

University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society
Graduate Representative Council
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM) MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2022, 5-7 PM

Elected Academic Unit Reps Attending:

Anthropology: Rachel Hooton	Studies: Weiyi Liu	Narayana
Art History and Visual Studies: Megan Austin	Electrical and Computer Engineering: Amer Kumar, Anushka Singh	Pacific and Asian Studies: Ivan Garcimartin Carmona
Biochemistry & Microbiology: Ladan Kalani (GSS Electoral Officer)	English: Lucie Kotěšovská	Physics and Astronomy: Samuel Fielder
Biology: Sarah Lane, Talen Rimmer	Environmental Studies: Lauren Burton	Public Health & Social Policy: Zackary Derrick
Business: Ethan Sun	French: Cédric Trahan	Sociology: Tyler Branston
Chemistry: Greg Gaube	Greek and Roman Studies: Alix Galumbeck	Theatre: Barbara Clerihue
Civil Engineering: Prakriti Raizada	Health Information Science: Dee Dee Wong, Evangeline Wagner	Writing: Hana Mason
Computer Science: Andrea Nguyen	Linguistics: Rosemary Webb	
Curriculum and Instruction: Lindsay Beal	Medical Sciences/Neuroscience: Kamal	
Educational Psychology and Leadership		

GSS Executive Board (1 vote per elected Board member) Present:

Chair: Summer OKIBE	Director of Services: Wyatt MADDUX
Director of Communications: Nicole KENT	Director of Student Affairs: Nahid SAFARI
Director of Finance: Bobby BICKLEY	Executive Director: Kyla TURNER (non-voting)

Invited Guests: None.

Recorder: GSS Governance Coordinator: Karen L. Potts

Regrets:

Earth & Ocean Sciences: Moronke Harris
Law: Kirsty Broadhead
Nursing: Lorilee Scott
Psychology: Heba Elgharbawy, Cian Dabrowski
Public Administration: Stephanie Dahling
CUPE 4163: Courtney Gauthier

CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CALL TO ORDER

OKIBE called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

OKIBE noted that it is the GSS practice to keep our cameras on during Zoom meetings to be supportive of the speaker and encourage participation.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Councillors (non-Executive Board members) are asked to take a turn to provide a personal statement of land acknowledgement. Sign up sheet for land acknowledgement and timekeeping is in the GRC Meetings folder.

DERRICK provided a personal land acknowledgement.

STANDING ITEMS

A. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: RESOLVED that the agenda is approved as presented.
M/S OKIBE, on behalf of the Executive Board/BURTON
Approved by CONSENT

B. TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER

CARMONA volunteered as timekeeper.

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: RESOLVED that the Minutes of the July 26th, 2022 GRC meeting are approved as presented.
M/S LANE/ NARAYANA
APPROVED by Consent.

D. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES/PAST MEETINGS

LEAD: POTTS

POTTS introduced the GRC motion log. Councillors are asked to review minutes from the previous meeting and the meeting motion/task log. Anyone assigned a task at a previous meeting is asked to provide an update. This is also the time on the agenda for Councillors to ask follow-up questions on previously assigned tasks and motions.

E. MEMBERSHIP REPORT, MEETING QUORUM AND ATTENDANCE

GSS Membership: As of September 20, 2022 there are 3161 GSS Members.

GRC Membership: GRC now consists of representatives from 29 academic units (out of 45 academic units eligible), 1 CUPE representative, and 5 Executive Board members.

Meeting Quorum: With 4 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 16. At the call to order, there were 29 voting members present. The meeting is quorate.

F. CHAIR'S REMARKS

OKIBE welcomed all the new and returning reps. The 2022-23 Executive Board introduced themselves.

G. EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS – INTRODUCTION

LEAD: GALUMBECK, POTTS

REF DOCS: [Executive Board Reports April-August 2022](#)

GALUMBECK noted that Councillors are required to read the Executive Board reports prior to the meeting. One of the 3 main roles of the GRC is to provide oversight of the Executive Board. This will be the time on the agenda to ask any follow up questions of the Executive.

