

# Constitution of the Biology Graduate Student Association

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## 1 Preamble

- 1.1 The name of the organization shall be the “Memorial University of Newfoundland Biology Graduate Student Association” (hereafter “the BGSA”).
- 1.2 Should the name of Memorial University of Newfoundland be changed, the name in Section 1.1 shall change to reflect this change.
- 1.3 The Executive Committee (hereafter “the Executive”) shall consist of the Chairperson, Treasurer, Communications Officer, Professional Development Coordinator, Seminar Series Coordinator(s), and Special Events Coordinator.
- 1.4 Unless otherwise stated, Annual General Meetings (hereafter “AGM”) and regular meetings shall follow Robert’s Rules of Order.

## 2 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the BGSA shall be to:
  - a. offer members professional development seminars and opportunities;
  - b. create opportunities for members to get to know each other and faculty through social events and a website;
  - c. speak to administration and department on behalf of members about issues important to graduate students (e.g., teaching, travel funding, course offerings, etc...);
  - d. create a forum through which members can present their research to the department;  
and
  - e. plan, organize, and run the Biology Departmental Seminar Series, in conjunction with faculty representatives.

## 3 Membership

- 3.1 General membership of the BGSA shall be open to all graduate students of Memorial University of Newfoundland enrolled in the Biology Department as well as graduate students with supervisors in or cross appointed to the Biology Department. This may include graduate students in the Biology, Biochemistry, Geography, Environmental Science, and Cognitive and Behavioural Ecology (CABE) departments. All these students will be considered full general

members of the BGSA (hereafter “members”) until their graduation or they remove themselves as members by putting a request in writing.

- 3.2 Each member shall have one vote in matters requiring a vote by the membership.
- 3.3 The Executive may, by three quarters majority vote, suspend the membership of any member and recommend to the members at a general meeting the expulsion of that member for behaviour likely to bring discredit to the BGSA. The expulsion of a member shall not be valid until confirmed by a three quarters majority vote of members at the general meeting. The person who is the subject of a proposed resolution for expulsion shall be given an opportunity to be heard at the general meeting before the resolution is put to a vote.

## 4 Members’ Meetings

- 4.1 An Annual General Meeting (AGM) of members shall be held every April following the Biology Graduate Student Symposium (BGSS) at a time and place determined by the Executive.
- 4.2 In addition to the AGM, other general meetings may be called at any time at the discretion of the Executive or by a petition signed by at least 5% of the members and presented to the Chairperson.
- 4.3 The presence of 10% of members will constitute a quorum. The departmental list of enrolled Biology graduate students will be used to calculate the number of members needed to constitute 10% for the quorum.
- 4.4 Any member of the BGSA may authorize another member to vote for them by proxy at a general meeting or in any action taken without a meeting. A proxy shall be in writing and signed by the member. Such a proxy must be delivered to the Communications Officer of the BGSA prior to the meeting and shall be valid only for the meeting named therein. A reminder of a member's proxy rights shall be included in any notice of any members' meeting.
- 4.5 Should a meeting be cancelled because of university closure, it will take place at the time and place one week from the cancelled meeting.

## 5 Members’ Communication Executive

- 5.1 All notices concerning the members shall be posted on the BGSA website and/or emailed to the BGSA mailing list.
- 5.2 The BGSA mailing list will be composed of email addresses given to the BGSA by the appropriate graduate secretary, unless a member provides an alternate email address.
- 5.3 Members must send all requests, complaints, or suggestions to the BGSA by emailing the BGSA at [bgsa@mun.ca](mailto:bgsa@mun.ca) or by emailing the Communications Officer directly.
- 5.4 Notice of all general meetings and the AGM will be sent to members and/or posted on the website not less than seven days prior to the meeting. In the case of a meeting rescheduled because of university closure, notice of the rescheduled meeting will be made within four days (see also section 4.5).

## 6 Executive

- 6.1 At each AGM, members shall elect a committee of representatives, which shall be called the Executive and Representative. Nominations for these positions will be received by the Communications Officer up to one week before the AGM and from the floor at the AGM. Each nominee will have an opportunity to speak at the AGM. Each Executive member will be a member of good standing and will need a majority vote to win the position.
- 6.2 The Executive shall be elected into one of the following positions:
  - a. Chairperson
  - b. Treasurer
  - c. Communications Officer
  - d. Professional Development Coordinator
  - e. Seminar Series Coordinator(s)
  - f. Special Events Coordinator
- 6.3 The BGSA Representatives shall be elected into one of the following positions:
  - a. Biology Graduate Studies Committee Representative (BGSC)
  - b. Biology Faculty Meeting Representative

c. Biology Undergraduate Studies Committee Representative (BUGS)

d. Graduate Students Union Board of Directors (BOD) Representative

6.4 Each Executive member will remain in their position until the next AGM, at which time they will be considered a Past-Executive member. They will not be considered a Past-Executive member if they are re-elected into full Executive status at the same AGM.

