

Graduate Student Association UW

Council

Meeting Minutes

August 4, 2021

Primary Meeting

Date: August 4, 2021

Time: 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

Place: Virtual

Council Speaker: Tyler B. Hampton

Minutes Taker: Niveta Chugh



MEETING ATTENDENCE

Name	Position/Faculty	Attendance*
Tyler Hampton	Council Speaker	P
MK Stinson	AHS - Rec & Leisure Studies	P
Kalsha Diaguarachige De Silva	AHS - Kinesiology	P
Sue Sherifali	AHS - Public Health & Health Systems	P
Danielle LaBrash	Arts - Political Science	P
Elizabeth Scarlettte	Arts - MPS	A
Ethel Zlotnik	Arts - MDEI	A
I. S.	Arts - Peace & Conflict Studies	A
Jessica Gill	Arts - Sociology	P
Kennedy Westlake	Arts - Psychology	P
Jillian Adams	Arts - Accounting & Finance	P
Khusro Mir	Arts - Economics	P
Lara El Mekkawi (Po: Sonia Ayesha Zafar)	Arts - English Language & Literature	Po
Lisa Duggan	Arts - Religious Studies	P
Madeleine Pinard	Arts - Global Governance	A
Sam Schrim	Arts - Germanic & Slavic Studies	P
Sarah Galarneau	Arts - Fine Arts	P
Tasneem Alsayyed Ahmad	Arts - Philosophy	A
Teghan Barton	Arts - History	P
Akshat Atray	Eng - Management Sciences	A
Nastaran Mosavari	Eng - CEE	A
Jared Uramowski	Eng - MME	P
Mozhgan Sadeghianlemraski	Eng - ECE	P
Nargess Heydari Beni	Eng - SDE	P
Wali ur Rehman Zia	Eng - MBET	A
Anju George	Enviro - Planning	A
Yusof Ghiasi	Enviro - GEM	P
Tia Driver	Enviro - SEED	P
Misty Matthews-Roper	Enviro - SERS	P
Jyler Menard	Math - Computational Math	P
Mojtaba Valipour	Math - Computer Science	P
William Bell	Math - Applied Mathematics	A
Caleb Ryan	Science - Biology	A
Jesse St Jean	Science - Pharmacy	P
Juliette Teodoro	Science - Optometry and Vision	P
Michael Chapman	Science - Physics and Astronomy	P
Joshua Woodcock	Theo - Theological Studies	A
Naima Samuel	UW Senate	

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Onurcan Gokkaya	UW Senate	
Max Salman	UW Senate	
Nicholas Palaschuk	GSA Board	A
Elham Mohammadi	GSA Board	A
Samira Mehrabi	GSA Board	P
Yi Abby Wang	GSA Board	R
Ruby Aigbotsua	GSA Board	A
Amir Hosein Sadeghi Isfahani	GSA Board	P
Twesh Upadhyaya	GSA Board	A
David Benjamin Billedeau	GSA President	P
Cindy Yeung	GSA VP Administration	P
Zabeen Khamisa	GSA VP Communication	R
MJ Singh	Presenter	P

*Attendance

P – Present , Po – Proxy , R – Regrets , A – Absent (no regrets)

AGENDA

Time		Item	Length (min)	Action
4:00 PM	1	SPEAKER’S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	5	
4:05 PM	2	ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA	2	For Approval
4:07 PM	3	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	1	
4:08 PM	4	ATTENDANCE	1	
4:09 PM	5	APPROVAL OF MINUTES - July 7, 2021	1	For Approval
4:10 PM	6	Thank You’s for Attendance and Commitment	15	For Information
4:25 PM	7	VP Admin Reflection	10	For Information
4:35 PM	8	UPDATE FROM THE BOARD	10	For Information
4:45 PM	9	July KPI Report	10	For Information
4:55 PM	10	Organize UW Update	10	For Information
5:05 PM		Break	5	
5:10 PM	11	Presentation: Higher Ed Governance, MJ Singh	30	For Information
5:40 PM	12	Council Policy Amendments, CP-4	20	For Approval
6:00 PM		Break	5	
6:05 PM	13	Confidential Session - VPNC Recommendation re VP Admin Hiring	30	For Approval
6:35 PM		ADJOURNMENT		

MINUTES

1. Speaker's Welcome and Opening Remarks **04:05pm**

Hampton takes the chair and calls the meeting to order at 04:05pm.

