

Trent Graduate Students' Association (TGSA) Orientation Document

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May 7, 2017

Hello and welcome to the Trent Graduate Students' Association. This guide is to help you navigate the formal processes of the TGSA and to aid in your successful participation in your graduate students' association.

What is the TGSA?

- The TGSA (or the GSA as it was formerly known) (Trent Graduate Students' Association) is an the organizational body that formed to represent the voices and experiences of Trent graduate students to the administration and to help graduate students come together as a community through social events.
- The TGSA consists of the Executive Team and Board of Directors (see below "Executive Team" and "Board of Directors")

Goals of the TGSA

- Representation of graduate students and graduate student concerns at Trent University
- Keeping our Health and Dental plan in line with graduate student needs
- Throwing social events for graduate students

How the TGSA Works

- The TGSA functions through executive meetings, board meetings, Annual General meetings, and various committee representation
- Through these meetings and committee representation graduate students can be represented on the level of university operations and decision making
- We are governed by our by-laws and policies that can be found in a document of the same name found here: <http://trentgsa.ca/about/constitution/>

Executive Team

- The TGSA is run by Trent graduate students that are elected to the various executive positions by the graduate student body in April.
- Each position is paid an honorarium of \$1000.
- These positions are:

President

Vice President Internal Affairs

Vice President Finance

Vice President Communications

Vice President Student Affairs

Vice President Senate Representative

Board of Directors

- Consists of Department representatives and commissioners (see below “Department Representatives” and “Commissioners”)

Department Representatives

- Each department can elect one representative to represent their interests in TGSA board meetings and on various Trent and TGSA committees.
- Interim department representatives can be voted in at a board meeting by the TGSA board (see below “Board Meetings”)
- Representatives are each paid a \$50 honorarium.
- This is the complete list of departments and degrees that require representation:

Anthropology M.A.	Environmental & Life Sciences M.Sc.
Applied Modeling and Quantitative Methods M.A.	Environmental & Life Sciences Ph.D.
Applied Modeling and Quantitative Methods M.Sc.	History M.A.
Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies M.A.	Indigenous Studies Ph.D.
Canadian Studies Ph.D.	Materials Science M.Sc.
Cultural Studies Ph.D.	Materials Science Ph.D.
Educational Studies (M.Ed.)	Psychology M.Sc.
English (Public Texts) M.A.	Sustainability Studies M.A.
	Theory, Culture & Politics M.A.

Commissioners

- There are four Commissioners:
Equity Commissioner
Environmental Commissioner
Health Benefits Commissioner
OGSA (Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance) Commissioner
- There are three Interest Group Representative Commissioners:
First Year Arts Student Representative Commissioner
First Year Science Student Representative Commissioner
International Student Representative Commissioner

Procedures at Meetings

- Open and fair debate
- Process follows Robert's Rules, a moderated, orderly process
- If you want to speak, raise your hand and the chair of the meeting will put your name down on the speaking order. You will speak in this order in order to hear all opinions without interruption.
- The chair of the meeting, the President or the Vice President, will oversee the meeting and implement Robert's Rules
- If you cannot attend a board meeting and you are a representative of some sort make sure to let the VP Operations know that you will not attend a meeting when the call for agenda items is emailed
- Attending meetings is important, the TGSA cannot properly function without adequate representation
- A quick guide to Robert's Rules is available in Appendix 1

Meeting Packages

- Before each meeting you will receive an email with:
 1. The agenda for the current meeting
 2. The minutes for the last meeting
 3. Reports for the executive, commissioners (if necessary), and board of directors (if necessary)
 4. Any additional information relevant to the meeting
- Items for the meeting packages must be submitted via email to the VP Operations when the email call goes out (see below "The Agenda" and "Understanding Motions")

Board Meetings

- These meetings are when the TGSA executive and the TGSA board—consisting of the commissioners, department representatives, and CUPE representative—can meet and discuss issues pertaining to graduate student life at Trent University

General Meetings (GM)

- These are annual meetings where any and all members of the TGSA—the executive members, the commissioners, department representatives, and CUPE representative, and all graduate students—can discuss issues pertaining to graduate student life, vote on changes to the TGSA by-laws, and receive updates about TGSA activities
- These meetings are held twice a year in October/November and March/April
- The April General Meeting is where the people running for executive positions will introduce themselves and make candidate speeches if necessary

