

Constitution of the Graduate Student Organization at Boston University

September 2024 Update

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Graduate Student Organization of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Boston University, hereafter called the Graduate Student Organization (GSO).

Article II. Purpose

The Purpose of the GSO shall be:

1. To provide a forum for the discussion of matters pertaining to the welfare of graduate students at BU.
2. To advocate on the issues of concern to our graduate student community.
3. To serve as a liaison between the graduate student body and BU administration.
4. To recommend graduate students to serve on BU committees for which graduate representation is necessary.
5. To assist with the process of integrating new students into graduate student life at BU.
6. To sponsor social activities and other events to encourage the development of the graduate student community.
7. To foster effective communication and cooperation among undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff and other members of the community.

Article III. Membership

1. The GSO membership shall be composed of full-time and part-time graduate students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Boston University.
2. The formal GSO membership body shall be composed of departmental representatives from each department of GRS, as well as officers, and committee members.
3. The GSO voting body shall consist of all GSO departmental representatives, officers, and committee members.
4. The good standing status of a member of the GSO is based on the standing of their respective department, in which,
 - a. Good standing is based on the attendance of departmental representatives.
 - b. Good standing status requires its respective department representatives to have attended at least 3 meetings of the previous semester, or at least 3 meetings the current semester in the case that at least three meetings have passed.

Article IV. Officers

1. The Executive Board shall be comprised of:
 - a. President
 - b. Vice President
 - c. Treasurer
 - d. Secretary
 - e. Committee Chairpersons

2. The President Shall:
 - a. Plan and facilitate General and Special GSO meetings.
 - i. Set up the schedule for General GSO meetings.
 - ii. Coordinate rooms and meeting logistics.
 - iii. Provide an agenda prior to each General GSO meeting.
 - b. Provide general leadership:
 - i. Meet with the executive board to plan for the upcoming meetings/rest of the semester.
 - ii. Stay in touch with the treasurer on a monthly basis.
 - iii. Stay in touch with and motivate committees on a monthly basis.
 - iv. Resolve serious disagreements among members (i.e., build consensus).
 - v. Act as a main point of contact for the GSO.
 - vi. Meet with Administration regularly.
 - vii. Provide regular updates for the membership.
 - viii. Work to advance the growth of the GSO.
3. The Vice President shall:
 - a. Stay in touch with committees and treasurer on a monthly basis.
 - i. Provide updates at the general meetings when a committee chairperson is unable to attend the meeting.
 - b. Coordinate with the President.
 - i. Assume the position of leadership in the absence of the President.
 - ii. Assist in Presidential duties such as responding to internal and external GSO inquiries and communications.
 - c. Act as the proxy for departmental representatives who cannot attend meetings.
 - i. Record attendance at GSO General Meetings.
 - ii. Voice the provided opinions and votes of the departments where possible.
 - d. Order enough food for the meeting to be delivered at the time of or just before the meeting:
 - i. Keep in mind food allergies and other dietary restrictions.
 - ii. Meetings 1-4 usually shall have a budget of \$100, but subject to treasurer discretion.
 - iii. Meeting 5 typically gets a larger budget of about \$200, subject to treasurer discretion.
4. The Treasurer Shall:
 - a. Set a budget and manage the GSO funds.
 - i. Fill out and submit reimbursement forms to Graduate Services Associate at Boston University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences within 2 weeks of receiving receipts.
 - ii. Communicate with the Graduate Services Associate at Boston University Graduate School of Arts & Sciences to confirm budget.
 - iii. Give budget updates at each General GSO meeting.
 1. Include the following items:

