a regular or general meeting. In absence of the President, or if the agenda includes a motion to recall the President, the Vice President shall preside.

C. Meeting minutes shall be recorded by a member of the GSS staff and should be made available within 48 hours to the graduate student body.

D. All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order, unless superseded by these Bylaws.

E. The president shall appoint a parliamentarian to provide advice on conducting the meeting and respond to points of order.

F. Meeting agendas shall be prepared in accordance with the Constitution. For motions to be included on the agenda they shall be made available to the President at least 48 hours before the meeting.

G. All motions not on the agenda must be given to the parliamentarian in writing upon presentation.

H. Unless otherwise specified in the Constitution or Bylaws, motions require a simple majority vote to pass.

I. All meetings are open unless the Senate votes to continue the meeting in executive session, as defined by the The Commonwealth of Massachusetts on Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25

**Article VI. Finances**

A. All Trustee and University financial and operational policies and Campus procedures shall govern the financial transactions of the Graduate Student Senate as well as the financial transactions of any person(s), agency, or organization funded in whole or in part by the Graduate Student Senate Trust Fund.

B. The Graduate Student Senate Tax shall be collected each semester by the University.

C. The GSS shall procure revenue primarily through the Senate Tax levied upon all eligible graduate students, as defined by the Constitution. A recommended increase in the Senate Tax of 7.5% and below shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Senate membership in attendance at a scheduled meeting. An increase in the GSS Tax of over 7.5% shall be in accordance with the constitution.

D. Procedure to approve the GSS budget

  1. On or before the last scheduled meeting of the Senate in April, the Finance Committee shall compile its final recommendations and submit it to the Senate as the proposed GSS budget. The proposed annual GSS budget shall contain a complete breakdown, by account number of recommended allocations.
2. The proposed annual GSS budget shall be placed on the agenda for the first scheduled Senate meeting in May, and upon a majority vote of the Senate membership in attendance shall be adopted by the Senate.

3. Any modifications to the approved budget in excess of $1000 shall be approved by the Finance Committee and Senate.

E. Graduate Student Organizations shall adhere to the Graduate Student Organization Funding Policy found in the appendix of the bylaws as well as the policies mentioned in Article VI section A.

**Article VII. GSS Code of Conduct**

A. No officer, staff or senator of the GSS shall participate in any private business or professional activity, or have any direct or indirect financial interest which would place said officer or agent in a position where there is a conflict between that private interest and the best interests of the GSS.

B. No officer, staff or senator of the GSS shall use or allow the use of any GSS property, facilities, or personnel of any kind for any activity not officially sanctioned by the Constitution of the GSS, the By-laws of the GSS or an Act of the GSS.

C. No person shall corruptly give, offer, or promise to any GSS officer, staff or senator any pecuniary or other benefit not authorized by the Constitution of the GSS, the By-laws of the GSS, or by Act of the GSS, for the past, present, or future performance or non-performance of an act which the person believes to have been, or the officer or agent represents as having been, within the official capacity of the officer or agent.

D. No officer, staff or senator of the GSS shall aid, advise, procure or in any other way directly induce another to act in violation of the Constitution of the GSS, the By-laws of the GSS, or an Act of the GSS.

**Article VIII. Grievance Procedure**

In the event of officer recall/removal or staff dismissal the individual shall follow the Graduate Employee Organization guidelines and procedures.

**Article IX. Amendment Procedures**

A. Any voting member of the Graduate Student Senate may propose an amendment to these Bylaws.

   1. The proposal for an amendment shall be submitted to the President at least two weeks before the meeting where it will be considered. Amendment proposals shall include:
      a. Original article (if applicable)
      b. Proposed amendment
      c. Reason for proposed amendment

B. The proposed amendments shall have been presented at one previous meeting of the body concerned; and

C. The final vote on all Bylaw amendments shall be determined by a two-thirds (2/3) majority.
Article X. Appendix
The Senate shall additionally treat the following documents as Senate Bylaws, and when amending these documents shall follow strictly the amendment procedures of the Bylaws as proposed in Article IX:

A. Graduate Student Organization Funding Policy
B. GSS Elections Guidelines