

# GRADUATE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL HANDBOOK



GRADUATE  
STUDENTS'  
ASSOCIATION

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

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## STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022

### VISION

To be recognized as the leader in graduate student advocacy and service delivery by our members, stakeholders, and external organizations across Canada.

### MISSION

The GSA serves all Ucalgary graduate students through responsive programs and initiatives to support their success during and after their academic endeavours.

### GOALS

**Advocacy** – Engage in meaningful consultation, research, and policy development in order to relentlessly advocate for the changing needs of UCalgary graduate students to the university and all levels of government.

**Service Delivery** – Maximize the impact of our services with the available resources through collaboration and consultation to support the success of all graduate students.

**Communication** – Foster direct and constructive communication between the GSA members, staff, and board to promote transparency, trust, and inclusion.

**Organizational Sustainability** – Foster a nurturing, professional, and productive environment that empowers innovation and risk taking, while maximizing efficiency and impact.

[www.gsa.ucalgary.ca](http://www.gsa.ucalgary.ca)

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1030ES Earth Sciences  
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## Background

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) was established in 1967 and currently represents approximately 6000 University of Calgary graduate students. Five student representatives are elected each year to sit on the GSA's Board of Directors. These elected officials, and a group of permanent staff members, advocate for graduate students to the University and the three levels of government, provide professional development opportunities, host diverse social events, and provide various funding opportunities. These are just a few of the ways that the GSA supports graduate students.

The GSA membership consists of all University of Calgary full and part-time graduate students. The membership elects the GSA Executive Board of Directors for a one-year term beginning May 1. The Executive Board of Directors governs the Association and provides strategic direction.

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## GSA Board of Directors

The GSA Board of Directors' (BoD) main objective is to support graduate students and advocate on their behalf. The GSA provides workshops, special events, financial aid and support, as well as development for graduate students as they progress through their university programs. The GSA also administers its own non-profit, self-funded, health and dental plan.

The BoD is comprised of 5 members:

- President
- VP Academic
- VP External
- VP Student Life
- VP Finance & Services

The BoD of the GSA creates committees in order to:

- Research specific issues
- Seek advice or input on specific issues
- Oversee and secure the proper functioning of projects, initiatives, or programs

Committees of a permanent nature are called standing committees. Each BoD portfolio has its own standing committee(s):

- President: Governance Committee, Senior Leadership Team, Labour Relations Committee
- VP Academic: Academic Support Committee, Awards Committee
- VP External: External Advocacy Committee
- VP Student Life: Student Experience Standing Committee, Community Engagement Subcommittee, Events Subcommittee, Mental Health & Wellness Subcommittee, Newcomer and International Student Subcommittee, [GSA]2 Subcommittee
- VP Finance & Services: Finance Standing Committee, Sustainability Committee

Committees created for a one-time function are called ad hoc committees. All committees are responsible to the BoD.

For a summary of the GSA organizational structure - see Appendix 1

For more information about the GSA Executives, or to contact them, visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/gsa-executive-board](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/gsa-executive-board)

For more information on the GSA, please see our website at [gsa.ucalgary.ca](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca)

