



## **GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION**



# **OPERATING POLICY – GSA CLUBS**

## **1. PURPOSE**

1.1 Clubs recognized by the GSA shall act as a centerpiece around which members of the McMaster community with similar interests, backgrounds, or ambitions can gather for educational, informational, and social purposes to benefit the McMaster community.

## **2. CLUB RECOGNITION**

2.1 Recognition as a GSA Club is a privilege based upon observance of certain procedures and acceptance of certain responsibilities. It follows that this privilege can be withdrawn, in whole or in part, if these procedures are neglected or responsibilities abrogated by the organization or group;

2.2 Under the terms of this policy, the GSA will not attempt to censor, control or interfere with any existing GSA Club on the basis of its philosophy, beliefs, interests or opinions expressed unless and until these lead to activities which breach the student code of conduct or the GSA policy. By the same token, recognition as a club by the GSA implies neither endorsement of a particular club's beliefs nor philosophy. It assumes only that the GSA has a responsibility to inform itself of organizations, which use University facilities and the GSA name, and to deny or withdraw recognition if the requirements of this policy are not observed;

2.3 All graduate student clubs wishing to use "GSA" in their name must be recognized by the GSA;

2.4 Recognized clubs shall not engage in activities, which are essentially commercial in nature. This is not intended to preclude the collection of membership fees to cover the expenses of the organization, or of charges for specific activities, programs or events, or to prohibit clubs from engaging in legitimate fundraising. Moreover, funding from the GSA shall be secondary to funds raised through legitimate fundraising activities, including sponsorships and membership fees. However, a recognized club group cannot:

2.4.1. Have as a major activity, a function that makes it an on-campus part of a commercial organization;

2.4.2. Provide services and goods at a profit when that profit is used for purposes other than those of the organization or as a donation to a registered charity;

- 2.4.3. Pay monies to some or all of its officers or members, except as a reimbursement for club expenses;
- 2.4.4. Request funding and/or donations from the Executive Board.

### **3. MEMBERSHIP**

- 3.1 Non-GSA members may hold club membership upon invitation of the club, but may not hold Executive office, or any position, which gives them authority to expend GSA Club funds;
- 3.2 Status as non-voting members may be extended to interested persons from outside the University
- 3.3 A minimum of 1/3rd of the clubs membership must be constituted of GSA members (fulltime or part-time graduate students);
- 3.4 Membership requirements and privileges must be clearly stated in the club constitution;
- 3.5 President and all VP's must be elected and reelected each year by Clubs members.
- 3.6 All members in good standing may be candidates in an election if they fulfill the requirements of that position as described in the club constitution, excluding GSA members.

### **4. RECOGNITION PROCEDURE**

- 4.1 Any group requesting GSA club recognition shall submit a complete an application form, named "Club registration form", to be sent directly to the Director of Operations in order to receive GSA club status; such an application shall include:
  - 4.1.1 A membership list of the Executive (minimum of 4) including titles, valid e-mail addresses, student numbers, and phone numbers for each student;
  - 4.1.2 A membership list of at least ten (10) GSA members who wish to be part of the club (excluding executives listed as part of 4.3.1), including valid e-mail addresses and student numbers for each student;
  - 4.1.3 A proposed constitution which includes:
    - 4.1.3.1 An approved name;
    - 4.1.3.2 A statement of purpose;
    - 4.1.3.3 Membership privileges, duties, and restriction;
    - 4.1.3.4 Definition and responsibility of executive officers;
    - 4.1.3.5 Election procedures (nominations, campaign, voting, impeachment);
    - 4.1.3.6 Financial procedures;
    - 4.1.3.7 Meeting requirements and procedures;
    - 4.1.3.8 Method of constitutional amendments;
    - 4.1.3.9 Disclaimer.
  - 4.1.4 A cover letter stating the club's desire to be active this term;
  - 4.1.5 A proposed year plan for the upcoming year (management of clubs and

