
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Toronto School of Theology Graduate Students' Association (TGSA)

Ratified: October 1, 2007
Revised: January 11, 2008
Revised: January 30, 2009
Revised: April 3, 2014
Revised: October 6, 2015
Revised: February 4, 2016
Revised: April 7, 2016
Revised: April 4, 2018

A. Activities

A.1 To be accountable to its members, TGSA must have open elections to its Board (section E), follow good financial practices (sections B, D.3), and hold an Annual General Meeting (section F.2).

A.2 TGSA Board members should also hold regular Board meetings (sections B, F.1), follow a Code of Conduct (section G), and fulfill the duties of their particular positions (section D).

A.3 When necessary, the TGSA Board will respond to grievances (section H), hold referenda (section E.6), and amend these Policies and Procedures (section Z).

A.4 TGSA's Board also serves TGSA members through a variety of activities and services, including:

- An annual student conference
- Funding for other student-led TST seminars and conferences;
- Professional development seminars on topics such as OGS/SSHRC scholarships, publishing, academic and non-academic jobs, teaching skills, mental health, and time management;
- Social events such as a fall welcome BBQ after the OGS/SSHRC workshop, pub nights, subsidized group movie or gallery tickets, and free lunches on campus;
- Social media pages for informing members of TGSA and TST events and discussing other relevant opportunities, issues and concerns; and
- Travel bursaries each semester for deserving TGSA members who are presenting papers at conferences outside of Ontario.

B. Fees and Finances (Constitution Section 3.5)

B.1 The amount of the levy will be variegated between part-time and full-time students.

B.2 The fee will be collected by TST through the University of Toronto.

B.3 The Treasurer is responsible for collecting the monies from TST.

B.4 When necessary, the TGSA Board can move to increase the annual student levy by two-thirds majority vote.

B.5 After TGSA Board approval, any increase to the student levy must be approved by referendum with a two-thirds majority vote of the general TGSA membership.

B.6 The President is responsible for informing the colleges, via the TST Director, of any changes to the membership fees.

C. The TGSA Board (Constitution Section 4)

C.1 The TGSA Executive Committee consists of the President, Treasurer, Vice-President Academic, Vice-President Conferences, Vice-President External, Secretary (non-voting), and any other members the Board deems necessary.

C.1.1 The Executive Committee will support the President in fulfilling the essential duties of the Board.

C.1.2 The President will delegate to other Executive Committee members in accordance with their duties.

C.2 The Board will fill vacancies between elections by appointment.

C.2.1 Board members must be nominated to fill Executive vacancies (Constitution Section 4.6). Current Executives may be nominated, but must resign their other position if chosen. If more than one Board member is interested, the Board will choose between them by secret ballot.

C.2.2 Any graduate student (including Board members) from the appropriate college or program may be nominated to fill a non-Executive vacancy (Constitution Section 4.7). If more than one candidate is interested, the Board will choose between them.

C.3 Board members are expected to attend all the meetings required by their role.

C.3.1 When a member knows they will be absent from a TGSA meeting, they shall notify the President or Secretary and email a brief update for the minutes as required.

C.3.2 If the Secretary is absent from a TGSA meeting, an acting Secretary will be appointed.

C.3.3 When a member knows they will be absent from an external committee meeting, they will inform the chair of the committee and the TGSA President, who will find another Board member to attend.

C.3.4 After two consecutive and/or unannounced absences from an external committee meeting, the TGSA President will appoint a new Board member to sit on the committee, and notify its chair and secretary.

C.4 Board members may be removed for excessive absence, even when announced, or other serious failures to fulfill their duties.

C.4.1 Executives have a particular responsibility to keep the confidence of the Board. Any two Board members may move to remove an Executive by secret ballot. An impartial Board member will be chosen to chair the debate and count the ballots, but not vote. If three-fifths of the sitting Board members ($\geq 60\%$) vote to remove the named Executive, their position will be declared vacant. The motion to remove and the result of the vote will be recorded in the minutes.

C.4.2 Other Board members may be removed by the same procedure, except that two-thirds of the sitting Board members ($\geq 67\%$) must vote for removal.

