University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

Graduate Representative Council

MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 22, 2026, 5-7 PM

Executive Board Invited (1 vote per member):
Chair: Violet Cieslik (she/her)
Director of Internal/University Relations: Hannah Brown (they/them)
Director of Finance: Eleanore Todd (she/her)
Director of Student Life: Manuel Centeno Duque (he/him)
Director of External Relations: Victor Marrugat Arnal (he/him)
Executive Director (non-voting): Kyla Turner (she or they)

Elected Academic Unit Reps Invited (1 vote per academic unit):

Anthropology: **Alex Campbell & Matt Johnson**	Ed. Psych & Leadership Studies:	Indigenous Education:	Political Science: **Olivia Labelle**
Art History and Visual Studies:	Electrical & Computer Engineering:	Indigenous Governance:	Psychology: **Sammi Wong**
Biochemistry & Microbiology:	English:	Interdisciplinary Studies:	Public Administration: **Emma Henders & Kaysha Lee**
Biology: **Emily Jewett & Owen Smith**	Environmental Studies: **Justine keefer & Spenser Morouney**	Law: **Olivia Fonseca Maraston & Akriti Singh**	Public Health & Social Policy:
Business:	Exercise Science, Phys. & Health Ed:	Mathematics & Statistics: **Linh Vo**	Social Dimensions of Health:
Chemistry: **Annabel Flint & Brianna Olynyk**	French and Francophone Studies:	Mechanical Engineering: **Savannah Dam**	Social Work:
Child & Youth Care:	Geography: **Neil Brubacher**	Medical Sciences/Neuroscience: **Frances Armas**	Sociology: **Jasmine Padam**
Civil Engineering: **Sawyer Shortt & Rahul Jumar Lal Das**	Germanic & Slavic Studies:	Music:	Theatre:
Computer Science:	Greek and Roman Studies:	Nursing:	Visual Arts:
Curriculum & Instruction: **Stephanie Puddister**	Health Information Science:	Pacific and Asian Studies: **Zhang Xi & Cania Made**	Writing:
Earth & Ocean Science:	Hispanic & Italian Studies:	Philosophy:	CUPE:
Languages, Linguistics and Cultures:	History:	Physics & Astronomy:	Other Programs:

Recorder: Irfan Tanveer, Governance Coordinator (he/him)
Invited Guests:
Regrets Received:
Absent without regrets:

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND OPENING ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 5:01pm by CIESLIK.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

Today's personal land acknowledgement will be provided by TURNER

The Executive Board members offered brief introductions to themselves.

- Violet Cieslik (she/her), Chair, PhD in Psychology
- Eleanore Todd (she/they), Director of Finance, PhD in Physics & Astronomy
- Manuel Centeno Duque (he/him), Director of Student Life, Master's in Biology
- Victor Marrugat Arnal (he/him), Director of External Relations, PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Hannah Brown (they/them), Director of Internal/University Relations, PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: to approve the agenda as presented.
*M/S: Executive Board/*Keefer

Discussion:
TURNER provided a brief overview of the standard GRC agenda format (generally Opening Items followed by Reports, followed by New Business, ending with Closing Items). Tonight's meeting has a slightly different order in order to provide onboarding and make all necessary committee placements.

CARRIED

TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER

Today's timekeeper was: CIESLIK

MEMBERSHIP REPORT, MEETING QUORUM AND ATTENDANCE

GSS Membership: As of September 15, 2026, the GSS has 3059 members.
Meeting Quorum: With 0 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 12.
Welcome to new GRC reps: Everyone!

MEETING NEW BUSINESS

1. WELCOME TO GRC!

Lead: CIESLIK
For: Discussion

CIESLIK gave a warm welcome to all new and returning graduate representatives. She outlined some of the benefits of serving on GRC, such as gaining skills and experience in serving on university committees, building out a record of university service work for those planning a career in academia, and fostering strong connections across campus.

2. HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE GRC REP!

Lead: TURNER
Reference: GRC Training Materials, Youtube Playlist
For: Discussion

TURNER provided an overview of the following:

- The GSS's relationship with UVic (we are separate legal entity)
- The GSS's governance structures
- GRC rep duties as outlined in our bylaws and GRC meeting norms
- A very, very brief review of what committees are part of GRC
- General tips and tricks for getting the most out of your time on GRC.

Member questions and comments included:

No questions

3. GRC SEATS FOR 2026-27

Lead: TURNER/CIESLIK
Reference: Bylaw 6.3 (in text below)
For: Decision

Background information: The GRC includes a seat for every UVic-recognized Academic Unit (Department, School, or Faculty depending on the unit. E.g. Department of Chemistry, School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, Faculty of Business), as well as a representative from CUPE 4163. GRC has the right to create additional seats for a single academic year.

