

Constitution of the
Graduate Student Advisory Council
Of the Graduate School of Art and Sciences
Of Columbia University

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Graduate Student Advisory Council (“GSAC”) and shall consist of PhD and MA graduate students enrolled in the Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (“GSAS”). For the purposes of this constitution, these students shall be known as the “graduate students.”

Article II. Purpose

Section 1. The purpose of GSAC shall include:

- A. To represent and be an advocate for the graduate student body to GSAS and Columbia University in the active pursuit of issues relevant to academic graduate students, including, but not limited to, financial aid, health care, housing, and social activities.
- B. To provide a structure for students to work to achieve collective progress.
- C. To create and maintain ongoing dialogue with the Dean of GSAS and staff of the Dean’s Office.
- D. To serve as a channel for communication between the graduate students and other individuals and groups external to the academic graduate student body, including, but not limited to, the Dean of GSAS, staff of the Dean’s Office, faculty members, other university officers and administrators, university committees, GSAS alumni and alumni organizations, and the University Senate.
- E. To build and strengthen the community of graduate students through working with all relevant parties.
- F. To appropriate allocated funds of GSAS students-activities fees.
- G. To maintain communication with alumni, alumni organizations, and career services to help graduate students in their professional development.

Section 2. GSAC shall have any authority necessary and proper to carry out its enumerated purposes in consistency with the rules and procedures of GSAS set forth by the Administration.

Section 3. GSAC, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University Policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religion, gender, disability, age, marital status, citizenship, or sexual orientation. GSAC also prohibits sexual harassment. This non-discrimination policy covers organization membership and eligibility for leadership positions, access to organization programs and activities, and the general treatment of members in the organization.

Article III. Membership

Section 1. GSAC shall be composed of 7 Officers of the Steering Committee, 3 University Senators, at least one student representative from each GSAS PhD department and doctoral subcommittee, and at least one student representative to represent the GSAS MA programs collectively. The departments and subcommittees are in accordance to Appendix I. Student representatives to PhD departments and subcommittees and MA departments shall be known as the Departmental Representatives (“DRs”).

Section 2. DRs must be currently registered in the department which he or she is to represent; and every such student is eligible for election and service as a student representative.

Section 3. DRs must be elected to serve on GSAC for a one-year term, to commence at the September GSAC plenary meeting, by the April plenary meeting of the preceding academic year. By September 15th of each year, the office of the Dean of GSAS should receive notice of the current representative(s) from the Departmental Administrator (“DA”) of each department.

Section 4. Incoming GSAC members shall be observers at the September plenary meeting and shall become full, voting members at the October plenary meeting. Outgoing GSAC members shall attend the September meeting as full, voting members and shall be observers at the October plenary meeting. This overlap is intended to provide continuity and to facilitate the transition.

Section 5. Should a DR resign from GSAC, the DR’s department or subcommittee should choose (whether by election, or otherwise, as outlined in Article III, Section 3) a new DR representative prior to the next GSAC plenary meeting, to fill the remainder of the term.

Section 7. Failure of DRs to meet the tasks outlined in By-Laws (Article III) will result in a status of bad standing for the respective department.

Section 8. A department in bad standing is ineligible to vote or apply to GSAC funding.

Article IV. Officers

Section 1. The Steering Committee shall consist of the following Steering Committee Officers (“Officers”): President, Vice President, Communications Chair, Budget and Finance Chair, Quality of Life Chair, Social Chair, Arts & Entertainment Chair, and Alumni/Public Relations Chair.

Section 2. Each Officer shall be elected by GSAC as required by Article XI.

Section 3. The Steering Committee term shall begin May 1 and end April 31 of any given year.

Section 4. Only graduate students who will be registered for the entire Steering Committee term shall be considered for Officer election to the Steering Committee.

Section 5. Steering Committee Officers will receive monetary compensation per semester.

Section 6. Steering Committee meetings involve only the Officers and occur once per month, at least one week prior to the GSAC plenary of that month. Officers must meet at least once during the summer session.

Section 7. No person shall hold more than one Office.