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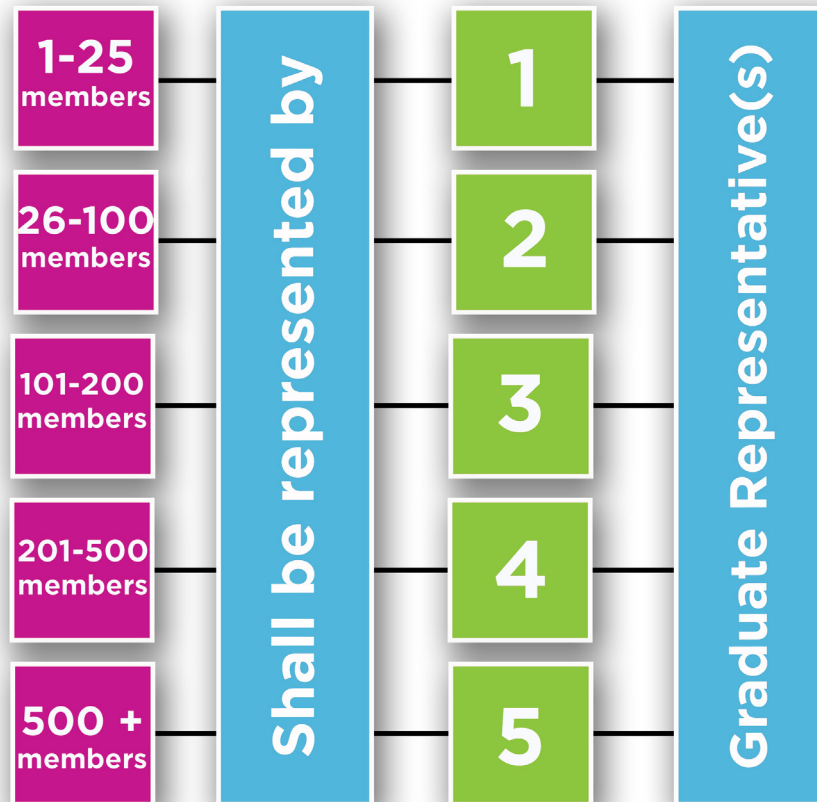
## **GSA Governance**

The Graduate Students' Association Bylaws are the governing documents of the GSA. These documents set out the structure of the GSA and govern the conduct of all GSA bodies. There is important information listed within our bylaws, including how to initiate a referendum, what the Judicial Board is for and how we run our elections. See Appendix 4 for some important bylaws regarding GRC. Please take some time to review your GSA Bylaws before the next Graduate Representative Council meeting. Bylaws can be found at: [gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/bylaws](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/bylaws)

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## GRC Representatives

Each Departmental Graduate Association (DGA) or department authorized by the University of Calgary to operate a graduate program, may be represented by one or more Graduate Representative(s) at GRC meetings. DGAs or authorized departments with:



Consortiums may appoint up to two (2) non-voting representatives.

If a Consortium Representative is a voting Graduate Representative of a DGA, they retain their DGA voting privileges (see DGA handbook - [gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgasgrns/](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgasgrns/)).

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## Responsibilities of GRC Representatives

The Graduate Representative Council (GRC) is a body comprising representatives chosen by graduate students in each university department/faculty. The GRC is an advisory body of the GSA, and is subject to GSA bylaws.

As a GRC representative you are responsible for the following:

- Attend six out of the seven meetings per year. If you are unable to attend you must appoint a proxy and inform the GSA prior to the meeting – [governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca).
- Disseminate information to graduate students in your department. This is your most important function as a GRC rep.
- Consult with graduate students on decision items.
- Vote in the elections of the roles of speaker, chief returning officer, clerk, and Financial Standing Committee Chair.
- Vote on important issues

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## GRC Meeting Operation

All GRC reps will receive an agenda for each meeting and the minutes from the previous meeting, minimally 5 days prior to GRC. If your DGA's GRC representative is not receiving these emails, please contact [governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca)

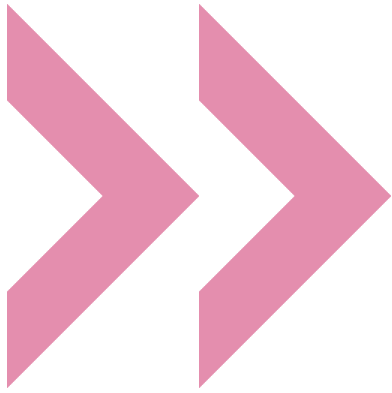
The meeting will begin with the acceptance of the agenda and the minutes from the previous meeting. A permanent item on the agenda is "Executive Reports" which provides the BoD with the opportunity to present the activities and projects of the previous month, as well as upcoming activities and projects, to GRC and provides GRC representatives an opportunity to ask any questions they might have related to these activities.

