

# **Constitution of the Graduate English Society of Queen's University**

February 2011

This document lays out the organizational structure of the Graduate English Society and the responsibilities of its members. All students in the graduate program in English at Queen's are members of the Graduate English Society (GES). Through the GES, students can voice and address concerns common to the graduate student body. The GES is interested in social, political, and professional interests specific to the English Graduate student body. The GES strives to foster a positive, mutually respectful, supportive, diverse and creative community. The makers of this document recognize the shifting nature of language and mean for the will of the membership and well-being of the community to be of utmost concern.

Last amended February 2011.

## **I. Graduate English Society**

1. The Graduate English Society (GES) consists of all students registered in the graduate program of the English Department of Queen's University for the current term.
2. The GES shall represent the interests of its members, send delegates to Department and University meetings, sponsor social and academic functions, keep the membership informed of all activities of interest, and distribute funds.

## **II. GES Executive**

1. The GES Executive shall be made up of two Co-Presidents, the GSC Representative, one Secretary and one Treasurer. All other available offices can be seen in Appendix B. Only one Executive position can be held at a time.
2. All GES Executive positions shall be elected at a fall meeting by majority votes, save the Co-President elected the previous year, as each Co-President serves a two-year term, with only one elected per year. In the second year of co-presidency, the incumbent Co-President provides a continuity of knowledge about the previous year's proceedings for the benefit of the incoming Co-President and GES membership. All nominees or their representatives must be present at this meeting.
3. Should there be a vacancy on the Executive, the Executive may appoint someone to fill it, subject to the approval, by majority vote, of a general meeting.
4. The Executive shall meet, or coordinate by email, prior to each GES general meeting in order to set the agenda.

## **III. GENERAL MEETINGS AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

1. There shall be a general meeting, open to the membership, at least twice in the fall term and at least twice in the spring term.
2. A general meeting may be called by six members petitioning the Executive.
3. A quorum shall be constituted when there are at least two Executive officers and at least eight general members present.
4. General meetings shall be conducted informally, in accordance with basic rules of parliamentary procedure (See Appendix A). The Executive shall consider majority decisions reached at these meetings to be the will of the membership.
5. An Executive officer or delegate may be recalled by a two-thirds vote of members

present and voting at a general meeting. A motion of recall must be publicized at least one week prior to voting by posting the agenda in the Graduate Student lounge at Watson Hall, or by posting the agenda over the GES listserv. Grounds for recall shall be failure to fulfill the responsibilities of office and/or actions detrimental to the interests of the membership.

6. The constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a general meeting. A motion of amendment must be publicized at least one week prior to voting by posting the agenda in the English Department lounge at Watson Hall, or by posting the agenda over the GES listserv.

#### **IV. GES REPRESENTATIVES TO EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS**

1. The GES may elect delegates to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), the Appointments Committee, Society of Graduate and Professional Students (SGPS), Departmental committees, the Graduate Teaching Assistant and Fellow Union (PSAC local 901), and other bodies as needed.

#### **V. FINANCES**

1. Any funds held by the GES shall be on deposit in an account at a nearby bank, credit union, or trust company, and shall be the Treasurer's responsibility. At least two Executive officers must authorize the spending of these funds.

2. These funds shall be used only for the benefit of the membership.

3. The Treasurer shall provide a financial statement to the membership at each general meeting. Receipt of this report must be approved by the attending members in a simple majority vote. If the report should be rejected, the treasurer must redraft an acceptable report to be approved at the next meeting.

4. If, for any reason, the GES is without an Executive, any and all funds outstanding in any and all GES accounts shall be held in trust and supervised by the Department until such time as an Executive is elected. In the event of a failure to elect a new Executive or the resignation of a sitting Executive, the officers authorized to supervise the GES funds shall be responsible for arranging the transfer of these funds to a responsible officer or officers of the Department, and for fulfilling any and all regulations of the bank with respect to such transfer.