C.4.3 If the Board is unable to agree on an impartial Board member, they must choose an external TST student or staff member to adjudicate.

D. Duties of Board Members (Constitution Section 4.5)

D.1 The **President** will chair all TGSA Board meetings, setting their agenda, date, time, and location in consultation with the Board; appoint Board members to sit on the Academic Council, Graduate Studies Council, Library Committee, and any other TST committees with graduate student representation; and be TGSA's principal liaison with the Directors of TST and the Graduate Centre for Theological Studies, communicating regularly to relay student concerns. They will also welcome new students and introduce them to the TGSA at TST's annual orientation; attend and speak at meetings of TST's Board of Trustees when invited; and summarize the TGSA's past year of activities at the AGM and in a report to be posted online and shared with TST.

D.2 The **Secretary** will record the minutes of TGSA Board meetings, including attendance; distribute the minutes of each meeting for approval at the next meeting; and maintain an archive of approved agendas, minutes, and other Board documents. They will also work with other Board members to keep the TGSA website up to date, assist the President in scheduling meetings and preparing agendas, and ensure the date, time, location, and agenda for General meetings is publicly announced well in advance.

D.3 The **Treasurer** will keep an accurate record of all revenue and expenses, prepare budgets and financial statements for approval at Board and General meetings, and follow all financial Policies and Procedures (see section B). They will also maintain an archive of approved budgets and financial statements, and ensure that only the current President, Treasurer, and Vice-President Conferences have signing authority on the bank account.

D.4 The **Vice-President Conferences** will begin and lead planning for a conference each year, setting and announcing the conference date, call for papers, and submission deadline in consultation with the Board, accepting paper and panel proposals, and preparing them for blind review by a small group of

Board members. They will also work with the Treasurer to apply for conference funding, prepare a budget for the conference, and track conference expenses; and share responsibility for other conference tasks with all Board members.

D.5 The **Vice-President External** will be TGSA's principal liaison with University of Toronto student unions, attending one UTSU and GSU meeting each year, inviting TST's UTSU representative (if any) to TGSA meetings, and meeting with them separately if they are unable to attend. They will also work with the University of Toronto and other Board members to inform TST students about and improve their access to university services, and build TGSA's relationship with TST affiliated colleges, inviting local student representatives to attend TGSA meetings.

D.6 The **Vice-President Academic** will be TGSA's principal liaison with TST academic committees, sitting on committees as appointed by the President, attending all regular meetings, reporting matters discussed to the TGSA for input, and relaying student feedback back to the committee. They will also meet with external committee representatives (including if possible outgoing representatives) as needed to ensure continuity and effectiveness in representation, chair TGSA meetings in the absence of the President, and assist in procedural disputes.

D.7 Board members appointed by the President to be **External Committee Representatives** (section D.1) will sit on their committee, attending all regular meetings, reporting matters discussed to the Board for input, and relaying student feedback back to the Committee, deferring to the judgement of the Board when the student perspective on an issue is contentious or uncertain. They will also meet with the Vice-President Academic as needed to ensure continuity and effectiveness in representation, notifying the Vice-President Academic and the chair of the committee if they will be absent from an external committee meeting, and resigning from their committee if they are unable to fulfill their duties to it.

D.8 **College Representatives** will be TGSA's principal liaison with graduate students at their college, reporting the concerns of students at their college at TGSA meetings and posting announcements of TGSA events and opportunities on their college's bulletin boards and social media groups. They will also attend their college's student orientation and introduce themselves as their college's representative at TGSA, and work with other college representatives to build relationships between graduate students at different colleges. The TGSA member holding this position must be an active and registered student of the College that they represent.

D.9 **Program Representatives** will be TGSA's principal liaison with graduate students in their program, reporting the concerns of students in their program at TGSA meetings and working with other Board members to better understand the issues faced by students in their program through polls, public meetings, and social media. The TGSA member holding this position must be an active and registered student of the program that they represent.