Any formal motions, committee reports, DGA happenings or other items of information are welcomed and encouraged. Any GRC rep can vote on or present a motion. If you wish to present at a GRC meeting, please ensure that all written information is submitted to the GSA office ([governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca)) by mid-month so that it can be included in that month's agenda.

During the meeting, the Speaker's interpretation of Robert's Rules of Order is followed. See Appendix 3 for a list of commonly used Robert's Rules.

## GRC Meeting Schedule

GRC meetings are usually held on the last Tuesday of most months of the academic year (see [gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/grc](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/grc) for dates) at 5:30 pm (check the website, newsletter, or email [governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca) for the location) unless otherwise announced in the



GSA News and Views Newsletter and on the GSA website. They run on average about 1.5-2.5 hours and cover issues affecting graduate students. After the meeting, members are encouraged to join the executive at the Last Defence Lounge (LDL) where free refreshments will be provided to those who attended the meeting.

GRC members are encouraged to check the GSA's News and Views Newsletter, the GSA website and their email for meeting reminders, agendas and schedules prior to the meeting itself. If the meeting location changes, it will be announced via e-mail and on our website as early as possible. If you are part of a DGA, you are required to send a representative to GRC in order to maintain DGA funding. Additionally, any GSA member is welcome to attend GRC meetings, although they may not be permitted to vote. For more information and the schedule of this year's meetings: [gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/grc](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/grc)

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## Departmental Graduate Associations

A significant portion of the GSA's services aims to foster an engaged student environment where GSA members are aware, accountable and active in their education and community. The Departmental Graduate Association program of the GSA is an integral way that students are showing their engagement. The DGA program, established in 2008, gives graduate students in every department, regardless of size, the chance to plan and manage their own students' association for graduate students. The GSA supports this program with enhanced and ongoing financial support for all DGAs. If you have a DGA in your department, we encourage you to join it. If you're already a member of your department's DGA and wish to join another similar DGA to form a consortium, there is funding for that as well. Please read the DGA handbook for more information - [gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgasgrns/](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/dgasgrns/)



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## The GSA's Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The GSA's AGM is held each September and addresses a number of major components such as structural changes and financial review. All graduate students are invited to attend and vote on any motions that arise. Additional Special General Meetings may be called as per the GSA bylaws and all graduate students are encouraged to attend these as well.

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## GSA Fees

The following is a list of the fees assessed to graduate students from the GSA (subject to change, check the GSA website for updates):

Health and dental fees	
Health plan	\$326.58
Dental plan	\$264.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$590.67</b>

GSA fees	
Advocacy levy	\$9.00
Professional development awards levy	\$5.00
Operations and services (full-time)	\$162.84
Operations and services (part time)	\$133.00
<b>Total (full-time)</b>	<b>\$176.84</b>
<b>Total (part-time)</b>	<b>\$147.00</b>

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## GSA Services

One of the most important functions of your position as a GRC rep is to present the services of the GSA to your department. Services are described here, on the GSA website, and will be discussed at GRC meetings.

### Professional Development Grant

Funds are available to students to support academic activities and professional development (such as the cost of presenting thesis research at conferences and some professional development workshops). Applications are accepted in the Fall and Winter terms and are available online at [gsa.ucalgary.ca/grants](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/grants) and at the GSA office.

### GSA Bursary

The GSA bursary makes funds available to graduate students who demonstrate financial need. Grants are awarded twice per year, once during the fall semester and once during the winter semester. You can apply for an individual bursary. For more information, visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/bursaries](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/bursaries)

### GSA Leadership Award

Students who demonstrate outstanding leadership in their departments, faculties, and the University community are encouraged to apply for the GSA Leadership Award valued at \$5000. Given out once per year at the end of the Winter semester, this award celebrates the dedication of graduate students to the University community. Visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards) for details.

