

Constitution of the Graduate English Society of Queen's University

February 2011

This document lays out the organizational structure of the Graduate English Society and the responsibilities of its members. All students in the graduate program in English at Queen's are members of the Graduate English Society (GES). Through the GES, students can voice and address concerns common to the graduate student body. The GES is interested in social, political, and professional interests specific to the English Graduate student body. The GES strives to foster a positive, mutually respectful, supportive, diverse and creative community. The makers of this document recognize the shifting nature of language and mean for the will of the membership and well-being of the community to be of utmost concern.

Last amended March 2016

I. GRADUATE ENGLISH SOCIETY

- 1.** The Graduate English Society (GES) consists of all students registered in the graduate program of the English Department of Queen's University for the current term.
- 2.** The GES shall represent the interests of its members, send delegates to Department and University meetings, sponsor social and academic functions, keep the membership informed of all activities of interest, and distribute funds.

II. GES EXECUTIVE

- 1.** The GES Executive shall be made up of two Co-Presidents, the GSC Representative, one Secretary and one Treasurer. All other available offices can be seen in Appendix B. Only one Executive position can be held at a time.
- 2.** All GES Executive positions shall be elected at a fall meeting by majority votes, save the Co-President elected the previous year, as each Co-President serves a two-year term, with only one elected per year. In the second year of co-presidency, the incumbent Co-President provides a continuity of knowledge about the previous year's proceedings for the benefit of the incoming Co-President and GES membership. All nominees or their representatives must be present at this meeting.
- 3.** Should there be a vacancy on the Executive, the Executive may appoint someone to fill it, subject to the approval, by majority vote, of a general meeting.
- 4.** The Executive shall meet, or coordinate by email, prior to each GES general meeting in order to set the agenda.

III. GENERAL MEETINGS AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

- 1.** There shall be a general meeting, open to the membership, at least twice in the fall term and at least twice in the spring term.
- 2.** A general meeting may be called by six members petitioning the Executive.
- 3.** A quorum shall be constituted when there are at least two Executive officers and at least eight general members present.
- 4.** General meetings shall be conducted informally, in accordance with basic rules of parliamentary procedure (See Appendix A). The Executive shall consider majority decisions reached at these meetings to be the will of the membership.

5. An Executive officer or delegate may be recalled by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a general meeting. A motion of recall must be publicized at least one week prior to voting by posting the agenda in the Graduate Student lounge at Watson Hall, or by posting the agenda over the GES listserv. Grounds for recall shall be failure to fulfill the responsibilities of office and/or actions detrimental to the interests of the membership.

6. The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a general meeting. A motion of amendment must be publicized at least one week prior to voting by posting the agenda in the English Department lounge at Watson Hall, or by posting the agenda over the GES listserv.

IV. GES REPRESENTATIVES TO EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. The GES may elect delegates to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), the Appointments Committee, Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS), Departmental committees, the Graduate Teaching Assistant and Fellow Union (PSAC local 901), and other bodies as needed.

V. FINANCES

1. Any funds held by the GES shall be on deposit in an account at a nearby bank, credit union, or trust company, and shall be the Treasurer's responsibility. Approval to spend funds on the GES's behalf, such as for a prospective GES event, should be requested and approved at the meeting prior to the expenditure. At least two Executive officers and a general vote must authorize the spending of these funds.

2. These funds shall be used only for the benefit of the membership.

3. The Treasurer shall provide a financial statement to the membership at each general meeting. Receipt of this report must be approved by the attending members in a simple majority vote. If the report should be rejected, the treasurer must redraft an acceptable report to be approved at the next meeting.

4. If, for any reason, the GES is without an Executive, any and all funds outstanding in any and all GES accounts shall be held in trust and supervised by the Department until such time as an Executive is elected. In the event of a failure to elect a new Executive or the resignation of a sitting Executive, the officers authorized to supervise the GES funds shall be responsible for arranging the transfer of these funds to a responsible officer or officers of the Department, and for fulfilling any and all regulations of the bank with respect to such transfer.

VI. GES RELATIONSHIP TO DEPARTMENT COMMITTEES

1. The Graduate English Society elects graduate student representatives to the following Departmental representative positions at the annual GES elections meeting in September:

Graduate Studies Committee Representative

Department Meeting Representative

Appointments Committee Representative (when applicable)

100 (or equivalent) TA Representative

2. If all positions are not filled at the September elections meeting, the Executive may appoint representatives subject to the approval of the membership at a general meeting.