The Stipend Review Committee will be doing a thorough read of all Executive Reports and will be recommending those reports/work that meet the expectations of the Director's portfolio and contribution to the Executive Board to approved.

H. COUNCILLOR REPORTS AND INFORMATION SHARING

LEAD: OKIBE AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

Councillors shared the issues and interests that prompted them to volunteer for Grad Council.

As being a conduit for two-way communication between members and the GSS is a major role for Councillors, members were encouraged to show up whenever grad students in their unit are gathering. It was noted that sending out an email and saying 'come to me' usually yields poor results. Talking to other grad students when they are already gathering and talking is a good way to make connections.

Members are encouraged to have their update recorded in the official minutes by emailing their report to gssgov@uvic.ca for inclusion.

I. APPOINTMENTS

LEAD: POTTS

a. GRC Standing Committees

All Councillors are required to sit on at least one GRC Standing Committee. Councillors were given the opportunity to give their preferences for committee assignment prior to the meeting. Those Councillors willing to volunteer for more than one committee were given preference to sit on the more 'popular' committees. Those Councillors who did not submit their preference form on time were assigned to committees based on the most need.

MOTION: RESOLVED that GRC members are appointed to the 2022-23 GRC Committees as follows:

Appeals:

*Dee Dee Wong
Lucie Kotěšovská
Ethan Sun
Andrea Nguyen
Cédric Trahan
Cian Dabrowski*

Bylaw and Policy:

*Ladan Kalani
Zackary Derrick
Evangeline Wagner
Sindhu Merwin
Kamal Narayana
Barbara Clerihue
Moronke Harris*

Communication:

*Hana Mason
Samuel Fielder
Sarah Roberts
Weiyi Liu
Anushka Singh
Matthew Somerville
Rosemary Webb
Megan Austin*

Events:

*Sarah Roberts
Sarah Lane
Andrea Nguyen
Anushka Singh
Matthew Somerville
Stephanie Dahling*

Finance:

*Alix Galumbeck
Kirsty Broadhead
Amer Kumar
David Serrano Suarez
Heba Elgharbawy
Hossein Rahmati
Lorilee Scott*

Student Affairs:

*Weiyi Liu
Kamal Narayana
Tyler Branston
Rachel Hooton
Lauren Burton
Prakriti Raizada
Gregory Gaube
Lindsay Beal
Courtney Gauthier*

Stipend Review:

*Dee Dee Wong
Ivan Garcimartin Carmona
Evangeline Wagner
Alix Galumbeck
Talen Rimmer*

Electoral Appeals:

*Dee Dee Wong
Evangeline Wagner
Sarah Roberts
Andrea Nguyen*

M/S FIELDER/GALUMBECK

APPROVED by Consent.

b. UVic Committees

Under the GSS Bylaws, all Councillors are encouraged to sit on at least one UVic committee to represent graduate student interests.

Nominations were taken for six UVic committee vacancies, and representatives were ratified.

Motion: RESOLVED to elect Lauren Burton as the graduate student representative to the UVic 2022-23 Faculty of Social Sciences, Awards and Recognition Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED to elect Rachel Hooten and Tyler Branston as the graduate student co-representatives to the UVic 2022-23 Faculty of Social Sciences, Graduate Curriculum Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED to elect Rachel Hooten as the graduate student representative to the UVic 2022-23 Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Dean's Advisory Forum on Indigenization.

FURTHER RESOLVED to elect Lucie Kotěšovská as the graduate student representative to the UVic 2022-23 Faculty of Humanities Council.

FURTHER RESOLVED to elect Amer Kumar as the graduate student representative to the UVic 2022-23 Student Life Grants Committee.

FURTHER RESOLVED to elect Zackary Derrick as the graduate student representative to the UVic 2022-23 Faculty of Social Sciences, STUA Student Advisory Committee.