Relevant Bylaws:
"6.3 Membership:

a. Graduate Representative Council shall consist of:
    i. The members of the Executive Board;
    ii. The Grad Reps for each academic unit as defined by the Society's policy, subject to Bylaw 6.3.b; and
    iii. A graduate student representative of CUPE 4163.
b. Each academic unit with at least three graduate students shall be entitled to one (1) Grad Rep or two (2) Co-Reps, from among its graduate students. Unless specified, the term "Grad Rep" in these bylaws includes Co-Reps.
c. Grad Council may create Grad Rep positions for any group by a majority resolution. This Grad Rep position will be temporary, ending with the term of the current Graduate Representative Council, on August 31."

Relevant Definitions (from the Governance/Policy Manual – Definitions)

Academic Unit Academic Unit means an administrative classification of students at the University of Victoria that meets all of the following criteria:

a. Is the smallest available unit that is either a department, school, centre or faculty, or the Interdisciplinary Studies Program
b. Offers a Masters, Doctorate, Diploma or Certificate program, or previously offered such a program provided that graduate students remain enrolled in the discontinued program(s),
c. Is recognized by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and
d. Has actively enrolled graduate students.

In 2024, UVic combined four departments into a single mega-department. The Departments of French, Germanic and Slavic Studies, Hispanic and Italian Studies, and Linguistics became the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures (SLLC). When the merger happened, GRC lost 3 seats. We've historically had very strong representation from French and Linguistics (though the last time we had Germanic and Slavic Studies or Hispanic and Italian Studies reps was in 2018). In order to maintain strong representation from these productive departments, GRC voted to create additional seats for each former department in 2024-25. We did not fill the Germanic and Slavic Studies or Hispanic and Italian Studies seats. French and Linguistics remained heavy-hitters for GRC involvement.

Until 2026, the Social Dimensions of Health (SDH) program was considered an independent academic unit. Our GRC reps for SDH have always been exceptional. Additionally, starting in 2025-26, the University began registering students without a department code within the Faculty of Health. In 2025-26, there were 30 students registered in "Faculty of Health" only who do not receive representation on GRC. Based on this, we're recommending the following motion:

> *MOTION: to create a seat for the French and Francophone "academic unit" be included on the 2026-27 UVic Departments Eligible for a GRC Seat list in addition to the School of Languages, Linguistics and Culture;*
>
> *FURTHER: to create a seat for Linguistics "academic unit" be included on the 2026-27 UVic Departments Eligible for a GRC Seat list in addition to the School of Languages, Linguistics and Culture;*
>
> *FURTHER: to create a seat for Social Dimensions of Health "academic unit" be included on the 2026-27 UVic Departments Eligible for a GRC Seat list.*
>
> *FURTHER: to create a seat for undesignated Faculty of Health "academic unit" be included on the 2026-27 UVic Departments Eligible for a GRC Seat list.*
>
> *M/S: Campbell/Morouney*

Discussion:

KEEFER asked why a separate seat was being set aside for the Linguistics Department, as this seemed obvious.

TURNER replied that the GRC has representation from each department, and the merger of some departments resulted in the loss of GRC seats, particularly in cases where GRC representatives from those departments were highly active.

KEEFER further asked who would be responsible for ensuring that departments are not doubly represented.

TURNER replied that these GRC seats are allocated for only one year, and assigning them helps ensure that students are represented within their respective departments during that period.

Vote:

Majority in favour.

CARRIED

4. BUDGET VARIANCE

Lead: TODD
Reference: GSS Bylaw 14 (in text below)
For: Decision

Whereas: Under Bylaw 14 – 14.1c. "Grad Council shall authorize all expenditures not explicitly covered in the budget, budget reallocations, and budget overruns that are greater than $2000 but not more than $10,000," and
Whereas the fryers in the Grad House Restaurant require replacement due to a leak located on August 24, 2026,
Motion: BIRT GRC allocate $10,000 from the Capital Fund for replacement of the Grad House fryers
M/S: Annabel/Ling

Discussion:
KEEFER asked whether the GRC is allowed to inquire about the amount available in the Capital Fund account.

TODD stated that there is $100,000 in the Capital Fund, of which $40,000 is reserved for the replacement of the grease trap.

BAIRSTOW asked whether the $40,000 allocation was included in the budget, and TODD replied that it was, noting that the motion had been approved at the previous budget meeting.

JOHNSON asked what would happen if the cost exceeded $10,000, and TURNER replied that the matter would be presented to the general membership.