The Agenda

- The TGSA agenda allows for meetings to remain organized and discuss all relevant matters in a timely manner at meetings. The agenda must be followed.
- Any board member or executive member may submit agenda items on behalf of their department for board meetings and any TGSA member may submit items for the General meeting.
- Agenda items are submitted to the VP Operations when the call is sent out approximately two weeks before the meeting is scheduled to occur.
- Agenda items can be anything that a person feels needs to be discussed, such as issues at the department level or university level. They do not always need to contain a motion (see below “Understanding Motions”).
- When an agenda item is submitted it must contain a detailed description of the item to be discussed. Any and all relevant documents (including graphs, charts, articles, etc.) must be submitted with the agenda item for people to read before the meeting and form an opinion on. If your formatting is not precise, the VP Operations may send you an email to clarify and help you to properly format your item.
- The person who submits an agenda item should be prepared to field questions about it during the meeting.
- At the end of the agenda is a section for “New Business” where last minute items can be added to the agenda to be discussed.
- A sample agenda is available in Appendix 2

Understanding Motions

- Motions will be submitted to the VP Operations to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Any TGSA board member or executive member may make a motion for board meetings and any TGSA member can submit a motion for General Meetings

- Make sure that motions are relevant to the goals and mandate of the TGSA.
- Motions must follow the formal language set out by Roberts Rules of Order. A motion will usually start with “Whereas” and the current state of the item to be voted on followed by “Be it resolved that” and the actual change set forth to be voted on.
- All motions must have a mover and a seconder. The mover is usually the person that put forth the motion onto the agenda while the seconder is a board or executive member that seconds the motion at the meeting when it is brought up.
- Anyone voting board member or executive member can second a motion at a board meeting and any TGSA member can second a motion during General Meetings.
- The mover of the motion must be prepared to field questions about the motion during the meeting.
- Motions are generally concerned with policy change to the TGSA by-laws which can be voted into affect at the GM, endorsing a cause or sending a letting in support, and an action item that some would like enacted by the TGSA
- Motions can be amended during a meeting through a motion/seconder and vote
- Motions will often have some debate, which is normal and expected
- Example motions are available in Appendix 3

Voting

- Department Representatives represent the collective opinion of their department’s student body during board meetings
- Keep your department’s interests in mind when voting
- Keep lines of communication with your peers open and solicit their feedback regularly
- Any member of the TGSA can vote during General Meetings

Appendix 1. Robert's Rules at a Glance

Action	Used To	IS	SR	DM	AM	RV
Point of Order	Object to Procedure	Yes	No	No	No	No (chair rules)
Point of Information	Request Information	Yes	No	No	No	No
Point of Privilege	Object to Personal Attack – Use Privilege	Only If Urgent	No	No	No	No (chair rules)
Roll Call Vote	Ask to record all votes	No	No	No	No	No
Object to Consideration of Question	Object to something considered inappropriate	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 Majority
Take from the Table	Take up a matter previously tabled	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Reconsider Now (or later)	To reconsider something previous	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Consider Out of Order	Suspend rules and consider an item out of its order	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority

IS – May Interrupt Speaker
 DM – Debatable Motion
 RV – Required Vote

SR – Secunder Required
 AM – Amendable Motion

Action	Used To	IS	SR	DM	AM	RV
Challenge the Chair	Vote on the ruling of the chair/speaker	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Adjourn	Adjourn the meeting	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	Recess the meeting	No	Yes	Time Only	No	Majority
Table a Motion	Suspend further discussion at this time	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Table a Motion	Postpone Consideration	No	Yes	Time Only	Yes	Majority
Call the Question	End debate on the current motion	No	Yes	No	No	2/3 Majority
Refer to Committee	Have something investigated further	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a Motion	Amend a motion in a specified way	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

IS – May Interrupt Speaker

DM – Debatable Motion

RV – Required Vote

SR – Seconder Required

AM – Amendable Motion

Appendix 2. Sample Agenda

Explanations are *in italics* after each portion of the agenda that needs explanation.

Agenda of TGSA Executive or Board Meeting, (date)

Start: 00:00, End: 00:00pm

Location: --

Chair: The President

Scribe: VP Communications

Attendance: Executive Officers and/or members of the TGSA Board

The chair and the scribe are always people from the executive team and attendance is taken at each meeting.

Presentation(s)

If necessary, a presentation can take place at the beginning of the meeting. Please note, any presentations happening here may not contain items to be voted upon because the meeting has not been called to order.

The chair will call the meeting to order.

This signals the official start of the meeting.

1. Motion to Approve the Agenda: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

The agenda will be sent out in advance of the meeting via email.

2. Motion to Approve the Minutes from (date) Board Meeting: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

This will be sent out with the agenda in advance of the meeting via email.