D.10 **Concentration Representatives** Members who hold the following seats: (Bible, History, Theology, Pastoral, Contextual) will follow the policies and procedures that apply to External Committee Representatives. Further, concentration representatives are responsible for updating the Board and, by extension, TGSA members of professional development opportunities specific to their

area, such as conferences, call for papers, fellowships, job openings, and funding opportunities. Concentration representatives should also work to connect students in their concentration with colleagues across the TST colleges.

D.11 Aside from the Secretary (D.9) and the Returning Officer (E.1), the Board may appoint **other non-voting officers** to advertise TGSA events, seminars, and meetings; catalogue and post TGSA documents and records; conduct polls or surveys; develop the TGSA website and social media pages; edit a student blog, journal, or newsletter; inform students about TGSA, TST, and university activities and services; prepare brochures, posters, and reports; and/or perform other tasks. The Board will set the exact duties, compensation (maximum \$200 to one individual in one academic year), length of service, and title for any non-voting officers before asking for nominations. If more than one candidate is interested, the Board will choose between them.

D.11.1 The Board should appoint a **non-voting officer for advocacy** for accessibility, international students, and historically under-represented students. This non-voting officer will liaise between the TGSA and student groups representing LGBTIAQ2S+, FNMI (First-Nations, Métis, Inuit), international and other student groups. This student will bring concerns from these groups and students to TGSA meetings and will work with other board members, college leaders, and student groups to better understand the needs and concerns faced by these students. This new position must be reviewed by the board at the end of a two-year trial period.

E. Elections and Referenda (Constitution Section 3.2)

E.1 Returning Officer

E.1.1 Will be appointed by the TGSA Board at least six weeks before the election, with the motion recorded in the minutes to help gain access to voting.utoronto.ca (see <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/cld/voting-system-agreement> for more details) or another secure online voting platform.

E.1.2 Will agree to be impartial and not seek an elected position or nominate anyone.

E.1.3 Will compile a list of positions coming open due to term limits and ask Board members for advance notice if they are resigning and/or seeking another position.

E.1.4 Will administer the nominations and elections according to the Policies and Procedures described below.

E.1.5 Will invite winning candidates to the next Board or General meeting after the election and present the results for ratification there.

E.1.6 Will announce the ratified results through the mailing list and update the list of Board members and their terms on the TGSA & TST websites.

E.2 Nominations

E.2.1 The nomination period should last at least 18 days and close at least two weeks before the meeting where the results will be ratified, subject to Board approval.

E.2.2 The Returning Officer will announce the open positions and nomination process on the mailing list three times, once before the nomination period and twice during it. They may also call for nominations through college bulletin boards, the TGSA website and social media pages, and in cohort classes, college meetings, or other public forums.

E.2.3 Candidates must be nominated by two of their peers, be willing to serve, and in the college, program, or concentration to be represented (if applicable). If it is unclear, the Returning Officer will ask potential candidates to declare their willingness to serve as well as their college, program, and concentration(s).

E.2.4 Once the nomination period ends, the Returning Officer will inform all the candidates of who is running and which positions are still vacant, giving multiply eligible candidates a brief opportunity to change the position they are seeking before the election without requiring additional nominations.

E.3 Executive Elections (Constitution Section 4.2.1)

E.3.1 If only one candidate is nominated for an Executive position, they will be acclaimed at the ratification meeting.

E.3.2 If more than one candidate seeks an Executive position, the vote for that position will be part of a general election.

E.3.2.1 The Returning Officer will set a schedule for the general election so there are at least three weekdays for campaigning and three weekdays for voting, excluding school and religious holidays. They will first inform the candidates of the schedule and any rules for the election campaign, asking each for a statement of less than 1000 letters, including spaces. The Returning Officer will then announce the election, candidates, candidate statements, voting method and dates through the mailing list, TGSA website, and social media pages.

E.3.2.2 If one candidate asks, and a majority of the others agree, the Returning Officer will organize, announce, and moderate an Executive candidates' forum.