6.5 The Past-Executive members of the previous term will attend the Executive meeting immediately following the AGM to provide continuity, past-history, and expertise to the newly elected Executive. Past-Executive members will not be considered voting members at this, or subsequent Executive meetings.

6.6 Any Executive or Representative may resign by giving written notice to the Chairperson or Alternate Chairperson. The decision whether or not to refill this position will be made by the remaining Executive. If this position is to be refilled, then a by-election will be held. If the position is to remain vacant, duties will be redistributed among the remaining Executive.

6.7 The duties of the Executive and Representatives shall be to manage the affairs of the BGSA, supervise the expenditure of the BGSA funds, and implement the execution of the policies found within this constitution.

6.8 The Executive will meet at least once a month, at a time and place determined by the Chairperson. The Chairperson will announce the time and place of the next Executive meeting at the current Executive meeting, as well as give notice by sending an email to all Executive members not less than four days prior to the next meeting.

6.9 An emergency meeting of the Executive may be called by any Executive member. Notice of an emergency meeting will be given not less than 24 hours before the meeting and all Executive will make a reasonable attempt to attend.

6.10 The presence of 51% (or 4 Executive members) will constitute a quorum.

6.11 Executive members cannot vote by proxy. Executive members that fail to attend three consecutive meetings or attend less than 50% of meetings in a 4-month period, without due cause, will be considered to have resigned. This position will be refilled following the policy outlined in section 6.6.

6.12 Representative positions are to follow the guidelines and restrictions placed upon them by their respective committees. Representatives will be asked to report to the BGSA Executive, via the chairperson, at least once a month. If needed a Representative member can request a meeting with the BGSA according to guidelines outlined in sub-section 6.9.

## 7 Executive Position Duties

### 7.1 Chairperson

- 7.1.1 Shall exercise a general supervision over the Executive members and business of the BGSA by keeping up to date on the past and current activities of the BGSA.
- 7.1.2 Shall serve as the Chief Executive Officer of the BGSA. Contracts and documents requiring the signature of the BGSA shall be signed by the Chairperson and shall be binding on the BGSA.
- 7.1.3 Shall represent the BGSA in its relations with the Biology Department, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and all other individuals / organizations / governments.
- 7.1.4 Shall chair the Executive meetings, AGM, and general meetings in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.
- 7.1.5 Shall act as the principle liaison between all Representative positions and the BGSA Executive. The chairperson is to collect updates from Representatives at least once per month and report any information to the Executive.
- 7.1.6 Shall draft an agenda for each Executive meeting and AGM.
- 7.1.7 Shall maintain the BGSA archive (see Section 9).
- 7.1.8 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

### 7.2 Treasurer

- 7.2.1 Shall be the Alternate Chairperson and therefore act as such when called upon by the Chairperson. This may include completing any of the above duties.
- 7.2.2 Shall be responsible for maintaining a financial record of the BGSA, including all income and expenses.

- 7.2.3 Shall present a financial report to the Executive in December and to the members at the AGM in April.
- 7.2.4 Shall initiate a minimum of one fundraising event per year in addition to money received from alcohol sales at the Biology Departmental Seminar Series.
- 7.2.5 Shall organize the purchase, pick-up, and sales of all alcohol for the Biology Departmental Seminar Series.
- 7.2.6 Shall select three bartenders and make sure they are licensed under the current Memorial University of Newfoundland policies.
- 7.2.7 Shall appoint another Executive member to complete their duties in their absence and notify the Chairperson of such.
- 7.2.8 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

### 7.3 Communications Officer

- 7.3.1 Shall contact all departments / individuals necessary to determine an updated list of members and their contact information.
- 7.3.2 Responsible for recording the minutes at each Executive meeting and the AGM and sending these minutes to the Executive members within fourteen days of the meeting.
- 7.3.3 Shall send out all notices to the members and keep record of those notices.
- 7.3.4 Shall report any communications received to the [bgsa@mun.ca](mailto:bgsa@mun.ca) email account requiring the attention of the Executive to the Executive and keep record of all communications.
- 7.3.5 Shall ensure that notices of important events and seminars are circulated to faculty, staff and students, as deemed appropriate. This may include ensuring that notices are forwarded by departmental secretaries, and that seminar announcements are posted on the MUN calendar of events (e.g., [today.mun.ca](http://today.mun.ca)).
- 7.3.6 Shall appoint another Executive member to complete their duties in their absence and notify the Chairperson of such.
- 7.3.7 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

7.3.8 Shall maintain the BGSA website at <https://www.mun.ca/biology/bgsa/>.

#### 7.4 Professional Development Coordinator

7.4.1 Shall organize and invite all members to professional / instructional / career workshops at least once a year. This may include BGSA designed workshops or those organized by Memorial University of Newfoundland: (1) Biology Department, (2) School of Graduate Studies, (3) Centre for Career Development, or (4) Instructional Development Office.