M/S CLERIHUE/TRAHAN

APPROVED by Consent.

BREAK

MEETING NEW BUSINESS

1. CHAIR'S REMARKS – PART II – REFLECTING ON THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

OKIBE reflected on the issues raised during the first part of the meeting, and offered some thoughts on connecting the issues to current GSS work, or possible steps for action or referral. From today's roundtable discussion OKIBE specifically noted the concern regarding funding, and emphasized the role of GRC Councillors to reach out to graduate students especially to let them know that the GSS exists.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE GSS 2022-23 ANNUAL PLAN

REF DOC: see APPENDIX A

Lead: MADDOX

MADDOX presented the Annual Plan of the Executive Board for the remainder of their 2022-23 term. MADDOX noted that this plan is about the priorities and energy. Previous Boards have had to focus on COVID and emergency planning. This Board recognizes that there have been issues left out during these past years and feel that with COVID being managed, they are able to get back to the other issues.

The main priorities for this year's Board are:

- a. Events
- b. Housing
- c. Communications
- d. BC graduate scholarship grant
- e. Research Assistant employment status

The full text of the Annual Plan is found in Appendix A.

MOTION: RESOLVED that the GSS Executive Board Annual Plan has been received and reviewed by the 2022-23 Graduate Representative Council.

M/S GALUMBECK/RIMMER
APPROVED by Consent.

CLOSING ITEMS

REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES:

POTTS explained that this will be the time on the agenda to hear reports from graduate student representatives on:

- Board of Governors:
- Senate:
- Faculty of Graduate Studies Council:
- UVic Advisory Committees:
- UVic Award Committees:
- UVic Search and Hiring Committees:
- UVic Faculty Committees:

Note: Representatives are encouraged to submit short written reports to gssgov@uvic.ca for inclusion in the minutes.

GRC COMMITTEE, ELECTORAL OFFICER REPORTS

POTTS explained that this will be the time on the agenda for reports from the GRC Standing Committees, as well as the Electoral Officer.

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

POTTS noted that this will be a regular time on the agenda for any GRC member participating in a group or issue to request support or participation from other graduate students. Bring information about rallies, events, good information and resource links and be ready to post in the CHAT!

NOTICES OF MOTION FOR NEXT MEETING

Please see Appendix B for a GRC Agenda Item template.

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS: CHECK YOUR [GRC CONNECT HOMEPAGE CALENDAR!](#)

Oct. 5th return of Wed coffee

Oct. 20th Burger night

GRC training session: Introduction to AGMs: Monday, October 24, 4-5 pm.

Next General Meeting: AGM October 25, 2022

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of October 4, 2022.
- Agenda, Notice of Motions to be posted: October 11, 2022

Next GRC meeting: November 29th, 2022.

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of November 17th, 2022.
- Agenda to be posted: November 22nd, 2022

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: RESOLVED that the meeting is adjourned.

M/S KALANI/WAGNER

APPROVED by Consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

klp/

X



Summer OKIBE
GSS Chair 2022-23

X



Kyla Turner
GSS Executive Director

SEPTEMBER 27TH APPENDIX A: 2022-23 GSS EXECUTIVE BOARD ANNUAL PLAN

Graduate Students Society Annual Plan 2022-2023

The previous two years have seen the onset and continued impacts of the global COVID-19 Pandemic. Graduate students have been significantly affected by travel restrictions, isolation mandates, and the move to online school. As this board is initiated, many restrictions have been lifted, and general life is shifting towards familiar normals. Reestablishing the trajectory of the Graduate Students Society's advocacy from COVID-related responses to the short and long-term support of the members is foundational to this annual plan. We thank the previous two boards for their ceaseless advocacy in ensuring the safety of our members and access to education for all during the height of the pandemic.

