

## **Electrical and Computer Engineering Graduate Student's Association**

### **Constitution and Operational Guidelines**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Graduate Student's Association (ECE-GSA) chapter is to operate as a complementary organization of the GSA in support of graduate students from the ECE department, despite its operational independence from both the GSA and the ECE department.

#### **Mission**

The primary mission of this student-run organization is to represent the ECE graduate student body and make the ECE department (and possibly the University of Manitoba) a better place.

#### **Activities and Scope**

Activities and scope of the ECE-GSA focus on the graduate student community (mainly ECE and possibly outside the department). Elected members of the ECE-GSA will represent the department as part of the GSA council, as student representatives at the departmental level and also as advocates for the students within the ECE department. In addition, the ECE-GSA will obtain its own operating funding through fundraising, sponsorship, advertising contracts as well as grants from the department and the GSA to host and sponsor events for and on behalf of the ECE graduate students.

#### **Membership/Leaders**

Any ECE graduate student is entitled to become a part of the ECE-GSA. There are several roles and procedures for those that wish to lead the organization.

#### **President**

- The president is the lead role for the organization and when needed, will make final, well-informed decisions on behalf of the organization in consultation with the other executive members or concerned parties within the organization
- Shall determine what will constitute operating funds in consultation with the other executive members
- May sign documents and contracts (e.g. room rental, etc.) on behalf of the ECE-GSA in consultation with the other executive members
- Will be the primary contact and administrator of the ECE-GSA portal and email account
- The president will attend GSA council meetings as the ECE graduate student councillor

- Can sit on one or more GSA sub-committee (e.g. awards, idrsc, finance, bylaws, campaigns, etc.)
- Sits on all the ECE-GSA subcommittees (e.g. event planning committee)
- Can approve the addition of a new role or subcommittee to the organization in consultation with the vice president after discussing the role at an executive meeting. The approval of both lead executives is required to pass such a motion
- Shares signing authority on all financial transactions with at least one other member of the executive or if no other members are willing, then a representative from the department must be used as a co-signee if they agree (e.g. the graduate student advisor)
- Responsible for filling out departmental grant forms twice per calendar year (April and November), per the GSA requirements, when grants from the GSA constitute the budget. Note that to qualify for the maximum amount, the ECE-GSA MUST have a representative on the GSA council that attends  $\frac{2}{3}$  or more of all meetings AND the ECE-GSA must have student representation on a minimum of one of the sub-committees where the individual attends  $\frac{2}{3}$  or more of all meetings
- Acts as an advocate on behalf of ECE graduate students addressing or forwarding concerns through the proper channels (at departmental or GSA committees/council to raise concerns)
- Shall explicitly declare that they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the Code of Conduct at the end of this document

### **Vice President**

- Consults with the president and is involved with all major decisions made on behalf of the ECE-GSA
- Can approve the addition of a new role or subcommittee to the organization in consultation with the president after discussing the role at an executive meeting. The approval of both lead executives is required to pass such a motion
- May sign documents and contracts (e.g. room rental) on behalf of the ECE-GSA after consultation with the president
- When the president is unable to fulfill roles as a committee member or councillor, the VP takes on that responsibility or if unable may delegate the role to another willing executive or elected student in the ECE department
- The vice president may attend GSA council meetings as the ECE graduate student co-councillor. Another elected graduate student from the department can be appointed

as the GSA co-councillor; the president albeit remains the main councillor

- The VP sits on the ECE-department committee as the graduate student representative
- May be called on to act as a proxy in place of the president for meetings
- Chairs the ECE-GSA event planning committee in the absence of an event planning committee chair
- When there is no individual to take on responsibilities of the treasurer, the VP will act as the ECE-GSA treasurer and have partial signing authority, shared with the president on all financial transactions of the ECE-GSA (i.e. a minimum of two signatures required for all transactions)
- Acts as an advocate on behalf of ECE graduate students addressing or forwarding concerns through the proper channels (at departmental or GSA committee/council meetings to raise concerns or etc.)
- For the case when there is no event planning committee chair, the VP MUST sit on one or more GSA sub-committees (awards, idrsc, campaigns, elections, finance, bylaws, etc.).
- The VP will record meeting minutes and keep a confidential record of the proceedings for all ECE-GSA executive meetings
- Shall explicitly declare that they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the Code of Conduct at the end of this document

#### **Treasurer (optional)**

- Will have signing authority, shared with the president for all ECE-GSA financial transactions
- Maintain records of the budget and all ECE-GSA expenditures for hosting or sponsoring events. Also the treasurer is responsible for keeping and organizing the receipts for ECE-GSA sponsored/hosted events in order to prepare financial reports
- Track bank account balance and prepare the financial report that may need to be submitted to funding agencies (e.g. for the GSA departmental grant form, the report should be submitted to the GSA in April of each calendar year)
- Can sit on one or more GSA committees (awards, idrsc, campaigns, elections, finance, bylaws, etc.)
- Can become familiar with rules and any safety regulations for a particular type of event (e.g. use of fire extinguisher, UMSAFE training to serve alcohol, etc.)

