

**Constitution**  
**Society of Biology Graduate Students of the University of Western Ontario**  
**9 April 2015**

**1 Name**

1.1 The name of this organization shall be "The Society of Biology Graduate Students of the University of Western Ontario" hereinafter referred to as the "Society", colloquially known as the Society of Biology Graduate Students (SOBGS).

**2 Purpose**

2.1 The purpose of the Society shall be to represent the best interests of Biology graduate students including but not limited to academic excellence, professional development, and social networking.

2.2 The Society shall act as the recognized organization through which the Department of Biology graduate students may leverage their collective will and enrich the graduate student experience.

**3 Powers and Jurisdictions**

3.1 The jurisdiction and powers assumed by the Society through this Constitution and any amendments thereto arise from self-governing authority and do not require the approval of any authority other than that of the Society itself.

3.2 The governing body of the Society shall consist of members elected by and from the general membership of the Society.

**4 Membership**

4.1 The requirements for full membership in the Society shall be registration in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies of the University of Western Ontario as a full-time or part-time graduate student in the Department of Biology.

**5 Elected Representatives**

5.1 The Society shall be represented by the following Elected Representatives:

5.1.1 A SOBGS Chairperson

5.1.2 A SOBGS Principal Representative to the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS)

5.1.3 SOBGS SOGS Representative(s)

5.1.4 A PSAC Local 00610 Union Steward SOBGS Representative

5.1.5 Graduate Education Committee SOBGS Representative(s)

5.1.6 Seminar Committee SOBGS Representative(s)

5.1.7 Undergraduate Education Committee SOBGS Representative(s)

5.1.8 Research Committee SOBGS Representative(s)

5.1.9 Outreach Committee SOBGS Representative(s)

5.1.10 SOBGS Social Committee Representative(s)

5.1.11 SOBGS Sustainability Representative

5.2 Duties for these positions are described in Section 12.

## **6 Meetings**

### **6.1 Decorum**

6.1.1 Responsibility for maintaining decorum and preparing the agenda will normally rest with the Chairperson. If the Chairperson is not present then the responsibility will pass to the Principal SOGS Representative.

6.1.2 Society members shall conduct themselves honourably and respectfully at all times.

6.1.3 The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order may be proposed at any time by a Society member and will then be invoked upon being seconded by another Society member, in a manner consistent with the Constitution of the Society.

### **6.2 General Meetings**

6.2.1 General Meetings may be called at an Elected Representatives Meeting (Section 6.3), by any Elected Representative, and the call will succeed if seconded.

6.2.2 The Chairperson shall ensure that a General Meeting of the Society occurs at least once per academic year (September 1 through August 31).

6.2.3 General Meetings will be chaired by the individual responsible for calling the meeting.

6.2.4 Notice of a General Meeting, including an agenda, shall be advertised through the biology graduate student electronic mailing list at least 5 business days in advance of the General Meeting.

6.2.5 All Society members shall be entitled to attend General Meetings. Only Society members shall be entitled to:

6.2.5.1 move, second, and vote on motions.

6.2.5.2 assign proxy, as defined in Section 6.2.6.

6.2.6 A proxy holder must be a Society member. Any Society member attending a General Meeting may hold a maximum of two proxy votes. A proxy form will be made available to the Society membership at notice of the General Meeting by the meeting chair. The signed proxy must be submitted to the meeting chair at the opening of the meeting, and shall be valid for the period of the meeting.

6.2.6.1 The proxy form will be adapted from the current SOGS General Meeting proxy form.

6.2.7 Quorum for a General Meeting shall consist of 10 percent of the Society membership and will be counted by those in attendance, excluding proxies. The meeting chair will be responsible for determining the number of Society members and calculating quorum.

6.2.8 Motions can be carried by a simple majority vote (greater than 50%), unless stated otherwise, either by secret ballot or show of hands at the discretion of the meeting chair.

6.2.8.1 The meeting chair has no voting rights.

6.2.9 Motions made and carried at a General Meeting shall be binding on the Society.

### **6.3 Elected Representatives Meetings**

6.3.1 Elected Representatives may convene meetings to discuss matters concerning the Society.

6.3.2 Elected Representatives Meetings may be called and chaired only by Elected Representatives.

6.3.2.1 A request for an Elected Representatives Meeting, communicated to the Chairperson from an Elected Representative, will obligate the Chairperson to call a meeting within 4 weeks time.

