



University of Saskatchewan
Graduate Students' Association
Emergency Annual General Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 13, 2024. **Online Meeting**

As Council gathers, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of our gathering place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Attendance: See appendix A

Chair: Devopriya Tirtho

Recording Secretary: Sara Nath

1. Call to Order/ Opening Remarks

The Chair of the council officially welcomed members of the council to the meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:04 P. M after the quorum for the meeting had been met. Sara Nath, the Recording Secretary of the Council, compiled the meeting minutes.

Before Approval

- The GSA chair explained to council members that GSA uses the Robert's Rules of Order for its meeting, so for a decision to be passed or approved, a mover and a seconder are needed, and the vote cast is either in favor, opposed or abstain. He further said that only voting members would be allowed to vote and the majority will get a decision to be passed.

2. Approval of Agenda

The chair said that all council members were emailed the agenda package. He asked about any amendments to the agenda as circulated via email.

There was one question from Mark. He said that they have not received any agenda as they are not council members. The chair replied that the agenda was already posted on the website, accessible to all general members of the GSA.

Also, Elyse inquired about additional items added to the agenda, as the emergency meeting was initially presented with only two specific items for discussion. She questioned the need to approve minutes and a food budget when members were not prepared for these topics. The chair responded by stating the necessity to approve past Council meeting minutes and assuring that the process wouldn't take much time as the minutes had already been circulated to all members. Kayla suggested postponing the discussion to the next council meeting to respect time constraints.

Later, Abbas proposed an amendment to the agenda to include a discussion and decision regarding the GSA annual award. He mentioned receiving inquiries from potential applicants and expressed the need to discuss revising the policy with both the council and general members. The chair agreed to address this discussion after today's scheduled motions, if time allows. The chair then proceeded for the voting process.

Motion to approve the agenda of the council meeting and strike up the food budget approval for this meeting. (Elyse/Catherine)

Carried

Yes: 21

No: 0

Abstention: 0

The agenda for the council meeting were approved by the majority of the council members.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1 Approval of February 13, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes from February 13, 2024, meeting. (Alex/Landon)

Carried

Yes: 18

No: 0

Abstention: 1

The motion to approve the February 13, 2024, meeting minutes was approved by the majority of the council members.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 GSA Executives Meeting Minutes January 17, 2024

Motion to approve the executive meeting minutes from January 17, 2024, meeting. (Alex/Abbas)

Carried

Yes: 16

No: 0

Abstention: 1

The motion to approve the January 17, 2024, executive meeting minutes was approved by the majority of the council members.

4.2 GSA Executives Meeting Minutes February 7, 2024

Motion to approve the executive meeting minutes from February 7, 2024, meeting. (Alex/Amanda)

Carried

Yes: 17

No: 0

Abstention: 1

The motion to approve the February 7, 2024, executive meeting minutes was approved by the majority of the council members.

5. Motion to Amend GSA Bylaws

The chair announced four motions to amend the GSA bylaws and requested the GSA President to provide rationale before the Council prior to voting. Kayla, the GSA President, explained each motion. Motion one aims to prevent executive members removed from their position via council vote from running again, ensuring fair elections with multiple candidates. Motion two proposes extending the nomination period for all positions when only one or zero candidates are nominated, promoting fairness in elections. Motion three involves updating the bylaw numbering and wording to align with the changes proposed in motion one. Motion four suggests the recording secretary create meeting minutes from recordings instead of an executive member, enhancing participation in meetings. These amendments, discussed with the Governance Committee, aim to foster inclusion and broaden the applicant pool for elections.

Riel expressed strong opposition to amendment 4.8.3.4.8, comparing it unfavorably to the impeachment policy of the USSU. He said that permanently barring a candidate from running for

any position, even due to impeachment, undermines democratic principles and disenfranchises the electorate. Riel emphasized that the ultimate right to determine elected officials should lie with the graduate student populace, not solely with the executive. He suggested that instead of implementing such measures, the GSA should focus on making running for executive positions more appealing to graduate students.

Elyse inquired about the location of meeting recordings, citing an issue with the recording from the December council meeting. Abbas explained that Zoom accounts are typically linked to personal accounts. In December, the previous chair used their Zoom account to circulate the meeting link to members, resulting in recordings being stored in the chair's Zoom account cloud.

Shafin inquired about the approval of the proposed language change by the governance committee members. Kayla responded, stating that the GSA governing committee had recently met to discuss these and future policy edits. Following the meeting, an email was sent detailing the discussion and inviting feedback on all items revisited. Kayla acknowledged the need to further define the terms of reference for the governance committee, as the current process lacks clarity on how policy and bylaw changes are initiated. Shafin also expressed concerns about denying former executives the right to stand for re-election, arguing that it undermines democratic principles. He highlighted the importance of allowing everyone to participate in the electoral process to ensure transparency and authenticity. He suggested that if someone has done wrong, they would face accountability through the election process, making the proposed restriction redundant.

