

THE ENGLISH GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

YORK UNIVERSITY

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 1 – NAME

This association shall be known as the “English Graduate Students’ Association of York University”, to be referred to hereinafter as the “EGSA”.

ARTICLE 2 – OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE EGSA

A. The objectives of the EGSA shall be as follows:

1. To represent the interests of all members in dealings with:
 - 1.2 the Graduate Program in English (“GPE”)
 - 1.3 the Faculty of Graduate Studies (“FGS”)
 - 1.4 the Graduate Students’ Association (“GSA”)
 - 1.5 the Canadian Union of Public Employees (“CUPE”)
 - 1.6 other organizations within or without York University
2. To represent the interests of all members regarding the quality and manner of education provided by the GPE.
3. To seek representation for the student body on all decision-making committees and councils within the GPE.
4. To encourage and to improve cooperation and understanding within the student body and between the students, faculty members, and staff members of the GPE.
5. To maintain a social atmosphere, friendship, and unity among members.

B. The principles of the EGSA shall be as follows:

1. The Association shall be democratic and non-profit.
2. The Association shall be non-discriminatory with respect to age, race, creed, colour, national origin, language of origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, religious or political affiliation or belief, sex, gender, marital or parental status, number of dependents, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS-related illness, positive Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) test, sexual orientation, gender orientation, personal appearance, mode of dress, place of residence, academic school of thought, record of offences, physical disability, nor by reason of a member’s affiliation with or activities in or on behalf of any association or coalition working on behalf of rights and privileges of a member or members of the EGSA.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

The EGSA is by definition inclusive. *

- A. Eligibility for membership: All students registered with the GPE—whether M.A. or Ph.D., full-time or part-time, occupying EGSA positions or not, attending EGSA meetings and events or not—have the right to participate in and/or to be represented by the EGSA.
- B. Privileges: Members may vote, hold positions on committees, and participate fully in the activities of the Association.
- C. Voluntary participation: The EGSA is by definition voluntary. This means that any and all influence the EGSA exercises depends on the free participation and contributions of time and energy made by students in the program; it depends on the sum-total of voluntary student participation. Without this participation, the EGSA would cease to exist.

* The EGSA belongs to the larger body of the York University Graduate Students Association, *as well as the Stong College Students' Association*; the former represents all students in all programs in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at York. The EGSA membership in the GSA and *Stong* determines its funding. A levy included in the tuition fees of all graduate students funds the GSA, and the EGSA receives its funds in turn from that source. This (involuntary) financial contribution may be considered the official mark of one's inclusion in the EGSA.

ARTICLE 4 – DESCRIPTION OF POSITIONS OPEN TO EGSA MEMBERS

4.0 All EGSA Steering Committee members and all student representatives on committees attend EGSA meetings as part of their duties.

4.1 The terms of office of the EGSA members will correspond with the EGSA fiscal year, which runs from September 1 to August 31.

4.2 THE EGSA STEERING COMMITTEE

- A. The EGSA Steering Committee is composed of four members.
- B. The Steering Committee acts as the core group that oversees the activities of the EGSA as a whole. (At least) one member of the Steering Committee:
 - 1. Sets agendas for meetings of the EGSA, usually held at least twice per term.
 - 2. Ensures that meetings of the EGSA are scheduled and announced, and chairs those meetings.

3. Attends all General meetings of the Graduate Program in English and presents the EGSA report at those meetings.
4. Sits on the GPE Executive Committee as EGSA rep.
5. Assumes responsibility for the external relations of the EGSA by speaking for all members to the Director of the GPE.
6. Assumes responsibility for internal relations between members of the EGSA.
7. Works to ensure that the EGSA is fully represented by students sitting on GPE committees.
8. One member of the Steering Committee assumes the role of the Custodian of the Constitution. It is the responsibility of this member to ensure that her or his successor receives a copy of this Constitution.