3. Alternate student representatives may attend the GSC and Faculty meetings in place of elected members when necessary. Elected representatives unable to attend meetings are responsible for finding substitutes.

4. Student members of the various councils and committees have full voting privileges.

VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GES EXECUTIVE

1. The **GES Executive** as a whole shall:

- a) help the English Department assist in the orientation of new students
- b) organize (or delegate the organization of) academic and social events and coordinate
- c) campus/community outreach
- d) actively respond to needs, interests, questions, and concerns expressed by the general
- e) membership, as well as to issues and events outside the GES that affect graduate students in English
- f) keep the membership informed about issues and events within and outside the GES
- g) organize GES fundraising events when necessary
- h) review the GES Constitution on a regular basis and, if necessary, revise it

2. The **GES Co-Presidents** shall:

- a) schedule and chair GES Executive and general meetings, and conduct GES elections
- b) lead the review and revision of the GES Constitution

3. The **GES VP Academic Affairs** (GSC PhD Rep) shall:

- a) act as GSC Representative
- b) act as academic affairs liaison between graduate students and the administrations of the
- c) Department and University
- d) solicit feedback from the membership when issues arise that affect GES members
- e) advocate on behalf of GES members at external-to-GES meetings, using feedback from members to make informed decisions

4. The **GES Treasurer** shall:

- a) assume responsibility for all GES account books and banking transactions
- b) deliver a financial report to the GES membership at each general meeting
- c) be a member of the fundraising committee and aid in the organization of GES fundraisers
- d) prepare an end-of-year financial statement

5. The **GES Secretary** shall:

- a) record the minutes of GES general meetings and post them on the GES listserv

VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF GES COMMITTEES

1. The **Social Committee** will consist of any interested GES members led by two elected PhD social conveners, and will plan fall orientation for new students and organize social events throughout the year.

2. The **Fundraising Committee** will consist of the Fundraising Chair, GES Treasurer and at least two other student representatives. They will meet to plan organize, and run fundraising events when deemed necessary by the GES at a general meeting.

APPENDIX A: GES Parliamentary Procedure

The Graduate English Society is deliberately informal in its parliamentary procedure. General meetings are conducted according to basic rules of order, and according to the GES Constitution.

1. Order of Business: Most agendas proceed in the following manner:

- a) Approval of Agenda
- b) Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting
- c) Business Arising from the Minutes
- d) General Announcements
- e) Treasurer's Report
- f) Reports and Funding Requests from Committee Representatives, Journals, and Period Groups
- g) Approval of Funding Requests
- h) New Business
- i) Adjournment

2. Quorum: At least two Executive officers and at least eight general members are required to be present for a general meeting to attain quorum. If a quorum is not attained, no official business (such as approval of funding requests) may be conducted at that meeting.

3. Motions: Technically, a motion should be made and seconded before debate on it begins. The GES, however, usually engages in discussion before making and voting on a relevant motion. If a member makes a motion he or she did not intend, it may be withdrawn, unless debate on it has already begun, in which case it must be voted on before a new motion can be made. Only one motion may be entertained at a time. Most motions may be passed by a simple majority.

Specialized motions include:

- a) **Move the Previous Question:** cuts off all debate and demands an immediate vote on the motion at hand. Requires a two-thirds vote.
- b) **Refer to Committee:** defers voting on an issue until a committee has investigated it further and reported back to the membership. Requires a majority vote.
- c) **Postpone:** moves a motion be postponed until later in the same meeting or until another meeting. (The motion must specify which.) Requires a majority vote.
- d) **Adjourn:** takes precedence over other motions, is not debatable, and cannot be made by someone who does not have the floor. Requires a majority vote. If there is other business remaining, the Chair may state the motion and ask the mover to withdraw it but, if refused, must immediately call a vote.

4. Debate: In order to speak to a motion or other issue, a member must be recognized by the Chair. In cases where several members want the floor at once, the Chair may announce the names of the next few speakers in order. The GES has no time limit set on debate, but the Chair may choose to limit debate by cutting it off after a certain time period, by restricting it to members who have not already spoken to the question, or by stressing that speakers should avoid redundancy and stick to the issue at hand. The Chair may choose to end a lengthy debate by calling for a vote. Once a vote is called, debate ends and a vote must be taken.