In creating this annual plan, the GSS Board has considered many causes and issues impacting graduate students, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalized. Critical housing needs, lack of community cohesion, and chronic underfunding represent the most pressing issues University of Victoria graduate students are facing. In identifying these issues, which require both short-term and long-term solutions, the GSS Board has chosen to target advocacy campaigns and direct energy to those goals that are achievable within the board term (April 2022-March 2023) in order to maximize timely impact. We believe that this plan will set up our successors on the next GSS Executive Board for success in improving housing availability, funding equity, and community development.

Events

Due to increased health and safety-based responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by public health authorities, the GSS and political governing bodies in 2020 and 2021 restricted the abilities of the GSS to deliver in-person events and services to students. The isolation imposed on students by well-warranted mandates resulted in deteriorating community mentality for current students and absent foundational connections for incoming students. As a core pillar of the GSS and one of four constitutional mandates, it is imperative to provide engaging community-stimulating events.

Events will be centred on community building to facilitate a sense of comradery, peer support, and inter-faculty cooperation for graduate students. In particular, programming will be designed to promote the engagement of international students, marginalized students, and students with families. Priority in event planning is to broaden the range of events to capture the interest and accessibility of all students. Regular events will occur weekly, biweekly, and monthly to maximize community building through routine availability. Hybridizing of events to provide accessibility to students off-campus or facing other barriers will promote the inclusion of previously underserved members. To foster community, the GSS aims to develop a robust event schedule with accessible, safe, and community-building events.

These will include the return of Wednesday Coffee, a weekly meet-and-greet event with free coffee for GSS members, the re-opening of the Grad House restaurant with regular events like trivia nights, and monthly events organized by the Events Committee.

Housing

In recent years, rental housing costs in Greater Victoria have increased significantly (20% from October 2020

to November 2021, Chek News). In September 2021, student feedback on public forums indicated that high cost (>\$1,600 1 bd, >\$2,600 2 bd, CBC), lack of availability (<1%, 0.2% for 2 bedrooms, VicNews), and scams were causing some students to reconsider attending UVic. These issues are predicted to worsen in the coming school year. Many students that secured accommodation are living in sub-standard and often illegal conditions while attending UVic. The impact of short-term rentals on the vacancy rate is currently under investigation by the City of Victoria and garden suite construction has been legalized in the District of Saanich. These approaches do not address the short-term ramifications of the housing crisis on students.

UVic administration has requested the support of the GSS in petitioning the Provincial Government to allow further debt to cover the cost of building on-campus infrastructure for graduate students. The GSS supports UVic in this approach and will commit to furthering this agenda. We have further been asked to guide UVic administration in the design of the next planned dormitory build: a live-learn space for graduate students. This consultation provides the GSS with opportunities to address both the need for family and mature student housing, as well as dedicated work spaces for graduate students. As a long-term goal and process, this proposal does not address the current housing issues.

We will continue to work with the UVic offices for Campus Planning and Community and Government Relations to petition the municipalities of the southern island to allow for significant long-term increases to the rental housing market, including:

1. Supporting In-Fill (garden suite, small apartment, etc.) Housing in Oak Bay
2. Supporting Secondary Suites (basement suites, etc.) in Saanich
3. Supporting further builds of apartment buildings in Cadboro Bay

To ensure graduate students are not declining positions or forfeiting their studies at UVic due to housing concerns, the GSS will undertake a strategy of letter writing/petitioning campaign, approaching news outlets, and supporting UVic in advocacy with government relations to ensure adequate, affordable, and available housing to UVic Graduate Students.

The primary goals that the GSS seeks are increased rental protections in Provincial and Municipal law, faster response times and better support from the Provincial Residential Tenancy Board (currently 4-6 month wait for response to concerns), and improved minimum standards for rental units including external inspections of rental spaces for health and safety concerns.

Additionally, we are supporting a petition started by the GSS at the University of British Columbia calling on Minister David Eby, Minister for Housing, to implement a rent freeze for 2023. This call for a rent freeze is supported by GSSes around BC, and we are working with the UVSS to ensure the Capital Regional District is targeted explicitly as a high-cost area.