E.3.2.3 The Returning Officer will work with voting.utoronto.ca or another secure online voting platform and the TST registrar to ensure a fair and secure online vote for every registered graduate student (Constitution Section 3.2). If a TGSA member is unable to vote, they can be emailed a ballot to print, complete, and seal in an envelope, to be counted once their eligibility and inability to vote is verified.

E.3.2.4 On the ballots, the positions should be in the same order as in the Constitution, and the option to randomize candidates should be checked.

E.3.2.5 Any ties will be resolved by a coin toss at the ratification meeting.

E.4 Program Elections (Constitution Section 4.2.2)

E.4.1 If only one candidate is nominated to represent a program or program concentration, they will be acclaimed at the ratification meeting.

E.4.2 If more than one candidate seeks to represent a program or program concentration, the vote for that position will be part of the general election, as described above, except that position will also have a 'I'm not in this program/concentration' choice on the ballot.

E.5 College Elections (Constitution Section 4.2.3)

E.5.1 If only one candidate is nominated to represent a college, they will be acclaimed at the ratification meeting.

E.5.2 If more than one candidate seeks to represent a college, the Returning Officer will oversee a vote limited to the graduate students in that college.

E.5.3 If possible, the vote may be through voting.utoronto.ca or another secure online voting platform. Otherwise, the Returning Officer will work with the candidates and the college to convene a meeting of graduate students in the college to elect their representative.

E.5.4 The Returning Officer will announce the election, candidates, candidate statements, voting method and dates through the college mailing list.

E.6 Referenda

E.6.1 A referendum is required to: admit affiliate students as members of TGSA (Constitution Section 3.4.2); amend the constitution (Constitution Section 5.1); alter the TGSA fee, once or on a recurring basis (Policy and Procedures Section B.5); join or leave a student union (per student union bylaws); or, opt students in to, or out of, some nonacademic fees (if applicable; see the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities Tuition and Ancillary Fees Reporting Operating Procedure).¹

E.6.2 The Board must set the issue(s) to be considered in a referendum no later than their December meeting. Board members will then be asked to represent the 'Yes' and 'No' sides of each issue with an impartial Board member appointed as the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer, with the Yes and No representatives, will constitute the Referendum Committee.

E.6.2.1 If amending the Constitution is in view, the Board will appoint representatives from the Constitution subcommittee (Constitution Section 5.1.2).

E.6.2.2 The Returning Officer will chair the Referendum Committee and have the power to appoint up to two additional representatives per issue, as long as the ratio of Yes and No representatives is brought closer to an even balance, or else kept the same.

E.6.2.3 Once the meeting minutes are approved, the Returning Officer will secure access to an online voting system.

¹ Available at <https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/documents/TuitionandAncillaryFees.pdf>.

E.6.3 The Referendum Committee will draft a Notice of Referendum with a short description of the referendum issue(s) and process; a list of the Committee members; and, an open call for comments, questions, and additional Yes or No representatives. The Notice will be distributed through the TGSA website and the email list.

E.6.4 The Committee will consult with external bodies, as needed. For example, if the referendum involves non-academic fees, TST should be consulted; if it concerns membership in a student union, the respective union should be consulted; and if it relates to a fee covered by the University of Toronto Ancillary Fee Protocol, the Council on Student Services should be consulted.

E.6.5 Mindful of feedback received, the Referendum Committee will organize a town hall that includes short presentations from interested parties with relevant information and a diversity of perspectives. The town hall date and location will be announced through the TGSA website and social media pages and the email list. The Returning Officer will moderate the town hall to ensure equal time for presentations and for questions, and if possible, presentation documents and an audio or video recording should be made available online for students who cannot attend.

E.6.6 Any interested parties who publically campaign on an issue must do so fairly. The Referendum Committee will write rules for campaigning in advance, clarifying as needed, and if rules are violated the Returning Officer may issue cautions; ask the Board to add, remove, or replace Yes or No representatives; or even halt the referendum, dissolving the Committee, and asking the Board to restart the process.

E.6.7 After the town hall, the Referendum Committee will prepare the ballot for the referendum, endeavouring to write clear, neutral, and short questions with only two possible outcomes (a yes or a no). The final wording of the ballot must be approved by a majority of the Board as well as a two-thirds majority of the Referendum Committee.