5. Voting: The votes required for various motions may be found under their respective headings. The Chair must restate the motion before a vote is taken. Many votes (e.g. approval of the minutes) may fall under the rubric of General Consent, that is, a voice vote the outcome of which is determined by the Chair and duly announced before moving on to the next item of business. A member may call for a more formal vote to be taken on any issue, in which case a show of hands must be made and recorded. Members may designate a proxy in writing prior to the meeting and submit this request to the Executive. The designated proxy vote will be recorded in the minutes and verified later with the voter who designated the proxy.

6. Constitutional Amendments: Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds vote to pass, and must be publicized a week prior to the meeting at which the vote is to occur.

7. Elections: Elections of the GES Executive and Committee members take place at a fall meeting of the GES, which is publicized at least two weeks in advance. Nominations can be made any time prior to, and at the fall meeting. Nominations that come in within forty-eight (48) hours before the fall meeting shall be posted one day before the fall meeting. If a nominee cannot attend, he or she may be represented by another member. All positions are elected or acclaimed by majority vote. When there is more than one candidate running for an executive position, candidates can have up to one minute to outline their intent, after which the candidates will leave the room, and the Co-Presidents will conduct a secret-ballot vote.

APPENDIX B: Complete List of GES Positions

1. Co-Presidents

The Presidency of the GES is a two-term (two year) position to be held by two PhD students. The Co-Presidents share executive responsibilities with each other. The Co-Presidents schedule and chair GES meetings, strike up committees, delegate tasks, and represent the GES in any capacity not facilitated by other members of the executive. The co-chairs are members of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

2. Secretary

The Secretary (or delegate) is responsible for attending every GES meeting, taking minutes, and posting them on the GES listserv in a timely fashion. The Secretary is a member of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

3. Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for the organization's finances, and his/her name is on the bank account at the Kingston Credit Union. The treasurer has to sign all GES cheques and is also responsible for reimbursing any person associated with the GES who has been authorized to spend money on its behalf (e.g., for the annual holiday party). The person who holds this position is also responsible for buying Christmas presents for the three departmental administrators in the amount of \$150.00 total, as well as a gift of appreciation for the custodian amounting up to \$50.00. The Treasurer is a member of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution) and the Fund-raising Committee.

4. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) Reps (2 - One MA, One PhD)

The Graduate Studies Committee Reps will attend all GSC meetings, reporting back to the GES in a timely manner. They will liaise with the Academic Affairs Committee (when applicable) and the Department Reps. Since the GES holds two votes on the GSC, the Reps will use the votes pursuant to the expressed interests of the GES membership. In order to ensure the Reps are making the most informed voting decisions, they must solicit feedback from the membership over the GES listserv in a timely manner. The GSC (PhD) Rep will chair the Academic Affairs Committee (see below). The Graduate Studies Committee Reps are members of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

5. Departmental Representative (2 – One MA, One PhD)

The Departmental Reps attend monthly faculty meetings and takes notes on issues that pertain to graduate students. The Rep will report back to the GES after each meeting. The Reps can vote at department meetings. This position requires both an MA as well as PhD student. These reps will take part in the Academic Affairs Committee (when applicable) and will liaise with GSC Reps in order to ensure all reps are making the most informed voting decisions at meetings.

6. Hiring Committee Representative (Must be a Senior PhD)

This position is elected on an as-needed basis, depending on the hiring intents of the Department within any given year. There may be more than one Hiring Committee Rep elected depending on the number of job positions being advertised/ hired and/or Queen's National Scholar competitions. Besides the work assigned to every hiring committee member (reading resumes, attending meetings and all job talks), this person is responsible for communicating grad student needs during the search and giving feedback from the grad students to the Hiring Committee after job talks. They will report the progress of the committee and solicit feedback from the GES as needed.

7. SGPS Representatives (1 – One MA or One PhD)

The representative serves as a member of the Society for Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS) Council, attending the SGPS Council monthly meetings and reporting regularly at GES meetings. Additionally, the representative will be expected to take part in an SGPS Committee, as part of the responsibilities as an SGPS Councillor, as well as submitting one (1) departmental report to the SGPS between the October-April months.

8. Computer Liaison

This position entails maintaining and updating the departmental GES reference page (in conjunction with the administrative liaison) and the various pages of the GES's own website on a regular basis. The liaison will also maintain the Graduate English listserv by informing incoming students about the listserv and its purpose, assisting those who require guidance on signing up or posting, and monitoring the forum's activities. Some computer savvy is certainly an asset, but you do not need extensive web knowledge. This position should be held by a PhD student who will be available during the Welcome period.

