

Communication Graduate Students Society Constitution and General By-Laws

PREAMBLE

Notes regarding this document:

- The society's Constitution and General By-Laws are hierarchically organized into Sections, Articles, Sub-Articles, Items, and Sub-Items.
 - Sections are enumerated with capital Roman numerals.
 - Articles are enumerated with Arabic numerals.
 - Sub-Articles are enumerated alphabetically with capital letters surrounded by parentheses.
 - Items are enumerated with lower-case Roman numerals surrounded by parentheses.
 - Sub-Items are enumerated alphabetically with lower-case letters surrounded by square brackets.
- Portions of this document should be referenced according to their position within the hierarchical sequence, preceded by the smallest element being referenced. Periods should be used to separate levels of the hierarchy where other punctuation is not present.
 - For instance:
 - Article V.1 refers to Article 1 of Section V.
 - Sub-Article V.1(B) refers to Sub-Article (B), of Article 1, of Section V.
 - Sub-Item I.2(B)(ii)[a] refers to Sub-Item [a], of Item (ii), of Sub-Article (B), of Article 2, of Section I.
- Gender-neutral "they" pronouns are used throughout this document.
- The Constitution and General By-Laws that appear hereafter should be upheld in all matters related to the CGSS.
- The Constitution and General By-Laws should be considered a *living document* with all points being reviewed on a regular basis. The student-elected Executive Board shall review the Constitution and General By-Laws at the end of each Executive tenure and ensure the following:
 - All By-Laws are up-to-date and relevant. This includes ensuring that all current By-Laws are vetted for accessibility.
 - Revisions to standing By-Laws and/or additions of new By-Laws should be drafted and approved by the current executive board, and then brought before the CGSS membership for approval/dismissal. See blanket voting procedures in below section of **PREAMBLE**, as well as detailed voting policies as outlined in **SECTION III: GENERAL MEETINGS, SECTION IV: ELECTIONS AND BY-ELECTIONS, SECTION V: IMPEACHMENTS.**

- Revisions that do not change the spirit and intent of the By-Law in question do not necessitate a membership vote (i.e., revisions to grammar/phrasing for the purposes of clarification).
- Revisions and/or additions to By-Laws that substantially change the intent of the By-Law and/or introduce new policies should be presented to the membership and voted upon before being permanently incorporated into this document.

Voting Procedures:

- Hybrid Meetings. All meetings will be held in a hybrid format to facilitate accessibility for all CGSS members.
- Votes in absentia. In an effort to maintain accessibility, votes in absentia will be permissible when a member in good standing is unable to attend the General Meeting in-person or online. In order for a vote in absentia to be counted, quorum must still be reached among the members in attendance (total across both in-person and online). The Executive must provide all relevant information concerning the matter to be voted upon prior to the General Assembly, and the absent member must review all relevant documents and/or proposed motions prior to the meeting. Votes in absentia must be provided to the CGSS Executive in writing (emailed to CGSSconcordia@gmail.com) before the meeting has commenced. Votes received once the meeting has commenced and/or concluded will not be counted. In the event of “friendly amendments” to proposed motions, the absentee votes will stand. If a member in attendance deems the proposed amendments to the motion substantial, then the vote will be rescheduled for a later date. As per parliamentary procedure, such as those noted by the Model UN, a “friendly amendment” is defined as “an amendment to a motion under debate that is perceived by all parties as an enhancement to the original motion, often only as clarification of intent. Friendly amendments are to be treated like other amendments, but do not necessitate a vote in order to pass. If those in attendance at a CGSS meeting agree that an amendment to a proposed motion is to be considered “friendly,” no additional voting on said amendment is required.

Accessibility:

- Every effort should be made to ensure that all society meetings and events are accessible for all members of the CGSS. This includes the above policies on hybrid meetings and votes in absentia, and extends to matters of access necessary for all social gatherings, fundraising efforts, and other organized activities.
- Accommodations and access requirements should be brought to the executive and addressed by said executive members prior to the beginning of the event in question. If the requirement has not already been accounted for, the executive shall accommodate the access request to the best of their ability.
- Efforts to mitigate inaccessibility should be considered top priority when planning all types of gatherings.

