

## University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

## Graduate Representative Council

## MEETING MINUTES

DECEMBER 17, 2024, 5-7 PM

**Executive Board Invited (1 vote per member):****Chair:** Wyatt Maddox**Director of Internal/University Relations:****Director of Finance:** Samuel Fielder**Director of Student Life:** Maggie Lawton**Director of External Relations:** Jitendra Palaparty**Executive Director (non-voting):** Kyla Turner**Elected Academic Unit Reps Invited (1 vote per academic unit):**

Anthropology: <b>Semyon Drozdetsckii</b>	Electrical & Computer Engineering: <b>Victor Marrugat Arnal &amp; Mahmoud Chick Zaouali</b>	Interdisciplinary Studies:	Public Health & Social Policy:
Art History and Visual Studies: <b>Sarah Roberts</b>	English: <b>Kerri Li</b>	Law: <b>Katarina Sawchuk</b>	Social Dimensions of Health: <b>Luiza Costa &amp; Kathryn Stone</b>
Biochemistry & Microbiology: <b>Gillian Leach / Liam Mihalynuk</b>	Environmental Studies: <b>Lauren Burton</b>	Mathematics and Statistics: <b>Khai Quigley</b>	Social Work:
Biology: <b>Muskan Karmani</b>	Exercise Science, Phys. & Health Ed: <b>Isaac Barss &amp; Maryam Sheikh</b>	Mechanical Engineering: <b>Maziyar Khadivi &amp; Bernardo Leite</b>	Sociology: <b>Neve Sugars-Keen &amp; Jasmine Padam</b>
Business: <b>Jenna Mahlmann</b>	French: <b>Jacqueline Rutherford</b>	Medical Sciences/Neuroscience: <b>Dhwani Sura</b>	Theatre:
Chemistry: <b>Jesse Delmage &amp; Phillip Jurek</b>	Geography: <b>Adam Regier &amp; Hazim Ismail</b>	Music: <b>Talietha Sangha</b>	Visual Arts:
Child & Youth Care:	Germanic & Slavic Studies:	Nursing:	Writing:
Civil Engineering: <b>Samira (Sami) Sarkardei</b>	Greek and Roman Studies: <b>Luke Montgomery</b>	Pacific and Asian Studies: <b>Bryce Bartsch &amp; Delaney Johnson</b>	CUPE:
Computer Science:	Health Information Science: <b>Marian Kaine &amp; Ghita Hajjami</b>	Philosophy: <b>Yukio Jamieson-Burns</b>	Other Programs:
Curriculum & Instruction: <b>Iram Zahra &amp; Samim Nikbakht</b>	Hispanic & Italian Studies:	Physics and Astronomy: <b>Olivia Moluchi &amp; Nathan Clements</b>	
Earth & Ocean Science: <b>Stacy Edmonsond &amp; Nadiya Shore</b>	History: <b>Joan Kelly</b>	Political Science: <b>Michael Chutskoff</b>	
Economics:	Indigenous Education:	Psychology: <b>Nazanin Babaei</b>	
Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies: <b>Yasmeen Barakat</b>	Indigenous Governance: <b>Ali Malhi</b>	Public Administration: <b>Jeremy Perkins &amp; Marry Ann Sing</b>	

**Recorder:** Irfan Tanveer, Governance Coordinator**Invited Guests:**

**Regrets Received:** Samira Sarkardei, Nadiya Shore, Lauren Burton, Yukio Jamieson-Burns, Nazanin Babaei, Mary Ann Sing, Delaney Johnson, Iram Zahra/Shamim Nikahkt, Maziyar Khadivi/Bernardo Leite

**Absent without regrets:** Semyon Drozdetskii, Muskan Karmani, Jenna Mahlmann, Kerri Li, Adam Regier/Hazim Ismail, Khai Quigley, Luiza Costa/Kathryn Stone

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND OPENING ITEMS

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CALL TO ORDER 5:00 PM

Meeting called to order by MADDUX at 5:05pm.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 5:01 PM

Councillors are asked to provide a personal, meaningful statement of land acknowledgement.

Today's personal land acknowledgement will be provided by PERKINS.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA 5:05

*MOTION: to approve the agenda as presented.*

*M/S: Executive Board/ROBERTS*

*CARRIED*

TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER 5:10

Today's timekeeper was RUTHERFORD.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT, MEETING QUORUM AND ATTENDANCE 5:12

**GSS Membership:** As of October 3, 2024 the GSS has 3099 members.

**Meeting Quorum:** With 9 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 15.

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## REPORTS AND OPEN DIALOGUE

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CHAIR'S REMARKS 5:13

MADDUX updated GRC on the goings on of the Executive Board. The Board has recently completed both annual performance reviews and triennial job descriptions reviews with both managers. The Board has also reviewed their Annual Plan in the board meeting this morning and will review it again in the New Year to ensure that they meet all their goals.

