

GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by: GSC on March 31, 2021

Approved by: CASCA Board on June 14, 2021

This governance document provides guidelines regarding the processes, structures, and operations associated with the Graduate Student Committee (GSC) of CASCA.

HISTORY

The Graduate Student Committee, hereafter “GSC”, was formed in 1998 with a mandate to reflect the views of, and address issues important to, astronomy graduate students across Canada. During the early 2000s the GSC conducted a number of surveys of CASCA’s graduate student membership to examine diversity issues and in the 2010s examined student welfare issues. Since its inception, the GSC has also played a central role in organizing the Graduate Student’s Workshop at the CASCA Annual General Meeting.

PURPOSE OF THE GSC

- I. To serve the interests of all graduate student members of CASCA.
- II. To articulate the views and concerns of the graduate student members of CASCA to the Board of Directors.
- III. To identify challenges and issues of concern for the graduate student members of CASCA and advocate for solutions.
- IV. To help understand challenges facing the graduate student population in Canadian astronomy, which may include, but are not limited to, issues of welfare, mental health, inclusion or exclusion.
- V. To maintain and grow a national community of graduate student members of CASCA;
- VI. To consider matters concerning graduate student members of CASCA referred to the Committee, and to make recommendations to the appropriate bodies.
- VII. To encourage awareness of CASCA among the graduate student population in Canada.

DUTIES OF THE GSC

- I. To communicate all relevant information regarding the views and concerns of graduate students to the Board of Directors.
- II. To communicate decisions and statements pertaining to the position of the graduate student body on issues related to graduate students and the future of astronomy and astronomy education in Canada.
- III. To develop and implement campaigns and programs for the betterment of the graduate student members of CASCA.
- IV. To identify issues affecting the graduate student members of CASCA, and recommend strategies.
- V. To consult with the local organizing committee on the planning of the Graduate Student Workshop at the Annual General Meeting of CASCA.
- VI. Organize “Best Student Oral Presentation” and “Best Student Poster Presentation” awards at the Annual General Meeting of CASCA.

- VII. To compile member input on issues related to graduate students in Canada, and provide a formal report to the Board of Directors and the membership at large regarding this input.
- VIII. To collaborate and coordinate with the appropriate CASCA Committees on issues that align with the committees' respective mandates.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GSC

- I. The GSC shall consist of:
 - A. The Chair -- officer (voting)
 - B. The Vice-Chair -- officer (voting)
 - C. Representative of the Equity and Inclusivity committee (non-voting)
 - D. Representative of the Education and Public Outreach committee (non-voting)
 - E. The Grad Rep(s) for each institution in Canada which has a graduate program in astrophysics (or related field), and chooses to participate (voting).
- II. Each institution shall be entitled to elect one (1) Grad Rep or two (2) Co-Reps, from among their graduate students. Each institution has one vote at meetings of the GSC. Unless specified, the term "Grad Rep" in these bylaws includes Co-Reps.
- III. Grad Reps shall have the power to appoint a proxy from their institution to act in their stead at a meeting of the GSC. The proxy must be a member of the Society, and the proxy shall have full voting privileges for the meeting. The Chair or Vice Chair may require the proxy to present a written authorization from the Grad Rep for the meeting they attend.
- IV. Additional graduate student members of CASCA may be appointed as members at large at the discretion of the GSC.
- V. Officers may not serve as a Grad Rep. If a Grad Rep is elected or appointed as an officer, they shall be deemed to have resigned as a Grad Rep.
- VI. No institution may have more than three individuals (voting or non-voting) on the committee at any one time.
- VII. All individuals serving on the Committee must be CASCA graduate student members in good standing with the Society for the extent of their term.
- VIII. Only members who have previously served on the GSC can be considered for the position of the Chair.

MEMBERS' RIGHTS, DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

- I. Members of the GSC sit in a capacity to represent the interests of members at large. As a best practice, committee members are expected to broadly consult the graduate student members of their institutions.
- II. All committee members including non-voting members have the right to voice in meetings.
- III. All voting committee members have the right to move, second and vote on motions.
- IV. All graduate student members of CASCA have the right to submit agenda items.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Chair

The Chair of a committee shall:

- I. Act as the primary spokesperson of the GSC.
- II. Be responsible for coordinating campaigns advocating for graduate students on a national level and within CASCA.
- III. Act as the primary liaison with CASCA's board of directors (i.e. president), CASCA's committees, and the graduate student membership at large.
- IV. Call meetings, set agendas and issue notice of meetings at least two days in advance of the meeting.
- V. Chair meetings.
- VI. Ensure there are regular reports on Committee activities to the CASCA Board of Directors.
- VII. Report all committee unseatings to the next GSC meeting.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Vice Chair

The Vice Chair Shall:

1. Assume the role of Chair in their absence
2. Record and maintain a record of the GSC's meeting minutes.
3. Be responsible for other duties as agreed upon and assigned by the GSC

Duties and Responsibilities of the GSC Reps on other CASCA committees

1. The terms of reference of the positions are outlined under the respective committees terms of reference. The Graduate Reps on those committees should abide by their committees' guidelines whilst upholding the graduate student interest.