SECTION I. PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

Article 1. The Communication Graduate Students Society (hereafter “CGSS” or “the Society”) is a society of graduate students founded to represent Concordia students of the MA Program in Media Studies and the PhD Program in Communication Studies at the departmental and inter-university levels, and to coordinate activities among said students, subject to the rules and regulations of Concordia University and the MA and PhD Programs in Media or Communication Studies. Roles and responsibilities of the society include defending the rights, promoting the interests, and improving the conditions of students in the program.

Article 2. Executive Board

(A) The CGSS Executive Board (hereafter, “the Executive”) shall be made up of eight (8) or nine (9) elected representatives.

- (i) Each representative must be a graduate student, in good standing, of the MA Program in Media Studies or the PhD Program in Communication Studies.
- (ii) Each representative must count Concordia University as their home university.
- (iii) In the event of a position vacancy, the responsibilities of said position will be shared among the active Executive members.

(B) The primary responsibilities of the Executive are outlined in the following roles:

- (i) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of PhD Coordinator.** The roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator are as follows:
 - [a] Mediate between all positions of the Executive Committee;
 - [b] Coordinate the Executive Board’s activities in a collegial spirit;
 - [c] Function as primary society spokesperson when the society communicates with media and external bodies;
 - [d] Coordinate the planning of Doctoral and/or graduate student events and various society activities in consultation with the Communications Officer;
 - [e] Be responsible for administrative exchanges with government and/or universities;
 - [f] Share annual report of activities in consultation with the MA Coordinator at the Annual General Meeting, and ensure the report is saved in CGSS Google Drive.
 - [g] Call executive meetings.
- (ii) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of MA Coordinator.** The roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator are as follows:
 - [a] Mediate between all positions of the Executive Committee;
 - [b] Coordinate the Executive Board’s activities in a collegial spirit;
 - [c] Function as secondary society spokesperson when the society communicates with media and external bodies;
 - [d] Coordinate the planning of COMS Master and/or graduate student events and various society activities in consultation with the Communications Officer;
 - [e] Coordinate the planning of Master’s Student Annual Conference in consultation with the MA Faculty Representative;

[f] Be responsible for administrative exchanges with government and/or universities;

[g] Share annual report of activities in consultation with the PhD Coordinator at the Annual General Meeting, and ensure the report is saved in CGSS Google Drive.

[h] Call executive meetings.

(iii) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of PhD Academic/Faculty**

Representative. The roles and responsibilities of the Academic/Faculty Representative are as follows:

[a] Support Doctoral students experiencing academic difficulties, and when appropriate, bring their concerns to the attention of faculty;

[b] Represent the CGSS at department meetings and report important information back to the executive board;

[c] Inform Doctoral students of academic resources available to them;

[d] Seek feedback from Doctoral students on academic conditions in the department, particularly with regard to issues experienced by Teaching Assistants, Markers, and Research Assistants, and communicate that feedback to the appropriate department faculty and staff members;

[f] Address academic issues related to Concordia University's graduate programs.

(iv) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of MA Academic/Faculty**

Representative. The roles and responsibilities of the Academic/Faculty Representative are as follows:

[a] Support Master's students experiencing academic difficulties, and when appropriate, bring their concerns to the attention of faculty;

[b] Represent the CGSS at department meetings and report important information back to the executive board;

[c] Inform Master's students of academic resources available to them;

[d] Seek feedback from Master's students on academic conditions in the department, particularly with regard to issues experienced by Teaching Assistants, Markers, and Research Assistants, and communicate that feedback to the appropriate department faculty and staff members;

[f] Address academic issues related to Concordia University's graduate programs.

(v) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of Treasurer.** The roles and responsibilities of the Treasurer are as follows:

[a] Manage all funding applications (annual GSA and other potential funding opportunities);

[b] Perform the role of 'first signatory' for all financial transactions;

[c] Compose and organize CGSS budgets, and any other financial documents;

[d] Manage CGSS funds;

[e] Provide and present the Financial Report at the Annual General Assembly and ensure that updated financials are saved to the CGSS Google Drive. Ensure that the yearly budget is well balanced between MA and PhD expenses.

[f] Register the CGSS with external or governmental bodies for legal and/or institutional purposes.

