

Councillor's Quick Guide to the GSA

Graduate Student Association - University of Waterloo

Version 1.0

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We, the Graduate Student Association - University of Waterloo, acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

Councillor's Quick Guide to the GSA

About the GSA

The Graduate Student Association – University of Waterloo (GSA-UW) was incorporated as a non-profit corporation in 1972. The GSA's mission is to **serve the graduate students of the University of Waterloo (UW) with dedication and commitment to enhance the quality of their academic and social experience and promote their well-being. We envision a University where the interests of graduate students are protected, and their voices are heard; where graduate students are able to realize themselves optimally free from social, financial, academic, environmental, and physiological barriers.** The GSA values **transparency, inclusivity, integrity, and self-improvement.** We promote and represent graduate student interests to the university administration and all levels of government and provide support and events to members.

Councillors must remember that they must conduct themselves according to the GSA's mission, values, and main objectives while holding their positions. A Councillor will effectively ensure that they maintain their duties and represent both their department's constituents and the GSA as a whole, by continuously operating with the above values at the forefront of their work.

Purpose of Council

Governance at the GSA is structured in a precise manner to best serve its membership. The membership of the GSA includes all of the 5300+ graduate students registered at the UW. Members have the right to attend and vote during the Annual General Meeting, at General Meetings, and at meetings concerning Referendums. Because of the large membership, the GSA's governance is split into various parts that oversee different aspects of operations, advocacy, and representation. As a member of Council, you help inform the Ends and official positions of the GSA relating to the membership's academic, social, and political representation. Council has created the following political positions that help guide its activities:

- Ensuring ethical academic, employment, and social policies for UW Graduate Students
- Encouraging UW and the wider Region of Waterloo community to be leaders in sustainability
- Mitigating barriers to pursuing graduate education in Ontario
- Supporting student mental wellness

To this end, Councillors should look to this list as a guideline for how to complete their various roles and responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities

As a member of Council, you have the honour and privilege of better serving the membership. This typically means that you would be fulfilling a role that either represents a specific department or fulfills either an operations or administrative-related role. Below is a list of each role and their corresponding responsibilities:

The Council Speaker

The Council Speaker acts as the chair for all Council meetings and assures the integrity of the Council process. The duties of the Speaker include the following:

- Chairing Council meetings
- Annually proposing a yearly schedule of regular Council meetings to Council
- Supporting Council to fulfill its obligation to the membership (i.e. filling vacant positions, establishing policies, etc.)
- Keeping the Board apprised of any and all of the Council's matters of concern and present the Board a monthly report
- Submitting the annual Council governance budget request to the GSA Board for consideration
- Train the Deputy Speaker in the correct issues, policies, and processes of Council to chair meetings should the situation arise

The Deputy Speaker

The Deputy Speaker assists the Council Speaker in administering the affairs of Council. The Deputy Speaker's responsibility is to support the Speaker in the efficient and effective operation of Council both during and outside of Council meetings.

Councillors

Councillors have a vital role on Council. As each Councillor represents a department at UW, the Councillor must act on behalf of their constituents, that being members who are registered in that department. Councillor duties include the following:

- Attend all GSA Council meetings (usually held monthly or bimonthly)
- Be prepared for Council meetings (e.g. reading the meeting package)
- Be in regular communication with your department administration and constituents
- Bring forward your constituent's concerns to Council and represent their interests
- Uphold the official positions of the GSA
- Be aware of the Code of Conduct and Council Policies of the GSA
- Review minutes of the Board to stay abreast of decisions and discussions affecting the GSA
- Foster a community that connects your department with the GSA
- Point constituents to GSA services upon their inquiry

Other Positions

By virtue of their position, the President, Vice-President, Directors, and Senators are also members of Council. See the more-detailed Councillor handbook (to be finalized Fall 2020) for additional information on these positions.