#### **VI. GES RELATIONSHIP TO DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES**

1. The Graduate English Society elects graduate student representatives to the following Departmental representative positions at the annual GES elections meeting in September:

**Graduate Studies Committee Representative**

**Department Meeting Representative**

**Appointments Committee Representative (when applicable)**

**100 (or equivalent) TA Representative**

2. If all positions are not filled at the September elections meeting, the Executive may appoint representatives subject to the approval of the membership at a general meeting.

3. Alternate student representatives may attend the GSC and Faculty meetings in place of elected members when necessary. Elected representatives unable to attend meetings are responsible for finding substitutes.

4. Student members of the various councils and committees have full voting privileges.

**VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GES EXECUTIVE** 1. **The GES Executive** as a whole shall:

- a) help the English Department assist in the orientation of new students
- b) organize (or delegate the organization of) academic and social events and coordinate campus/community outreach
- c) actively respond to needs, interests, questions, and concerns expressed by the general membership, as well as to issues and events outside the GES that affect graduate students in English
- d) keep the membership informed about issues and events within and outside the GES
- e) organize GES fundraising events when necessary
- f) review the GES Constitution on a regular basis and, if necessary, revise it

2. **The GES Co-Presidents** shall:

- a) schedule and chair GES Executive and general meetings, and conduct GES elections
- b) lead the review and revision of the GES Constitution

3. **The GES VP Academic Affairs (GSC PhD Rep)** shall:

- a) act as GSC Representative and oversee the Academic Affairs Committee
- b) act as academic affairs liaison between graduate students and the administrations of the Department and University
- c) solicit feedback from the membership when issues arise that affect GES members
- d) advocate on behalf of GES members at external-to-GES meetings, using feedback from members to make informed decisions

4. **The GES Treasurer** shall:

- a) assume responsibility for all GES account books and banking transactions
- b) deliver a financial report to the GES membership at each general meeting
- c) chair the GES Fundraising Committee and aid in the organization of GES fundraisers
- e) prepare an end-of-year financial statement

5. **The GES Secretary** shall:

- a) record the minutes of GES general meetings and post them on the GES listserv

**VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF GES COMMITTEES**

1. The **Social Committee** will consist of at least two MA social conveners and at least two PhD social conveners, and will plan fall orientation for new students and organize social events throughout the year.

2. The **Academic Affairs Committee** will consist of one representative from each year of the MA and PhD programs (including one representative for students in fifth year and above) and will include the VP Academic/GSC Representative, the MA GSC Representative, and the Department Meeting Representatives. The committee will address graduate student concerns regarding the structural make up and process of graduate studies in English, including but not limited to course work, comprehensive exams, STP presentations and thesis supervision, as well as RA work. The committee will meet at least once before and after each GSC meeting to ensure adequate representation and wide awareness of GSC activity.

3. The **Fundraising Committee** will consist of the GES Treasurer and at least two other student representatives, and will meet to plan fundraising events when

deemed necessary by the GES at a general meeting.

## **APPENDIX A: GES PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

The Graduate English Society is deliberately informal in its parliamentary procedure. General meetings are conducted according to basic rules of order, and according to the GES Constitution.

1. **Order of Business.** Most agendas proceed in the following manner: Approval of Agenda

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting Business Arising from the Minutes General Announcements Treasurer's Report

Reports and Funding Requests from Committee Representatives, Journals, and Period Groups

Approval of Funding Requests New Business Adjournment

2. **Quorum.** At least two Executive officers and at least eight general members are required to be present for a general meeting to attain quorum. If a quorum is not attained, no official business (such as approval of funding requests) may be conducted at that meeting.

3. **Motions.** Technically, a motion should be made and seconded before debate on it begins. The GES, however, usually engages in discussion before making and voting on a relevant motion. If a member makes a motion he or she did not intend, it may be withdrawn, unless debate on it has already begun, in which case it must be voted on before a new motion can be made. Only one motion may be entertained at a time. Most motions may be passed by a simple majority. Specialized motions include:

Move the Previous Question: cuts off all debate and demands an immediate vote on the motion at hand. Requires a two-thirds vote.

Refer to Committee: defers voting on an issue until a committee has investigated it further and reported back to the membership. Requires a majority vote.