- [g] Transfer bank account and online account to the incoming Treasurer at the end of their term.
- (i) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of PhD Communications Officer.** The roles and responsibilities of the PhD Communications Officer are as follows:
- [a] Facilitate cooperation with Concordia University's Diploma in Communication program;
 - [b] With the MA Communications Officer, be the primary point of email contact for the society Executive and manage the Executive email account;
 - [c] Oversee and update the CGSS website;
 - [d] Facilitate communication between the department, PhD students, and Master's and Doctoral programs;
 - [e] Obtain an up-to-date email list for all PhD students at the beginning of each academic year;
 - [f] Share society business, events, and announcements to all society members via the Executive email account, send relevant correspondence to PhD student Discord or other communications channels, and update any social media platforms that may be in use.
- (ii) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of MA Communications Officer.** The roles and responsibilities of the MA Communications Officer are as follows:
- [a] Facilitate cooperation with Concordia University's Diploma in Communication program;
 - [b] With the PhD Communications Officer, be the primary point of email contact for the society Executive and manage the Executive email account;
 - [c] Oversee and update the CGSS website;
 - [d] Facilitate communication between the department, MA students, and Master's and Doctoral programs;
 - [e] Obtain an up-to-date email list for all MA students at the beginning of each academic year;
 - [f] Share society business, events, and announcements to all society members via the Executive email account, send relevant correspondence to MA student Discord or other communications channels, and update any social media platforms that may be in use.
- (vi) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of Equity Representative.** The roles and responsibilities of the Equity Representative are as follows:
- [a] Support International students and students experiencing systemic barriers.
 - [b] Seek feedback from International students and students experiencing systemic barriers;
 - [c] Represent the CGSS at department meetings in the event that the Academic/Faculty Representative is unavailable;
 - [d] Advocate for equity on behalf of all members of the society;
 - [e] manages accessibility of online communications.
- (vii) **The CGSS Executive shall include the role of Coordinator Elect.** The roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator Elect are as follows:

- [a] Agree to fulfill the role of one of: Coordinator, or Academic/Faculty Representative, or Treasurer, or Communications Officer, or Equity Representative at a later designated date;
- [b] Act as the interim to one of the aforementioned positions. The agreement to the shadowing of said position will take place at the time of election.
- [c] Act as Co-Coordinator in collaboration with elected Coordinator(s). In the event of a vacancy in one of the aforementioned roles, the Coordinator Elect will fulfil the role until the time of the next election.

SECTION II. MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

Article 1. All students of Concordia University registered as graduate students in the MA in Media Studies or the PhD in Communication Studies Program shall be considered members of the CGSS.

Article 2. An individual member of the CGSS shall be in good standing if they are recognized as such by the Concordia University Department of Communication Studies.

Article 3. At least one of the roles of Treasurer, Equity Representative, or Coordinator Elect shall be held by a PhD student, and at least one shall be held by an MA student. If only one member runs for a position, they may hold it no matter their educational program.

SECTION III. GENERAL MEETINGS

Article 1. Authority to call General Assembly

- (A) A General Assembly of the membership may be called by the Executive at any time, provided the Executive gives members a minimum of five (5) days-notice of the meeting via a reasonable communication method of the Executive's choice.
- (B) A General Assembly of the membership may be called by any member, without action by the Executive, with the support of at least ten percent (10%) of the general membership of the CGSS.
 - (i) In order for a non-Executive member to call a general meeting, the member shall provide notice to the society's membership that a general meeting is called, accompanied by the signatures of at least ten percent (10%) of the society membership supporting the call.
 - [a] It shall be permissible to provide such notice via digital communication.
 - [b] Electronic documents providing genuine digital images of physical signatures, as well as genuine cryptographic digital signatures, shall constitute valid substitutes for signed physical documents.
 - [c] Notice must be provided to the membership of the society at least five (5) days before the meeting is to take place.