3. Presentation(s)

- a. VP Internal Affairs: How to follow Robert's Rules of Order

These are special presentations usually given by a guest speaker. They can be lengthy and happened at the beginning of the meeting prior to the main meeting, if necessary.

4. Executive Reports:

- a. President
- b. VP Internal Affairs
- c. VP Finance
- d. VP Communications

- e. VP Student Affairs
- f. Senator

Motion to accept the reports: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

These short reports will be attached to the agenda. Executive members may quickly speak about their reports, in person, if necessary. Questions about the reports may be asked directly after this.

5. Commissioner Reports, Board of Director Reports, Committee Reports, and Other Reports

- a. Environmental Commissioner
- b. Cultural Studies PhD Board Member
- c. Fun Committee

Motion to accept the reports: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

These short reports will be attached to the agenda. The member that wrote the report may quickly speak about their reports, in person, if necessary. Questions about the reports may be asked directly after this. This section, unlike the executive report section, will not always contain reports. It depends on how often committees sit and when people in these positions feel it is necessary to provide a report.

6. Departmental Issues/Question Period

- a. Canadian Studies Ph.D.—Difficulties electing a new Board Member from the department

This is some time set aside for people to discuss things at Board or General Meetings. The TGSA wants to know what's going on in your departments to better serve you. Having a problem or throwing a party? Let us know. This section will not always contain items. You can also just ask general question of the TGSA that you think are important.

7. Main Motions

7.1 Motion to throw a BBQ: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Whereas his clause has something to do with the motion and provides some reason as to why the notion is being brought forth,

Whereas additional, yet separate, information in the form of a clause is needed here,

BIRT the TGSA approves that this is indeed a motion.

Be it further resolved that (BIFRT) all motions for agendas from this point on will look like this motion.

BIFRT the inclusion of names and email addresses here is so that the executive team and members of the TGSA may contact the movers of the motion prior to the meeting to discuss concerns or answer questions.

7.2 Motion to approve a budget for an event: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

This portion of the agenda is the main meat. These are the issues we vote on. All motions will be discussed prior to a vote. The length of this section will vary. All reports and attachments necessary to make an informed decision will be attached to the agenda.

8. Other Business

Motion to stop having BBQs because they attract coyotes: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Whereas coyotes are unruly party guests and take all the food,

Whereas bears are lovely and well-mannered,

BIRT the TGSA no longer organizes any BBQs.

BIFRT the TGSA just gives food to the bears.

This section of the agenda is a place for people to bring forth topic to council. They may be proposed ahead of time as shown above or suggested during the meeting. This is another time in which questions can be asked at meetings.

9. Notice of Motions and Announcements

- b. The next board meeting will be held (on date)
- c. The reports and motions for that meeting are due (on date)

This section is to provide information about when the next meetings are and any other relevant important dates to do with the TGSA. This section may be used to highlight motions that will appear in the next meeting agenda.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

Seconded: Executive Officer and/or Board member (email)

This section is the final adjournment motion signaling the end of the agenda and, when/if passed, the end of the meeting.

Appendix 3. Sample Motions

By-law change:*

Be it resolved that (BIRT)** that the TGSA add to/remove from/alter Article (insert number e.g. Article 1) as follows: (then include the section of policy you wish to add to, remove from, or alter).

Include the old section of policy you are changing for comparison.

*By-laws and policy changes must first be approved by the Constitutional Changes (TGSA) Committee and can only be voted into effect at General Meetings

**BIRT can be written in as a short hand for the full statement

Endorsement of a Letter of Cause:

Be it resolved that (BIRT) the TGSA endorses the following letter/cause and the executive team send copies of the letter to the (insert recipients here) on behalf of the graduate student body at Trent University. (A copy of the letter and/or a written explanation of the cause will be submitted with the motion to the agenda and the letter will exist as an appendix to the agenda).

OR

BIRT the TGSA show support to (insert name of cause/charity/student group/community) by (some form of endorsement).

OR

BIRT the TGSA make a donation to (insert charity here) in the amount of (insert amount here).

Action Item:

These motions can represent a wide variety of actions you think it is important for the TGSA to address and undertake. It can be addressed to the TGSA as a whole or a particular member of the executive team, commissioner, or board of directors' member; remember to be specific. If there is something you would like to see done but aren't sure how to form a motion feel free to email the VP Operations for assistance.

Whereas the general membership of the TGSA requires more information about (insert thing here e.g. tuition increases).

BIRT the executive team of the TGSA host a special meeting to discuss tuition with Trent graduate students.

OR

Whereas the TGSA is holding to many BBQ events,

BIRT the VP Student Affairs hold an online survey to find out what kinds of other events graduate students at Trent would like to have organized by the TGSA.