

The University of Texas at Austin
CONSTITUTION OF THE
GRADUATE STUDENT ASSEMBLY
PREAMBLE

We, the graduate students of the University of Texas at Austin in order to (1) secure and protect the rights of all graduate students at this institution; (2) to promote the interests and opinions of the graduate student body; (3) to undertake and promote programs and projects which are of benefit to the graduate student body; (4) to serve as the official voice of graduate students on matters of academics, student welfare, campus policy, and the implementation of this policy; (5) to facilitate graduate student communication and interaction; (6) to gather and disseminate information pertinent to graduate students; (7) to foster an awareness of the student's role in the academic community; and (8) to enhance the quality and scope of education at the University; do hereby ordain and establish this as the binding Constitution of the Graduate Student Body and the Graduate Student Assembly.

ARTICLE I
Organization

Section 1. Name. The name of the organization shall be the Graduate Student Assembly (GSA).

Section 2. Authority. The Graduate Student Assembly is the principal body for the representation of the interests of graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin (*Part One, University of Texas at Austin Handbook of Operating Procedures*).

Section 3. Purpose. The Graduate Student Assembly shall seek to improve the academic, social, and professional lives of graduate students consistent with the goals listed in the Preamble to the Graduate Student Assembly Constitution. The Graduate Student Assembly shall strive to be a thoughtful and deliberative student governance body that supports the collegial and interdisciplinary relationship between graduate students and with the graduate faculty and University-Wide communities. The objectives of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be provided in the Bylaws.

Section 4. Sponsored Student Organization. The Graduate Student Assembly is a Registered Student Organization of the University of Texas at Austin and its President shall be responsible for ensuring that recognition and official sponsorship of the Graduate Student Assembly by the Dean of Students is maintained (*Series 50202, University of Texas Regents Rules*).

Section 5. Recognized Student Governance Organization. The Graduate Student Assembly is a Recognized Students' Association of the University of Texas at Austin (*Series 50203, Section 1, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 6. Recognized Forum for Student Opinion. The Graduate Student Assembly is a recognized forum of student opinion (*Series 50203, Section 2, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 7. Graduate Students Represented. The Graduate Student Assembly represents all graduate students of the University of Texas at Austin enrolled in the Graduate School, Graduate School of Business, LBJ School of Public Affairs, School of Law, Dell School of Medicine, and all other colleges or schools governed by the most recent Graduate Catalog and Law School Catalog.

ARTICLE II Membership

Section 1. Diversity. Graduate Student Assembly membership shall be limited to students, faculty, and staff of The University of Texas at Austin regardless of race, national origin, creed or political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or veteran's status (*Sections 3 and 11, UT Austin Student Organization Manual*).

Section 2. Scope. All graduate students in good standing at The University of Texas at Austin are considered members and eligible to participate in the Graduate Student Assembly. To be in good standing a student must be enrolled in and making satisfactory progress in a program leading toward a graduate degree or a post-baccalaureate professional degree at the University of Texas at Austin. Whether the graduate student is in good standing is determined by the rules of the Graduate School (*Series 50101, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 3. Representation. The graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin shall be represented in the Graduate Student Assembly through the following members:

3.1. Voting Members. Graduate students elected to represent the students of each field of study as defined in the most recent Graduate Catalog and Law School Catalog.

3.1.1 Departmental Representatives shall be considered the primary voting members of the Graduate Student Assembly

3.1.2 Alternate Representatives shall have voting rights only in the absence of the primary voting representative for their field of study.

3.2. Officers and Directors. Graduate students elected as President, Vice-Presidents, and appointed officers and directors.

3.3. Graduate Representatives to University Governance Committees. Graduate students appointed to represent all graduate students to university governance committees and advisory groups regardless of the organization sponsoring their appointment.

3.4. Other Members. Other assembly designated members as specified in the Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE III

Elections

Section 1. General Provisions. General elections for executive officers shall be held on two consecutive weekdays as dictated by the Common Election Code. General elections for departmental and alternate representatives shall be held by the second week of the fall semester. The Election Code shall govern the Election Process

1.1. Special Elections. The President shall have the power to call special elections to fill vacancies or address other emergency matters.

Section 2. Election Oversight Board. The Election Oversight Board shall hear appeals of contested campus-wide elections or Election Supervisory Board decisions and be considered the last authority in campus-wide elections.

