

Graduate Physics Society Orientation

Felix Thiel, GPS president



Who is the Graduate Physics Society ?

Well, lets ask the constitution...

The Queen's Graduate Physics Society (GPS) represents the academic, professional, and financial interests of graduate students within the Department of Physics, Engineering Physics, and Astronomy.

Our aims are to improve working standards and academic community, to engage in activities that benefit our members; including social, educational, and research events; and to create professional development opportunities including academic outreach, education, and networking.

The GPS acts as the representative of graduate students within the Department in all professional and private contexts, and engages only in activities that have been democratically approved through open discussion and majority vote by the members.

All current full or part-time MSc, MASc, or PhD students in the Department of Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy are automatically members of the GPS.

....that was a lot of legal speak so who is GPS?



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We continuously try to improve the academic experience and opportunities for graduate students in the physics department

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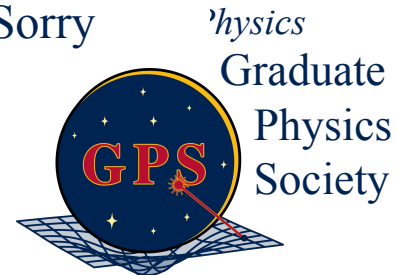
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We all are the GPS (except all the other non-students in the room, Sorry Aaron et al.)



Most of us have two lives

Students, researchers, physicists

For concerns with

- Course offerings, the curriculum
- thesis research
- any academia-related concerns
- Infrastructure in the physics department

Talk to your GPS executives, or Aaron or Julie

Teaching Assistants

For concerns with

- Your duty as a TA
- Exceeding your allocated TA hours
- Safety concerns while teaching undergrad courses or labs
- Not receiving your TA pay or contract

Talk to our union stewards (Nick and Paul)



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TA

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Governance

Executive Committee

- President
- Vice-president
 - Socials committee (2 members + VP)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- SGPS Representative
- Sports Organizer
- Union Stewards (2)
- Web Administrator

Representative Committee (variable)

- Graduate Steering Committee Rep
- Colloquium Committee Rep
- EDII Committee Rep
- Public Outreach Rep
- (If necessary) Appointments Rep



Governance



Felix Thiel

President



Minya Bai

Vice-President



Alex Hayes

Treasurer



Callista Sullivan

Secretary



Dhyan Thakkar

SGPS Representative



Nicholas Swidinsky

Union Steward



Paul Hughes

Union Steward



Ryan Curtis

Sports Organizer



Marcus Tamura

Social Committee



Mathieu Perron-Cormier

Social Committee



Mayukh Bagchi

Web Administrator



Jennika McIntosh

Colloquium Rep



Yilda Boukhtouchen

Graduate Steering Rep



Ivanna Boras Vazquez

EDI Representative



Parisa Nozari

Teaching & Outreach Rep



Who to go to if you have complaints

Problems never go away from ignoring them so here is a list of people you can talk to:

- For curriculum related complaints/advice talk to the GSC Rep
- For EDII related complaints/advice talk to the EDII Rep
- For TA-related complaints talk to the union stewards
- For problems that affect students across departments talk to the SGPS rep
- Anything else talk to the President or Vice president

Other great people to talk to

- Your Supervisors
- Aaron Vincent (Grad Chair)
- Alex Pedersen (EDII Manager at the McDonald Institute)



We CAN (sometimes successfully) advocate for ourselves

Case Study: The Graduate Wellbeing Survey

Context: We were not happy with our research pay (excluding the TA pay) the cost-of-living in Kingston had outweighed our income significantly for years

Problem: Not all physicists understand our financial struggles, but.....
.... every physicist (hopefully) understands data

Plan: Two graduate students (our GSC Rep Yilda Boukhtouchen and Avani Bhardwaj) with the generous help of Aaron put together a survey to assess our financial situation last April



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Case Study: The Graduate Wellbeing Survey

Outcome: **58% of students completed the survey**, the results were convincing enough to give us a one-time **1200 \$ increase** to our **minimum funding**, and the department agreed to **put forward a plan for yearly increases to our stipends**

Followup: We are currently working on compiling the results in a report that will be circulated in the physics department

Report on the Financial Wellness of Graduate Students in
Queen's Physics, Engineering Physics & Astronomy
Results from a survey held in March and April 2026
Avani Bhardwaj, Yilda Boukhtouchen and Felix Thiel
on behalf of the Queen's Graduate Physics Society (GPS)
September 1, 2026

ing rise of inflation and the increase in cost-of-living (COL) across Canada the
GPS) has conducted a survey to assess the financial situation
and stipends in the Department of Physics, Engineering
We will begin by giving an overview
distribution of rent paid
give an overview

ata such as how much rent individuals pay, what
expense category, how much money is saved at
as, financial pressure, quality of life, as well
graduate students participated in the survey
ere MSc/MASc students versus the true
and international students was roughly
ents are domestic students and 24.8%
s can be seen in Fig. 1



Getting involved

Tier 1: “The bare minimum”

- Attend general meetings, usually 2 hours in duration once per academic term (Fall, Winter, Summer)
- Join the Discord server
- Look out for GPS announcements on Discord and Email
- Time commitment: 0.5 -1 hours per month

Tier 2: “Committee Work”

- Consider nominating yourself for a representative committee position
- Alternatively, join the socials committee and help organizing events
- Time commitment: 2 - however many hours you want it to be

Tier 3: “Executive Work”

- Nominate yourself for an executive position
- Practice your leadership skills and work as a mediator between the department and students
- Time commitment 4- however many hours you want it to be



Other fun stuff!

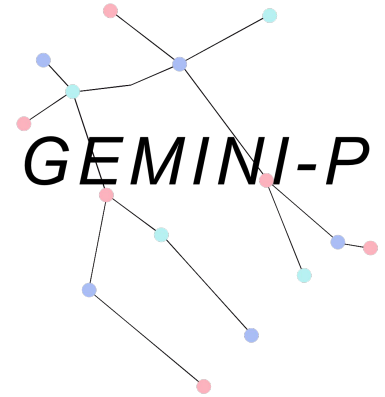
- Board game nights every Tuesday at 6:00 pm in the lounge (Talk to Marcus Tamura, or subscribe on Discord)
- Movie nights (Talk to Mathieu Perron-Cormier)
- Seasonal events:
 - Halloween party
 - End-of-term/ Christmas party with baking competition
 - 12 days of physics
 - Easter egg hunt
 - Hopskotch-a-thon
- Intramurals (Talk to Ryan Curtis), this summer we had:
 - Soccer
 - Volleyball
- Mental Health in Physics Coffee and Cookies every Friday 4 pm in the lounge (Talk to Jon Clarke)
- ... and much more be sure to subscribe to certain activities in #socials-selection on the Discord to learn more
- **If you have ideas organize something, talk to the treasurer if you need money**



Other opportunities outside of GPS

Gender Minorities in Physics (GEMINI-P)

- Gender Equity advocacy group in the physics department
- If you are interested you can reach out to gemini-p@queensu.ca
- Joint events with GPS
- Movie nights



Outreach with the Queen's Observatory

- Located on the rooftop of Ellis Hall, and student run
- Open house generally every 2nd Saturday of the month
- Stay tuned for a call for volunteers
- Reach out to observatory coordinators Parisa Nozari (21pn10@queensu.ca) and Julian Caza (j.caza@queensu.ca)