4.2.1 SECRETARY-GRADUATE ASSISTANT

The secretary is a position filled by a Graduate Assistant appointed by the GPE Director, and:

- A. Takes minutes at EGSA meetings. Reproduces and distributes minutes to all members of the EGSA.
- B. Oversees EGSA communications, ensuring all members are informed of EGSA activities. Announces EGSA meetings, critically important meetings of the GPE, EGSA parties, guest lecturers, and other such events.
- C. Maintains the EGSA files in good order, and passes them on to the succeeding Secretary-Graduate Assistant.
- D. Oversees, when active, the EGSA phone tree.
- E. Produces an annual list of students enrolled in the GPE that includes members' research interests and contact information

4.2.2 TREASURER

The Treasurer is a member of the EGSA who is not a part of the Steering Committee and oversees the financial affairs of the EGSA, and:

- A. Collects allocations of EGSA funds from the GSA and the Stong College Students' Association.
- B. Distributes cheques to successful applicants for EGSA funding contributions toward thesis preparation and conference travel.
- C. Prepares EGSA budget and keeps EGSA accounts in good order.

4.3 EGSA REPRESENTATIVES ON GPE COMMITTEES

4.3.1 VOTING MEMBERS AT GENERAL PROGRAMME MEETING

POSITIONS OPEN – 6:

The EGSA strongly encourages all members to attend General Meetings of the GPE, regardless of whether one is an official voting member.

General Program Meetings constitute the ultimate decision-making body in the Program, with the final authority on policies, curricular offerings, degree requirements and regulations, recommendation on faculty appointments, and other crucial matters.

4.3.2 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

POSITIONS OPEN – 5:

In addition to five faculty members, this committee is composed of ten GPE members.

The GPE Curriculum Committee:

- A. negotiates curriculum for the GPE each year;
- B. recommends and evaluates proposals for new courses;
- C. considers needs and responds to proposals for long-term curricular development;
- D. responds to concerns in the quality of teaching offered by faculty in the program;
- E. assesses coverage, rotation, and scheduling of yearly course offerings;
- F. takes responsibility for the variety, quality, and effectiveness of course offerings the program provides;
- G. submits recommendations at General Program Meetings for the final vote.

4.3.3 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

POSITIONS OPEN – 2:

In addition to three elected faculty, four ex-officio (Chairs of Arts Humanities plus the 3 Undergraduate English Departments), for a committee composed of nine people.

The GPE Executive Committee:

- A. advises the Director on all matters concerning policies and operations of the program;
- B. considers the general policy and status of the Program within York's Faculty of Graduate Studies and with respect to other Graduate Program in competition with ours;
- C. submits recommendations at General Program Meetings for the final vote

4.3.4 GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

POSITIONS OPEN – 2:

In addition to four faculty for a committee composed of six program members.

The GPE Graduate Study Committee:

- A. receives, assesses, and then rejects/modifies/approves all proposals for Directed Reading proposals (M.A. and Ph.D.), M.A. theses, M.A. research papers, and Ph.D. Dissertations;
- B. considers petitions for exemptions from language exams and for incompletes;
- C. annually assesses the progress of each student in the program;
- D. recommends change of status or resignation if the work or progress of a student is unsatisfactory.

4.3.5 EXAMINATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

POSITIONS OPEN – 2:

(In addition to three faculty members for a committee of five program members.)

The GPE Examinations Committee:

- A. oversees, reviews, and sets examinations policy;
- B. reviews and sets field examination reading lists, in consultation with Program Subcommittees;
- C. oversees the setting up of examining committees, in consultation with examination supervisors, both for oral and written exams, according to the Program regulations for sittings in May, August, and December.
- D. submits recommendations at General Program meetings.

4.3.6 EGSA REPRESENTATIVES ON PROGRAMME SUBCOMMITTEES

POSITIONS OPEN – 16 (TOTAL):

One for each of the following subcommittees:

1. Linguistics/Stylistics
2. Old and Middle English
3. Renaissance Literature
4. Restoration and the Eighteenth Century
5. The Romantic Period
6. The Victorian Period
7. Modern Literature
8. Contemporary Literature American Literature
9. Canadian Literature
10. Post-Colonial Literature
11. Prose Narrative
12. Drama
13. Criticism and Theory
14. Poetry
15. Women and Literature

GPE Subcommittees:

- A. determine reading lists for approval by the Examinations Committee, which lists determine in turn the required reading for field examinations in given areas;
- B. relate to course offerings given during a particular year in a particular area, inasmuch as committees stay active;
- C. by virtue of their presence in the Program Handbook as lists of faculty members who share expertise in given fields, the subcommittee represents the presence of that “field” as an area of study in the overall program.

4.3.7 OMBUDSPERSONS COMMITTEE OF THE GPE

POSITIONS OPEN – 3:

(In addition to three faculty for a committee of six program members.)