Communications

Dissemination of information from the GSS to the membership is a prominent issue due to the lack of direct communication tools available. According to the BC Societies Act Section 20 - 1(h):

Records to be kept:

(1)A society must keep the following records:

(h)the society's register of members, organized by different classes of members if different classes exist, including contact information provided by each member;

The current information policy between UVic and the GSS does not provide the GSS with contact information for members as required by the Societies Act. As a result, GSS information must be disseminated through an opt-in bulletin ([link to sign up here](#)), the GSS website, faculty administrative staff (at a low volume), social media, and the marquee letter sign near the bus loop. This does not provide the direct communication required for appropriate contact with membership to ensure services provided by the GSS are accessible.

To bring the GSS in line with the legal requirements of the Societies Act, a new policy will be drafted in cooperation with UVic to ensure contact information for all members will be available to the GSS. An appropriate method for receiving, maintaining, securing, and destroying records will be developed within the policy to ensure no breach of privacy may occur. Updates to the privacy policy of the GSS are under development by staff. Changes to the Societies Act by the Ministry of Finance have been confirmed to the GSS. These updates should ensure that the GSS can meet the members' communication obligations by removing restrictions imposed by the university on how we can send emails to all currently enrolled GSS members.

BC Graduate Scholarship and BC Access Grant

The cost of living for students continues to increase in Victoria. Following prior advocacy efforts by the GSS, we have an opportunity to coordinate with other graduate student societies in BC to improve access to public funding sources. The two specific funding sources we would like to focus on are the BC Graduate Scholarship and the BC Access Grant. The BC Graduate Scholarship is available only to Canadian citizens and Permanent Residents and is more likely to support students conducting research in STEM fields. The BC Access grant is available to non-Citizen and/or non-PR students who meet the criteria for either low or middle income; however, it is not applicable for graduate students.

Next steps:

The GSS will conduct a campaign, possibly aligned with graduate student orientation, to inform its members about the current availability of the BC Graduate Scholarship. The BC Graduate Scholarship has recently been renewed for two years; however the GSS supports sending a robust slate of applicants to this scholarship to demonstrate the need for this source of funding to become a permanent government program. We are also seeking to increase funding to UVic from \$630,000 to \$750,000.

We will maintain our collaborations with the GSSBC and continue working on expanding the availability of these resources to more significant numbers of students. In particular, the BC Access Grant is a needs-based award that, if available to graduate students, would improve access and equity for graduate students living near or below the poverty line. Fortunately, other board members of GSSBC are interested in this campaign, and we can create a joint action campaign regarding the expansion of these fundings.

RA Employment Status

The role and relative importance of research assistantships (RAs) varies widely in various graduate programs at UVic. Still, it is the view of the GSS that the work completed by students in an RA is a valuable resource to the university as well as the host departments. As such, we would like to move toward employee status for students completing RAs as part of, or in addition to, their graduate degrees. This would bring employment

opportunities for graduate students at UVic in line with other research-focused universities that facilitate research training opportunities for graduate students. These RA-ships form an integral part of the professionalization training for research-focused graduate students.

We will collaborate with the UVic EQHR and VP-Research and Innovation departments to make hiring practices for RAs more equitable and transparent through creating a centralized job board for RAships and encouraging principal investigators to apply for a minimum of the living wage for grant-funded RAs.

We aim to promote improved supervisor-employee relationships by advocating for the integration of constructive and accessible materials and workshops for each party. Collaboration with the Ombudsperson will be ongoing to create tools for resolving conflict and improving communication.

SEPTEMBER 27TH APPENDIX B: REPORTS

Zachary DERRICK: Human and Social Development Faculty Council:

The elected student representatives on HSD Faculty council have been working together to improve student voices at the faculty level. Derrick was on the Constitution Working Group and can report that the revised Constitution now includes student representatives on all faculty committees.