Pabitra asked about the potential outcome if a removed executive challenges the removal process and wins. Kayla responded, stating that several outcomes are possible. If the challenge is successful and flaws in the removal process are identified, the executives may be reinstated. Additionally, any deficiencies in the removal process may prompt revisions to organizational policies to prevent similar issues in the future, potentially involving changes to procedures or oversight mechanisms.

Richard expressed concern about the proposal to bar former executives from running for election, particularly if they were removed by the executive body. He argued that in a democracy, individuals removed by the executive body should still be allowed to run again, allowing voters to decide their eligibility. However, if executives were removed by the General Assembly, he agreed with barring them from running again.

Mark questioned the necessity of an emergency meeting for the proposed bylaws changes, suggesting it's unusual outside of emergencies. Ramin clarified that the urgency stemmed from an upcoming election, where waiting for the annual meeting would delay needed changes. Amanda mentioned concerns raised by student bodies about bias in the election processes, suggesting that the emergency meeting addresses these concerns and implements changes to support fairer elections in the future. She also shared some links of reddit posts that initially started the concerns around the GSA as well as the USSU election process.

Catherine highlighted two points: first, the need to adjust compensation for the recording secretary if executive meetings are recorded and transcribed; and second, the importance of ensuring that GSA accounts have access to Zoom recordings to avoid the need for personal account sharing. She emphasized that all recordings belong to the GSA as a collective entity.

Richard also questioned the need for an emergency meeting to discuss the agenda items. He emphasized the importance of democracy and fairness, advocating for allowing anyone willing to stand for election to do so, and letting the voters decide their fate. Richard cautioned against using laws to prevent people from standing for election, believing it would not be helpful and could be seen as an attempt to manipulate the electoral process.

Meaghan expressed a different perspective, stating that if someone is removed from an elected position, there's likely a valid reason for it. She talked against allowing them to run again, as they were removed for a reason and it wouldn't make sense to reinstate them. Meaghan emphasized that removal from a position of power indicates wrongdoing, not just a personal dislike, making it unjustifiable for them to run again. Alex also pointed out that according to the current bylaws, graduate representatives already have the authority to impeach. The proposed amendment doesn't grant executives additional power over who serves in the executive, except for the provision that impeached individuals cannot run again. Jennifer also acknowledged Meaghan's point and emphasized that the grounds for removal are crucial, suggesting that democracy doesn't require allowing someone to pursue power if they have previously misused their authority to the extent of being removed.

Elyse expressed concern that the proposed bylaw change might have two underlying agendas. She felt it was targeting specific individuals rather than addressing broader issues. She highlighted that the democratic process involves allowing voters to decide who they deem fit to represent them, rather than preemptively preventing certain individuals from running. She emphasized the importance of using existing impeachment procedures rather than restricting candidacy. However, Meaghan highlighted the challenge of ensuring that graduate students have

access to complete information. She expressed worry that without transparency, voters might unknowingly perpetuate problematic cycles in leadership. Alex also agreed with Meaghan. Amanda expressed agreement with Meaghan's concern about the potential for bias in the removal process. She emphasized the importance of assuming maturity and rationality among council members and suggested that if someone has been removed, it should be assumed that there were valid reasons for it. Amanda highlighted the need to provide opportunities for new candidates to run for positions, addressing concerns about bias in the electoral process.

Shamin asked if the GSA president can initiate policy changes without involving the GSA Governance Committee. Kayla clarified that there's currently no defined procedure for this, emphasizing the need for better transparency in such matters. She explained the role of the Governance Committee in ensuring the association maintains proper documentation and initiates amendments to policies, bylaws, or the constitution as needed.

Richard expressed concern about the democratic implications of barring individuals from running for office after being removed by the executive body. He highlighted the lack of clarity regarding the reasons for removal and questioned whether this information was effectively communicated to the GSA. Richard argued that decisions made by a small group of executives should not have the same weight as those made by the entire General Assembly. He suggested that barring individuals from standing for election should only apply if they were removed by the General Assembly, not just the executive body. Ramin clarified that the decision to remove the previous President was made by the Council, not just a few executives, and was based on a vote involving graduate student representatives. He emphasized that the proposed changes to the bylaws were not targeted at specific individuals but aimed to address broader concerns and ensure future accountability. He also advised Richard to review the published meeting minutes for clarity on the removal process, highlighting that the decision was made collectively by the Council through a motion brought forward. He told Richard to reference the minutes for accurate information. Wyatt stated that it's essential for meeting attendees to be informed by reading the minutes beforehand and suggested that those who haven't done so shouldn't contribute to the discussion. Meaghan also talked about the importance of being informed about the issues before participating in the discussion. She highlighted that the meeting is not a platform to recap past discussions but rather to address current matters with the available knowledge. She stressed the need for attendees to conduct their due diligence by reading the meeting minutes to understand the context fully.