- a. Starting Balance at the beginning of the year
 - b. Current Balance on BU Books
 - c. Allocated Funds
 - i. How much has been allocated to what purpose
 - ii. Unallocated Funds
 - d. If the treasurer cannot attend, they must send the budget updates to the vice president up to 1 hour before the general meeting.
- 5. The Secretary shall:
 - a. Attend each General GSO and Executive Board Meeting.
 - b. Take notes on the events of each meeting.
 - i. President will provide the secretary with the agenda.
 - ii. Secretary will elaborate on:
 - 1. What topics were covered.
 - 2. What votes were put forth.
 - a. Results of each vote.
 - 3. Any other comments or issues addressed.
 - iii. If the secretary cannot attend a meeting, they must find a replacement prior to the meeting.
 - c. Post General Meeting notes to the GSO website within 1 week of the meeting.
- 6. Committee chairpersons shall:
 - a. Plan and facilitate respective committee meetings.
 - b. Delegate committee tasks.
 - c. Stay in touch with the President and Vice President on a monthly basis.
 - d. Provide updates at each General Meeting.
 - i. If the chairperson cannot attend, they must send the budget updates to the Vice President up to 1 hour before the general meeting.

Article V. Committees

- 1. Purpose, Structure, and Procedure
 - a. A committee shall consist of members of the GSO membership, and exists in order to address specific issues of importance to the GSO membership, or for the functioning of the GSO itself.
 - b. Each committee shall have a written statement of purpose clearly defining the goals and duties of that committee.
 - i. A committee may adopt its own operating guidelines as long as the guidelines do not contradict the GSO constitution, amendments, and bylaws.
 - c. Committees may be created or dissolved at any time by majority vote of the GSO voting body. In similar fashion, committees may be temporarily deactivated (and later reactivated) by majority vote of the voting body.
 - d. Each committee shall have one chairperson, who shall hold primary responsibility for the committee.

- i. The position of chair shall be filled by a willing member of the committee and shall be selected by the members of the committee.
- 2. Committee Reports
 - a. The chairperson from each committee should attend each general GSO meeting.
 - b. Each committee must maintain pertinent documentation and report their activities at least once a month at a General GSO Meeting.
 - i. If a monthly committee report cannot be given by the chairperson, any member of said committee may present the report.
 - ii. If a committee member is not available, a written report of the committee's activities must be given to the Vice President of the GSO up to 1 hour prior to the meeting.
 - c. If no representative from a particular committee reports by the above means for two or more general GSO meetings in a semester, an evaluation of the committee shall take place at the following GSO General Meeting.
 - i. In this case, the GSO voting body shall decide whether choosing a new chairperson for the committee or deactivation of the committee is necessary.
 - ii. All Committees shall adhere to these guidelines while active.
- 3. Types of Committees
 - a. A **standing committee** shall be a committee that is active during the entire year.
 - b. A **periodic committee** shall be a committee that is active during some proper subset of the year, as defined in the description of said committee.
 - c. An **ad hoc committee** shall be a committee formed in order to address specific short-term issues. Such a committee will dissolve upon completion of its purpose.
- 4. Standing Committees
 - a. Travel Grant Committee
 - i. This committee is charged with collecting, reading, assessing, and awarding travel grants to certain GSO members.
 - 1. Eligible winners will be:
 - a. PhD Candidates
 - b. Be in departments with good standing with the GSO.
 - c. Submit their applications on time.
 - b. Social Committee
 - i. This committee is charged with the planning, promotion, and running of social activities benefiting graduate students.
- 5. Periodic Committees
 - a. Orientation Committee
 - i. This committee is responsible for planning and organizing aspects in which the GSO is represented in the graduate student orientation.
 - b. Ad Hoc Committees
 - i. Financial, Academic and Research Committee (FAR)
 - 1. This committee is responsible for monitoring the financial health of graduate students, establishing adequate procedures for the handling of grievances, examining the quality of advising and encouraging successful mentoring of graduate students, and

ensuring that an environment conducive to productive research exists.