Article V. Committees

Section 1. All DRs are required to serve on at least one committee.

Section 2. Standing committees include: Budget and Finance Committee, Quality of Life Committee, Alumni Relations Committee, Graduate Seminar Series Committee, Social Events Committee, and Arts and Entertainment Committee

Section 3. An indefinite number of *ad hoc* committees may be created as desired by GSAC. Their membership shall be open to all interested students registered in GSAS.

Section 4. The particulars of a proposed *ad hoc* committee shall be specified prior to constituting such a committee, in accordance to By-Laws, Article II, Sections 10 and 11.

Article VI. Voting

- Section 1. Each department in good standing is entitled to one vote but may have numerous GSAC representatives. Representatives of the same department decide amongst themselves and/or within their departments the details of voting privileges.
- Section 2. All MA programs will collectively be represented as one department, entitled to one vote.
- Section 3. Should a representative be unable to attend a meeting, that representative may send a proxy from the same department who shall enjoy full privileges, including the right to vote. In order for the proxy to have voting privileges the representative must provide advance, written notification of the proxy to chair of the meeting in question. Without such notification, the proxy may still attend and take part in the debate, but he or she may not vote on any ballot taken at the meeting.
- Section 4. Departments in bad standing are not eligible to vote. Departmental statuses are determined according to Article III, Section 7.
- Section 5. Departmental statuses of departments with responsive DRs or new DRs are reset at the beginning of the Fall and Spring semester to good standing.
- Section 6. A simple majority shall constitute the right to pass resolutions except for amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws.
- Section 7. The President shall hold the discretion to end any and all debate on a resolution and shall initiate voting procedures following Robert's Rules of Order.

Article VII. GSAC Representation to External Groups

- Section 1. Should any external group request a representative of the academic graduate student body, GSAC shall discuss this request at a plenary meeting and, with the approval of a majority of those in attendance and eligible to vote, shall decide whether to provide representation to the group in question.
- Section 2. The decision to provide representation must specify the means by which the representatives are to be chosen, their number (to be determined in negotiation with the group requesting the representatives), and, if they are to be elected from among the members of GSAC, this election should occur at the same plenary meeting.
- Section 3. Any student registered in GSAS is eligible to serve as a representative to any external group.
- Section 4. In accord with the by-laws of the University Senate, at the March plenary meeting GSAC shall elect the GSAS Senators from among the graduate students.
- Section 5. Any academic graduate student is eligible to serve as a GSAS Senator.
- Section 6. In accord with Senate by-laws, the representatives shall be divided into three groups: the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.
- Section 7. A GSAS Senator must be registered in the division he or she is to represent.

Article VIII. Meetings

- Section 1. GSAC shall hold monthly plenary meetings in the Fall and Spring semester consisting of members defined in Article III, Section 1.

- Section 2. GSAC plenary meetings are open to all academic graduate students.
- Section 3. The date of the GSAC plenary meetings shall be determined by the Steering Committee during summer session and announced by the second Monday of the Fall semester.
- Section 4. Attendance to GSAC plenary meetings is compulsory to all members defined in Article III, Section 1.
- Section 5. The Dean of GSAS and/or various members of the staff of the Dean's Office shall be regular attendants of the GSAC plenary meetings. This attendance forms one part of the channel of communication between GSAC and the Dean.
- Section 6. An absolute majority, more than half, of departments in good standing shall constitute quorum. Once quorum is determined, the presiding steering committee officer calls the plenary meeting to begin.
- Section 7. All meetings shall be conducted using Robert's Rules of Order, unless otherwise decided by the attendees of the meeting (by two-thirds majority vote).
- Section 8. The Steering Committee shall meet as often as necessary, but not less than once each month, as outlined in Article IV, Section 6.
- Section 9. All standing committees and *ad hoc* committees shall meet as often as necessary, but not less than once each month during the Fall and Spring semesters and not less than once during the summer session, for purposes specified when they were created.