- The treasurer will assist in obtaining sponsorship/funding for events hosted/put-on by the ECE-GSA
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#### **Events Chairman (optional)**

- Will chair the event planning committee meeting and record meeting minutes
- Coordinates and hosts meetings for the event planning committee when organizing events
- Time permitting and depending on available budget, a reasonable minimum of two events hosted per academic term will be considered. More are welcome if finances and time allow, however a minimum amount ensures presence among ECE graduate students so they become familiar with the executive and will understand to contact them with student related concerns
- Interact with the President, VP and Treasurer to discuss budget for each term and estimated expenditures for proposed events
- Will ensure that all receipts are provided to the Treasurer to keep track of expenditures and balance the budget
- Maintenance of the organization's web page through the co-curricular records group. This includes advertising for upcoming events, pictures of past events, links to sponsors, pictures/email for existing/past ECE-GSA members if students need to contact the executive. Ensures proper consent for use of pictures at events concerning students in attendance (e.g. in event advertisement, mention if pictures will be captured and possibly published on the web site). All posted material must be screened to ensure it is suitable for public consumption (e.g. no explicit language or inappropriate pictures)
- Must become familiar with rules and any safety regulations for a particular type of event (e.g. use of fire extinguisher, UMSAFE training to serve alcohol, etc.)
- Must become familiar with rules for hosting events on campus relating to catering services and food handling
- The event planning coordinator MUST sit on one of the following GSA sub-committees, the events or campaigns committee (this is assuming available space for the professional designate at the sign-up period which is discussed at GSA council meetings usually in May and September)
- Carefully keep track of the attendance of Event Planning Committee Members at the

meetings and activities of all volunteers helping to host events. Service hours of all the volunteers and Event Planning Committee Members must be approved by the president

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#### **Event Planning Committee Members (optional and can have a group)**

- Responsible for attending event planning meetings, helping to plan and host events for ECE graduate students on behalf of the ECE-GSA
- Generate ideas for events and share/propose them at event planning committee meetings
- Become familiar with rules and safety regulations for a particular type of event (e.g. use of fire extinguisher, UMSAFE training to serve alcohol, etc.)
- Interact with President and Event Planning Committee Chair in order to learn all aspects of ECE-GSA. Event Planning Committee Members will be qualified to run for an ECE-GSA executive position in a general election three months after their membership
- Their duties are assigned by either the President or Event Planning Committee Chair (i.e. Events Chairman)
- Can sit on one or more GSA committees (awards, idrsc, campaigns, elections, finance, bylaws, etc.)
- Shall explicitly declare that they have read, understood and agreed to comply with the Code of Conduct at the end of this document

#### **Elections/Selection**

There are two methods by which members of the ECE-GSA are selected. The four main positions, President, Vice President, Treasurer and Events Chairman will be filled through a democratic electoral policy. The term of office will run for one year and may begin at the end of September.

A past or current executive member not running for a position must be selected by the outgoing executive team as the Chief Returning Officer (CRO). When this fails, an unbiased third party (e.g. the graduate student advisor) should be selected. He/she will act as the CRO for any general election and by-election. The CRO may form an election committee. The election committee shall have the discretion to amend the dates and times of the nomination and campaign period and any other regulations regarding the ECE-GSA election to adjust for unforeseen issues.

Incumbents are allowed to hold an office for two consecutive terms (and a maximum of four

years in total) if they are eligible and selected as the successful candidate in the yearly electoral process. After the second consecutive year, interested parties can continue to campaign for other positions within the ECE-GSA, but must relinquish their office to provide other qualified ECE graduate students a chance to take on a given role. For the best interests of ECE graduate student body, the qualified ECE graduate students for running for an executive position are only past/current executives and past/current members of event planning committees who have been actively involved with the association for at least three months. This requirement must be strictly enforced by the CRO unless there is not sufficient qualified candidate(s) per position. The number of sufficient candidates can be one. It shall be at the discretion of the CRO, albeit.

The electoral process must be hosted publicly at the beginning of an academic term (early September for the fall term is recommended). First, a one-week nomination period where nominations will be assessed and may be accepted by the CRO. After the nomination period, candidates will be given one week to host their campaigns (advertise and discuss their platforms with ECE graduate students if they wish), culminating in an 'all-candidates-forum' where candidates can give a brief presentation outlining their platform/goals for the year and field any questions from the ECE graduate student body. The process for hosting the election can be done with a formal ballot box, email or online voting through the ECE-GSA portal. In any case, the ballots are submitted to the CRO for vote-counting and announcement of the successful candidate(s).