GRC COMMITTEE, ELECTORAL OFFICER REPORTS, UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS 5:18

- **Advocacy and Campaigns:** PALAPARTY reported that Advocacy and Campaigns received a report from Bryce on the available municipal recreation and athletics centres close to UVic. The committee is currently started working on initiative is more accessible and affordable recreation. The advocacy and campaign committee will raise the issue of renaming the ATRS fee in the UPASS package to the next Operational Relations meeting. Furthermore, the committee also discussed more helpful options for international students.
- **Appeals:** FIELDER noted that all submitted appeals were reviewed and letters have gone out informing appellants of the results.

- **Bylaw & Policy:** MADDUX reported that BPC met and approved amendments to Bylaw 14.4 Funds of the Society, as well as the Electoral Appeals policy and committee terms of reference. SAWCHUK mentioned that committee discussed about future projects like By-Law 15 regarding Non-Partisanship. This will help ensure to capture more funding opportunities.
- **Events:** LAWTON reported that all January events have been planned and that the Events committee is massively productive and researching new event ideas now. RUTHERFORD reported that the craft market and sugar cookie decorating event went very well, and a student expressed appreciation for organizing these events at the GSS. RUTHERFORD also announced upcoming social events, including a hot chocolate and brownie social on Wednesday, January 8th. Additionally, RUTHERFORD noted that the Events Committee has proposed organizing skating and a pub crawl. PALAPARTY inquired if anyone involved during the event would require assistance or training at the skating center. LAWTON confirmed that the group would attend the center as planned. Lastly, RUTHERFORD shared that the float for Pride will not be pursued due to a lack of volunteers.
- **Finance:** FIELDER reported that Finance Committee has booked the staff budget consultation and will shortly book the Board's consultation. FIELDER mentioned that only non-fixed costs can be adjusted. Additionally, the board has completed management performance reviews and approved raises for management for the upcoming year. MARIAN inquired about the source of fixed-cost funding. TURNER explained that student societies are primarily funded by student fees, with most of the funding coming from student tuition accounts, as outlined in the University Act. TURNER also noted that some funding is provided by UVic to support graduate student events.
- **Stipend Review:** JAMIESON-BURNS reported that SRC met and approved all November Board reports as well as top ups for the board members who have gone significantly over hours.
- **Electoral Officer:** QUALTER no report.

#### GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS 5:28

Are there any reps who need to change their GRC committee? Please speak up now!

*MOTION: to accept withdraw of Jeremy Perkins from Checks and Balances Committee and accept the appointment of Jeremy Perkins to Bylaw and policy committee.*

*M/S: MADDUX and LAWTON.*

*CARRIED*

#### OPEN DIALOGUE AND REPORTS 5:35

LEAD: MADDUX discussed operations-related meetings with the university executive, which included topics such as access to garbage bins near the bus stops and graduate student housing.

ROBERTS raised concerns about the state of the bathrooms in the library, noting that they are sometimes poorly maintained and lack necessary toiletries. ROBERTS also mentioned that food costs on campus are excessively high.

PALAPARTY added that the quality of the food does not justify its high cost.

PERKINS noted that the MPA department's Co-op program currently has no available Co-op jobs, even though such positions are exempt from the Provincial government hiring freeze. PERKINS also mentioned being unaware of whether this issue has been adequately addressed. TURNER explained that this problem has persisted since last year, mainly affecting programs that rely heavily on government Co-op placements. TURNER stated that the government hiring freeze is beyond UVic's control. PERKINS suggested that the board advocate for UVic programs to exempt students from mandatory Co-op requirements for graduation under these circumstances.

RUTHERFORD raised concerns about supervisory relations, citing a student in their department who has experienced difficulties in this regard.

ROBERTS added that, in their department, professors complete TA students' reports at the end of the semester. LAWTON shared that this is similar in their department and emphasized the importance of ensuring that students and professors are on the same page regarding the number of hours required.

TURNER noted that TAs are unionized under CUPE 4163 and recommended that students contact CUPE 4163 for any issues related to TA work hours.

LEACH mentioned that students in their department are interested in forming a student society.

TURNER explained that creating a student society involves substantial work, including holding annual general meetings, filing board member information with the BC Registry, conducting audits, preparing bylaws, and establishing a society bank account. There are other options besides forming a society registered with the BC Societies Act, but the GSS has not been able to create a plan to support these associations so far.