Postpone: moves a motion be postponed until later in the same meeting or until another meeting. (The motion must specify which.) Requires a majority vote.

Adjourn: takes precedence over other motions, is not debatable, and cannot be made by someone who does not have the floor. Requires a majority vote. If there is other business remaining, the Chair may state the motion and ask the mover to withdraw it but, if refused, must immediately call a vote.

4. **Debate.** In order to speak to a motion or other issue, a member must be recognized by the Chair. In cases where several members want the floor at once, the Chair may announce the names of the next few speakers in order. The GES has no time limit set on debate, but the Chair may choose to limit debate by cutting it off after a certain time period, by restricting it to members who have not already spoken to the question, or by stressing that speakers should avoid redundancy and stick to the issue at hand. The Chair may choose to end a lengthy debate by calling for a vote. Once a vote is called, debate ends and a vote must be taken.

5. **Voting.** The votes required for various motions may be found under their respective headings. The Chair must restate the motion before a vote is taken. Many votes (e.g. approval of the minutes) may fall under the rubric of General Consent, that is, a voice vote the outcome of which is determined by the Chair and duly announced before moving on to the next item of business. A member may call for a more formal vote to be taken on any issue, in which case a show of hands must be made and recorded. Members may

designate a proxy in writing prior to the meeting and submit this request to the Executive. The designated proxy vote will be recorded in the minutes and verified later with the voter who designated the proxy.

**6. Constitutional Amendments.** Constitutional amendments require a two-thirds vote to pass, and must be publicized a week prior to the meeting at which the vote is to occur.

**7. Elections.** Elections of the GES Executive and Committee members take place at a fall meeting of the GES, which is publicized at least two weeks in advance. Nominations can be made anytime prior to, and at the fall meeting. Nominations that come in within forty-eight (48) hours before the fall meeting shall be posted one day before the fall meeting. If a nominee cannot attend, he or she may be represented by another member. All positions are elected or acclaimed by majority vote. When there is more than one candidate running for an executive position, candidates can have up to one minute to outline their intent, after which the candidates will leave the room, and the Co-Presidents will conduct a secret-ballot vote.

## **Appendix B: Complete list of GES positions**

### **1. Co-President (2)**

The Presidency of the GES is a two-term (two year) position to be held by two PhD students. The Co-Presidents share executive responsibilities with each other. The Co-Presidents schedule and chair GES meetings, strike up committees, delegate tasks, and represent the GES in any capacity not facilitated by other members of the executive. The co-chairs are members of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

### **2. Secretary**

The Secretary (or delegate) is responsible for attending every GES meeting, taking minutes, and posting them on the GES listserv in a timely fashion. The Secretary is a member of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

### **3. Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for the organization's finances, and his/her name is on the bank account at the Kingston Credit Union. The treasurer has to sign all GES cheques and is also responsible for reimbursing any person associated with the GES who has been authorized to spend money on its behalf (e.g., for the annual holiday party). The person who holds this position is also responsible for buying Christmas presents for the three departmental administrators in the amount of \$100 total. The Treasurer is a member of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution) and the Fund-raising Committee.

### **4. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) Reps (2 - One MA, One PhD)**

The Graduate Studies Committee Reps will attend all GSC meetings, reporting back to the GES in a timely manner. They will liaise with the Academic Affairs Committee (when applicable) and the Department Reps. Since the GES holds two votes on the GSC, the Reps will use the votes pursuant to the expressed interests of the GES membership. In order to ensure the Reps are making the most informed voting decisions, they must solicit feedback from the membership over the GES listserv in a timely manner. The GSC (PhD) Rep will chair the Academic Affairs Committee (see below). The Graduate Studies Committee Reps are members of the executive (please see Section II of the Constitution).

### **5. Departmental Representative (2 – One MA, One PhD)**

The Departmental Reps attend monthly faculty meetings and takes notes on issues that pertain to graduate students. The Rep will report back to the GES after each meeting. The Reps can vote at department meetings. This position requires both an MA as well as PhD

student. These reps will take part in the Academic Affairs Committee (when applicable) and will liaise with GSC Reps in order to ensure all reps are making the most informed voting decisions at meetings.

