

2025-26 Bylaw and Policy Committee Annual Report

October 28, 2025 AGM

Membership

Chair: Rosemary Webb

2024-25 members:

- Semyon Drozdetskii
- Bernardo Leite
- Jasmine Padam
- Jeremy Perkins
- Katarina Sawchuk
- Kyla Turner, ex-officio, non-voting
- Irfan Tanveer, ex-officio, non-voting

2025-26 members:

- Maren Akyürek
- Josie Hill
- Chidimma Ike
- Jasmine Padam
- Melody Ray
- Andrea Sadowski
- Ruyan Wang
- Annie Wu
- Kyla Turner, ex-officio, non-voting
- Irfan Tanveer, ex-officio, non-voting

Duties of the Committee

The Bylaw and Policy Committee is responsible for overseeing and proposing changes to the governance documents of the GSS. The Committee responds to the needs of the Society through referrals and requests of staff, members, the Graduate Representative Council (GRC), and the Executive Board. Changes should follow the steps outlined in the Bylaw & Policy Committee workflow chart, as dictated by the existing bylaws, policies, and the Societies Act.

Overview of Work Completed

Over the summer, the Committee finalized momentous work on the amendment to Bylaw 15 (Non-partisanship) which was suggested before I took over as Chair from Wyatt Maddox. The Committee did an exceptional job on this bylaw development! Previously the bylaw read “The Society is non-partisan and shall not endorse any political party or candidate for public office.” Now the Bylaw is extremely well fleshed-out and developed thanks in particular to work by Kyla, Irfan, and Katarina. Big thanks to all the

2024-25 members for their comments. We also did a couple quick fixes on some outdated pronouns in Bylaws 4 and 14 (moving from his/her to their, her/him to them).

As for policies, the Committee also oversaw the cleanup of our Governance Manual, which was a mess to navigate: multiple policies with the same number, a non-functional table of contents, inconsistent formatting, and some outdated/duplicitous content. Although Committee members may have felt like this work was tedious and boring, since we completed the project, we have a much more unified and usable Governance Manual. Huge shoutout to Irfan for the nitpicky final touches on formatting! There are still sections of the Governance Manual that need revising, and our working document reflects this, but the publicly available version is at least much better to look at. Updated policies include:

- Policy 9 (Appendix B), verifying and updating the list of UVic and external committees we have representation on (thank you Bernardo!)
- Policy 17 (Appendix C), updating the Executive Board stipend amounts (thank you Jeremy!)
- Policy 20, ensuring the information covered in existing staff Collective Agreement is not unnecessarily added into the Governance Manual (thank you Semyon!)
- Policy 30, adjusting the dollar amounts allotted to staff per diem in the case of attending out-of-town conferences, since we found out after sending Kyla and Abby Fleck to Montreal that the amounts were wildly insufficient for the 2025 economy (thank you again Jeremy!)
- Policies 40-48, updating Terms of Reference for our GRC committees (thank you Jasmine!)
- Adjusting all references to the BCUWU Collective Agreement for the relevant dates (2025-28); removing all hyperlinks (possibility of them being broken now or in the future); ensuring all references to Board positions are with the current position titles; adjusting process and language used in “accountability reports” in Policy 17; creation of a formatting style guide for future revisions (myself!)

Finally, Irfan worked with Kyla to develop a primer document meant for the incoming Electoral Officer to better understand their position responsibilities and timelines. It outlines the policies, procedures, and bylaws governing the Electoral Officer's role. The document was also checked by Semyon, our current Electoral Officer. This will be a great resource for those stepping into the role in the future!

Overview of Incomplete and Outstanding Work

Upcoming for this year's work is a review of our Constitution, which has been in place unrevised since the GSS' conception. We are planning a thorough review of the GSS' values, including surveying our membership. This will ensure that our governance documents continue to represent our interests, values, and priorities, and allow us to undertake work to advance those priorities. We will also look into a proposed amendment of Bylaw 6.3b which currently restricts the number of GRC co-reps to 2, as we have encountered problems with this since the University has merged multiple departments into one School (SLLC) and split one department across multiple Faculties (Psychology and Clinical Psychology). We may also tackle other areas of the Governance Manual that have been flagged for revision. The Committee will continue to stay flexible in our projects and workflow so that we can respond to any issues with our governance as they arise over the year!