(C) Chairperson and Secretary

- (iii) All General Assemblies shall be mediated by a Chairperson, and documented by a secretary (i.e., take notes and ensure they are uploaded to the CGSS Google Drive).
- (iv) For non-electoral General Assemblies, members of the current CGSS executive shall fulfil the roles of Chairperson and Secretary.
- (v) For electoral meetings, the meeting shall be chaired by a member in good standing who is *not* a current member of the CGSS Executive Board.
 - [a] In extreme circumstances, when an external Chair is not available, a member of the CGSS Executive Board may be appointed to serve as a non-voting Chair with the support of a majority (greater than fifty percent, 50%) of the assembled membership.
- (vi) It is preferable, but not required, that the Secretary be external to the Executive Board. If an external Secretary is not available, a non-Executive member of the CGSS shall serve as Secretary, while maintaining voting privileges.
- (vii) A motion must be adopted, at the beginning of each General Assembly, to designate the Chairperson and Secretary.
- (viii) For General Assemblies called for the purpose of impeachment under Section V, a member of the CGSS who is neither one of the signatories of the petition to call the meeting (hereafter "Petitioners"), not a member of the Executive, shall be appointed as Chairperson by mutual agreement of the Executive officers and the Petitioners.
 - [a] If the Executive and Petitioners cannot reach an agreement to appoint a society member as Chairperson, a disinterested third party from outside the society may act as Chairperson, contingent upon the agreement of the Executive and Petitioners.

Article 2. Every reasonable effort must be made to inform all members of the CGSS of the General Assembly.

- (A) Regardless of whether the meeting is called by action of the Executive or by non-Executive members, notice must be given via a reasonable method of communication at least five (5) days prior to the time that the meeting is to be held.

Article 3. Quorum Requirement

- (A) No motion or resolution proposed at a General Assembly shall be binding on the society unless the quorum requirement has been met.
- (B) The quorum requirement shall be met, and the meeting held to have "quorum status," if the requisite number of members are present and accounted for at the start of the meeting, and quorum status has not since been invalidated.
 - (i) The arrival or departure of members during the meeting shall not automatically invalidate quorum status.

- (ii) Following the departure of any member during the meeting, any single member present may demand a quorum recount of the remaining members.
 - [a] Upon departing, a member may also demand that a recount be conducted immediately following their departure.
 - [b] If, following such a recount, the number of members present is found to meet the quorum requirement, the meeting shall proceed according to the agenda.
 - [c] If, following such a recount, the number of members present is found insufficient to meet the quorum requirement, the meeting is no longer considered to have quorum status.
 - [d] After the meeting loses quorum status, the Chair may choose to put the meeting into temporary recess, pending the return of members.
 - [e] If the Chair chooses not to put the meeting into recess, the meeting is immediately and automatically adjourned.
 - [f] The Chair may choose to force immediate adjournment at any time while the meeting is in recess.
- (C) At all General Assemblies, for the purposes of all society business, including the elections or impeachments of Executive officers, except as specifically provided in Sub-Article V.3(D), ten percent (10%) of the total society membership for each of the MA and the PhD cohorts shall constitute quorum (rounding up to the nearest real number).
- (D) The only circumstance requiring increased attendance to meet quorum is that of a student strike. In the event of a vote to strike, at least thirty percent (30%) of the general membership must be present for the proposed motion or resolution to be voted upon. No motion or resolution to enact or cease a student strike action or strike mandate shall be binding on the Executive or the general membership, unless the motion carries at a meeting with at least thirty percent (30%) of the society membership present and accounted for at the time that the motion is carried.
- (E) Unless otherwise stipulated, a motion is carried in the General Assembly if it receives more votes in favour than votes in opposition. To be sure, any votes on matters pertaining to budgetary decisions or revisions to the CGSS by-laws and constitution require a majority vote in favour from both the present PhD members and the present MA members. A simple majority among one cohort or the other, but not both, will not be considered sufficient to pass.
- (F) Subject to the guidelines and restrictions of the Constitution and General By-Laws, all duly-passed General Assembly resolutions are binding on the society.
- (G) Every reasonable effort must be made to hold General Assemblies at a location that is accessible for the full participation of society members. In addition to holding the meeting in an accessible location, all General Assemblies must be hybrid, as is noted in the **PREAMBLE** section of this document.

- (H) The proceedings of a General Assembly must be documented, and such documentation made available to the general membership of the society within ten (10) days after the meeting.