2. Adoption of the Agenda **04:06pm**

Agenda adopted by unanimous consent.

3. Declaration of Interests **04:07pm**

No conflicts of interests were declared.

4. Attendance **04:07pm**

Chugh takes the attendance.

5. Approval of Minutes **04:09pm**

The July meeting minutes were not ready for approval.

6. Thank You for attendance and commitment **04:10pm**

The Council Speaker thanked the councillors for their contribution and recognised their attendance and commitment towards the GSA Council. This was to have a positive reflection of the councillor's role towards the GSA. The Council Speaker thanked all the Councillors who had a perfect attendance at the meetings. The Council Speaker would be sending out Thank You certificates to re-affirm the service of the Councillors in the GSA. The Council Speaker proposed that he wants the councillors to build up a closer community.

7. VP Admin Reflection **04:14pm**

Outgoing VP Admin Cindy reflected on her experiences and accomplishments with GSA-UW. These included:

- *UPass Refund Program implementation*
- *Graduate Student Initiative (GSI) funding*
- *COVID-19 impact survey*
- *WUSA + GSA Housing Survey*
- *Work alongside the GSA Wellness Coordinator, including online social events*
- *Speaking at the Student Mental Health Research Conference*
- *Advocacy for an ombudsperson*
- *Graduate student wellness round table*
- *Regular Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports with help of Data Coordinator*
- *Partnerships with Columbia Lake Village*
- *Activity in President's AntiRacism Taskforce (PART)*

8. UPDATE FROM THE BOARD

04:32pm

The Board Chair gave an update from the Board. Samira mentioned that the Board's time has been invested in reviewing applications to join the Board. The Board will have the elections soon and new directors will be joining by mid-August. The Board has been working on the budget. Samira mentioned that the Board received 10 applicants and it was difficult to choose for top 5 candidates. So, the Board will be reviewing the 10 applications again and then run the elections.

The Council Speaker mentioned that new people bring in new ideas in the GSA.

9. July KPI Report

04:36pm

Cindy Yeung gave an update on KPI Report. She mentioned that the month of August went into wrapping up the GRT refund program, hiring committees, partnership events and grad representation. She mentioned that her team attended 40 meetings and had a full representation on President's Anti-racism task force working groups. She mentioned that they got a chance to present at one of the meetings in terms of what graduate students with respect to professional development and mentorship. Other meetings ranged from meetings with Organize UW, being on the Dean of Environment Nominating Committee and meeting with WUSA and GSPA.

The ongoing events of GSA-UW include #PolicticsToday, Building Your Career (Remotely), BIPOC Graduate Community Collective, Candid Talks with Grads and International Student Hangouts. Other events like GSA-UW Logo Design Contest to design the new Logo for GSA-UW.

GSA-UW hired a new General Manager. GSA-UW opposed Poor Procedural Practices for allowing SGRC (Senate Graduate & Research Council) vote to require graduate students take additional unpaid training. VP(Comms) provided the graduate student perspective on the Director of Campus Wellness hiring committee. VP(Comms) had a meeting with Math to discuss the possible formation of a LGBTQ+ graduate student community on campus in STEM.

GSA hosted a flower kit pickup event with GSPA where 170 kits were given out to students. GSA facilitated their next candid talks on International Student Issues during Covid19.

10. Organize UW Update

04:40pm

MK Stinson gave an update on Organize UW. She mentioned that Organize UW organized a lot of outdoor events in Waterloo and Victoria Park. Organize UW has been planning for GSA movie night and free ice-cube event in the month of August. Organize UW has been doing a lot of with Equity Committee and have been working onto drafting GSA principles and action plan. Organize UW has been working on growing their online and offline communities.

Quick Updates from the Speaker

04:54pm

The Council Speaker mentioned that the UW President has offered to join a Council meeting in early fall. The format would be a mix of pre-submitted questions, and live Q&A.

The Council Speaker asked about the preference of the Council in terms of having the Council meeting. He gave a choice between the following: -

- *September Regular Council Meeting*
- *A Special Mid-September Council Meeting*

The Council Speaker mentioned that feedback from the Councillors on this will be carried to the regular meeting in September and the meeting can be pushed to October.