6.3.2.2 Any other Society member may attend and speak at a meeting, providing that the individual is recognized through a simple majority vote (greater than 50%) of Elected Representatives in attendance.

6.3.3 Quorum for an Elected Representatives Meeting will be half plus one of the Elected Representatives.

6.3.4 Proxy voting will not be permitted for Elected Representatives Meetings.

6.3.5 Resolutions from such meetings must be ratified at a General Meeting before they are considered binding on the Society.

## **7 Elections**

7.1 All Society members are eligible to seek election.

7.2 Elections shall be held on the first Monday following September 20 of each year for all positions, unless stated otherwise.

7.2.1 Elections will be held for Seminar Committee Winter Representative(s) on the first Monday following January 10 of each year (Section 12.7.1).

7.3 Elected Representatives shall take office immediately upon election and fill their position for one (1) year.

7.4 The current Chairperson will act as an election coordinator. If the Chairperson is unavailable (e.g. due to graduation), the current Principal SOGS Representative will act as election coordinator, followed by the most senior Elected Representative as determined by number of terms served. In the event of a tie for seniority, the election coordinator will be determined by draw of lots.

7.5 The election coordinator will begin notifying the Society membership of the election date and call for nominations no later than 10 days before the elections are held. This will include, but not be limited to, the biology graduate student electronic mailing list.

7.6 Nominations for all Elected Representative positions shall be received by the election coordinator. Nominations must be submitted by hard copy or email, and Society members may nominate themselves.

7.7 Elections shall be conducted by email ballot.

7.8 Votes shall be tallied by the election coordinator. If only a single candidate stands for office, that person shall gain the position by acclamation.

7.9 In the event that an Elected Representative position is vacated prior to 60 days before the regularly scheduled election for that position, the Chairperson shall assume the responsibility of coordinating the election of a new candidate for the position.

## **8 Conflict of Interest**

8.1 No Society member should vote on a question in which he or she has personal or pecuniary interest not common to Society membership. Clarification of this concept can be seen in the SOGS By-Laws.

8.2 The responsibility for revealing conflict of interest lies directly with the Society member concerned.

8.3 Conflict of interest perceived by any Society member concerning any other Society member should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson or Principal SOGS Representative immediately.

8.4 If a Society member with a conflict of interest does not abstain from voting, the Chairperson or Principal SOGS Representative shall follow the complaint process as defined in Section 9.

8.5 A Society member may be barred from membership on a SOBGS subcommittee if they are unable to take part in the business of the SOBGS subcommittee due to conflict of interest frequently occurring.

## **9 Complaints against an elected representative**

### **9.1 Filing a complaint**

9.1.1 Any Society member may file a formal complaint about an Elected Representative.

9.1.2 Complaints about the Chairperson shall be addressed to the Principal SOGS Representative and complaints about any other Elected Representative shall be addressed to the Chairperson.

9.1.3 The person who receives the complaint shall be identified as “the Recipient”, the person submitting the complaint shall be identified as “the Appellant”, and the person who is the subject of the complaint shall be identified as “the Subject”.

9.1.4 Society members may file a formal complaint by sending a letter to the appropriate representative with the reason for their complaint. Reasons for complaint include, but are not limited to, failure to perform duties as described Section 12, actions considered offensive to a Society member, and voting while in a conflict of interest.

### **9.2 Investigation of the complaint**

9.2.1 Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Recipient shall perform the following actions:

9.2.1.1 Within one week, the Recipient shall inform the Subject that a complaint has been lodged against him or her, and that the process of investigation as described in Section 9 has been initiated. The Subject shall be given a reasonable amount of time (no more than one week) to respond to the Recipient and address the problem described in the formal complaint. The Recipient shall immediately inform the Appellant of the response of the Subject, and ask the Appellant if this response is satisfactory.