At this point, Catherine proposed amending the language to specify that individuals removed from a particular position cannot run for that same position again. Richard expressed concern about allowing individuals who have been removed from a position to stand for any position at all, particularly if their actions warranted removal. He emphasized the seriousness of certain offenses, suggesting that some offenses might disqualify individuals from holding certain positions again. Richard differentiated between removal by the General Assembly and by the governing board, suggesting that barring someone from standing for any position after removal by the General Assembly might be understandable, but doing so after removal by the governing board could be excessive.

Mark clarified the procedural point regarding discussing a motion before it has been formally moved and seconded, expressing his understanding of Robert's Rules of Order. He emphasized the importance of adhering to proper procedure and indicated his willingness to discuss the motion once it is officially on the floor. Following this, Amanda seconded the motion. After that, Mark expressed concern about the process of conducting the meeting as an emergency session, suggesting that such significant changes to the bylaws should be discussed in a more typical venue. He questioned the absence of a regular appeals process and the lack of specific criteria for removal outlined in the bylaws. Mark emphasized the need for transparency and suggested better informing members about impeachments or removals rather than imposing a lifetime ban on running for office. He viewed such a ban as potentially excessive, particularly if the removal was based solely on a vote by the Executive Council. On the other hand, Wyatt proposed an amendment suggesting that instead of permanently barring individuals from running elections for executive positions, a time limit could be set, such as a four-year timeline, to ensure fairness.

Meaghan proposed a case-by-case approach for dealing with individuals removed from their positions, suggesting the establishment of a council or external source to handle disciplinary matters. She emphasized the importance of ensuring the safety of the GSA and creating a safe space for everyone. Using the example of workplace harassment, she argued that allowing individuals who committed serious offenses to return could compromise the safety and well-being of others. Meaghan acknowledged that while this approach might be complex and time-consuming, it could address different levels of offenses and prioritize the safety of the GSA community. Elyse and Taylor sought clarification regarding any harassment allegations against former GSA presidents and the safety of the GSA environment. Koal expressed concern about bringing sexual harassment into the discussion, stating it wasn't relevant to the past events. Meaghan clarified that she was using the example of sexual harassment to illustrate her point.

about safety, emphasizing that it wasn't related to past incidents. Alex reiterated Meaghan's clarification, noting that she was making an example, not referencing specific past incidents.

Amanda expressed support for Meaghan's proposal and suggested an additional clause in the bylaws. She recommended specifying that certain serious offenses like lewd comments, sexual assault, or assault against another member would result in a permanent ban from running in the GSA again. For other minor offenses, Amanda suggested implementing a suspension period, leveraging the existing suspension clauses in the bylaws. Richard expressed agreement with Amanda's proposal and emphasized the importance of considering the severity of the offense when determining whether someone should be allowed to run for office again. He suggested that people can change over time. Additionally, Richard highlighted the need for broader consultation and discussion, suggesting that the issue would have been better addressed in a regular general meeting rather than an emergency one.

After all these discussions, the chair initiated the voting process.

Motion to ammend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.4.8. (Amanda)

Carried

Yes: 10

No: 14

Abstention: 9

Ramin expressed concern that everyone participating in the vote whether a student or not. Richard noted that if anyone suspects that someone participating in the meeting is not a student, they should raise their concern for verification. Otherwise, it is advisable to assume that everyone present is a graduate student. There were 37 attendees in that meeting, in order to approve the motion, 2/3rd vote (at least 24 yes votes) in favor is needed. Abbas raised concerns about missing votes and requested identification of individual voters. Richard disagreed, stating his belief that everyone present was a graduate student unless proven otherwise. Meaghan noted that even if the missing votes were obtained, the motion would still fail. The chair proposed re-voting to ensure transparency, but Wyatt and Amanda argued against it, emphasizing that the vote had already taken place. Meaghan mentioned that claiming to be a graduate student in the chat didn't guarantee it. Amanda referenced the email inviting the general public to attend. Ultimately, the chair noted the lack of majority votes in favor of the motion, which meant that the motion could not pass.

The motion to ammend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.4.8 was not approved by the majority of the general members.