9. Accute Representative

One student who is a member of ACCUTE represents the GES on the ACCUTE Graduate Executive. The responsibilities of the position include forwarding ACCUTE emails to the GES listserv, and collecting data from the department for ACCUTE surveys.

10. Works in Progress Coordinator

Organizes an informal colloquium once a year (or twice, if the interest is there) at which faculty and graduate students present work in progress. He or she will organize a tea or informal gathering after the talks. The department head provides funding for Works in Progress, but the Coordinator will arrange with the Coffee Hour Representatives to use the GES's coffee and tea for the event.

11. Social Conveners

Social conveners will be two PhDs. They are responsible for Welcome Week, including the work of planning, booking, advertising, and attending the events; that planning is done in the summer so that the events may be advertised in August. Social conveners are mainly responsible for: setup of the wine and cheese in late September (organized by the Grad Chair with departmental money); set-up and organization for the Christmas Party (department pays for this as well); set-up and organization for the Spring Party (no departmental money). Approval to spend funds on the GES's behalf for parties/events should be requested at the meeting prior to a prospective Social function. Social Conveners may also organize other events during the year to the benefit of the community. The Social Conveners will also act as New/Prospective Student Liaisons in order to provide continuity between the application, recruitment, and orientation processes for incoming students. The liaison answers new student/ applicants' questions (including through the GES Social Conveners email, queens.ges.social@gmail.com), give tours and sometimes can arrange a place for them to stay when they come to visit the campus. The Grad Chair communicates with the liaisons to organize tours and other recruitment activities. These people are responsible for ensuring that the GES has a role in recruitment.

12. Coffee Hour Representatives

The Coffee Hour Representatives are responsible for ensuring coffee hour is run every week of the academic term. The cost for maintaining Coffee Hour will be the responsibility of the GES; however, the Coffee Hour Representatives shall ensure costs do not exceed \$100 per term (depending on the financial status of the GES). The Coffee Hour delegate(s) shall be responsible for setting up and cleaning the lounge before/after each Coffee Hour session, and shall solicit baked goods and snacks from members in person or over listserv.

13. MLA Representative

The MLA Representative is required to be a member of the MLA Society. The student that holds this position is responsible for posting general items of interest regarding MLA membership, conferences etc. to the GES listserv which she/he will receive through the MLA listserv.

14. Fundraising Chair

The Fundraising Chair, with help from the fundraising committee, is responsible for planning, advertising, and executing several fundraising events throughout the school year as decided by the general GES Membership. These have traditionally been a book sale per semester, and candy sales around Halloween and Valentine's Day.

15. English 100 TA Representative

The GES 100 TA rep speaks for the body of 100 tutorial TAs. The rep attends all 100 Steering

Committee meetings. Ideally, the rep is notified of the agenda in advance of each meeting to allow time to confer with the TA constituency in order adequately participate in discussions on proposed policy changes that directly affect TAs and students. The 100 TA rep will help informally mediate issues between TAs and students or instructors. The rep will liaise with the PSAC local 901 English Department Steward(s), and inform her/him/them of any issues that cannot be informally resolved, after which the Steward(s) will begin the Grievance Procedure as outlined by the local and/or the PSAC local 901 Collective Agreement. The GES 100 representative is entitled to request a meeting of the Steering Committee at any time in order to address issues arising from instructors, TAs, and students. In the event the 100 TA Rep position is vacant, a PSAC local 901 Steward may act in the position.

16. PSAC Local 901 English Department Steward(s)

Departmental Steward(s) are responsible for maintaining contact with PSAC local 901.

She/he/they must be a current TA or TF, have an awareness of the issues TAs and TFs face in the English Department, and advocate on behalf of fellow GES members who are TAs or TFs at the Department level. She/he/they should build an awareness of the local's Collective Agreement in order to help GES members who are TAs/TFs file grievances or inform the local of the issues TAs/TFs experience in the department. She/he/they shall be a liaison between local 901 and TAs/TFs that are GES members. This Steward will also liaise with the 100 TA rep to ensure GES members who TA/TF have several avenues for recourse, should an issue arise.

Departmental Steward(s) are responsible for attending monthly Steward Council meetings of PSAC local 901, and for reporting information back to the GES membership in a timely fashion after Steward Council meetings.

17. CTL Facilitator

This position is responsible for keeping GES members aware of all opportunities offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. This includes information and schedules for Expanding Horizons workshops, not-for-credit Teaching and Learning Professional Development certification, the Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (SGS901) course, and any other specialized events or workshops that may be relevant to the GES membership.