### GSA Emerging Leader Award

This scholarship was established by the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary (GSA) in recognition of newly-admitted students who have demonstrated outstanding academic and leadership potential, and involvement in the Calgary community within the first year of their studies. Visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards) for details.

### GSA Graduate Citizenship Award

This award recognizes graduate students who have demonstrated outstanding dedication to their fellow students and/or communities through public service and volunteer activities. Individual awards are granted in the amount of \$2,000 and 20 such awards are available to University of Calgary graduate students. Graduate students can apply for this award once each fall. Visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards) for details.

### Excellence Awards

Each year students are able to nominate exemplary teachers, supervisors, administrators, and mentors that have supported them in their academic career at the University. For more information, visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/awards)

### **Quality Money**

Quality Money grants are one way that the GSA gives back to the student community. Emphasis is placed upon proposals that impact the majority of students, promote multidisciplinary interactions, and integrate sustainable initiatives. Each year, the GSA puts out a call for Quality Money proposals in order to solicit proposals from interested parties across the university. Quality Money applications are processed on a competitive first-come-first-served basis. For information on how and when to apply for Quality Money, visit [gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/quality-money-program](https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/quality-money-program)

### **GSA Weekly Newsletter**

The GSA News and Views is a weekly e-newsletter to which graduate students are automatically subscribed. The News and Views offers specific and timely information about upcoming events, issues, important deadlines for things like funding applications, grants, scholarship and conference submissions, job postings, and happenings that are important to you, the graduate student. Submissions from the graduate student population are greatly encouraged. The weekly deadline for submission is Friday at 4:00 pm. To sign up or to submit, contact [thao.nguyen1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:thao.nguyen1@ucalgary.ca)

### **GSA Health & Dental Plans**

The GSA is proud to offer its very own student owned, student governed and not-for-profit extended health and dental care benefit plans. Coverage under these plans includes annual dental check-ups, up to 80% coverage for prescription drugs, additional coverage for health practitioner treatments as well as a host of other benefits. Full-time students are automatically enrolled; part-time students may purchase coverage too (as long as it is purchased before your registration/annual fees deadline). All forms and coverage information are available online at [studentcare.ca/CalgaryGSA](https://studentcare.ca/CalgaryGSA) or contact the GSA office at 403.220.5997 or [askgsa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:askgsa@ucalgary.ca)

### **The Last Defence Lounge**

The Last Defence Lounge (LDL) is a fully licensed restaurant and lounge that is owned and operated by the GSA. The LDL is open to graduate and undergraduate students, their guests, faculty, staff, and visitors to the University. It is located on the third floor of MacEwan Student Centre (MSC 350) and features a full food and liquor menu and friendly staff. The lounge has a spacious patio, which is open in the summer. For more information contact the General Manager at 403.220.7973 or [gsarest@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gsarest@ucalgary.ca)

### Thesis or Program Completion Champagne

Yes, it's true - the GSA buys a bottle of champagne or non-alcoholic sparkling wine for all graduate students who successfully complete their oral defense (thesis-based) or complete their program (course-based). Download and fill out the [request form](#) and bring it to the Last Defence Lounge. This is a dine-in only service.

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## University Graduate Student Services

### Career Services

If you are looking for career advice, want to improve your job interview skills or tweak your résumé/ CV, consult Career Services, where you'll find a dedicated full-time staff member who specializes in graduate students to help guide you to career success. [ucalgary.ca/careers](http://ucalgary.ca/careers)

### My GradSkills

Along with the GSA, the Faculty of Graduate Studies is committed to your success as a graduate student at the University of Calgary, and beyond to your future career. To assist you with your success, the Faculty of Graduate Studies has partnered with organizations on and off campus (including the GSA) to provide you with a structured MyGradSkills website where you can learn about a wide range of valuable resources, workshops, courses and activities in a single location. Aim high, and use My GradSkills to help you build your portfolio and create your own success at the University of Calgary and beyond. [grad.ucalgary.ca/mygradskills](http://grad.ucalgary.ca/mygradskills)