Duties and Responsibilities of Graduate Representatives

Grad Reps shall:

1. Attend the regular committee meetings (i.e. monthly)
2. Represent the best interest of fellow grad students at the GSC
3. Report back to members at home institution on discussions and decisions made by the GSC
4. Where possible, sit on one of the GSC's working groups.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- I. Committee officers and Graduate representatives on other CASCA committees (standing and ad-hoc) shall be appointed by ordinary resolution of the GSC and/or through the annual intake process following the ELECTIONS procedures outlined below.
- II. Grad Reps are not appointed by ordinary resolution of the GSC. They are elected by their respective institutions.

- III. Grad Reps are appointed for a term of up to one year. However, they are free to remain in their position if no other member of their department expresses interest.
- IV. Working group members' terms expire at the end of the Council term.
- V. Committee members at large (CML) seats will be assigned, with consent, to any graduate student member of CASCA satisfying the CML criteria who attends two (2) consecutive committee meetings. CML Committee Seat members have all voting and voice privileges granted to ordinary members of the committee.

ELECTIONS

Electoral Officer

The Electoral Officer shall:

- I. Be appointed by the GSC;
- II. Be appointed in March, for a term that ends in the following September;
- III. Not be a nominee for any elected officer positions nor be a current voting officer of the GSC;
- IV. Be responsible for the operation of all elections;
- V. Notify all candidates of the Schedule of Elections; and
- VI. Work with the Grad Reps in case an appeal of the election results was submitted.

Elections of officers and Representatives on CASCA Committees

Procedure for Elections of officers and representatives on CASCA committees:

- I. Elections shall be scheduled every year at the CASCA AGM.
- II. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot using the plurality system.

Notice of Elections:

- I. At least seven (7) days' notice of an election shall be given to graduate student members, specifying the schedule of elections.
- II. At minimum, notice shall consist of:
 - A. An email sent to every eligible member; and
 - B. Notice to all Grad Reps.

Election Nomination Period

- I. Nominations shall open at least days prior to an election and be open until the business meeting during the Graduate Student Workshop
- II. In the event that no nomination is received for an Officer position, the following elections procedures will be followed:
 - A. The electoral officer will issue a call for candidates for any Officer positions for which there is no nominee. Call for candidates will be issued via email to all graduate members CASCA.
 - B. Candidates may submit a written statement of candidacy to the electoral officer at least one day prior to the next GSC meeting.
 - C. If a position is contested, all GSC members present at the meeting will vote by secret ballot to decide the winner.
 - D. If the position is not contested, all GSC members present will vote by secret ballot to acclaim the candidate.

Election Nominations:

- I. Nominees must be members of CASCA in good standing.

- II. Nominations must be declared to the Electoral Officer no later than the close of nominations.

Voting and Ballots:

- I. Election ballots shall contain the name of the nominees, the positions that they are nominated for.
- II. Voting by proxy is not permitted.
- III. Candidates may select a scrutineer to attend the counting of ballots from a list of voters - i.e. attendees present at the voting.
- IV. Preliminary results shall be circulated to the membership within three (3) business days of the close of polling. Official results shall be posted upon the disposition of any appeals.
- V. Appeals of the election results must be submitted to the electoral officer within two (2) business days of the close of polling.

Vacancies of Officer and Representatives on CASCA Committees

Upon a vacancy occurring for an Officer position or a representative on CASCA committees position outside of normally scheduled elections, the GSC shall consider whether to exercise its powers to appoint a replacement in two steps.

- I. After being advised of the vacancy, the GSC will discuss and determine whether it wishes to fill the vacancy at the following meeting. Such discussions and determination shall have no regard to any potential individual candidates, but simply whether it is advisable to appoint a replacement given the timing of the vacancy and any other contextual factors. Such discussions shall not normally take place at General Meetings as the appointment of replacements is a specific power of the GSC.
- II. If the GSC determines it wishes to fill the vacancy, a general membership wide call-out for interested and eligible parties will normally occur, particularly through the CASCA mailing list and other advertising means. Candidates will be expected to attend the next GSC meeting to make their case and answer any questions from GSC members. Candidates who wish to circulate material for the GSC's consideration prior to the meeting shall provide such material in electronic form by a specified date.

Grad Council shall subsequently make its decision by secret ballot so that one candidate attains a majority. If more than two candidates contest the position and no candidate has a majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes shall be dropped and another secret ballot conducted. This process shall continue until one candidate attains a majority. The GSC shall subsequently ratify the results and accordingly appoint the successful candidate to the vacancy. Prior to the ratification and appointment motion, the GSC retains complete discretion to not appoint anyone to the vacancy. Similar discretion also extends if no candidates come forward for consideration as the GSC may extend the time for nominations or leave the position vacant.

Institutional representatives

As part of the annual appointment process or upon a vacancy becoming apparent for the remainder of the GSC's term, the GSC shall advise the department and former Grad Rep(s) of the need to appoint a new representative.

It is up to graduate student members within each department to decide who will represent the department in the GSC capacity. The method of selection is also up to these members, and the

GSC will be informed of the identity of these individuals upon their selection. At a minimum all graduate student members in the department will be notified by email of the opportunity to sit on the GSC, and the means to discover how they can be nominated for the position.