BREAK – 5 MINUTES – 5:55 PM

## MEETING NEW BUSINESS

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### 1. WORKSAFE BC UPDATE 6:00

Lead: MADDOX/TURNER

Reference:

For: Discussion

Ben McAllister, UVic's Manager of Risk and Insurance, provided the GSS with information on when graduate student researchers are and are not covered by UVic WorkSafe BC and other insurance products (below). The Board will be meeting with UVic for a discussion on this information and to start advocating for changes. What questions or recommendations would GRC like the GSS to add to the agenda for that meeting?

Ben McALLISTER, Manager, Risk, Insurance and Continuity Planning, provided TURNER a verbal overview of when graduate students are and are not covered by WorkSafe BC.

WorkSafe BC (WSBC) insurance exists to benefit employees injured in the course of their work. Graduate students who are engaged in research or other work *through an employment relationship* with UVic (RA, TA, sessional, etc.) will be covered by WSBC. Academic work and research is covered on a case-by-case basis depending on the exact circumstances in which the injury occurred. In general, academic work and research is *not covered* by WSBC due to the lack of employment relationship. For example, undergrad students completing their lab assignments are not covered by WSBC.

There remain a lot of grey areas for graduate student researchers due to WorkSafe BC adding “trainees” to their definition of worker. UVic and other BC universities are actively seeking clarity from WSBC on the definition of trainees right now.

McALLISTER noted that practica students like nursing and social work students and other work-integrated learning programs generally meet the definition of trainee easily with WSBC. However, graduate students conducting research for their own degrees are generally considered students and not employees. McALLISTER also stated that students are not covered by other UVic insurance products, such as Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance.

McALLISTER and Robin Hicks, Dean of FGS, are working on creating a FAQ sheet to outline when graduate students are covered by UVic insurance products and where they are not. They are also actively exploring ways to cover the gaps. However, there are barriers inherent in the academic vs professional relationship between the university and graduate students in finding solutions here. For example, accessing long-term disability and other forms of employment insurance is reliant on *wages* (scholarships and fellowships are not wages) and insurable work hours. The eligibility criteria for accessing employment insurance is set by the provincial and federal government and the University does not have the ability to change the criteria for grad students.

McALLISTER is aware that UBC offers additional AD&D insurance for graduate student researchers for an additional cost. However, AD&D only covers very significant injuries and leaves gaps in potential coverage. He is examining other insurance product options. He did also note that insurance coverage, particularly no-fault insurance like WSBC, does generally come with the loss of rights to sue the University for the injured student. In the event of a significant research related injury, the appropriate action would likely be for the student to take the university to court for a settlement. UVic does maintain insurance for such cases and accepts that this can be an appropriate outcome in the event of a research-related injury. However, this obviously comes with significant barriers for our members in accessing support after an injury or other loss incurred through their research.

McALLISTER will attend the January 15 Operational Relations (OR) meeting for further discussion with the Executive Board. He will also be sending Robin Hicks drafts of the FAQ sheet for graduate students before the OR meeting and we will likely be able to see the draft before Jan 15.

The GSS would like to hear what additional questions that GRC reps have for McAllister. These included:

PERKINS asked whether the legislation clearly defines the term “trainee,” and suggested that WorkSafe BC might be engaging in unfair administrative practices if this is not well-defined.

ROBERTS asked if students have the right to refuse unsafe work.

LEACH raised concerns about workplace safety, asking how to address situations where an unsafe task is being performed and another individual is in the vicinity.

PALAPARTY inquired whether paid research assistants are covered under WorkSafe BC. TURNER responded that research assistants with an employment offer letter or contract are covered under WorkSafe BC. RA's paid through scholarships, fellowships, etc. are not employees and not covered by WorkSafe BC.

LEACH mentioned that some workplaces are part of "safe communities" programs and suggested checking whether UVic is part of any such initiative.

BERNARDO asked if there could be more explicit communication regarding WorkSafe BC coverage for on-campus and off-campus work.

## 2. JANUARY/FEBRUARY EVENTS UPDATE 6:20

Lead: LAWTON

Reference:

For: Discussion

Maggie to update on what to expect in January from the GSS so GRC reps can build out their social calendars and encourage their colleagues to come out. Also: the Grad House hosts Winter Pride events throughout February. It's super gay and you should come out for it!

Wednesday Jan 8th: Hot chocolate and Brownies social.

Friday Jan 10th: Drag Show

Wednesday Jan 15th: Pancake breakfast.

Thursday Jan 16th: Inner-Outer life Balance Workshop in collaboration with the Student Wellness Centre.