Vote:

Majority in favor

CARRIED

5. DEMOCRATIC RULES OF ORDER

Lead: CIESLIK
Reference: Democratic Rules of Order 10th Edition:

https://search.library.uvic.ca/permalink/01VIC_INST/1u2tr8p/alma9957759495607291, also GSS Bylaw 6.5 (in text below)
For: Decision

Whereas: Under Bylaw VI - 6.5.b. "Grad Council may set formal meeting structures for meetings of the Grad Council for the academic year in September,"
Motion: BIRT GRC adopt Democratic Rules of Order as the official rules of order for the GRC meetings for the 2026/2027 academic year.
M/S: Johnson/Campbell

Discussion:
TURNER clarified that the GRC may adopt Democratic Rules of Order. Previously, the GRC followed Robert's Rules of Order, which were later abandoned in favor of a more casual approach to meeting procedures.

TODD added that she had reviewed several different documents on Democratic Rules of Order, as well as the original version.

AKRITI asked who drafted the Democratic Rules of Order, and VIOLET replied that the BPC reviews them. TURNER added that these are established rules of order that already exist and are available for GRC members to consult.

BAIRSTOW asked what motion seconding means.

CAMPBELL asked whether, if this motion carried, training or implementation would be required. TURNER responded that implementation would be required.

DUQUE noted that the rules may affect a member's ability to participate in meetings but would help make meetings more efficient.

MOROUNEY asked what the alternative options to the Democratic Rules of Order would be. TURNER replied that having clear rules of engagement helps meetings run more efficiently and provides clarification for participants.

BRUBACHER asked whether these rules would affect voting procedures. CIESLIK replied that the conduct of meetings is governed by the organization's bylaws.

BROWN added that the University of Victoria uses Democratic Rules of Order and that this is something the GRC should also have.

SMITH asked whether it would be possible to remove specific Democratic Rules of Order if they were not working effectively. TURNER replied that the Democratic Rules of Order are flexible enough to accommodate the needs of students participating in meetings.

Vote:

Majority not in favor.

FAILED

6. EXCELLENCE IN GRADUATE RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM (EGRS) – JOINT PROJECT WITH FGS

Lead: CENTENO/BROWN
For: Discussion

CENTENO and BROWN advertised the forthcoming EGRS and reminded GRC reps that the deadline to submit a presentation or poster is October 2. They also strongly encouraged all GRC reps to attend the symposium.

Centeno to email me the name of the judges for the EGRS.

BREAK – 5 MINUTES –

REPORTS AND OPEN DIALOGUE

CHAIR'S REMARKS

CIESLIK updated GRC on the goings on of the Executive Board. The Board will present their Annual Plan at the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, October 27, which will include details on the plans that the Board will be working towards until the end of March.

Current issues for the Board include: planning the Excellence in Graduate Research Symposium as mentioned above, providing department orientations across campus to welcome all our new members, and two systemic advocacy campaigns. The first advocacy campaign underway is addressing unmet public transit needs for our members, specifically advocating for more student involvement in decision-making within the Victoria Regional Transit Commission and increasing services to the airport and from campus to Langford. The second advocacy campaign relates to post-secondary funding across the Province. We are advocating for an increase in public funding for public universities and colleges. As we are advocating directly to the Provincial government, we may need to revise current plans due to the snap Provincial election that was called today.

GRC COMMITTEE, ELECTORAL OFFICER REPORTS, UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- Advocacy and Campaigns: MARRUGAT re-iterated the role of A&C committee in working on the major advocacy campaigns outlined in Chair's Remarks. He added that A&C and GRC have been working to address heat related issues across campus.
- Appeals: TODD gave a brief overview of the functions of the Appeals Committee – namely to review and adjudicate appeals submitted to opt in or out of GSS services after the deadline. She noted that the work of this committee is always highly confidential and that her updates will generally include only the number of appeals heard each month.
- Bylaw & Policy: CIESLIK reported that BPC has recently completed a very significant project overhauling our bylaws, policies and procedures as it relates to our elections and referenda. The bylaw amendments will be presented at the Annual General Meeting on October 27 for a member vote. Projects for the 2026-27 BPC will include revisions to the Board leave of absence bylaws, Board stipends bylaw, and the creation of a revised Electoral Officer job description.
- Events: CENTENO gave examples of ongoing events and previous events recommended by EC members

- Finance: TODD gave an overview of Finance Committee's work, which will include review of the audit, development of the annual budget for 2027-28, and fee referendum planning around our Health and Dental fees.
- Stipend Review: TBD
- Electoral Officer: FIELDER

GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS

TANVEER and TURNER have reviewed all GRC reps Committee Preference Forms. While we tried our best to give everyone their first choice committee, we also needed to ensure we met the minimum membership requirements for each committee.

Additionally, the GSS Conduct Policy states: "At the beginning of each GRC term of office, GRC shall elect five members who shall serve as a pool from which the Society Chair shall draw Conduct Committee members." If a complaint is made under our Conduct Policy, these five members will be called on to investigate the conduct issue and apply an outcome per the Conduct Policy (dismiss the complaint, request an apology/training/restitution, or recommend discipline.)