The Ombudspersons Committee is intended to serve as liaison between faculty and students in the Program, especially in sensitive or difficult cases of harassment, discrimination, or personal difficulty in which a student seeks a mediating alternative.

4.3.8 EGSA REPS ON THE GRADUATE STUDENTS’ ASSOCIATION

POSITIONS OPEN – 3:

This position involves:

- A. attending monthly meetings of the Graduate Students’ Association, to vote on policies that affect all graduate students at York;
- B. communicating to the EGSA membership at meetings any items or business of the GSA which will affect the student life of EGSA member

4.3.9 EGSA REPRESENTATION ON THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES COUNCIL

(No information as of 7 May 2002.)

4.5 Related Positions

4.5.1 UNION STEWARDS

A good part of the EGSA membership belongs, by virtue of their holding teaching, research and graduate assistantships, to the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903 active at York.

The Union requires two (2) Union Stewards from its members in the Department of English. The Steward often makes reports at EGSA meetings to facilitate communication between those members of the Union who also belong to the EGSA.

ARTICLE 5 – PROCEDURE AND POLICIES

5.1 ELECTION AND TENURE OF THE EGSA STEERING COMMITTEE

5.1.1 The Steering Committee of the EGSA should be elected (or acclaimed) no earlier than September 15th and no later than October 1st in the fall term of each academic year.

5.1.2 It is the responsibility of the outgoing Steering Committee to notify members of this election as soon as fall registration dates have begun.

5.1.3 All nominations for Steering Committee positions (including Treasurer) must be submitted in writing as early as possible in September preceding the election. This estimates the time of any election, if necessary, at about mid-October.

5.2 GRADUATE ASSISTANT - EGSA SECRETARY

The occupant of this position is appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Assistant performs the duties of Secretary, outlined in 4.1.1.

5.3 ELECTION OF EGSA REPS ON GPE COMMITTEES

5.3.1 The Steering Committee shall issue an open call to EGSA members, advertising the positions available. EGSA members interested in volunteering for a given position must contact a member of the Steering Committee and inform she or he of the position desired.

5.3.2 In cases where the number of EGSA members interested in filling the positions for a given committee exceeds the number of EGSA representatives required, representatives must be elected.

Any such elections should take place after the new Steering Committee is established. EGSA participation on committees is very important, and should be running smoothly by the end of October.

It is the responsibility of all EGSA members to ensure broad representation on these committees. The varying interests of students in the program according to (see list) must be represented in these committees.

5.3.3 If the EGSA is in an active state, no EGSA member should occupy more than two positions, excluding the Steering Committee, the members of which may sit on (up to) three committees.

5.3.4 In cases where committee positions remain vacant even after mid-October due to lack of volunteers, the limits to participation (item 5.3.3) will be waived. The Executive committee should attempt to solicit volunteers and delegate any consenting volunteers to committee positions throughout the year.

5.3.5 All such delegating of unselected or late-volunteering representatives (item 5.3.4) should be recorded in the minutes of an EGSA general meeting at which time a vote will be held to ratify or reject the appointment.

5.3.6 The EGSA Secretary should keep an up-to-date file of all EGSA members occupying committee positions.

5.4 VOTING POLICY FOR REPS ON EGSA COMMITTEES

5.4.1 EGSA representatives on committees function as a caucus; that is, they will vote as a group for or against any given motion. However, this stipulation is not binding: if after discussion, members cannot agree, they are free to vote according to what they perceive to be in the EGSA's best interest.

5.4.2 In cases where there is no consensus among the caucus, and voting of EGSA representatives is split, this disagreement and/or lack of unity may point to potential disruptions or conflicts of interest among EGSA members.

Therefore, all such disagreements or potential conflicts should be communicated by one or both of the committee reps to the EGSA membership and/or Steering Committee at the EGSA general meeting immediately following the committee meeting in question. This should help ensure the membership's awareness of how committee members are perceiving and representing the interests of the EGSA as a whole.

In many cases, the disagreement may relate to something inconsequential. Nevertheless, any other policy risks a lack of representation and communication of the interests of the whole student body on GPE committees.

5.5 MEETINGS OF THE EGSA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

5.5.1 At least once per term, EGSA meetings chaired by a member of the Steering Committee should be called. A meeting shall be called in September to reorient returning graduate students and to welcome new graduate students to the Department and to inform them of the aims of the Association.