Monday January 20th: Cider and Study event.

Friday Jan 24<sup>th</sup>: Trivia Night with Fierce Brosnan

For additional events, refer to GSS monthly calendar.

## 3. BYLAW 14.4 AMENDMENT 6:25

Lead: MADDOX

Reference: [Bylaw 14.4 Text Amendment](#)

For: Decision

Motion: to approve the amendment to bylaw 14.4, Funds of the Society.

M/S: Bylaw and Policy Committee/FIELDER

Discussion:

MADDOX presented proposed amendments to Bylaw 14.4, Funds of the Society, which currently stipulates that the GSS may receive funds from student fees, sales of goods (e.g., restaurant sales, event tickets, and UPASS/insurance opt-ins), and private endowments. The amendment seeks to expand the funding sources to include government and NGO grants, thereby increasing opportunities to attract additional funding.

LEACH suggested that public donations should also be considered and included in the policy. *TURNER* noted that the Bylaw and Policy Committee should review this feedback, particularly considering the existing conflict-of-interest policy. *TURNER* also mentioned the potential implications of the "pay and play" model *and GSS does not endorse where there is conflict of interest.*

ROBERTS emphasized the importance of ensuring that the bylaw language holds the GSS Board accountable. In response, *TURNER* reiterated that accountability measures are already addressed in the conflict-of-interest policy.

*Outcome:*

*The motion did not proceed.*

*Amendment:*

*"BIRT the item be sent back to the Bylaw and Policy Committee for further review and revisions based on the feedback provided during this meeting."*

Next Step:

The Bylaw and Policy Committee will review the item and present a revised version at a future GRC meeting.

#### 4. FOOD BANK UPDATE 6:30

Lead: MADDIX

Reference: Correspondence from UVSS re: Food Bank referendum

For: Discussion

The UVSS has decided that they are unwilling to consider a fee referendum for the Food Bank due to the low usage among undergrads and the recent increase in UVSS fees. Based on this information, is GRC still in favour of the GSS pursuing a fee referendum to increase the Food Bank fee from \$2.11 to between \$3-5? (Please note that the GSS Food Bank fee increases with inflation each year and is set to increase to \$2.18 regardless of referendum.)

ROBERTS mentioned why UVSS does not feel comfortable contributing more than graduate students and acknowledged UVSS's point but noted that graduate students shouldn't be asked for donations or higher fees as they are the most impacted by reduced funding.

RUTHERFORD asked if this change would make any difference if the GSS does not proceed with this agenda. *TURNER* responded that it would not and added that the GSS has requested a graduate student to be included in the working group going forward.

ROBERTS expressed concern about UVSS's failure to disclose financial information, which raised a red flag.

BERNARDO asked if the GSS could become more involved with the governance of the UVSS food bank within the working group. *TURNER* responded that the UVSS food bank will be striking a joint working group in the New Year.

LAWTON shared that past experiences with UVSS have left the GSS less motivated to contribute more funds to the food bank.

FIELDER stated that previous meetings had mostly rejected the GSS's proposals, and as a result, the board is hesitant to proceed with a joint venture with UVSS for the food bank.

MADDIX noted that UVSS hasn't provided the financial information and, as the chair, feels hesitant

to proceed with the food bank referendum.

ROBERTS stated that the GSS cannot run a referendum campaign given that UVSS is unwilling to provide the necessary information.

BERNARDO inquired about the percentage of contributions from the GSS.

PERKINS explained that when UVSS is struggling with this matter and unwilling to collaborate on running the food bank, it would be a hard no from the GSS.

## STANDING ITEMS 6:40 PM

### APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES (APPENDIX A) 6:40

*MOTION: BIRT the Minutes of the November 26, GRC meeting are approved as presented [OR approved with minor corrections as provided].*

*M/S: ROBERTS/RUTHERFORD*

*CARRIED*

### EXECUTIVE BOARD STIPEND REPORTS – QUESTIONS ARISING AND MOTION TO ACCEPT – 6:42

LEAD: JAMIESON-BURNS

REF DOCS: Executive Board Reports Folder

Councillors are required to read the Executive Board reports prior to the meeting.