SECTION IV. ELECTIONS AND BY-ELECTIONS

Article 1. General Elections

- (A) A new CGSS Executive shall be elected annually (for a one-year tenure) by an election to be held by January 31.
 - (i) This election and meeting are to be called by members of the current Executive Board and this election shall be chaired by a non-Executive member of the CGSS.
 - (ii) Members of the current Executive Board may run again for any position on the Executive Board.
- (B) Candidates shall make their desire to run for the Executive positions known at the time of the general meeting. There is no specific process of nomination.
 - (i) If a candidate is not able to attend the meeting, they may designate another member in good standing to present their candidacy.
- (C) Candidates shall be elected from and by members in good standing of the CGSS.
- (D) If two candidates present themselves at the time of the election for a given position, the election shall be resolved by the following process:
 - (i) Each of the assembled members shall vote by secret ballot to elect one of the candidates.
 - (ii) Whichever candidate receives the greater number of votes shall be elected to the position.
 - (iii) Abstentions, spoiled ballots, or votes for people who have not been presented as candidates are not counted.
- (E) If more than two candidates present themselves at the time of election for a given position, the election shall be resolved by the following process:
 - (i) Each of the assembled members shall vote by secret ballot for one of the candidates.
 - (ii) The nominated candidate who receives the greatest number of votes shall be elected to the position.
 - (iii) Abstentions, spoiled ballots, or votes for people who have not been presented as candidates are not counted.
- (F) Tied Votes
 - (i) A tied vote shall be defined as a vote action in which one of the following two conditions holds: (1) in a two-candidate vote, both candidates received the same

- number of votes; OR (2) in a vote involving three or more candidates, the top three or more candidates received the same number of votes.
- (ii) In the event of a tied vote, the sitting Executive shall, by internal vote, appoint one of the tied candidates for the position.
- (iii) Any member of the sitting Executive who is also a top candidate in a tied vote shall recuse themselves from voting on their own appointment.

(G) In all elections by secret ballot, the chairperson shall be responsible for counting submitted ballots.

(H) Each member of the society may cast no more than one (1) ballot per vote action.

(I) If only one candidate presents themselves at the time of the election for a given position, the members of the CGSS may decide to acclaim said candidate, without a vote by secret ballot.

- (i) To be appointed by acclamation, a candidate must receive a vote share greater than fifty percent (50%) of the assembled membership at the meeting (not counting any non-voting member serving as Chair under Sub-Item III(C)(ili)[a] in order to be elected.

Article 2. The new Executive officers shall take office immediately following the adjournment of the meeting at which the election has taken place.

Article 3. Vacancies

(A) In the event of an unfilled Executive position, the CGSS shall call a by-election within two months of the vacancy opening.

(B) The Executive shall provide a minimum of five (5) days-notice to the society membership of the time and venue at which a by-election meeting is to take place.

(C) If quorum is not met for a duly-announced by-election meeting, the Executive shall be empowered to appoint a candidate to the position, as an interim representative.

(D) During the period in which an Executive position remains unfilled, the roles and responsibilities of that position will be shared among other elected members of the Executive Committee.

(E) By-elections are to be conducted by secret ballot in accordance with Article III.1.

Article 4. Following the annual General Assembly and election, members of the previous year's Executive Board shall meet with members of the newly-elected Executive Committee, subject to availability, to ensure year-to-year continuity.

SECTION V. IMPEACHMENTS

Article 1. The general membership of the CGSS, in a meeting called for the purpose of an impeachment, shall have the right to dismiss any member of the Executive if that representative's action or inaction is detrimental to the honour or interest of the society.

Article 2. Members of the Executive are to be impeached individually, not in groups. Voting will be done by secret ballot.

Article 3. A member of the Executive will abstain from voting on their impeachment. However, that individual has the right to speak to the assembled membership to defend themselves if they wish.

Article 4. A successful impeachment requires a total number of votes in favour greater than fifty percent (50%) of the assembled membership, not counting any non-voting member serving as Chair under Sub-Item III(C)(ii)[a].

Article 5. If impeached, a member of the Executive shall surrender their position immediately. The position shall be treated as a vacancy under Article IV.3.

SECTION VI. FINANCES

Article 1. Budget Proposal

- (A) The annual budget proposal is to be approved at a General Assembly. The General Assembly may be held at the same time as the yearly Executive Board elections (prior to January 31 each year). The budget should be presented to those in attendance before voting commences.
- (B) The approved budget proposal will provide the Executive members with a budgetary mandate.
- (C) No member of the Executive or member of the society shall have a right to incur any debt or liability on behalf of the CGSS, and the CGSS shall not be responsible for any debts incurred by Executive officers or members.