MOTION: to appoint 2026-27 GRC reps to the GRC Standing Committees as follows:

Advocacy and Campaigns: Kaysha Lee, Spenser Morouney, Annabel Flint, Matt Johnson, Akriti Singh, Savannah Dam, Neil Brubacher, Cania Made

Bylaw and Policy: Justine Keefer, Emily Jewett, Brianna Olynyk, Rosemary Webb, Akriti Singh, Sammi Wong

Events: Gabriel Pangang, Akriti Singh, Olívia F. Maraston, Stephanie Puddister, Owen Smith, Emma Bolzonello, Linh Vo

Governance Oversight: Akriti Singh, Cania Made, Justine Keefer, Owen Smith, Stephanie Puddister

Operational Oversight: Frances Armas, Alexandra Campbell, Sawyer Shortt, Olivia Labelle, Linh Vo

FURTHER to appoint the following five members to serve as the pool of candidates for the Conduct Committee per the Conduct Policy.

Tabled to October GRC meeting

CARRIED

OPEN DIALOGUE AND REPORTS

LEAD: CIESLIK

STANDING ITEMS

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

MOTION: to approve the Minutes of the July 22, 2026 GRC meeting as presented
Flint/Brown
CARRIED

EXECUTIVE BOARD STIPEND REPORTS – QUESTIONS ARISING AND MOTION TO ACCEPT

LEAD:
REF DOCS:

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

SRC has not met for the 2026-27 academic year. Expect a motion regarding July, August and September board reports at the October GRC meeting on October 20.

REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES

LEAD: CIESLIK

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

- Board of Governors:
- Senate:
- Faculty of Graduate Studies Council:

- Previously appointed committees:

Committee	Appointment Date	Rep Name
Uvic accessibility committee		Hannah

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

GRADUATE REPRESENTATION ON UVIC COMMITTEES (APPENDIX B)

LEAD: TANVEER

Reps serve on one or more UVic committee(s) to ensure grad student interests are represented.

MOTION: to elect graduate student representatives to the following UVic committees:
Committee: The Faculty of Science Equity Diversity and Inclusion Council
Member: Linh Vo

Committee: Office of Student Life's Student Life Grants Committee
Member: Sammi Wong

CARRIED

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION

LEAD: CIESLIK

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!

NOTICES OF AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

LEAD: CIESLIK

Next GRC meeting we'll have:

GRC Rep Introductions (some people get elected late, so we want all reps here before we do introductions!)

Welcome to the Faculty of Graduate Studies by Dean Robin Hicks

TURNER mentioned that the Welcome Back BBQ will take place on Thursday and that tickets are available for $5 at the Front Office.

ARNAL added that at tomorrow's Wednesday Coffee event, there will be a session called "Cut Sucks" and encouraged GRC members to bring students from their departments to attend the event.

CULOS added that she met with the Dean, the Head of the Science Department, and Facilities staff to discuss the heat issues in the building, particularly in the laboratories, which pose a health and safety concern. Sophie noted that the key takeaway from the meeting was the significant facilities deficit of approximately $900 million. She explained that government funding provides only $15 million annually, resulting in substantial deferred maintenance.

CULOS further explained that Facilities must conduct a cost-benefit analysis when prioritizing repairs. For example, a health and safety issue such as an elevator malfunction may be ranked higher on the priority list than excessive heat in the building. Sophie added that she emphasized the importance of addressing the heat issues, ensuring that both the department and Facilities are aware of the estimated annual loss of $600,000 in research funding and productivity caused by the conditions in the laboratories. She stated that this issue should also be considered a priority.

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS:

LEAD: CIESLIK

Next GRC Meeting: October 20, 2026

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of October 6, 2026
- Agenda to be posted: October 14, 2026
    - What to expect: Introductions to all GRC reps, Democratic Rules of Order Training (if voted in tonight), Welcome from the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies

Next Meeting: GSS Annual General Meeting! October 27, 2026

- Agenda to be posted: October 13, 2026
- Audit to be posted: October 20, 2026
    - What to expect: Presentations on the following:
        - The 2025-26 Audit and Re-appointment of the Auditors
        - The Board's 2026-27 Annual Plan

- Work of all GRC committees March-September 2026
- Update on GSS Services. Alumo will present on our insurance plan this year!
- Bylaw amendments

Office, Staff Scheduling Notes: The GSS will be closed Wednesday, September 30 along with the University for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and Monday, October 12 for Thanksgiving.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: to adjourn the meeting.
MOVED/SECONDED
CARRIED

x

Violet CIESLIK
GSS Interim Chair 2026-27

x

Kyla Turner
GSS Executive Director