9.2.1.2 If the Appellant is unsatisfied by the response of the Subject, the Appellant may inform the Recipient of his or her intention to pursue impeachment of the Subject, as described in Section 9.3. At this time, the Appellant must explain why his or her complaint impinges on the ability of the Subject to perform his or her duties as an Elected Representative.

### **9.3 Impeachment**

9.3.1 The Recipient shall inform the Subject that a decision was made to pursue impeachment proceedings.

9.3.2 If the Recipient believes that the complaint may be spurious, he or she may, at his or her discretion, organize an ad hoc committee comprised of three Elected Representatives, chosen by random draw, to discuss the merits of the complaint against the Subject (within no more than one week). If the complaint is considered merited, the Recipient proceeds with impeachment. If the complaint is considered unmerited, the Recipient shall inform the Appellant of the ad hoc committee's decision.

9.3.3 The Recipient shall call, organize, and chair a General Meeting within two weeks of the Recipient informing the Subject of the decision to pursue impeachment. The Recipient shall inform the Society membership by the biology graduate student electronic mailing list and describe the nature of the complaint against the Subject, while not using the name of the Subject and being tactful to the nature of the complaint.

9.3.4 The Recipient shall write a motion to impeach the Subject, which will be presented at the General Meeting. This motion will describe the nature of the Appellant's complaint, and only the Subject of the complaint is permitted to be named in the motion.

9.3.5 At the General Meeting, the motion to impeach the Subject shall be read and discussed. A vote by secret ballot shall be taken at the meeting. If two-thirds or greater majority vote for impeachment then the position shall be declared vacant and a by-election shall be declared as described in Section 7.

## **10 Finance**

10.1 The Society shall only use its funds towards the best fulfilment of the purpose of the Society, as described in Section 2.

10.1.1 The Society shall only use its funds in a manner consistent with the purpose for which they were collected or earmarked.

10.1.2 The Society shall use its funds for events and initiatives in a manner proportionately equitable among streams of the department.

10.2 The Chairperson and Principal SOGS representative will administer the finances of the Society, working in collaboration with the Biology Department Graduate Program Assistant.

10.2.1 The Chairperson shall produce a projected budget to be ratified at a General Meeting within three months of their election.

10.3 Expenditures seen as being inconsistent with the purpose of the Society (Section 2) shall be grounds for a complaint as described in Section 9.

## **11 Amendments to the Constitution**

11.1 Proposals for amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Chairperson.

11.2 The Chairperson shall present the proposal at the next Elected Representative Meeting to discuss the merits of the proposal. The person who submitted the proposal shall be invited to speak at this meeting.

11.2.1 If the proposal is considered merited, the Chairperson presents it at the next General Meeting. If the proposal is considered unmerited, the Chairperson shall inform the person who submitted the proposal of the Elected Representatives' decision.

11.3 Proposals endorsed by the Elected Representatives shall be presented at the next General Meeting. The Society membership shall vote to accept or reject the proposal, such a motion requiring a two-thirds majority vote approval. No amendments to the proposal will be allowed at the General Meeting.

11.4 Proposals that are rejected may not be resubmitted for consideration until they have been edited to address concerns, or until one calendar year has passed.

## **12 Duties of the Elected Representatives**

### **12.1 SOBGS Chairperson – 1 elected position**

12.1.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society.

12.1.2 Work to improve the biology graduate student experience.

12.1.3 Liaise between biology graduate students and Biology Graduate Chair.

12.1.4 Attend all biology faculty and staff meetings as the official biology graduate student representative.

12.1.5 Call, organize, and chair Society meetings.

12.1.6 Administer the finances of the Society, working in collaboration with the Principal SOGS Representative and the Biology Department Graduate Program Assistant.

12.1.6.1 Prepare a projected budget to be ratified at a General Meeting.

12.1.7 Ensure the Elected Representatives are fulfilling their responsibilities, especially, but not limited to the:

12.1.7.1 Biology Graduate Research Forum,

12.1.7.2 Biology Formal.

12.1.8 Act as a stand-in for the Principal SOGS Representative in the event that the Principal SOGS Representative is unavailable.

12.1.9 Has no voting rights at Elected Representative Meetings except in the case of a tie, where their vote is used as a tie breaker (1 vote).