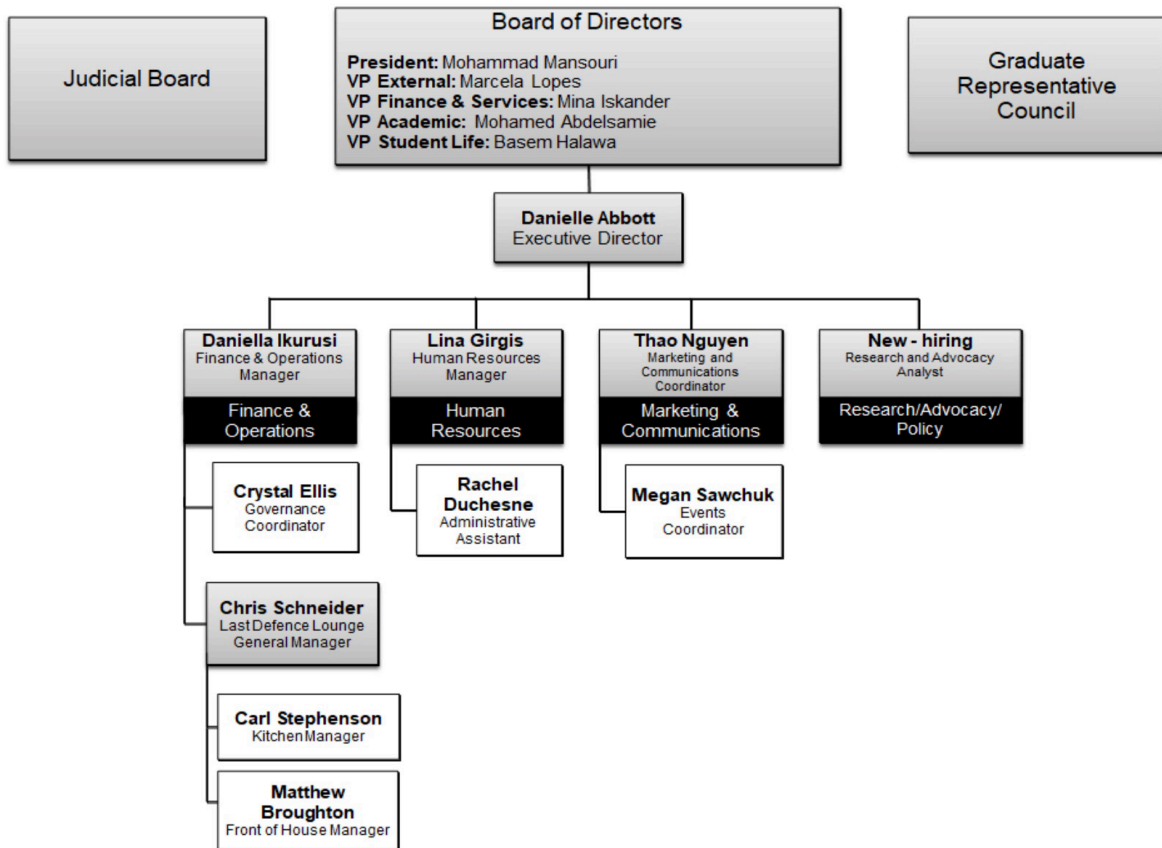
### Graduate Orientation

The GSA assists the University in running orientation sessions for new graduate students, these are offered twice per year, and run at the beginning of the Fall and Winter terms. For details on orientation, make sure to check the News and Views Newsletter or contact any of the GSA Executive: [gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/gsa-executive-board](http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/about-the-gsa/gsa-executive-board)