5.5.2 Each meeting should include an announcement, if possible, of the place and time of the next meeting. This scheduling could be reinforced by communicating the schedule once more in the minutes which should be distributed as soon as possible following each given meeting, so that EGSA members may plan to attend.

5.6 EGSA REPRESENTATION AT GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE GPE

5.6.1 The EGSA has six student representatives who vote at General Program Meetings. Voting members are a set committee of the EGSA, elected in September of each year.

5.6.2 If a voting member cannot attend the General Program Meeting, it is that member's responsibility to delegate a replacement to attend the General Program Meeting to cast their vote.

5.6.3 In the case of a Voting Member who fails both to attend and to find a replacement, a member of the Steering Committee may delegate, on-the-spot, another member of the EGSA in attendance to cast their vote.

5.6.4 Voting members who fail both to attend and to provide a replacement at three GPE meetings thereby open their positions to re-election or delegation at the following EGSA meeting.

5.6.5 A similar guideline should apply to EGSA representatives on other program committees who fail to attend any two meetings of that committee, without good reason.

5.7 FINANCE

- A. All monies accruing to the EGSA shall be held in bank accounts in the name of the English Graduate Students' Association.
- B. All bank accounts and outgoing cheques shall require the co-signature of two (2) members of the EGSA Steering Committee, preferably the treasurer and a member of the Steering Committee.
- C. The organization's fiscal year shall run from 1 September until 31 August.
- D. Throughout the fiscal year, the executive, usually represented by the treasurer, shall update the membership on all EGSA financial matters by means of:

- i. A detailed written report, tabled at a general membership meeting in September (or October), outlining all revenues and expenditures from the previous year;
 - ii. Written, up-to-date financial statements in January and April; and
 - iii. Oral reports at EGSA executive and general membership meetings, as required.
- E. The Steering Committee shall ensure that sufficient funds are on hand to fulfill the financial obligations of the EGSA between the semi-annual receipt of funds from the Graduate Students' Association.
- F. Any expenditure of funds -- those which fall outside customary expenses -- shall be approved by the general membership.

5.8 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A member will abstain from voting on any motion resulting directly in personal gain.

5.9 ALLEGATION OF WRONG-DOING AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

5.9.1 Elected representatives may be removed from their positions by two-thirds majority vote, where quorum is met by the presence of twenty per cent (rounded down) of members at a meeting of the EGSA.

5.9.2 By-elections to replace removed representatives shall be held at the meeting in which representatives are removed.

5.9.3 If there are no nominations to fill vacated positions, a member of the Steering Committee (unless the Steering Committee has been removed) shall assume their duties until they can be filled.

5.9.4 If a member of the Steering Committee is removed, the Treasurer shall assume the duties of that member until the position can be filled.

ARTICLE 6 – ACTIVITIES OF THE EGSA

6.1 THE EGSA COLLOQUIUM

This forum is usually held in March each academic year.

EGSA members volunteer to be organizers and/or editors of the student colloquium. The Colloquium Planning Committee is responsible for: identifying the colloquium topic; announcing deadlines for submissions (January or February); recruiting a keynote speaker. Students submit papers to the Planning Committee who organizes them into various sessions to be delivered over two or three days.

6.2 EGSA PARTIES

The EGSA has traditionally sponsored at least three parties per year: one in September, one in December, and one in April or early May. It is recommended informal social events be held a minimum of once per month.

6.3 EGSA DIRECTORY

At the beginning of each academic year, the EGSA Secretary shall compile a list of program members, their research interests and contact information.

6.4 LEXIS

(Information needed.)

6.5 FINANCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH THE EGSA

ARTICLE 7 – AMENDMENT OF THIS CONSTITUTION

7.1 Any member may propose amendments to this Constitution through the following procedures:

- A. Proposed amendments to this Constitution shall be communicated to the Steering Committee, as well as to the general membership.
- B. A meeting at which proposed amendments are considered shall be held no sooner than fourteen days, and no later than twenty-one days, after they are communicated to the Steering Committee and to the general membership.
- C. For purposes of voting on amendments to this Constitution, quorum shall be met when twenty per cent (rounded down) or more of the members have voted.
- D. In order for an amendment to pass, two thirds of members present must vote in favour of it. Abstentions shall count as votes against the amendment.