E.6.8 Once the ballot is approved, the Referendum Committee will set a voting period of at least 14 days, beginning no earlier than the FINCA date in the fall term and ending no later than the last day of class in the winter term or the TGSA AGM, whichever is first. They will then draft a second Notice of Referendum that includes the voting method, dates, question(s), and brief statements from the Yes and No representatives on each issue. This Notice will be distributed through the email list twice, once before the voting period and once during it, as well as on the TGSA website and social media pages, college bulletin boards, and in other public forums.

E.6.9 The Returning Officer will work with an online voting system and the TST Registrar to ensure a fair and secure vote for every registered graduate student. If a TGSA member is clearly unable to vote online, they will be emailed a ballot to print, complete, and seal in an envelope for delivery to the Returning Officer before the end of voting, to be counted once their eligibility is verified.

E.6.10 For a question proposing a net increase in non-academic fees of more than \$25/year, quorum requires 50 students or 20% of those eligible to vote, whichever is less. Quorum for any other question requires 25 students or 10% of those eligible to vote, whichever is greater.

E.6.11 To pass any referendum question requires both quorum and the support of a two-thirds majority of those voting. (For constitutional amendments, this defines the meaning of ‘ratify’ in Constitution Section 5.1.6.)

E.6.12 Referenda outcomes are binding on the TGSA Board and Executive unless overturned by another referendum. Any question that may overturn the outcome of a past referendum cannot be voted on until the following academic year.

F. Board and General Meetings (Constitution Section 4.8)

F.1 Board Meetings

F.1.1 The Board will normally meet each month during the school year, at dates and times established at the beginning of each term. Extraordinary Board meetings may be called by the President on three days’ notice.

F.1.2 The Board works towards achieving consensus in its meetings. If achieving consensus becomes unfeasible in a given meeting or on a given topic, *Roberts’ Rules of Order* will be followed.

F.1.3 All members of TGSA attend any regular Board meeting, but non-members of the Board may speak only if they have an item on the agenda or a motion grants them the right to speak. Even with speaking rights, guests shall not move motions, vote, or interrupt debate. Guests may be expelled at the discretion of the Board or the chair.

F.1.4 At the discretion of the Board, a portion of a Board meeting may be held *in camera*, but no motions may be passed *in camera*.

F.2 General Meetings

F.2.1 An Annual General Meeting (AGM) for all graduate students will be held in April of every year, with the date, time, location and provisional agenda circulated at least one month in advance through the email list, TGSA website and social media pages, and other public forums.

F.2.1.1 The AGM must take place on or near to campus.

F.2.1.2 The Treasurer will present a financial statement for the year just completed and a preliminary projected budget for the following year.

F.2.1.3 The Returning Officer will present the newly elected members of the Board.

F.2.2 When deemed necessary, other general meetings may be called by the Board with fourteen days’ notice.

F.2.3 The chair will work towards achieving consensus at General meetings. If achieving consensus becomes unfeasible in a given meeting or on a given topic, *Roberts’ Rules of Order* will be followed.

F.2.4 Each TGSA member carries one vote in the General meetings.

F.2.5 General meeting minutes will be published on the TGSA website.

G. Communication and Conduct Guidelines

G.1 Like all TST students, TGSA board members are subject to various policies on student behaviour, including the University of Toronto's Code of Student Conduct and Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment. However, as student representatives in a public role, it behooves board members to not just meet but surpass the minimum standards expected of all students. Therefore, in their interactions with each other and with the wider TST community, TGSA board members as well as TGSA officers, employees, and volunteers are asked to:

G.1.1 Respect the time and contributions of others by preparing for meetings, reading relevant materials before asking questions, and striving to keep comments concise and on topic.

G.1.2 Present the truth as honestly and fairly as possible, acknowledging uncertainty and never exaggerating, minimizing, or distorting information or the opinions of others.

G.1.3 Listen carefully and respectfully to the words of others, seeking to understand their views before responding, and waiting to be recognized by the chair instead of interrupting.

