University of Victoria Graduate Students' Society

Graduate Representative Council

MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 20, 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: **Sarah Roberts & Farzaneh Moallef-Akbari**	Electrical & Computer Engineering: **Ahamd Eid & Asif Ali**	Indigenous Governance:	Psychology: **Sammi Wong**
School of Molecular Life Sciences: **Jonah Ma & Silas Porter Crenna**	English: **Megan Sundberg**	Interdisciplinary Studies:	Public Administration: **Aaron Levy & 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: **Reia Drucker**	Greek and Roman Studies: **Emma Bolzonello**	Nursing:	Visual Arts:
Curriculum & Instruction: **Stephanie Puddister**	Health Information Science: **Nasim Al Goni**	Pacific and Asian Studies: **Zhang Xi & Cania Made**	Writing:
Earth & Ocean Science: **Seamus Bairsto & Kristyn Lang**	Hispanic & Italian Studies:	Philosophy:	CUPE:
Languages, Linguistics and Cultures: **Rosemary Webb**	History: **Moira Dann**	Physics & Astronomy: **Laura Dufort-Gagnon & Liam Reimer**	Other Programs:

Recorder: Irfan Tanveer, Governance Coordinator (he/him)
Invited Guests: Robin Hicks, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Regrets Received: Emily Jewett, Biology; Sarah Roberts, Art History and Visual Studies;
Absent without regrets: Nasim Al Goni, Savannah Dam, Olivia Labelle

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND OPENING ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER 5:00 PM

Meeting called to order at 5:00pm by CIESLIK.

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 CIESLIK.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA 5:05

MOTION: to approve the agenda as presented.
M/S: Executive Board/WEBB
CARRIED

TIMEKEEPER VOLUNTEER 5:10

Today's timekeeper was: CIESLIK

MEMBERSHIP REPORT, MEETING QUORUM AND ATTENDANCE 5:12

GSS Membership: As of October 20, 2026, the GSS has 3091 members.
Meeting Quorum: With 1 regrets received, quorum for tonight's meeting is 16.
Welcome to new GRC reps: Reia Drucker, Ahmad Eid, Asif Ali, and any other late September/October electees I regret missing on this list.

REPORTS AND OPEN DIALOGUE

INTRODUCTIONS! 5:15

Who are you? Name, pronouns, department and what brings you to GRC? And what is your favourite local restaurant?

Full introductions not recorded in the minutes. Welcome, everyone!

CHAIR'S REMARKS 5:35

CIESLIK updated GRC on the goings on of the Executive Board. In the last month, the Board has been working to onboard all GRC committees, including training with TURNER. The Board has also been getting everything ready for the Excellence in Graduate Research Symposium (EGRS) on November 4 and 5 now that applications have closed. We encourage everyone to come out to that. Other significant work this month includes AGM preparation. CIESLIK reminded GRC reps to attend the AGM next week. The Transit Survey results have been shared with the Victoria Regional Transit Commission.

GRC COMMITTEE, ELECTORAL OFFICER REPORTS, UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS 5:40

- Advocacy and Campaigns: MARRUGAT reported that A&C met on Oct 8 and completed training. They will learn advocacy letter writing skills next month. For Transit, MARRUGAT reported that he has sent off the transit survey results to Victoria Regional Transit Commission (VRTC) and MARRUGAT is continuing to fight for a voting seat on the VRTC.
- Appeals: TODD reported that one appeal was adjudicated. Appeals committee training took place on Oct 5.

- Bylaw & Policy: WEBB reported that BPC met for training on Oct 8. BPC has a few ongoing projects that will be assigned to committee members for work at the next meeting. CIESLIK provided an overview of how to navigate teams and the tools available for policy development. WEBB noted forthcoming projects include bylaw amendments for board leaves and stipends, and elections/referenda regulations.
- Events: CENTENO reported that October and November events were planned and volunteers were recruited for set up, take down, and hosting. They are still looking for volunteers at the EGRS. Also they need a set up volunteer for the clothing swap in November. Forthcoming events include cider and study, sugar cookie decorating, and end-of-term party. CENTENO reminded everyone that Robin Hicks, Dean of FGS at the tea party on Thursday 3:30-5:30.
- Finance: TODD reported that Fin. Committee has received training (Oct 5) and reviewed the audit (Oct 14). Their next meeting will look at a forthcoming health & dental fee referendum.
- Stipend Review: PUDDISTER reported that SRC met and reviewed all backlogged board reports. We are now up to date on board report review work. PUDDISTER noted that Eleanore's hours were a little high over the summer. PUDDISTER also noted a few math errors in various reports.
- Electoral Officer: FIELDER no report.