#### **6. Hiring Committee Representative (Must be a Senior PhD student)**

This position is elected on an as-needed basis, depending on the hiring intents of the Department within any given year. There may be more than one Hiring Committee Rep elected depending on the number of job positions being advertised/ hired and/or Queen's National Scholar competitions. Besides the work assigned to every hiring committee member (reading resumes, attending meetings and all job talks), this person is responsible for communicating grad student needs during the search, giving feedback from the grad students to the Hiring Committee after job talks. They will report the progress of the committee and solicit feedback from the GES as needed.

#### **7. SGPS Reps (2 - One MA, One PhD)**

This representative serves as a member of the Society of Graduate and Professional Students Council. The reps must attend the SGPS Council's monthly meetings and must report regularly at GES meetings. They can also choose to participate in any committees struck up by the SGPS.

#### **8. Computer Liaison**

This position entails maintaining and updating, on a regular basis, the Graduate English listserve, the GES website, and monitoring listserve activity. The Computer Liaison will also work with the CTL and Queen's Pedagogy Commons Facilitator to maintain the Queen's Pedagogy Commons. Some computer savvy is certainly an asset, but you do not need extensive web knowledge. Responsibilities also include informing the incoming class about the GES listserve and assisting graduate students who need help with it. This position should be held by a PhD student who will be available during the Welcome Back period.

#### **9. ACCUTE Rep**

One student who is a member of ACCUTE represents the GES on the ACCUTE Graduate Executive. The responsibilities of the position include forwarding ACCUTE emails to the GES listserve, and collecting data from the department for ACCUTE surveys.

#### **10. Works in Progress Co-ordinator:**

Organizes an informal colloquium once a year (or twice, if the interest is there) at which faculty and graduate students present work in progress. They will organize with the social conveners a tea and informal gathering after the talks.

#### **11. Social Conveners**

Social conveners can be PhDs and MAs, though at least two of the positions should be PhDs. The PhDs are responsible for Welcome Week, including the work of planning, booking, advertising, and attending the events; that planning is done by the two PhD social conveners in the summer so that the events may be advertised in August. Social conveners are mainly responsible for: set-up of the wine and cheese in late September (organized by the Grad Chair with departmental money); set-up and organization for the Christmas Party (department pays for this as well); set-up and organization for the Spring Party (no departmental money). Coffee Hour is under the responsibilities of the social conveners and one social convener will take responsibility for ensuring coffee hour is run every week of the academic term. The cost for maintaining Coffee Hour will be the

responsibility of the GES; however, the Social Conveners (or Coffee Hour delegate) shall ensure costs do not exceed \$100 per term (depending on the financial status of the GES). The Coffee Hour delegate(s) shall be responsible for setting up and cleaning the lounge before/after each Coffee Hour session, and shall send out calls over the listserve for people to help by bringing in baked goods. Social Conveners may also organize other events during the year to the benefit of the community.

### **12. MLA Representative**

The MLA Representative is required to be a member of the MLA Society. The student that holds this position is responsible for posting general items of interest regarding MLA membership, conferences etc. to the GES listserve which she/he will receive through the MLA list-serve.

### **13. Fundraising Committee (2 co-chairs)**

The Fundraising Committee consists of several members (as needed) and the Treasurer. They will run at least one fundraising event for the GES every year if needed and decided by the membership. This has traditionally been a book sale. The annual event is usually held in the spring, but that is up to the committee chairs. They are responsible for creating, advertising and running the event.

### **14. New/Prospective Student Liaison**

The liaison answers new student/ applicants' questions, give tours and sometimes can arrange a place for them to stay when they come to visit the campus. The Grad Chair liaises with this person to organize tours and other recruitment activities. This person is responsible for maintaining a list of grad students who would like to volunteer for these duties and ensuring that the GES has a role in recruitment. This person is a member of the Social Committee and takes part in Welcome Week organization.