5.2. Motion to amend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.8

The chair asked the GSA president to present her rationale for this motion.

Kayla proposed an amendment to remove the word "that" and include "all" positions in bylaw 4.8.3.8. The amendment aims to extend the nomination period for all positions if no nominees are received after the regular nomination period. This adjustment seeks to foster a competitive and democratic election process with multiple candidates for each position.

Mark opposed the motion, arguing that extending the deadline undermines the principle of timely application. He said that candidates should apply within the posted deadline, and extending it compromises fairness. Taylor echoed Mark's statement, suggesting that the GSA needs improved advertising strategies to attract candidates, emphasizing the importance of effective communication. Mark also highlighted a communication issue, stating that he struggled to find information about the meeting, indicating a need for better promotion. Amanda disagreed with Mark, emphasizing the importance of considering equity and support for all individuals. She shared a personal example of a difficult situation she faced, suggesting that extending the deadline could provide opportunities for people in challenging circumstances to participate in elections. Amanda believed that this extension would enhance accessibility and accommodate diverse living situations.

Jordan supported the proposal, highlighting that many positions often receive no applicants due to lack of visibility on the website or social media. She added that extending the deadline would allow more people to apply, ensuring a more competitive election process. Additionally, Jordan raised concerns about the possibility of uncontested positions resulting in automatic appointments, emphasizing the need for broader participation and democratic elections. Meaghan echoed Jordan's statements, emphasizing that extending the deadline promotes equity and addresses past challenges where positions went uncontested. She talked about the importance of increasing awareness about the election process, citing difficulties in finding information about GSA executive positions.

Richard supported Mark's perspective, opposing the proposal to extend the nomination deadline. He believes that the current nomination period provides sufficient time for interested individuals to apply for positions. He suggested that interested individuals should rely on their networks for

information about election opportunities, emphasizing the importance of respecting the established nomination period.

The GSA VP External, Abbas shared an example to support the proposed change. He highlighted a past experience where they missed the deadline for VP External candidacy, resulting in an extension only for that position. With four candidates competing for VP External, he emphasized the importance of having multiple candidates for fairness and democracy. He also raised concerns about the lack of competition for other positions, urging reconsideration of the criteria to ensure at least two candidates for each role.

GSA VP Finance, Ramin, highlighted concerns about the election process and advertising transparency. He emphasized the need for change to enhance the GSA's reputation and ensure a more democratic election process. Ramin mentioned issues with late advertising and limited outreach to graduate students, proposing individual emails to improve awareness. He expressed a desire to address these gaps and biases for a more inclusive process.

Alex acknowledged the need for improved communication regarding voting for GSA positions and committees. They expressed support for the motion as a means to prevent individuals from running unopposed and taking crucial council positions without sufficient scrutiny. Alex emphasized the importance of having choices in elections to ensure accountability and representation within the graduate student association.

Catherine suggested allowing voters to vote "no" if a candidate is running unopposed. Meaghan highlighted that the issue extends beyond communication, expressing concern about repeated unopposed candidacies. Taylor questioned the reasons behind the lack of candidates for GSA positions. Meaghan mentioned it is due to the past GSA president. She expressed hope for a positive change with the incoming president. Alex pointed out that graduate students are busy, with family responsibilities, and requested respectful communication. Shamin queried the factors leading to unopposed candidacies and potential barriers for candidates. Alex acknowledged the need for better communication from the GSA but noted a prevalent apathy toward student governance among fellow graduate students. Elyse questioned if an extension would address the issue, suggesting the development of student governance and leadership initiatives instead.

Elyse highlighted the trend of low candidacy participation across multiple GSA presidential terms. Taylor suggested returning GSA council meetings to GSA commons to boost student interest and participation, but Alex noted that not all academic councilors can attend in-person meetings, highlighting potential challenges with this approach.

Kayla proposed amending the motion to ensure that each position has at least two candidates, promoting a more democratic election process. Wyatt clarified that the current discussion pertains to whether all positions or only the vacant one should be reopened if there are no nominees. Richard supported extending the nomination period if no nominations are made for any position. Megan emphasized the need to focus on the current motion to avoid getting off track, while Amanda suggested holding a vote on whether to reopen all positions or just the vacant one due to dropping attendance.

After all these discussions, the chair initiated the voting process.

Motion to amend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.8. (Ramin/Amanda)

Carried

Yes: 6

No: 14

Abstention: 10

The motion to ammend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.4.8 was not approved by the majority of the general members.