Article IX. Elections, Vacancies, and Impeachment

- Section 1. All GSAS departments shall hold elections for Officers and DRs by the April GSAC plenary meeting.
- Section 2. The election of the DR(s) should be by direct vote of all graduate students currently registered in the department or subcommittee; however any other method of choosing a representative may be employed, so long as a majority of all graduate students in the department or subcommittee agree to the method.
- Section 3. If a department does not elect its DR(s) by September 5th, the Steering Committee shall conduct elections for that department.
- Section 4. GSAC shall hold elections for Steering Committee Officers at the April plenary meeting. GSAC shall follow nomination and election procedures as outlined in the By-Laws, Article IV.
- Section 5. Elected Officers shall begin their term of office starting May 1 after the election and end their term on the following April 31.
- Section 6. Only GSAS students who will be registered for the entire Officer term shall be considered for election to the Steering Committee.
- Section 7. If a DR becomes an Officer, their DR membership shall become vacant except if they are elected as an interim Officer.
- Section 8. In the event of a vacancy in the Office of the President, the Vice President shall immediately become the President and the Office of Vice President shall become vacant.

Section 9. For vacancies in other Offices, the President shall appoint a DR as an interim Officer until an election may be held. GSAC shall follow the election procedure as detailed by the By-Laws, Article IV. Interim officers shall serve until April 31.

Section 10. Members may be impeached and removed from office for unethical behavior, failure to adhere to the regulations of the Council, not fulfilling the responsibilities of the office, or by accumulating more than two (2) unexcused absences.

Section 11. Any Officer, DR, and Representative to external groups, including GSAS Senators, may motion to impeach. Graduate students may contact the GSAC Steering Committee to initiate impeachment proceedings.

Section 12. Motions to impeach must be announced at the previous plenary meeting and included in the written agenda distributed at the meeting at which the vote is to be taken.

Section 13. Any Officer, DR, and Representative to external groups, including GSAS Senators, may be removed from office by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those GSAC members eligible to vote and in attendance at the plenary meeting at which the vote is taken.

Article X. Usage of GSAC Funds

Section 1. GSAC shall have the right to receive allotted funds from GSAS and the University including, but not limited to, Student Activity fees.

Section 2. GSAC may, with the consent of the GSAS Administration, introduce concessions or hold events for the graduate students in order to generate revenue. GSAC reserves the right to sell, rent, subcontract, or franchise the proceeds and/or management of such revenue-producing operations.

Section 3. Any event funded in whole or in part by the proceeds of GSAS student activities fees must be open to all GSAS students.

Section 4. The allocation of funds from GSAS student activities fees is subject to the approval of the Dean of GSAS. GSAC recognizes the power of the Dean to veto such allocations, because of the Dean's responsibility to assure that the events and activities funded by GSAC out of the proceeds of the student activities fees are legal, do not damage the tax-exempt status of the university, and/or do not contravene any written university policy. Whenever an allocation has been vetoed, the Dean shall issue to GSAC a written explanation of the basis of the action.

Section 5. GSAC shall exercise exclusive control over the spending of funds obtained under Sections 1 and 2 of this Article. GSAC shall spend such funds to further the purposes of this Constitution.

Section 6. GSAC shall delegate the right to spend its funds to graduate student organizations.

Section 7. To receive funding, graduate student organizations shall apply for formal recognition by GSAC.

Section 8. A graduate student organization shall not duplicate the function and/or stated purpose of any other graduate student organizations recognized by the Council.

Section 9. All petitions for GSAC recognition must be submitted two weeks prior to the GSAC plenary at which the recognition shall be voted on. Petitions will be voted on during the plenary meetings of: September, October, November, December, January, February, and March. No petitions are accepted during summer session.

Section 10. All GSAC recognized organizations applying for GSAC funding shall be willing to assume financial responsibility for damage caused by the organization to any space or equipment to University facilities, and be willing to accept the Constitution, By-Laws, and decisions made by GSAC.

Section 11. Recognized GSAC organizations applying for GSAC funding shall provide any information requested with regards to the organization's sources and uses of funding, be open to all members of the Columbia community regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender, veteran's status, or physical ability, and accept all rules mandated by University policy and local, state, and federal law.