### **12.2 Principal SOGS SOBGS Representative – 1 elected position**

12.2.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society.

12.2.2 Attend all monthly SOGS Council Meetings.

12.2.3 Ensure the SOGS Representatives attendance at the monthly SOGS Council Meeting is complete for at least the first hour of each meeting.

12.2.4 Assist in arranging Alternate SOGS Representatives when SOGS Representatives are unable to attend the monthly SOGS Council Meeting.

12.2.5 Communicate SOGS business highlights to the Society membership.

12.2.6 Encourage attendance among all Society members for the SOGS General Meetings.

12.2.7 Act as a stand-in for the Chairperson in the event that the Chairperson is unavailable.

12.2.8 Administer the finances of the Society, working in collaboration with the Chairperson and the Biology Department Graduate Program Assistant.

12.2.9 Has voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote).

### **12.3 SOGS SOBGS Representatives**

12.3.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society, *in a number allocated by SOGS*

12.3.2 Attend all monthly SOGS Council Meetings.

12.3.3 Arrange Alternates SOGS Representatives if they are unable to attend the monthly SOGS Council Meeting.

12.3.4 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

#### **12.4 Alternate SOGS SOBGS Representatives – 2 elected positions**

12.4.1 Society members can nominate themselves through the Chairperson or the Principal SOGS Representative.

12.4.2 Shall endeavour to be available for monthly SOGS Council Meetings

12.4.3 Will act as an official Alternate in the event that a SOGS Representative is unavailable for the monthly SOGS Council Meetings.

12.4.4 Have no voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings.

#### **12.5 PSAC Local 00610 Union Steward SOBGS Representative – 1 position**

12.5.1 From among the PSAC Local 00610 stewards, as allocated to the Society by PSAC Local 00610, one will be selected by those stewards as the principal PSAC Local 00610 steward.

12.5.2 Attend all PSAC Local 00610 steward meetings.

12.5.3 Perform the work of a steward as defined by PSAC Local 00610.

12.5.4 Liaise with the Chairperson when relevant information may need to be presented at faculty meetings.

12.5.5 Communicate PSAC Local 00610 business at Society meetings.

12.5.6 Has voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote).

#### **12.6 Graduate Education Committee SOBGS Representative**

12.6.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society, *in a number allocated by the Graduate Education Committee.*

12.6.2 From among the Graduate Education Committee SOBGS Representatives, one will be selected by those representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.

12.6.3 Attend all Graduate Education Committee meetings

12.6.4 Work towards the goals of the Graduate Education Committee as defined by the committee itself. These duties may include:

12.6.4.1 Selection of biology graduate students for admission,

12.6.4.2 Setting and implementing all biology departmental graduate policy,

12.6.4.3 Organization of the biology graduate curriculum,

12.6.4.4 Organization of qualifying exams,

12.6.4.5 Appointment of members of advisory committees,

12.6.4.6 Arranging for the defense of theses,

12.6.4.7 Ranking of post-graduate scholarship and post-doctoral fellowship applications,

12.6.4.8 Consideration of requests for extensions of biology departmental financial support,

12.6.4.9 Assist the yearly update and publication of the Biology Graduate Student Handbook.

12.6.5 Communicate Graduate Education Committee business at Society meetings.

12.6.6 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.7 Seminar Committee SOBGS Representative**

12.7.1 One Fall Representative will be elected in September, with the remaining Winter Representative(s) (*in a number allocated by the Seminar Committee*) elected in January, through the formal election process of the Society (Section 7.2.1).

12.7.2 From among the Seminar Committee SOBGS Representatives, one will be selected by those representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.

12.7.3 Attend all Seminar Committee meetings.

12.7.4 Follow the SOBGS Graduate Student Seminar Hosting Guidelines, available on the Biology Department website.

12.7.5 Work towards the goals of the Seminar Committee as defined by the committee itself. These duties may include:

12.7.5.1 Assist in the invitation and reception of speakers for the biology departmental seminar series held weekly during the fall, winter, and spring terms,

12.7.5.2 Facilitate the annual election of a biology graduate student-nominated speaker(s).

12.7.6 Communicate Seminar Committee business at Society meetings.

12.7.7 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.8 Undergraduate Education Committee SOBGS Representative**

12.8.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society, *in a number allocated by the Undergraduate Education Committee*.