**Thank you very much for volunteering your time to the GSA!**

## Appendix 1: GSA Organizational Chart (2019-2020)

### The Graduate Students' Association of the University of Calgary



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## Appendix 2: Acronyms

Provided below is a list of acronyms commonly used in GRC meetings:

AGM	Annual General Meeting
BOG	Board of Governors
CAGS	Canadian Association of Graduate Schools
CASA	Canadian Alliance of Student Associations
CAUS	Council of Alberta University Students
CIP	Comprehensive Institutional Plan
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRO	GSAs Chief Returning Officer
DGA	Departmental Graduate Association
FGS	Faculty of Graduate Studies
GA(R)	Graduate Assistantship (Research)
GA(T)	Graduate Assistantship (Teaching)
GA(NT)	Graduate Assistantship (Non-Teaching)
GFC	General Faculty Council
GRN	Graduate Research Network
GPAC	Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council
GRC	Graduate Representative Council
GSA	Graduate Students' Association
GSG	Graduate Student Groups
GU15	Group of GSAs from the Canadian research universities
HEPI	Higher Education Price Index
IAE	Ministry of Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education
LDL	Last Defence Lounge
NSERC	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council
SLT	GSAs Senior Leadership Team
SSHRC	Social Science and Humanities Research Council
SU	Students' Union
TA	Teaching Assistant
TUCFA	The University of Calgary Faculty Association
U15	Group of Canadian research universities
UPC	The University Planning Committee

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## Appendix 3: Robert's Rules of Order

Motion	Purpose of Motion	To Enact Motion
Main motion	To take action on behalf of the body	Debatable; requires majority vote
Adjourn(ment)	End of the meeting	Not debatable; immediately voted upon and requires majority vote
Call for orders of the day	Asks to stick to the agenda	Not debatable; requires 1/3 majority to sustain
Motion to limit or extend debate	Limits or extends debate	Not debatable; requires 2/3's majority vote
Point of order	Is a question about the process or a particular motion	Automatic if granted by chair
Point of information	To ask about the process or particular motion	Automatic
Motion to rescind	To change the results of a vote	Requires 2/3's majority to reverse results of earlier vote
Motion to suspend the rules	Suspend formal process for a short period	Debatable and requires 2/3's majority vote

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## Appendix 4: Important Bylaw Items

- 8.13.5 The FSC Chair and Vice Chair shall: provide a written report on the finances of the Association to the GRC and the Board of Directors in the Fall and Winter Academic terms.
- 9.13 Any Graduate Representative position that becomes vacant shall be filled by the appropriate DGA or department, according to DGA Policy.
- 9.13.1 The new representative shall be official once the Speaker and GSA office have been notified.
- 9.14 The term of office of each Graduate Representative shall be twelve months.
- 9.15 A DGA or department may not select a GSA Director (aka GSA Executive) as a Graduate Representative.
- 9.16 If a Graduate Representative is elected to the GSA Board of Directors, their position as a Graduate Representative shall be considered vacant once they have assumed the Directorship.

Active Members who have been removed as Graduate Representatives under Bylaw 9.2:

- 9.2 The GRC has the authority to enforce appropriate behaviour by all Members and representatives of the Association. If it is deemed necessary by the GRC,
- 9.2.1 Any representative of the Association, including a member of the Board of Directors, and GRC Representatives, may be removed from their position by a two-thirds majority vote of the GRC.
- 9.2.2 Any Member may be reprimanded by removal of their membership privileges, either in whole or in part, temporarily or permanently, by a unanimous vote by the Board of Directors. If the Board votes unanimously to temporarily or permanently remove Membership privileges, the impacted Member may appeal to the Judicial Board in writing within five (5) business days of the decision. To uphold the Board's decision, the Judicial Board must also vote unanimously in favour of the Board's decision. The Judicial Board's ruling is final.

or Bylaw 9.21:

- 9.21 Any Graduate Representative who is absent without an Alternate for more than two meetings in an academic year may be removed as a Graduate Representative by majority vote of the GRC.