- ii. Funding Committee
 - 1. This committee is charged with providing support for basic operating and programming expenses. Duties also include the proposal and maintenance of a budget each year. The chair of this committee is the Treasurer.
- iii. Healthcare Committee
 - 1. This committee is responsible for informing graduate students about their healthcare options, primarily by maintaining a repository of healthcare information available to graduate students and shall maintain a reasonable presence at forums relevant to student healthcare.
- iv. Housing and Community Committee
 - 1. This committee represents the housing interests of the graduate population. In addition, the committee investigates the concerns of graduate student welfare in regards to safety and other related matters.
- v. Liaison Committee
 - 1. This committee will act as liaison to the administration, and, to additional groups and organizations as the GSO body chooses. The GSO shall have a minimum of two liaisons. All liaisons must be elected. The chair of the committee is the Vice President.
- vi. Publicity Committee
 - 1. This committee is responsible for assisting with the publicity of all announcements that come from the GSO or that the GSO passes along from third parties. The committee will also maintain the GSO's server, mailing lists, and web site, and assist other committees with their webpages. Finally, this committee will be responsible for taking minutes at GSO meetings.
- vii. Steering Committee
 - 1. This committee is responsible for maintaining the constitution
- viii. Survey Committee
 - 1. This committee is responsible for planning and organizing campus surveys for GSO use.

Article VI. Departmental Representatives

- 1. Eligibility
 - a. Each Masters or PhD degree-granting program or department in the Graduate School or Arts and Sciences is entitled to choose representative(s) to the GSO body.
 - b. Each representative must be a current graduate student in the program or department they represent.

- c. There shall be no more than two voting representatives per department or program at each meeting.
 - d. The number of representatives per department will be two, regardless of the size of the department.
 - e. Each department will also be able to have a maximum total of one alternate representative who is assigned, to act in the absence of any of the two voting representatives.
2. Duties
- a. Representatives are expected to attend all GSO General Meetings.
 - i. A minimum of 3 meetings must be attended by at least 1 representative each semester in order for the respective department to be eligible for travel grants.
 - ii. Eligibility will be based as mentioned in Article 3, in which good standing is determined by attendance of the previous semester or the current semester if three meetings have passed.
 - b. Representatives shall serve as voting members of the GSO body.
 - i. Each representative shall receive a single vote in the GSO body.
 - c. Representatives shall represent the concerns of their constituencies before the GSO, and communicate the proceedings and issues raised at GSO meetings to their constituencies.
 - d. Representatives shall also encourage the active participation in the GSO of graduate students within their respective department.
 - e. Although representatives bear particular responsibilities to the graduate students of their department, they shall also represent the interest of students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at-large.
3. Proxies
- a. In the event that a department representative is unable to attend a general meeting,
 - i. They should find another member of their department who can attend the meeting to represent their department's interests.
 - ii. If no other person from that department can attend the meeting, the representative should review the agenda and email comments and voting choices to the Vice President no less than 1 hour before the meeting.

Article VII. Meetings

- 1. Attendance
 - a. All meetings are open to any graduate student at Boston University.
 - b. While all members of the graduate community are welcome to attend meetings, only GRS students are eligible for formal membership, voting privileges, and specified opportunities.
 - c. The President and Vice-President are expected to attend ALL meetings listed below.
- 2. Documentation
 - a. The Secretary is charged with ensuring that the proceedings of all meetings are recorded and distributed to all department representatives, officers, and committee members.
 - b. Department Representatives are expected to disseminate relevant information from these meetings to their constituencies.
- 3. Types of Meetings
 - a. General Meetings
 - i. General Meetings shall be held at regular intervals (as determined by the GSO President) and at least once a month to keep the GSO body informed of issues and activities of the GSO committees.

- ii. The President shall preside at these meetings and shall distribute an agenda to the committee members one week prior to the meeting.
- iii. At least one representative from each active committee is expected to attend every General Meeting.
- iv. All department representatives are expected to attend all General Meetings or appoint a proxy to attend in their place as outlined in the “Department Representatives” article.
- v. General meetings will be a forum for committees to report their activities and progress as well as a place for graduate students-at-large to air issues that they may feel need to be addressed by a committee.
- b. Special Meetings
 - i. Special meetings are called in the event of an emergence or to address a timely issue.
 - ii. Special meetings may be called by the President or Vice President of the GSO at their own discretion or at the request of a department representative, committee member, or another officer.
 - iii. All members of the GSO body are expected to attend special meetings.
 - iv. The call for a special meeting must be made in a timely fashion and ample notice must be given at least 5 days notice of the meeting time and place.
 - v. The President presides at special meetings.