GRC STANDING COMMITTEES – APPOINTMENTS 5:45

We'll place all GRC reps elected after September 22 on GRC committees tonight. If anyone wishes to change committees, please raise your hand. This motion captions only those people who were not previously elected onto committees in September.

MOTION: to appoint 2026-27 GRC reps to the GRC Standing Committees as follows:
Advocacy and Campaigns: Reia Drucker, Zhang Xi, Farzaneh Moallef-Akbari

Bylaw and Policy: Silas Porter Crenna, Olivia Connor, Moira Dann, Aaron Levy

Events: Kristyn Lang, Laura Dufort-Gagnon, Seamus Bairsto, Liam Reimer, Gabril Pangang, Megan Sundberg

Governance Oversight: Jasmine Padam

Operational Oversight: Rahul Kumar Lal Das, Ahmad Eid, Chanpreet Khangura (Finance only CML),

M/S: DUFORT-GAGNON / KEEFER
CARRIED

Whereas the 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"
Motion: to appoint the following five GRC members to the pool of candidates for the Conduct Committee: Megan Sundberg, Reia Drucker, Brianna Olynyk, Neil Brubacher, Moira Dann
M/S: MOROURNEY/CONNOR
CARRIED

OPEN DIALOGUE AND REPORTS 5:50

LEAD: CIESLIK

DUFORT-GAGNON asked about other departments' ethical AI use policies. BAIRSTO said his department has left these decisions to supervisors, the default is you cannot use it unless specifically permitted by the supervisor. SINGH noted that the Law department has specific policies for AI use.

BREAK – 5 MINUTES –5:55 PM – FOREGONE DUE TO ROBIN HICKS' ARRIVAL

MEETING NEW BUSINESS

1. WELCOME TO FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES! 6:00

Lead: HICKS
For: Discussion

Robin Hicks, Dean of the FGS, provided a welcome and an overview of the FGS functions and reporting structure. He noted that FGS oversees all graduate studies, and works in conjunction with students' home departments, as well as the Graduate Admissions and Records Office (GARO), to oversee all administrative and academic aspects of graduate degrees. While most faculties are conglomerations of departments with similar research areas (e.g. Biology, Chemistry fall under the Faculty of Science), the Faculty of Graduate Studies is the conglomeration of all graduate level studies. FGS has two levels of governance: the Graduate Executive Council and the FGS Council, both of which include a GSS Board member as a standing representative.

The academic requirements for your program are set by your home department, who are the experts within your own field. FGS ensures that the overall quality of the programs meet the requirements for a Masters or PhD degree.

GARO is primarily an administrative office that oversees, as the name suggests, admissions as well as student records like transcripts, thesis archiving, etc.

FGS has a small staff of scholarships and awards officers who oversee FGS funding and grant applications. The Associate Deans of FGS can meet with graduate students to provide confidential support and policy explanations for resolving issues with their degree. In the student's home department, their Graduate Advisor or Graduate Secretary can provide similar support.

HICKS gave an overview of the graduate student demographics. About a third of members are in a PhD, a third in a research Master's, and a third in a combination of taught/professional Master's and non-degree programs (e.g. certificates). 98% of UVic grad students are full-time. 35% are international students, 9% are Indigenous, and 16% are in co-op.

HICKS gave further information on current FGS projects including:

- Graduate Supervision Policy review – expected to have a new policy this year. HICKS highlighted the ways he is looking for GRC to support data collection and student surveys to support this project this year.
    - Ideas for improvement include:
    - a supervision agreement (letter of understanding) to be established at the start of programs between students and supervisors
    - semesterly formative feedback from the supervisor
- Gen AI and graduate education

    - This will still be department specific, but FGS is looking to establish overarching regulations
- Professional development
    - Looking to create permanent asynchronous professional development training/workshop tools this year
- Supports for accommodation planning for graduate students conducting research
- Part-time study. As HICKS noted, 98% of uvic grad students are full-time. There are practical issues to tackle, such as funding, TA, completion times, research expectations, etc. before implementing a plan for more part-time studies
- Development of international student peer mentor program

Questions and discussion:

BROWN asked for more information about part-time studies. They noted that students registered with CAL taking 1.5 units are still considered full-time. However, after courses are done, the thesis course code is always full-time. HICKS noted that "credits" once students are conducting research is a bit artificial since the only thesis "courses" are 3.0 units.

CONNOR asked about international students for both part-time and CAL-registered full-time students. HICKS noted that this is one of the core issues that need to be addressed in this planning. BROWN noted the current system requires explanation for immigration paperwork.

EID noted that housing is a huge issue here. TURNER gave the history of the "re-phased" graduate dorm that is expected to open in 2034.