5.4. Motion to amend GSA bylaw 2.5.1.11

Kayla proposed transferring the responsibility of processing executive meeting minutes from an executive member to the recording secretary. This change aims to alleviate the burden on the executive member, allowing them to participate more fully in discussions without being occupied with minute-taking tasks. By shifting this duty to the recording secretary, they would be provided with meeting recordings to process the minutes accurately, ensuring that discussions are accurately reflected.

Jeisson inquired about the consequences of the recording secretary failing to fulfill their duties. Taylor pointed out that altering the policy could lead to an uneven distribution of responsibilities among GSA executives, potentially burdening other executives with additional duties.

Motion to amend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.8. (Amanda/Alex)

Carried

Yes: 15

No: 5

Abstention: 7

The motion to ammend GSA bylaw 4.8.3.8 was not approved by the majority of the general members.

Kayla expressed hope for new leaders to step forward in the upcoming election, emphasizing the need for strong, transparent, and organized leadership to guide the organization. She encouraged everyone to spread information about the election and thanked them for their dedication to the cause.

7. Announcement of Electoral Process

The chair announced adjustments to the upcoming election schedule due to unforeseen circumstances and revisions in the bylaws. Assuring members of the commitment to fairness and integrity, they mentioned ongoing efforts to finalize details and ensure transparency. The full schedule and necessary information will be published by next week after approval from the elections and referenda committee. The chair thanked everyone for their understanding and patience in upholding democratic standards.

8. GSA Executive Reports

Abbas suggested adjourning the meeting due to members observing Ramadan fasting. He noted that if all members were in agreement, it would be appropriate to do so. The chair agreed, and went for the meeting adjournment.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 p.m. (Catherine/Kayla)

Carried

Appendix A

Academic Council	Name of Councilors and (alternates)	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 24, 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024
Biology Graduate Student Association	Shuqi Ren Ilsa Griebel (Alternate) Lynsey Bent (Alternate)	P	P	P	P	P	P	A		
Chemistry Course Council	Nasrin Aliasgharlou Vi Phan (Alternate)	A	P	P	P	P	A	A		
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Anatomy, Physiology & Pharmacology	Mary Lazell Wright Farnoosh Tabatabaieian (Alternate)	P	A	P	P	A	A	P		
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Biochemistry, microbiology & Immunology	Rachel Harris – Councilor	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Community Health & Epidemiology	Zoe Schipper – Councilor Tachlima Chowdhury Sunna (Alternate)	A	P	P	P	P	P	A		
College of Medicine Graduate Students Society – Health Sciences	Elyse Proulx-Cullen – Councilor Shima Hozhabrimahani (Alternate)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Computer Science Graduate Council (CSGC)	Thulani Hewavithana Norah Ridley Mumtahina Ahmed (Alternate)	P	P	P	P	P	P	A		
Engineering Graduate Community Council (EGCC) – Biological	Pabitra Chandra Das	P	P	P	P	P	A	P		

Physical Therapy Student Society (PTSS)	Tyler Blanchette Carter Frerichs (Alternate)	P	P	P	A	P	P	P		
SENSSA	Chelsea Ohenewaa Nyarko Aisha Adelah (Alternate)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
School of Public Health (SPHSA)	Somayeh Abdi Jacyn Edwards Ahmed Muftah (Alternate)	A	P	P	A	A	A	A		
Sociology GSA	Meaghan Boily Leah Houseman (Alternate) Kayla Arisman (Alternate)	P	P	P	A	P	A	P		
Soil Science Graduate Student Association	Landon Orenchuk Tristan Chambers (Alternate)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Animal and Poultry Science GSA	Megan Dubois Wyatt Armes	A	P	P	P	P	P	P		
ARE Graduate Student Society	Koal Sammons Josh Bourassa	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Toxicology Graduate Student Association (TGSA) Academic Councilor	Alexandra Cullen Emily Kennedy	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
History Graduate Student Association	Kiegan Lloyd Catlin M. Woloschuk	A	P	P	P	A	P	A		
Physics & Engineering Physics (PEGASUS)	Jeisson A. Vanegas Carranza Nicholas Simonson	N/A	N/A	P	A	P	P	P		
Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy Student Association	Harjot Tu Bazal Khalid	N/A	P	P	A	A	P	A		

Executive member	Name of executive member	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Jan 24, 2024	Feb 2024	Mar 2024	Apr 2024	May 2024
Exec. President	Kayla Benoit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Finance and Operations	Ramin Mohammadi	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Academic and Student Affairs	Sristy Sumana Nath	P	P	A	P	P	P	P		
Exec. VP External Affairs	Abbas Fazel Anvari Yazdi	A	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Exec. VP Indigenous Engagement	Kayla Benoit	A	A	P	P	N/A	N/A	N/A		