Article VIII. Decision Making

- 1. Deciding on Proposals
 - a. A proposal can be brought to the floor by anyone in the GSO membership.
 - b. Once the proposal has been presented, the motion must be seconded by a department representative.
 - c. A preliminary poll shall be taken amongst all members of the attending voting body present, including any proxies.
 - d. For proposals that impact the entire GSO membership, three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of GSO membership will be required to vote on the proposal.
 - e. If there are any votes not to approval the proposal, an iterative round of discussion and polling will occur as follows,
 - i. After sufficient discussion of the proposal, another poll will be taken.
 - ii. After the second and each subsequent poll, if any there are three possible outcomes:
 - 1. The proposal is approved unanimously.
 - 2. It is decided that there are problems with the proposal that might be worked out with further discussion, in which case another round of discussion and polling takes place.
 - 3. If the proposal fails to pass unanimously after the second round, a third round at a later date will take place where the proposal will be decided based on a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote, with at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of membership partaking in the vote.
 - f. A poll will only consist of votes from members of GSO membership that are present and any votes transmitted to the Vice President prior to the poll by at least 1 hour.
 - g. It will always be the goal of the GSO to build consensus among its members.

Article IX. Elections

- 1. Elections and Terms

- a. A General Election shall be held at the last meeting of the Fall Semester.
 - b. Officials elected at this meeting shall assume office at the first meeting of the Spring Semester and shall serve for one year.
 - c. The current officials continue to serve until the newly-elected official assume their duties in the Spring.
 - d. Special Elections may be held at any time to fill vacant positions.
 - i. Officials elected via a Special Election assume their duties immediately and serve until the end of the current term along with the other officers and committee leadership.
 - ii. Although the GSO should always strive for candidate that can service full terms, candidates that cannot serve for a full term may still be elected as long they clearly state the portion of the term they can serve as part of their candidacy.
2. Elected Positions
- a. Elected officers include the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, Travel Grant Chair, Social Chair.
 - b. The chair of each committee must be chosen by members of that committee, other than the social chair and travel grant chair.
3. Eligibility
- a. Any part-time or full-time graduate student shall be eligible for an elected position.
 - b. No student may hold more than one position, unless no other eligible person is willing to serve, or as a result of a previous officer dropping their position during a term—for the exception of a special election.
4. Procedure
- a. Voting shall take place by secret ballot or using a digital voting method.
 - i. Ballots shall be counted by officers not running for the position in question.
 - b. Officials shall be elected based on votes of approval as follows.
 - i. For each position, voting members shall cast one vote for all candidates they deem acceptable or should turn in a blank ballot if they deem none acceptable.
 - ii. The winner shall be the candidate with the most approval votes,
 1. If the largest number of votes are blank ballots, then that position shall remain vacant until filled by an elected held at a later date.
 2. If the initial approval vote results in a tie, a runoff election shall be held between the tying candidates.
 3. If, however, the initial approval vote results in one candidate receiving the most approval votes but without a majority, a runoff election shall be held between the top two voted in-favor candidates.
 - a. In runoff elections, voting members may approve of at most one candidate. After a runoff, if no candidate receives votes from majority of the voting members present, then that position shall remain vacant until filled by an election held at a later date.

Article X. Removal From Office

1. Any officer or committee member may be removed from their position by a vote of three fourths (3/4) of the attending GSO voting body.
2. Members of the GSO body facing removal must be given an opportunity to defend themselves.
3. As department representatives are chosen by their constituency, they may only be removed by their constituency.

Article XI. Amendments

1. This constitution may be amended by a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) vote of the attending GSO voting body.
 - a. Any amendment should be circulated to the voting body at least one week prior to a vote on the amendment.

Article XII. Bylaws

1. Bylaws, which provide operating guidelines for the GSO, may be created or amended by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the entire GSO voting body.
 - a. Bylaws must not contradict this constitution.

Article XIII. Updating the Constitution

1. It is recommended that the GSO Constitution be updated, amended, and/or reviewed every five years, or based on the discretion of GSO Leadership.

Article XIV. Adoption

1. This newly updated constitution shall take effect immediately once adopted by a vote of approval by a three-fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the attending Fall 2024 GSO voting body.