7.4.2 Shall organize and run the September Science Building Orientation for all new members.

7.4.3 Shall appoint another Executive member to complete their duties in their absence and notify the Chairperson of such.

7.4.4 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

#### 7.5 Seminar Series Coordinator

7.5.1 Shall organize the Biology Departmental Seminar Series in consultation with the Executive and appointed faculty members.

7.5.2 Shall contact all presenters to confirm their willingness to present, preferred time, presentation title, and abstract.

7.5.3 Shall ensure that the money needed to host out-of-town guests does not exceed the budget.

7.5.4 Shall develop a seminar series schedule and weekly notices and ensure it is given to the Communications Officer for circulation to members and faculty.

7.5.5 Shall chair each seminar by introducing the presenter, facilitating questions, and thanking the presenter.

7.5.6 Shall appoint another Executive member to complete their duties in their absence and notify the Chairperson of such.

7.5.7 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

7.5.8 This position may be occupied by up to three (3) Executive members per year, with the division of labour organized by the co-coordinators.

## 7.6 Special Events Coordinator

- 7.6.1 Shall organize one social event and one community engagement / service event per semester for all members.
- 7.6.2 Shall, with the Communications Officer, ensure all events are adequately advertised to members.
- 7.6.3 Shall appoint another Executive member to complete their duties in their absence and notify the Chairperson of such.
- 7.6.4 Shall play a role in organizing and facilitating BGSA events.

## 7.7 Representatives

- 7.7.1 Shall abide by guidelines, restrictions, and timing outlined by the respective committee.
- 7.7.2 Shall represent the general interests of the members of the BGSA during respective committee meetings.
- 7.7.3 Shall attend all meetings of respective committees and advise the BGSA chairperson if attendance is not possible. If the Representative is going to leave early or miss an extended period of meetings, then a by-election can be held at the discretion of the Executive.
- 7.7.4 Shall contact the chairperson prior to each meeting to ensure proper information is transferred.
- 7.7.5 Shall report committee updates to the chairperson monthly and attend BGSA Executive meetings at the discretion of the chairperson.
- 7.7.6 If affiliated departments / programs are not represented by the elected Executive (i.e. at least one Executive member from Biology, Ocean Sciences, Marine Institute, CABE, Geography, and Environmental Science), positions for non-voting Program Representatives will be opened, and filled by volunteers. Program Representatives, which may also include Representatives that sit on other committees not filled by the core BGSA Executive or Representatives, will be responsible for communicating events, opportunities, and other resources available to BGSA members beyond the core Biology Department.

## 8 Accounting

- 8.1 All accounts opened in the name of the BGSA must have a minimum of two signing authorities, the Chairperson and Treasurer.
- 8.2 All disbursement of funds shall require the signature of at least two signing authorities.

## 9 Archive

- 9.1 Before the annual Executive changeover, the minutes of Executive meetings, the previous AGM, seminar series schedule, website content, financial reports, social events posters or advertisements, official letters, and any other material useful to the new Executive members will be copied to a shared Google Drive and a hard drive to be kept in the BGSA office. A summary of the year's events and financial status will also be presented at the AGM.
- 9.2 Collection of this material will be organized by the Chairperson.
- 9.3 This archive will be kept by the current Chairperson and given to the new Chairperson at the first Executive meeting with the new Executive as outlined in section 6.5.
- 9.4 The Google Drive account owned by the BGSA email account, [bgsa@mun.ca](mailto:bgsa@mun.ca), will serve as archive of all BGSA related documents.

## 10 Email Account

- 10.1 All BGSA communications will be sent and archived by the Communications officer as per Section 9.
- 10.2 Email account use is limited to the Communications Officer and Chairperson.
- 10.3 The email password will be changed by the incoming Communications Officer and given to the Chairperson.
- 10.4 All online accounts and platforms used for activities of the BGSA will be owned by the BGSA email account, [bgsa@mun.ca](mailto:bgsa@mun.ca), including but not limited to the Google Drive account.

## 11 Graduate Student Union

- 11.1 The BGSA is ratified by the Graduate Student Union as an official society and will therefore follow the rules and regulations determined by the Graduate Student Union.

## 12 Amendments

12.1 Amendments to this constitution may be made at any meeting of members and requires a two-thirds majority vote.

12.2 Any proposed changes must be circulated to the membership for consideration at least 48 hours prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed. All amendments must be explained fully at the AGM, with time provided for questions and further amendments if required.