DUFORT-GAGNON asked about GenAI in research. HICKS noted that there is a website available now that describes AI uses in courses, however GenAI use in research is not currently sufficiently regulated at UVic. FGS is looking into how to effectively use GenAI within research across campus. HICKS's goal is to have regulations set by the department/program. DUFORT-GAGNON asked for timeline for new policies. HICKS said 4-6 months at an FGS level, and thereafter the departments would require more time to develop their own policies.

2. RESEARCH TOOLS AND PLATFORMS 6:25

Lead: CIESLIK

For: Discussion

Last meeting, a GRC rep mentioned that they lack access to IBM SPSS. Are there other datasets/research tools that grad students are lacking access on? Where are the "pain points" for research computing?

Discussion: BRUBACHER – remote access is a theme for using UVic tools off-campus as there is currently only temporary access available. Also losing access as grad students move between being staff (TA, especially) and student roles at the university. Other system to note: Chrome River.

WEBB – Adobe Acrobat to create properly formatted pdfs.

FLINT – seconded the Adobe Acrobat issue, as a Mac user.

DRUCKER noted the wide range of open source alternatives available. CENTENO noted that we can gather the full scope of issues, we can bring in resources from across campus, such as the Libraries' open source workshop.

BROWN uses STATA statistical analysis tool, but it was only available on some campus computers.

STANDING ITEMS 6:35 PM

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES (APPENDIX A) 6:35

MOTION: to approve the Minutes of the September 22, 2026 GRC meeting as presented [OR approved with minor corrections as provided].
M/S: FLINT/BAIRSTO
CARRIED

EXECUTIVE BOARD STIPEND REPORTS – QUESTIONS ARISING AND MOTION TO ACCEPT – 6:40

LEAD: Stephanie PUDDISTER, SRC Chair
REF DOCS: 2026-27 Board Reports

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

Motion: to approve the July, August and September board reports as presented.
M/S: Stipend Review Committee / BOLZONELLO
CARRIED

REPORTS FROM GRAD REPS ON UVIC COMMITTEES 6:45

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

- Senate: DUFORT-GAGNON reported that the Senate Committee on Libraries is piloting a program to semesterly/term-long laptop loans with a small number of computers. This would compliment the short-term laptop loans they current offer.
- Graduate Executive Council: CIESLIK reported that the Greek and Roman Studies PhD program, which has no students, has been discontinued. And Pacific and Asian Studies is combining their curricula for separate programs.
- CUPE4163: is at the bargaining table and making good progress

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

- Student Life Grant Committee – Sammi Wong
- This meeting was held on October 19, 1-4pm to review grant applications submitted for the September 30 cycle.
- There was a very high number of applications this time (13). Usual numbers range from 5-10 applications depending on the cycle.
- Due to the high number of applications, (1) first time applicants were prioritized, (2) If the application was for an initiative that was previously funded, BUT submitted by a new person, that application was rejected.
    - For (2), if submitted during cycle where there were few applications, these applications would still be considered.
- Below is a breakdown of the grant funds of 2026-27 (not including Sept and Jan application cycles):
    - Total for 2026-27: $12,920
        - Base: $10 0000
        - Endowment: income: $2,920

- Applications 2026-27
  - Initiatives funded (May): $4 500
- Remaining funds for Sept and Jan application cycles: $8,420

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

LEAD: TANVEER

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

MOTION: no committee appointments made.

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT/ADVOCACY/PARTICIPATION 6:55

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!

CENTENO shouted out EGRS on Nov 4 and 5. Posters will happen on Wednesday only. Verbal presentations happen both days. There will be am FGS funding workshop. The schedule of events is available online. CENTENO asked for volunteers to email him at gsslife@uvic.ca.

MOROUNEY reported a concern about transparency in project funding between students and supervisors, particularly for funds allocated to a specific research project, field work, etc.

KEEFER noted that international students have questions about health insurance, access to care, etc. TURNER and CENTENO noted the different roles for GSS and the International Centre for Students (ICS) in providing insurance. MARRUGAT and BROWN gave more information about MTMI vs MSP.

CENTENO shouted out the events survey live now!

NOTICES OF AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING (APPENDIX C)

LEAD: CIESLIK

IMPORTANT DATE REMINDERS:

LEAD: CIESLIK

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
    - 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

Next GRC Meeting: November 24, 2026

- Please have any potential agenda items, with supporting materials, to the Executive Board for consideration, in advance of November 10, 2026
- Agenda to be posted: November 17, 2026

Office, Staff Scheduling Notes: GSS will be closed for Remembrance Day on Wednesday, November 11. Grad House will be closed Nov 9-11 for Reading Break.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: to adjourn the meeting at 6:58.
M/S: DUFORT-GAGNON / DANN
CARRIED

X

Violet Cieslik
GSS Chair 2026-27

X

Kyla Turner
GSS Executive Director