12.8.2 From among the Undergraduate Education Committee SOBGS Representatives, one will be selected by those representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.

12.8.3 Attend all Undergraduate Education Committee meetings.

12.8.4 Communicate concerns received from the outreach representatives, who relay information from BUGS (Biology Undergraduate Society; Western University; see 12.10.6.3), at the next BUEC meeting.

12.8.5 Work towards the goals of the Undergraduate Education Committee as defined by the committee itself. These duties may include:

12.8.5.1 Improving the biology undergraduate student academic experience.

12.8.6 Communicate Undergraduate Education Committee business at Society meetings.

12.8.7 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.9 Research Committee SOBGS Representative**

12.9.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society, *in a number allocated by the Research Committee*.

12.9.2 From among the Research Committee SOBGS Representatives, one will be selected by those representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.

12.9.3 Produce, update, and expand a list of awards, grants, and scholarships appropriate to each of the streams in the Biology Department.

12.9.4 This may be accomplished by collaborating with students, professors, and staff from among the streams of the Biology Department.

12.9.5 Attend all Research Committee meetings.

12.9.6 Work towards the goals of the Research Committee as defined by the committee itself. These duties may include:

12.9.6.1 Identifying key research areas.

12.8.5 Communicate Research Committee business at Society meetings.

12.8.6 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.10 Outreach Committee SOBGS Representative**

- 12.10.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society, *in a number allocated by the Outreach Committee.*
- 12.10.2 From among the Outreach Committee SOBGS Representatives, one will be selected by those representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.
- 12.10.3 Update the SOBGS section of the Biology Department website.
- 12.10.4 Attend all Outreach committee meetings.
- 12.10.5 Work towards the goals of the Outreach Committee as defined by the committee itself. These duties may include:
  - 12.10.5.1 Marketing the Biology Department for the purpose of attracting new students,
  - 12.10.5.2 Educating the public on recent research, particularly from within the Biology Department.
- 12.10.6 Required to receive weekly email updates from BUGS (Biology Undergraduate Society; Western University) to acquire knowledge on biology undergraduate-related events.
  - 12.10.6.1 Communicate events between both SOBGS and BUGS at SOBGS meetings that are of interest to SOBGS.
  - 12.10.6.2 Plan and execute an event during the winter academic semester to bring graduate and undergraduate students together to discuss life as a graduate student and general interest in becoming a graduate student.
- 12.10.7 Communicate Outreach Committee business at Society meetings.
- 12.10.8 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.11 SOBGS Social Committee Representatives- 3 elected positions**

- 12.11.1 Elected through the formal election process of SOBGS.
- 12.11.2 From among the SOBGS Social Committee Representatives, one will be selected by the representatives as the spokesperson at Society meetings.
- 12.11.3 Attend all Social Committee meetings.
- 12.11.4 Work towards the goals of the Social Committee as defined by the Society. These duties include:
  - 12.11.4.1 Organizing major social events,
  - 12.11.4.2 Fund raising for SOBGS events,
  - 12.11.4.3 Advertising the initiatives of the SOBGS Social committee,
  - 12.11.4.4 Ensuring that alcohol is available at Society events while maintaining agreement with all applicable laws.
- 12.11.5 The Social Committee is empowered to organize and chair voluntary subcommittees towards their goals (no voting rights at SOBGS).
- 12.11.6 Communicate Social Committee business at Society meetings.
- 12.11.7 Have voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).

## **12.12 SOBGS Sustainability Representative**

- 12.12.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society.
- 12.12.2 Start and work to improve environmental sustainability within the Biology Department.
- 12.12.3 Liaise between biology graduate students and the SOGS Sustainability Committee.
- 12.12.4 Seek membership on the SOGS Sustainability Committee.
- 12.12.5 Work with SOBGS event coordinators to ensure SOBGS events are conducted sustainably.
- 12.12.6 Run the organic compost program within the Biology Department.

12.12.7 Communicate Sustainability business at Society meetings.

12.12.8 Has voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote each).