The Council Speaker said that the President has an expertise to discuss upsides and downsides of the policies across campus. There are a lot of issues which the Council wants the President to address.

The Councillor from Accounting and Finance raised a concern that during the regular meeting, the Councillors do not have enough time to discuss important issues.

The Councillor from Germanic and Slavic Studies raised a concern that Feridun Hamdullahpur took most of the time with a monologue. The Council Speaker replied that it is worth having the President to introduce himself. The pre-submitted questions would help to address most of the issues as the President would know what kind of questions to expect.

11. Presentation: Higher Ed Governance, MJ Singh

05:05pm

MJ Singh presented the Research Report on Higher Education Governance Models. The purpose of the report was to provide an alternative to Robert's Rules of Order for the GSA-UW Board of Directors and Council to determine a governance model which can better support engagement and meeting efficiency.

MJ mentioned that main issues surrounding the current governance model surrounds the efficiency at which the ideas can be brought forth by Council members while also ensuring that the voices are heard in an equitable manner. Also, the hierarchical nature of the governance can deter participation from Council members. So, an alternative structure which helps in representation and accessibility is preferred. The structure which can foster GSA-UW's values of "transparency", "inclusivity", "integrity" and "self-improvement" is preferred.

MJ presented the background of the research report. She mentioned that the Board of Directors is the governing body of the corporation of GSA-UW and oversees the operations of the corporation. So, if there is a division between the Council and the Board of Directors, then there is a hinderance in the democratic process. She mentioned that the report will explore popular criticism of Robert's Rules, possible solutions and their adaptability to discuss the best possible course of action that the GSA-UW should take in their future governance models to improve communication.

The key considerations to consider are the notable alternatives and weakness of the Robert's Rules.

There are two notable alternatives to Robert's Rules, Consensus Processes and Dynamic

Facilitation. The Consensus Processes aims to work towards a decision where all the members can agree on the outcome and where the outcome can effectively last. Consensus Processes can help the members feel a sense of collective accomplishment in making decisions. Everyone is engaged in the final decisions. On the other hand, Dynamic Facilitation creates an open environment which includes the diversity of all perspectives, ideas, and concerns in the group. Proposals are encouraged and recorded on a chart pad as possible solutions, but they do not determine the flow of conversation, nor do they become the focus of the decision-making process. In dynamic facilitation, the disagreements are re-framed as valuable additions to the group exploration and each disagreement is acknowledged or recorded in the group's charts. Both alternatives differ from each other, and they allow for better people's participation.

MJ listed the weaknesses of Robert's Rules. Robert's Rules are complicated and rigid. They discourage participation as they require a lot of work to understand and be comfortable with the rules. It will take a sufficient time for people without previous experiences in their daily lives to learn these rules. Robert's Rules can be easily weaponized when the complexity of the rules can become a tool for people whose primary purpose is to disrupt a meeting or to prevent a meeting from acting.

MJ presented the results of the Consensus Building Approach (CBA), and the results says that they are easier to implement than decisions made by the majority rule. So, adopting a consensus approach allows for all the benefits of an alternative to Robert's Rules as they are easy to understand and are flexible. CBA includes everyone in the decisions that are being made hence leaving relationships intact.

Other recommendations were creating Committees and Caucuses would favor engagement with members in GSA. These groups would provide more accessible and usable support to students in need. The University of Toronto has various committees like Environmental Justice and Sustainable Committee. The Equity and Advocacy Committee, and the Finance Committee. Notable caucuses include the Race and Ethnicity Caucus which is committed to social justice, community building and healing, the International Students' Caucus is the main student body that coordinates approximately 5000 international Graduate students' interests and concerns.

The Council Speaker asked if the research involved talking to anyone from UofT's committees and caucuses. MJ replied that she has not spoken to anyone, but UofT's governance structure stood out as the most unique when compared to Ontario's GSAs.

A Director asked for the positives of the Robert's Rule. MJ clarified that the Robert's Rule is predictable and if you have background with it, then it works great and in favor of the members. Robert's Rule keeps you on track if there are restrictive time constraints. A Director asked how the Caucuses and Committees would work in orchestrate with the Council, the Board, and the Executive Team. He asked if there was any plan to implement the recommended model. MJ replied by saying further research into other Universities who have gone through this imposition would be of great help. It would be a subset of the existing Executive team and it would be people who would be volunteering for those positions. This depends on what sorts of Caucus and Committees; the members want to highlight. This would require discussions around what GSA and student bodies need and want to highlight their voices. The Council Speaker clarified that there is no plan now for this to be executed. He mentioned that the Council is not following the Robert's Rule.