G.1.4 Express criticism and dissent in a courteous and constructive manner, focusing on the details of the issue and avoiding comments on the personal characteristics or motives of others.

G.1.5 Interpret conflicts of ideas and differences of opinion charitably, as a healthy sign of the critical thought and proper debate needed for good governance, rather than as personal attacks.

G.1.6 Speak civilly in a way that invites continued dialogue, refraining from aggressive, condescending, degrading, loud, and other potentially intimidating words or actions, even in jest.

G.1.7 Commit to facilitating a safe and welcoming environment for all, challenging practices and obstacles that may make TGSA physical and virtual spaces unfriendly or inaccessible.

G.1.8 Take responsibility for the effects of words and deeds, refusing to deflect or deny accountability, while also extending patience and grace for the mistakes of others.

G.2 If anyone believes that a TGSA board member, officer, employee, or volunteer has seriously violated these guidelines or engaged in other conduct not fitting of their position, they should follow the grievance procedure described in section H.1.

G.2.1 If anyone observes an offence against the University of Toronto Code of Student Conduct or Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment by a member of the TST community, they should contact the GCTS director and/or the University of Toronto's Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre directly.

H. Grievances

TGSA members are expected to act in a spirit of gracious interpretation and collegiality. This disposition includes a commitment to using inclusive language (regarding human relationships) with attention to the

intersectionality of personal and communal experiences. We acknowledge that relationships between individuals and communities can break down, requiring reconciliation and conflict resolution. When such conflict arises, this Grievances procedure will be followed.

H.1 All TGSA Board members will hear and respond to complaints carefully, reminding all parties involved of the following procedures.

H.1.1 If a student or TGSA Board member has a concern about the conduct of a Board member, they should first contact them directly. If their response does not resolve the concern, they should next ask their college representative or any TGSA Executive to arrange and attend an in-person meeting between both parties. If the meeting also does not resolve the issue, they should then address the TGSA Board, either in person or in a letter at the next Board meeting. The TGSA Board will listen to all parties and then develop a response to the issue(s) raised. If the complainant is not satisfied by the response of the Board within thirty (30) days of their meeting, they should contact the Director of TST's Graduate Centre for Theological Studies (GCTS).

H.1.2 In cases of seriously inappropriate behaviour or potential violations of the University of Toronto Code of Student Conduct, direct contact and in-person meetings may be skipped, and the GCTS Director may be informed before the end of the 30 day period.

H.1.3 If a student or TGSA Board member believes TGSA is not following good financial procedures, not being accountable to its members, or otherwise failing to uphold the TGSA Constitution, they should contact their college representative and any TGSA Executive. If their response does not resolve the concern, they should then address the TGSA Board, either in person or in a letter at the next Board meeting. The TGSA Board will listen to all parties and then develop a response to the issue(s) raised. If the complainant is not satisfied by the response of the Board within thirty (30) days of their meeting, they should contact the GCTS Director.

H.1.4 The TGSA Board may at its discretion respond to grievances that do not follow the procedure described above, but they are under no obligation to do so.

H.2 In responding to a complaint, the TGSA Board may decide to discipline one of its members through asking for an apology, censure, suspension, expulsion, and/or impeachment. If the President is the subject of a disciplinary motion, another executive must chair the debate. All voting on disciplinary motions should be done with a secret ballot.

H.2.1 A motion asking for an apology requires a simple majority. Whether and how an apology is given has no formal effect, but may influence other decisions of the Board.

H.2.2 A motion of censure requires a simple majority, and should be in the form of a reprimand describing the member's conduct and expressing strong disapproval of it.

H.2.3 A motion to suspend some or all of a member's rights and duties for a defined period of time requires a two-thirds majority.

H.2.4 A motion to expel a member from the room requires a two-thirds majority.

H.2.5 The procedure to impeach a board member is described above in section C.4.

Z. Amendments

Z.1 Review of the Policies and Procedures may take place at the discretion of the TGSA Board.

Z.2 All amendments must be ratified by two-thirds majority of the TGSA Board.