Section 12. GSAC recognized organizations applying for GSAC funding shall give appropriate acknowledgement to GSAC as the source of their funding and support in any and all programming and/or promotional material.

Section 13. GSAC recognized organizations applying for GSAC funding shall be explicit in any and all programming and/or promotional material that the views and opinions of the organization do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of GSAC or its members.

Article XI. Charter Ratification and Amendment

Section 1. This Constitution takes effect as of Date after it has been ratified by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of GSAC, and when subsequently accepted by the Dean of GSAS

Section 2. Any GSAC member may propose an amendment to the Constitution or By-Laws. Proposed amendments must be announced at the previous plenary meeting and been included in the written agenda distributed at the meeting at which the vote is to be taken.

Section 3. Amendments to the By-Laws shall pass by a simple majority of GSAC or a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Steering Committee.

Section 4. Amendments to the Constitution shall pass by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of GSAC.

Appendix I.

Recognized Constituent Departments of the
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GSAC represents PhD graduate students in the following departments of instruction:

Anthropology; Applied Physics & Applied Mathematics; Art History and Archeology
Astronomy; Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics; Biological Sciences; Biomedical
Engineering; Biomedical Informatics; Cellular Physiology and Biophysics; Chemistry; Classics;
Earth and Environmental Sciences; East Asian Languages and Cultures; Ecology, Evolution, and
Environmental Biology; Economics; English and Comparative Literature; French and Romance
Philology; Genetics and Development; Germanic Languages; History; Italian; Latin American and
Iberian Cultures; Mathematics; Microbiology, Immunology and Infection; Middle Eastern, South
Asian, and African Studies; Music; Nutritional and Metabolic Biology; Pathobiology and
Molecular Medicine; Pharmacology and Molecular Signaling; Philosophy; Physics; Political
Science; Psychology; Religion; Slavic Languages; Sociology; Spanish and Portuguese; Statistics;
Sustainable Development

and doctoral subcommittees:

Architecture (History and Theory); Biostatistics; Business; Cellular, Molecular and Biomedical
Studies; Chemical Engineering; Chemical Physics; Civil Engineering & Engineering Mechanics;
Classical Studies; Communications; Computer Science; Earth and Environmental Engineering
(Henry Krumb School of Mines); Electrical Engineering; Environmental Health Sciences;
Epidemiology; Materials Science and Engineering; Education (Teacher's College); Electrical
Engineering; Environmental Health Sciences; Epidemiology; Industrial Engineering &
Operations Research; Mechanical Engineering; Neurobiology and Behavior; Nursing; Social
Work; Sociomedical Sciences; Theatre; Urban Planning

GSAC represents MA graduate students in the following departments of instruction:

African-American Studies; American Studies (Liberal Studies M.A. Program); Anthropology; Art
History and Archaeology; Biomedical Informatics; Biotechnology; Classical Studies; Classics;
Climate and Society; Conservation Biology; Dental Sciences; Earth and Environmental Science
Journalism; East Asia: Regional Studies; East Asian Languages and Cultures; East Asian Studies
(Liberal Studies M.A. Program); English and Comparative Literature; French and Romance
Philology; French Cultural Studies in a Global Context; Germanic Languages; Hispanic Cultural
Studies; History; History and Literature; Human Rights Studies; International and World History
(M.A./M.Sc. with London School of Economics); Islamic Studies (Liberal Studies M.A. Program);
Italian; Japanese Pedagogy; Jewish Studies (Liberal Studies M.A. Program); Journalism; Latin
America and the Caribbean: Regional Studies; Latin American and Iberian Cultures; Mathematics
with a Specialization in the Mathematics of Finance; Medieval and Renaissance Studies; Middle
Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies; Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies; Modern
European Studies; Museum Anthropology; Oral History; Philosophical Foundations of Physics;
Philosophy; Political Science; Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences; Quantitative Methods
in the Social Sciences, Dual-degree M.A./M.P.A.; Religion; Religion-Journalism Dual M.A./M.S.
Program; Russia, Eurasia and East Europe: Regional Studies; Russian Translation; Slavic
Cultures; Slavic Languages; Sociology; South Asian Studies; Statistics