2.1. Composition. The members of the Election Oversight Board shall consist of a chair and two members. The Graduate Student Assembly shall nominate the members of the Election Oversight Board and approve those nominations with a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote. The election Oversight Board shall be appointed no later than four (4) weeks before the General Election.

2.2. Vacancies. In the event that a member of the Election Oversight Board is rendered unable to serve, the President shall appoint a replacement upon two-thirds (2/3) approval of the Assembly.

2.3. Conflicts of Interest. Candidates for campus-wide elections and current officers may not serve on the Election Oversight Board. Members who serve on the Election Oversight Board cannot be considered for membership on the Executive Committee in the following year.

Section 3. Voting. Each graduate student may cast one (1) joint vote for both the President and Vice-President. Each graduate student may cast one (1) vote for their respective departmental representative(s), and one (1) vote for their respective alternate representative(s) in the Graduate Student Assembly.

3.1. Results. The candidate for each departmental representative or alternate representative receiving the highest number of votes for the Assembly seat shall be certified in the respective position. A candidate for President or Vice-President must receive a majority of the total votes cast in the general or special election.

3.2. Run-Off Procedures. If the top candidates for a position receive a tie vote in a general or special election where more than two candidates ran for a position, a runoff election will occur. The runoff election shall proceed as described in the Election Code.

Section 4. Disputes. The Election Supervisory Board shall first hear election disputes and grievances. The GSA Election Appeals Board shall hear appeals of the Election

Supervisory Board decisions. Contested election results shall be referred to the Assembly, as described by the GSA Election Code..

Section 5. Term of Office. All officers shall serve one-year terms, beginning at 12 noon on the first Tuesday in April of each year. All departmental representatives and alternate representatives shall serve one-year terms beginning in the fall semester.

Section 6. Resignation. Any voting member, officer, director, or appointed member of the Graduate Student Assembly may resign at any time through written and signed declaration either immediately or at a future specified date and time. This declaration must be submitted to the President, Vice President, and Administrative Director. A written and signed declaration of resignation must be clear and unconditional.

Section 7. Conflicts of Interest. The same person shall not hold two elected offices simultaneously, nor shall two persons simultaneously hold the same elected office. No alternate representative may serve concurrently as an officer of the Graduate Student Assembly. The Graduate Student Assembly may not make any endorsements in any elections.

ARTICLE IV Officers and Executive Committee

Section 1. Executive Officers. The executive power of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be vested in the President of the Graduate Student Assembly, the Vice-President, the the Academic Affairs Director, the Administrative Director, the Communications Director, the Financial Director, the Legislative Affairs Director, the Membership Director, and the Programs Director

1.1. Elected Officers. The President, and Vice-President shall be elected by the graduate student body during the campus-wide elections held each spring. To be eligible for President, a graduate student must have served as a departmental representative, Graduate Student Assembly committee, or as an officer during the preceding year.

1.2 Appointed Officers. All other executive officers of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be appointed upon recommendation of the incoming President and approval of two-thirds (2/3) of the Assembly. All appointed officer candidates shall be entitled to address the Assembly directly regarding their qualifications for the position.

1.3. Duties of Officers. The main authority of the President and Vice-President shall be specified in the Constitution. Other duties of the President and Vice-President along with the duties of all other officers of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be specified in the Bylaws.

1.3.1. President of the Graduate Student Assembly. The President shall be

the Chief Executive Officer of the Graduate Student Assembly. The President shall be the representative of graduate students to the administration of the University of Texas at Austin, to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas System, to the City of Austin, and to the Texas Legislature.

1.3.2. Vice-President. The Vice-President shall monitor the internal and external operations of the Graduate Student Assembly as defined by the President. The Vice-President shall be the presiding officer of the Assembly.

1.4 Presidential Veto - The President of the Graduate Student Assembly shall have the power to veto any bill or resolution passed by the Graduate Student Assembly. The President must veto a bill within seven (7) calendar days of its passage and notify the assembly within twenty-four (24) hours of said veto. A Presidential Veto nullifies the stance of the Graduate Student Assembly as a whole and no action specified in the legislation may be carried out.

1.4.1 Override of the Presidential Veto - Any bill or resolution vetoed by the President of the Graduate Student Assembly may be overridden by the Assembly with a two-thirds (2/3) absolute vote. Bills and resolutions that pass the override may not be vetoed.

Section 2. Executive Succession.