For the case when only one candidate is running for a specific position, a simple vote of Yes/No is required. When there are no successful candidates for a position, successful candidates for the remaining positions are allowed to take on responsibilities of the other roles or alternately host a separate by-election for the position or when all else fails, appoint someone that is willing to take on the role.

For the case where a candidate is no longer able to fulfill their duties (e.g. graduating in February), a by-election can be held to fill their position in between the general elections and the time period will not be included in the two-year term set out above as it would be considered a partial term of office.

The second method by which members can be selected is for the ECE-GSA subcommittees (e.g. Event Planning Committee). Members of the event planning committee can be appointed by the elected executive members of the ECE-GSA upon advertising or receiving statements of interest from ECE graduate students in becoming members of the Event Planning Committee. The amount of active members can vary as needed to fulfill the needs of the executive and their planned events. Members can be added/removed throughout the year as needed. All ECE graduate students are qualified to join the Event Planning Committee.

### **Hosting a By-Election**

In the event that a position becomes vacant throughout the one year term, it will be necessary to fill that position through conducting a by-election. The procedure to hold a by-election will

follow that of the general electoral guidelines set out above. Nominations for the position can be provided over a one-week period, followed by a week of campaigning, culminating in the vote.

### **Campaign Guidelines**

The first step in hosting an election involves a nomination period. We will take on a similar procedure that the GSA uses. This requires that an interested student must obtain a form with signatures of students in their department (e.g. up to 10) indicating that they support the prospective candidate in their endeavour to run as an executive member. Also, the form can be signed by a department official who agrees to confirm that said candidate is in fact a student member of the ECE-department (typically the graduate student advisor or a professor would be a suitable choice).

Once the nomination forms have been remitted to the CRO, they will decide whether to accept the nomination based on the number of qualified candidates with some past experience with ECE-GSA. A short, one-week campaigning period, then takes place. This can take on the form of putting up posters (obtaining proper permissions to do so) explaining the candidates platform to help encourage people to vote for them. In addition, email circulars submitted to the graduate student advisor (to be distributed amongst the ECE-graduate students) can be used to advertise a platform in a similar fashion. All campaign material must be approved in form and content by the CRO prior to distribution. The material should be respectful to all (i.e. outgoing and currently running) parties and cannot contain any libel, slander or factually incorrect statements. Any candidate or slate found violating the rules of campaigning will face penalties, and possible disqualification at the discretion of the CRO. For the case when a candidate supporter is found to be engaging in campaign tactics which are in violation of the election rules, the candidate/slate which they campaigned for will be held responsible and face penalty.

At the end of the one week period, the prospective candidates can gather to host an 'all-candidates-forum' where each candidate gives a short presentation to explain their intent in running for office and will be available for a short question period after by those students in attendance. This is best suited when there are multiple candidates for each position but can still be held if there is only one candidate per position at the discretion of the CRO.

Voting has already been discussed in the Electoral Process and can be done in person with a ballot box or through email/online-voting where results are passed to the CRO. The vote will occur no later than three days after the end of the campaign period and last for a minimum of 24 hours and up to 72 hours maximum. At the end of the voting window, the ballots will be counted and successful candidates will be notified along with a public announcement to the ECE graduate students.

### **Executive Officer Removal**

For the case when an executive officer does not fulfill their roles as outlined in the constitution without a reasonable attempt to explain or improve upon their performance, this clause dictates

how to proceed to remove the officer from their role.

An executive meeting must be called, including the member who is no longer fulfilling their role.

The process must be fair and respectful for all concerned parties. The incumbent officer must be allowed to present their case, with a written statement, presentation or both for the ECE-GSA executive team before any final decisions can be made.

The executive (excluding the individual in question) will deliberate on past performance and the written statement or presentation from the incumbent and decide on whether they will be given a second opportunity to fulfill the roles of their position.

When a second chance is granted, if the role continues to be unsatisfactory for a minimum time period of one month, the incumbent's position will be terminated immediately and a by-election can be held (where the incumbent is not allowed to run) to re-fill that position with an alternate candidate. For the case when no second chance is granted, a similar procedure to advertise and re-fill the position immediately through a by-election will occur.

### **ECE-GSA Decision Making Process**

All major decisions of the ECE-GSA must involve at a minimum the core executive team, including the President and Vice President. The two optional positions of Treasurer and Events Chairman must also be involved if they are active.