In the event that the department encounters difficulties in making these selections, the GSC will assist with the selection process using means appropriate for the particular department.

TERM OF OFFICE

- I. Members of the GSC shall maintain their status as graduate students for the length of their term.
- II. For all members of the GSC, the term of office shall be for one (1) year starting from the date of appointment and ending at the following CASCA AGM.
- III. All positions on the GSC may be renewed for up to one (1) term.
- IV. Members can serve on the GSC for longer than two (2) years by holding different positions.
- V. No individual, regardless of roles, may spend longer than four (4) consecutive years on the GSC.
- VI. Members may resign at any time by providing written notice to the GSC. Resignations will be in effect two weeks after notice has been received.

UNSEATING OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- I. A committee member other than an ex-officio member who misses two (2) consecutive meetings without providing regrets, or assigning a proxy shall be automatically removed from the Committee. Where there are two (2) Co-Reps, at least one (1) Co-Rep must attend the meetings of the GSC. Notice of members automatically unseated will be given at the next meeting of GSC.
- II. In cases of a breach or violation of CASCA's Ethics Statement, a two third majority of all voting members may remove someone from the committee. Any individual subject to a removal vote shall be given at least a week's notice by the Chair of any upcoming meeting that will include the vote.

MEETINGS

- I. The GSC shall meet once per month.
- II. Meetings shall be conducted following Robert's Rules of Order.
- III. Votes on any items must be done during a meeting of the GSC.
- IV. Committee meetings may be called by the Chair of the Committee, the Vice Chair in the absence of the Chair, or any two voting members of the Committee.
- V. Notice of committee meetings must be sent issued at least one day in advance. Notice shall include the time, agenda and place of the meeting. Notice shall be circulated to committee members.
- VI. Any graduate student member of the Society may attend any open Committee meeting with voice but without vote.

- VII. No committee member may be excluded from any meeting of the Committee and Committee members shall have both voice and vote at all meetings of their Committee. However, members may be ejected from meetings and/or removed from the committee for abusive behaviour.
- VIII. The GSC shall keep detailed minutes of Committee meetings. Approved Committee minutes shall be posted online within a reasonable time.
- IX. Regrets for attending a committee meeting shall consist of written notification to the committee chair in advance of the meeting.
- X. Committee members who give regrets to the committee Chair in advance of the meeting are excluded from the calculation of quorum.

QUORUM

- I. Quorum for GSC meetings shall be at least fifty percent (50%) of GSC members, excluding vacancies and regrets.
- II. No meeting of the GSC is quorate with fewer than five (5) voting members including the officers of the committee, and representing five (5) institutions.
- III. If no quorum is observed, agenda items may be moved to the next meeting.

COMMUNICATION

- I. The GSC Chair is responsible for all communication (to the membership at large and the CASCA Board of Directors) on behalf of the GSC but may delegate through any parties.
- II. Internal communication of the GSC occurs over Slack.
- III. The CASCA mailing lists must be used by the committee to solicit information to the membership at large.
- IV. The GSC's views can be communicated via biannual written reports, or on more sensitive issues may be communicated directly to the CASCA President who is the defacto Board representative for the GSC.
- V. All minutes should be made available on the CASCA website.
- VI. All minutes shall be approved at the AGM.
- VII. Sensitive topics may be considered "in camera" and are not subject to being reported.
- VIII. If any action/comments made by the chair are deemed inappropriate by ANY member of the GSC, they are encouraged to discuss this with the Vice-Chair. If the Vice-Chair is complicit in this behavior, the member is suggested to discuss the matter with the EDI rep. In the unfortunate circumstance that the EDI representative is also complicit, the individual is suggested to discuss the matter with either the next senior member of the GSC or with the CASCA board directly.
- IX.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the GSC may only be modified under an ordinary resolution of a general meeting during the GSC business meeting at the Graduate Student Workshop. A majority of votes cast are required for a motion to be accepted, implemented, and with the approval of the CASCA board.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest arises when a person exercises an official power or performs an official duty or function and at the same time, knows that in the performance of this duty or function or in the exercise of power there is the opportunity to further a private interest. Further, there is an apparent conflict of interest when there is a reasonable perception that the person's ability to exercise an official power or perform an official duty or function will be or was affected by a private interest.

The general rule is to declare all real, potential, and apparent conflicts of interest, and to avoid them as much as possible. Where a conflict of interest arises, members shall make full disclosure of the conflict and shall seek to resolve it in the best interest of the GSC and CASCA. If someone is in doubt about whether they or someone else is or may be in conflict of interest, it should be discussed with the Committee Chair. Disclosure and discussion are the most important methods to assess and resolve conflicts of interest, particularly when uncertainty exists. Standards will vary based on the nature of the conflict, but a very high standard shall apply to conflict of interest involving monetary benefits.

Members should withdraw from committee deliberations and should abstain from voting on any motion pertaining to the approval of a matter in which they have a conflict of interest, be it direct or indirect. However, in general voting on matters which will have an effect on a broad group by a member of that group is not a conflict of interest.