*MOTION: to approve the November Board reports as presented.*

*To approve top ups of the following amounts:*

*\$600 to Wyatt Maddox*

*\$200 to Samuel Fielder*

*M/S: Stipend Review Committee/ROBERTS*

*Discussion: PERKINS said that the due to increase work load the stipend review committee decided to offer top-ups to the two board members who consistently went over their hours.*

*PASS with MAJORITY*

*CARRIED*

### REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES 6:45

LEAD: MADDOX

Open Floor to hear any reports from graduate student representatives on:

Committee	Appointment Date	Rep Name
Appointment Committee for the Dean of Science	Sept 2024	Liam Mihalynuk
Faculty of Science EDI Council	Sept 2024	Stacy Edmonsond
Childcare Advisory Committee	Oct 2024	Iram Zahara and Luiza Costa
Appointment Committee – AVP Research	Oct 2024	Maggie Lawton
Society for Students with a Disability Graduate Student Representative	Nov 2024	Jitendra Palaparty



Associate Dean Administration Research and Creative Activity Search committee	Nov 2024	Sarah Roberts

MIHALYNUK – Appointment committee for the Dean of Science appointed Peter Loock as the new Dean of Science and the public presentation by Peter was on Tuesday December 10, 2024. This event was recorded and is viewable to anyone interested in watching it.

Link - <https://www.uvic.ca/faculty-staff/careers/academic-leadership-opportunities/current/dean-scie-review-2024.php> (Netlink ID Required)

For further information reach out to Liam Mihalynuk at - [liammihalynuk@uvic.ca](mailto:liammihalynuk@uvic.ca)

ROBERTS mentioned about the following UVic committees:

1. UVic are rolling out a digital tool for graduates to submit their progress reports. Currently, departments have individual systems for this and may use a PDF. They will slowly be trialling this with different grad departments. The system will flag if a student has not met with their supervisory committee for a period (may depend on the department, e.g. 1 month, 1 per semester).
2. The Sustainability Scholars program will be open for applications in late January; these are May research positions with a community partner. Scholars will be employed as RAs by UVic and will be mentored by a partner organization on a sustainability/circular economy/environmental project. This is open to all units, and international students can apply.
3. FGS are issuing new funding to departments (\$2 million over 2 years); for recruitment of international students. This funding is limited to thesis-based, incoming PhD students only. It will be to assist with the proof of funds needed for a study permit visa. (currently the government requires incoming students to demonstrate at least \$30,000 in available funds for visa purposes).

EDMONSOND mentioned that The Faculty of Science EDI Committee met on December 4. There were two main agenda items:

1. The committee is working to revise the Faculty of Science Charter of Values, which was previously tabled by the faculty council. This document outlines values and principles that are "intended to guide the Faculty of Science's relationships with individuals and is expected that they will guide the interactions of all members within the Faculty of Science". The Charter of Values broadly focuses on establishing principles that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. This document will be circulated to each department for feedback within the next few weeks.
2. The results of the EDI Climate Survey (sent out to all students/staff/faculty last year) are currently being analyzed. These data will be used to recognize barriers that need to be overcome, and will support conversations about EDI training for faculty, bias in hiring processes, and preferential hiring practices. Preliminary results were shared during the meeting. One important finding is that most graduate students were not familiar with the

process/resources available for reporting EDI-related issues. Overall, people were also more comfortable talking about EDI-related issues within their departments, rather than outside (perhaps related to lack of familiarity with other available resources). More detailed results will be shared with the UVic community once the analysis is complete.

Reps are encouraged to submit short written reports to [gssgov@uvic.ca](mailto:gssgov@uvic.ca) for inclusion in the minutes.

#### GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES (APPENDIX B) 6:50

LEAD: TANVEER

Reps are asked to sit on a UVic committee(s) to ensure grad student interests are represented.

*MOTION: to elect graduate student representatives to the following UVic committees:*

*Committee: Appointment Committee for the President and Vice-Chancellor*

*Member: Wyatt MADDUX*

*M/S: FIELDER/ROBERTS*

*CARRIED*

#### REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION 6:55

LEAD: MADDUX

Opportunity 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!

BERNARDO said that tomorrow is the last happy hour for CUPE 4163 TA's and encouraged everyone to come with their questions. The happy hour will be at 7 p.m.

#### IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS:

LEAD: MADDUX

Next General Meeting: GSS Semi-Annual General Meeting March 25, 2025

- Agenda to be posted: March 11, 2025

Next GRC Meeting: January 28, 2025

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of January 14, 2025
- Agenda to be posted: January 21, 2025

Office, Staff Scheduling Notes: The GSS will be closed December 23-January 3 inclusive for Winter Break.

#### ADJOURNMENT

*MOTION: BIRT the meeting is adjourned.*

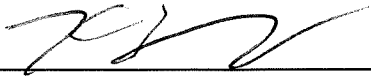
*M/S: WYATT/BERNARDO*

*CARRIED*

X 

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Wyatt MADDUX  
GSS Chair 2024-25

X 

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Kyla TURNER  
GSS Executive Director