The Council Speaker asked the Board Chair if she sees this conversation/discussion come back to

the Council again or the Board needs to hold on it for some time. The Board Chair replied by saying that this conversation needs to be put out in front of the Board and have Q&A session with the directors. The directors need to get everything together and decide on the best strategy for it. The Board Chair suggested to make student bodies more familiar with the basics of all the strategies.

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy commented that the alternatives to the Robert's Rule seem to be beneficial considering the GSA-UW's governance structure.

12. Council Policy Amendments, CP-4

05:34pm

The Council Speaker presented the Council Terms and Attendance Policy. He mentioned that there are some outdated Council policies and CP-4 is the one that needs to be updated. CP-4 says that "if a Councillor misses a meeting without regrets, they can lose their seat in the Council". He said that he does not have any intention to enforce CP-4 in its current form. He mentioned that Council contributed to the re-writing of the By-Law referring to Council, which now further solidifies the councillors' roles in the GSA.

Opening discussion, the Speaker asked whether an attendance policy is good to have, and how lenient should it be. He mentioned that there should be a standard set with respect to participation. He pointed that if someone is too busy to regularly attend Council meetings, then it is better to have someone who would actively serve on GSA. A report was distributed a week prior to this meeting outlining the proposed policy changes.

The old policy is as follows-

2. Terms: Except in extenuating circumstances, a councillor's term will be concluded from the department's (or program's) seat will become under the following conditions:
 - (a) The councillor is no longer an active graduate student in the department.
 - (b) The councillor assumes the office of Director, Speaker, President, or Vice-president.
 - (c) The councillor did not attend, and did not send regrets for, regular or special meetings of Council.
 - (d) The councillor did not attend, and did not appoint a proxy for, two of the last four regular or special meetings of Council.
 - (e) The councillor did not attend three of the last four regular or special meetings of Council.

The old policy said that if the Councillor did not attend and did not send regrets for, they can lose their seat. The councillor can lose their seat if the councillor did not attend, and did not appoint a proxy for, two of the last four regular or special meetings of the Council, they can lose their seat. He mentioned that the Council has not done a great work at training on how to appoint a proxy.

The Council Speaker mentioned that the points (c), (d) and (e) has been moved to new section and made the new policy more elaborative allowing for extenuating circumstances.

The new policy is as follows-

3. Attendance: Except in extenuating circumstances, a councillor may be removed from their seat if they have an unacceptable attendance record.

(a) An unacceptable attendance record is defined as:

- (i) The councillor did not attend, and did not send regrets for, a two consecutive regular or special meetings of Council.
- (ii) The councillor did not attend, and did not appoint a proxy for, two of the last four regular meetings of the Council.
- (iii) The councillor did not attend one-third of all regular meetings of Council (per one year period beginning with the councillor's appointment or election).

(b) Prior to being removed from their seat, the councillor must have been contacted by the Speaker and notified of the following:

- (i) Their attendance records
- (ii) The possibility of losing their seat should they have an unacceptable attendance record.
- (iii) That improving their record can prevent them from losing their seat.

(c) Terms: Except in extenuating circumstances, a councillor's team will be concluded, and the department's (program's) seat will become vacant under the following conditions:

- a) The councillor is no longer an active graduate student in the department (or program).
- b) The councillor assumes the office of Director, Speaker, President, or Vice-President.
- c) The councillor has repeatedly and/or egregiously violated the Council Code of Conduct.

The fourth point is housekeeping that says that CP-4 numbering should be updated to reflect additions approved in prior motions. Under original 3b, replace "CP-5.1" with "this policy".

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy asked for clarification on the mechanics of the 3a(iii), attendance condition which says not attending 1/3rd of the Council meetings and asked if that meant 1/3rd of the meetings for which the graduate students served as a councillor. The Council Speaker clarified if those 12 Council meetings are held in a year and if someone is unable to attend 4 meetings, then they can lose their seat and will be given a notice. He said one cannot be certain on 4 council meetings as extra council meetings can be scheduled. The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy raised a concern that there was overlap between if it was only at the end of one year and the councillor is given a notice, or it was halfway through the term where 6 meetings have been held and councillor missed 2 of them. The Council Speaker clarified that if the councillors are missing 2 meetings out of 6 meetings, a notice will be sent ahead of time.