2.1. Vacancy of the Presidency. In the event that the President of the Graduate Student Assembly is unable to serve, the Vice-President shall assume that office.

2.2. Vacancy of the Vice-Presidency. In the event that the Vice-President is unable to serve, the President shall nominate a successor to the Vice-Presidency. This successor must be confirmed by an absolute two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Assembly.

2.3. Interim President. In the event that the President and Vice-President are simultaneously rendered unable to serve, the Administrative Director shall immediately become interim President of the Graduate Student Assembly. The interim President shall be charged to call a special student election to elect a new President and Vice-President in the timeliest manner possible. The interim President retains his or her original position in the Graduate Student Assembly, and is eligible to be elected President of the Graduate Student Assembly.

2.4. Vacancy of Appointed Officers. In the event of a vacancy, the President shall appoint a replacement upon two thirds (2/3) approval of the Assembly.

Section 3. Executive Committee. All officers of the Graduate Student Assembly shall serve on the Executive Committee. In addition, the President shall invite other participants to the Executive Committee meetings.

3.1. Purpose. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for coordinating the executive functions of the Graduate Student Assembly. The Executive Committee shall meet in advance of the regular meetings of the Assembly to set the agenda.

3.2. Authority. The Executive Committee shall have the authority to act on behalf of the Assembly when the Assembly is not in session. Other duties of the Executive Committee shall be specified in the Bylaws.

3.3. Chair. The President of the Graduate Student Assembly shall preside over all meetings of the Executive Committee. The President and the Vice-President each have the authority to convene the Executive Committee.

Section 4. Conflicts of Interest. An officer of the Graduate Student Assembly shall not serve as an elected representative or officer in any university-wide student governance organization.

ARTICLE V

Assembly

Section 1. Authority. The Assembly shall be the legislative body of the Graduate Student Assembly. Assembly members acting as an assembled body in session shall constitute the final authority of the Graduate Student Assembly to represent graduate students of the University of Texas at Austin. The Assembly may conduct polls, initiate petitions, and/or establish forums for debate or discussion under the provisions of the Bylaws and Rules of Order (*Series 50203, Section 2.3, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 2. Regular Legislative Session. The Assembly shall be considered "in session" after the Vice-President has called the first, regular meeting of the fall semester until the adjournment of the last regular meeting in the spring session.

2.1. Special Session. The President may call the Assembly into special session when the Assembly is not in regular session. The Assembly may also request a special session with a petition signed by 10% of the voting membership. All requests for a special session must be delivered to the Vice-President, who shall inform the membership, at least seventy-two (72) hours before the requested meeting time.

Section 3. Executive Reports. The Assembly shall review the actions taken by the Executive Committee when the Assembly was not in session and at each regular meeting.

Section 4. Responsibilities of Voting Members. Voting Members of the Assembly shall faithfully represent the interests of their constituents rather their own personal interests.

Section 5. Open Meetings. All meetings of the Assembly shall be open to the public. The time, place, and business of each meeting shall be announced to the public at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of the meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Removal

Section 1. Impeachment. Members of the Executive Committee may be impeached and removed from office for failure to fulfill the duties and responsibilities mandated in the Constitution, Bylaws, or Rules of Order of the Graduate Student Assembly.

1.1. Initiation of Proceedings. A motion to impeach an elected officer of the Graduate Student Assembly must be submitted in writing and requires the written seconding of at least two voting members of the Assembly.

1.2. Hearing. In the event of impeachment, removal hearings shall take place in the next meeting of the Assembly as the first order of business. A member of the Rules and Administration committee shall preside at such hearings.

Section 2. Recall. Voting members of the Assembly may be recalled and removed from office for cause as specified in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules of Order of the Graduate Student Assembly.

2.1. Initiation of Proceedings. A recall motion of a voting member of the Assembly requires a written petition of a majority of the graduate students from the affected field of study, verified by a member of the Executive Committee of the GSA.

2.2. Hearing. In the event of recall, removal hearings shall take place in the next meeting of the Assembly as the first order of business. The chair of the Election Oversight Board shall preside at such hearings.

Section 3. Removal from Office. A three-fourths (3/4) majority of the total voting membership of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be necessary to remove an elected officer, appointed individual, or voting member of the Assembly.

Section 4. Excessive Absence. Officers and voting members of the assembly shall make every effort to attend all meetings while the assembly is in session, and excessive, unexcused absence may be considered a cause for removal from office.