Decision making must be based on a democratic vote where the majority rules, except for the changes which are explicitly outlined in the constitution that need the approval of both lead executives (president and vice president). These changes must be approved by both lead executives in addition to the approval of the majority. When voting results in a tie, those in favour and against must present their case to the group for deliberation. Once the opinions of both parties have been expressed, a second vote will be cast. Should a stalemate still occur, then the event planning committee and the graduate student advisor from the ECE department may be consulted for their opinions to help resolve the stalemate.

When a resolution is not possible, the decision falls to the president who must weigh the options and make an informed sound decision and explain to the group why a decision was made. The president's decision is considered the final say in the matter to avoid extensive meetings and time spent by the group. All should be aware of this process and understand that if they can't come to an agreement, the president will have the final say.

All decisions must take into account that the ECE-GSA is a representative for the ECE graduate student body and must have their best interests in mind.

### **Funding Allocation**

The operating budget of the ECE-GSA should be determined by the president in consultation



with other executive members. It is strongly recommended to regularly apply for both the ECE department and the GSA grants. At the time of preparing this document, the GSA grant consists of two departmental grants per term of office, received in December and May of each year. The amount of money received consists of a certain amount per graduate student in the department. The amount remitted to the department will be paid in full as long as the criteria set out by the GSA are met. These are in the form of: attendance of an ECE graduate student at a minimum of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the GSA council meetings, at least one graduate student from the department must be on a GSA sub-committee and have attended  $\frac{2}{3}$  of those committee meetings and finally the departmental grant forms must be submitted on time. Each of these requirements incurs a specific penalty if not met.

From the yearly budget, the ECE-GSA is encouraged to host, sponsor and put on a variety of events, fitting into that budget. All financial decisions must go through the decision making process outlined above and be approved by the majority. The funding is not intended for personal use or anything that does not benefit the ECE graduate student body as a whole and any transactions that are a result of that nature will result in immediate grounds for termination.

### **Operational Guideline**

At a minimum, it is suggested that the ECE-GSA convene once a month to hold a short meeting. This will be organized by the president or the vice president and the procedure will be to briefly outline what members have been involved with (e.g. presence on committees, event planning, etc.). The purpose of hosting monthly meetings is first to disseminate information from experiences sitting on the committees that may affect graduate students in the ECE-department. In addition, the treasurer will provide a report on the financial status including account balance and the projected budget for the upcoming term until the next departmental grant is received from the GSA. Finally, event planning will be discussed in this forum. This will include preparations and planning for future events and also meeting after an event to discuss what worked, what didn't and how to proceed moving forward. Records of the discussion regarding the events will be recorded and maintained by the ECE-GSA Event Planning Committee Chair.

### **How to Amend the Constitution**

When a member or group of members from the ECE-GSA (from the executive or event planning committee) wish to amend or update the constitution, this must be done at an executive meeting where all executive and eligible event planning committee members are present. A vote on the amendment(s) must pass by a  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority in order to be adopted into the constitution. Eligible event planning committee members are those who have helped hosting at least one event in the past or have been a member for at least three months.

The proposed amendments must be circulated to all executive and eligible event planning committee members, 48 hours in advance of the meeting to allow enough time for consideration. All successfully voted changes to the constitution must be approved by both lead executives (President and Vice-President). For the case when only one lead executive (i.e.

President or Vice-President) agrees to a motion, the amendment shall not be applied.

### **Code of Conduct for Members**

All ECE-GSA members must read, understand and agree to comply with this Code; otherwise their membership will be automatically invalid.

- Documents at all the sessions of executive meetings are confidential, unless explicitly identified as an “open” session by the executive team.
- Agendas, minutes, reports and other documents presented at event planning committee meetings are not confidential, unless specifically identified as “confidential”.

Each ECE-GSA executive and member:

- shall act only in the best interests of ECE graduate students association;
- shall carry out their functions with honesty, integrity, independence, and good faith;
- shall respect the confidentiality of information received in the performance of duties, both during and after their tenure on the ECE-GSA;
- shall declare any conflict of interest as soon as they are aware of it;
- shall not assist any person or any organization in its dealings with the ECE-GSA when such intervention may result in any preferential treatment to them by the organization;
- shall not reveal confidential information received to any other person without the express prior, written authorization of the organization executive team.

**Disclaimer 1:** This constitution is intended as a guideline for operations of the ECE-GSA from past experiences and based on how to draft a constitution as discussed by Stanford University Student Activities [1].

**Disclaimer 2:** Nothing in this constitution is intended to preclude any ECE graduate student from membership on the ECE-GSA. The constitution exists to provide a framework within which to deal with situations regarding ECE graduate students affairs.

**Disclaimer 3:** The content of this document may be out of date. Inquiry the lead executive (President/Vice-President) for the most recent updated bylaws and policy manuals.

[1] *Draft a Constitution*, Student Activities and Leadership, Stanford University, 2014