### **15. The Academic Affairs Committee**

This committee will consist of one representative from each year of the MA and PhD programs (including one representative for students in fifth year and above) and will include the PhD GSC Representative, the MA GSC Representative, and the Department Meeting Representatives. The committee will address graduate student concerns regarding the structural make up and process of graduate studies in English, including but not limited to course work, comprehensive exams, STP presentations and thesis supervision, as well as TA, TF, and RA work. The committee will meet at least once before and after each GSC meeting to ensure adequate representation and wide awareness of GSC activity

See Section VIII, 2.

### **16. 100 TA Rep**

The GES 100 TA rep speaks for the body of 100 tutorial TAs. The rep attends all 100 Steering Committee meetings. Ideally, the rep is notified of the agenda in advance of each meeting to allow time to confer with the TA constituency in order adequately participate in discussions on proposed policy changes that directly affect TAs and students. The 100 TA rep will help informally mediate issues between TAs and students or instructors. The rep will liaise with the PSAC local 901 English Department Steward(s), and inform her/him/them of any issues that cannot be informally resolved, after which the Steward(s) will begin the Grievance Procedure as outlined by the local and/or the PSAC local 901 Collective Agreement. The GES 100 representative is entitled to request a meeting of the Steering Committee at any time in order to address issues

arising from instructors, TAs, and students. In the event the 100 TA Rep position is vacant, a PSAC local 901 Steward may act in the position.

#### **17. PSAC Local 901 English Department Steward(s)**

Departmental Steward(s) are responsible for maintaining contact with PSAC local 901. She/he/they must be a current TA or TF, have an awareness of the issues TAs and TFs face in the English Department, and advocate on behalf of fellow GES members who are TAs or TFs at the Department level. She/he/they should build an awareness of the local's Collective Agreement in order to help GES members who are TAs/TFs file grievances or inform the local of the issues TAs/TFs experience in the department. She/he/they shall be a liaison between local 901 and TAs/TFs that are GES members. This Steward will also liaise with the 100 TA rep to ensure GES members who TA/TF have several avenues for recourse, should an issue arise. Departmental Steward(s) are responsible for attending monthly Steward Council meetings of PSAC local 901, and for reporting information back to the GES membership in a timely fashion after Steward Council meetings.

#### **18. CTL and Queen's Pedagogy Commons Facilitator**

This position is responsible for keeping GES members aware of all opportunities offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. This position is also responsible for promoting the Queen's Pedagogy Commons (QPC) within the department and petitioning for new essays twice a year. In consultation with our faculty liaison/mentor (currently Maggie Berg), this position will work with the Computer Liaison to maintain this aspect of the GES website.

#### **Statement of Intent for the Queen's Pedagogy Commons:**

The Queen's Pedagogy Commons is intended to be a site for the free exchange of research on pedagogical issues facing graduate students and teaching fellows. This research may take the form of a short essay, draft teaching philosophy, book review, infographic, personal account of teaching experiences, annotated bibliography or any other relevant research that may be helpful to fellow grad students. The exchange of such materials is intended to produce a usable archive of relevant teaching material for graduate students who are currently developing a Teaching Dossier and completing the PUTL certificate program at the CTL. The third certificate (of four) requires that a student produce a "literature review" on an "aspect of university teaching and learning that interests you and is linked with your own teaching." The CTL also suggests that students disseminate their work. While each student will need to submit their work individually to the CTL to earn the certificate, the Queen's Pedagogy Commons will function as a venue for this aspect of the certificate, provide valuable material for a student's Teaching Dossier, and offer students the opportunity to include a non-peer reviewed essay to their list of publications.

#### **Guidelines for the Maintenance of the Queen's Pedagogy Commons:**

The facilitator for the Queen's Pedagogy Commons is responsible to distribute an informal call for papers twice a year to members of the GES. Upon receiving the submissions, the facilitator will compile them into a neat package for the Faculty Liaison/Mentor. The purpose of the Liaison/Mentor is to ensure high academic standards of the submissions, offer short revisions, and mentor students. All submissions will be accepted and posted on the website once the recommended revisions have been completed. All contributors will have the ability to remove an essay at any time. The

facilitator must work closely with the Computer Liaison and assist them in all aspects of the QPC portion of the website.