4.1.1 Notification. Departments with members removed under this section will be notified by the administrative director within one (1) week of dismissal.

ARTICLE VII Financial Management

Section 1. Budget. The budget for the Legislative Session of the Graduate Student Assembly shall be approved by a majority vote of the Assembly.

Section 2. Deficits. No expenditures shall be allowed that would result in a deficit in any Graduate Student Assembly account.

Section 3. Sources of Funding. The Graduate Student Assembly is eligible to receive funding from the compulsory Student Services Budget Committee. Funding may also be generated through optional student fees in accordance with approved procedures for optional Student Services Budget Committee. Additional revenue may be generated, as the Graduate Student Assembly deems appropriate or necessary, in accordance with established University policy.

Section 4. Annual Financial Reports. The Graduate Student Assembly shall submit an annual financial report to the University of Texas at Austin chief business officer and shall make such special reports as may be called for by such business officer. A duplicate copy of each report shall be filed with the University of Texas at Austin chief student affairs officer (*Series 50203, Section 1.5, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 5. Additional Provisions. The Bylaws and Rules of Order shall outline specific policies and procedures for the expenditure of Graduate Student Assembly funds.

ARTICLE VIII

Governing Documents

Section 1. Authority This constitution shall be considered the highest authority in the proceedings of the Graduate Student Assembly. The Bylaws shall be considered the next highest authority. The Rules of Order as well as Election Code shall be considered after the Bylaws and Constitution

Section 1.1. Suspension. Elements of the Constitution or Bylaws may not be suspended.

Section 2. Amendments.

2.1. Constitution. The Graduate Student Assembly may amend the Constitution by an affirmative roll call vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the total voting membership of the Assembly, followed by a two-thirds (2/3) approval of the Executive Committee.

2.1.1. The full text of all proposed amendments shall be provided in a notice to the Assembly and the public at least ten days before the first reading. The second reading must at least ten days after the first reading.

2.1.1. The amendment shall be transmitted to the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice President for Student Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin. of passage. The amendment will become effective upon approval by the above named offices. If the above named offices have not acted within two weeks of transmittal, the amendment will become conditionally effective, pending action by the above named offices.

2.1.2. The University of Texas at Austin chief graduate studies officer and chief student affairs officer shall have the power, when in their judgment

the interests of the institution require it, to amend or repeal any provision in the constitution of the Graduate Student Assembly, but such action shall not be effective until approved by the University of Texas at Austin President and the appropriate University of Texas System Executive Vice Chancellor. The transmission of the proposed amendment or repeal to the University of Texas System shall be accompanied by justified statement from the Assembly supporting or not supporting the proposed action (*Series 50203, Section 1.3, UT Regents Rules*).

Section 3. Referendum

- 3.1. Graduate students, upon petition of ten percent (10%) of the total number of valid ballots cast in the most recent general election of Graduate Student Government, shall have the right of referendum.
- 3.2. The bylaws will specify a procedure for submission and consideration of petitions.
- 3.3. Referenda will only be considered passed if passed with at least three fifths (3/5) of the vote cast in the current election and endorsed by the Dean of Students or the President [of the Graduate Student Assembly].
- 3.4 The Assembly, by majority vote, may refer any pending action to students for a vote at the next election.

Section 4. Copies

- 4.1. **Official Copies.** The Administrative Director is responsible for maintaining an accurate and updated paper copy of the governing documents in the official files along with the history and amendments relating to them. The Administrative Director shall also maintain an immutable electronic version of all current official copies.
- 4.2. **Working Copies.** The Administrative Director is responsible for providing copies to each new Officer and Committee Chair, and for maintaining a current copy of these documents in an electronic format so that they are easily accessible to all members, graduate students, and other interested parties.
- 4.3. **University of Texas System Board of Regents Copy.** A copy of the current Constitution is also maintained in the offices of the University of Texas System Board of Regents.
- 4.4. **University of Texas at Austin Copies.** Copies of the current Constitution and Bylaws are also maintained in the offices of the University of Texas at Austin Office of Graduate Studies and Office of the Dean of Students.

Ratified on March 31, 1994.
Amended on April 6, 1998.
Amended on October 6, 2003.
Amended on March 2, 2004.
Amended on April 22, 2005.
Amended on December 20, 2005.
Amended on February 10, 2006.
Amended on November 27, 2006.
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Proposed on January 25, 2012