The Councillor from RLS had doubts regarding wording for 3a(ii) as the special meetings was strike off in this section. Does that mean that the councillors need to send regrets for the special meetings too and how does the two special/regular meetings work? Do special meetings need to appoint proxy? The Council Speaker replied that 3a(i) clarified that if the special meeting has been organized and if the councillors say that they cannot attend the meeting and send regrets, it solves the purpose. The special meetings that are strike off in 3a(ii) essentially allows special meetings to allow an exemption and if you say that you cannot attend them, it does not account for

2 of the last 4 meetings and it is not counting for 1/3rd of regular meetings. He clarified that if you missed a regular meeting and a special meeting, then this could lead to harsh consequences.

The Councillor from CEE asked what the difference between 3a(i) was and 3a(ii). The Council Speaker clarified that if the councillor did not attend two regular meetings and sent the regrets but did not appoint the proxy, then according to 3a(ii), can lead to harsh consequences. He asked if getting a proxy for the meeting a councillor cannot attend would be taxing for 3a(i) and 3b(ii). The Councillor from CEE mentioned that for 3a(i), it is better to remove the special meetings.

The Councillor from Computer Science asked what the idea behind regret is and why is it being considered. The Council Speaker mentioned that the Board has similar policies about sending regrets for meetings and the Board needs quorum to operate. The Board needs 7 people to operate. If people in week in advance tell that they cannot attend the meeting due to poor internet etc., then the regret allows to cancel the meeting or delay the decisions if majority of the people cannot attend the meeting. The benefit of regrets is being fair to your peers and the meeting can be re-scheduled further in advance. If some one is sending regrets a week in advance, it works great. Regrets are critical for the Board.

The Councillor from Physics and Astronomy pointed that 3a(i) works great to in line with 3b. The Council Speaker said that 3b plays an important role and says if the councillors cannot attend the meetings, it is best if they handover the role to some one else. The department's seat should be filled by someone who can serve the department actively.

The Council Speaker proposed two ways to proceed. He suggested to have a vote on approving some of the policy in first reading and the policy will come back to Council for second reading. Alternatively, this can be delayed and have breakout rooms on this topic. He asked if the Council wants to have a first reading the same day to proceed with the conversation. The process will be consensus. The councillors agreed with the first reading.

The Councillor from CEE suggested that in 3a(i), it would be better to get rid of the word “special” meetings and 3a(ii) should say more than 2 regular consecutive meetings.

The Council Speaker said he will move the motion with amendments by the councillors.

The Councillor from SEED asked for clarification if the amendment was for 3.i. or 2.i. The Council Speaker clarified that the amendments were for 3.a.i.

The first motion was raised with amendments by Nastaran to 3.a.i- 3.a. ii.

“BIRT CP-4 items 2.c. through 2.e. be moved to a new section 3.” Attendance” and are amended on slide 34 below to increase leniency for Councillor absences.” (Hampton/Sadeghi) (20-0-0)

The second motion was raised.

“BIRT CP-4 item 3.b. be created as shown on slide 35 to allow for transparency of the attendance policy.” (Hampton/Stinson) (19-0-0)

The third motion was raised.

“BIRT CP-4 item 2.c. be created as shown on slide 36 to reinforce the Council Code of Conduct.” (Hampton/Valipour) (20-0-0)

The fourth motion was raised.

“BIRT that housekeeping changes are made to CP-4 according to slide 37, including the removal of item 1.d. and the appendix to CP-4.” (Hampton/Teodoro) (20-0-1)

The Councillor from CEE asked if the councillor who missed 2 meetings and assigned a proxy could just receive a warning. The Council Speaker replied by saying that can be implemented.

13. Confidential Session- VPNC Recommendation Re-VP Admin Hiring

06:18pm

Motions carried in confidential session:

“BIRT the GSA-UW Council supports the appointment of Glaucia Melo to the position of Vice President Administration, with a term starting in August 2021.”

14. Adjournment

07:00pm