- activities);
- 4.1.6 A proposed budget, linked to the planned activities.
- 4.2 The recognition request will be processed in two weeks following the submission.
- 4.3 Where a group applying for recognition has direct connections with another body outside the GSA, either inside or outside the University, the nature of this connection and the name of the body must be disclosed fully and substantially in the application for recognition. Connections requiring disclosure include but are not limited to any kind of funding or sponsorship, or being an on-campus part of another body;
- 4.4 The GSA's interest in the constitution is based on its concern that organizations and individuals using its name and its facilities are genuine clubs, and that they pursue activities in accordance with the law, and in addition that such things are organizational structure, membership, procedures, rules of conduct, etc., are spelled out so that all members who join a club and take part in its activities may do so with full knowledge of their rights and responsibilities within the club;
- 4.5 Clubs, whose applications are received after the deadline stated in 4.4 above, may apply to the Director of Operations for recognition until the date on which clubs training is held in September; these applications will be granted by a majority vote of the Council at a regularly scheduled meeting after September;
- 4.6 All new clubs and clubs ratified by the Council after September will be on probation for one year; the following will occur during the probation year:
- 4.6.1. The Director of Operations will work closely with the club, and make recommendations at the end of the year as to whether or not the club should receive full recognition;
  - 4.6.2. Any club not recommended for full recognition at the conclusion of their probation will be placed on a second year of probation;
  - 4.6.3. If full recognition is not recommended after the second year, the club will be disbanded;
  - 4.6.4. The club shall notify the VP service in advance of all club and Executive meetings and events;
  - 4.6.5. New clubs must submit a midterm (December) and a year-end (March) evaluation.
- 4.7 Clubs shall have written their Constitution that their views and actions may not reflect the views of all the members of the GSA;
- 4.8 The VP Service shall distribute to the Council, a list of those clubs that applied for recognition and recommend those applications found satisfactory;
- 4.9 Clubs will receive e-mail confirmation of their recognition status within two (2) weeks following Council approval;
- 4.10 Any Constitutions deemed by the GSA Services to require changes or further examination shall be returned to the clubs to make the necessary revisions; these Constitutions shall

be presented to the Council for ratification after all the appropriate changes have been made;

4.11 All clubs shall automatically lose recognition on September 1<sup>st</sup> if the recommended changes to the Constitution have not been implemented; no club shall receive funding from the GSA until it is duly recognized;

4.12 A record of all changes and results of Constitution reviews will be kept on file by the GSA via the Director of Operations for perusal by all GSA members;

4.13 For all GSA Clubs whose primary purpose is to produce a publication, a Board of Publication shall be created with the terms of reference and membership to be ratified by the Board of Directors.

## **5. GSA CLUB PRIVILEGES**

5.1 A recognized club shall:

5.1.1 Be eligible to use GSA notice boards and meeting rooms;

5.1.2 Be eligible to book rooms on campus;

5.1.3 Have a mailbox in the GSA Office;

5.1.4 Be able to advertise events on the GSA website, email service, etc. free of charge;

5.1.6 Be eligible to make use of the GSA name;

5.1.7 Be eligible for funding from the GSA;

5.1.8 Be eligible for risk management liability coverage for their events through the McMaster University Risk Management policy;

5.1.9 Be eligible to gain free access to all permanently-installed audio/visual equipment at McMaster University;

5.1.10 Be eligible to use space on the GSA website.

## **6. DUTIES OF CLUBS**

6.1. A GSA Club shall:

6.1.2 Include the words: "A recognized and funded club(society/organization/association) of the GSA" under its name and the GSA logo on all letterhead, advertising, and publicity;

6.1.3 Ensure that the clubs' Constitution and statement of purpose are up to date and that the club is operating in accordance with both;

6.1.4 Determine its own program membership and membership fee, consistent with the policies of the GSA;

6.1.5 Hold election(s) prior to the second Friday in March;

6.1.6 Ensure that the club's Executives are GSA members;

6.1.7 Ensure that the club's Executive consists of at least a President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, and one additional Executive member. At least two of whom shall be signing authorities for the club;

- 6.1.8 File, with the VP Service by the second Friday in October, any updates to the information required in the club's application. As well as any updates to the club's executive and constitution as they occur;
- 6.1.9 Follow the policies and procedures outlined in the "GSA Clubs Operating Policy" and take direction from the Director of Operations as necessary;
- 6.1.10 Follow all applicable laws of the land, including but not limited to GSA, McMaster University, local, provincial, and national by-laws, laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures;
- 6.1.11 Attend clubs training and Clubs Committee meetings as called by the Director of Operations;
- 6.1.12 Be financially responsible for their activities;
- 6.1.13 Maintain communication with the VP Service by responding to all correspondence within 2 days;
- 6.1.14 Hold at least one general meeting per year with the following requirements:
  - 6.1.15.1. Notice must be given to the VP Service one week in advance;
  - 6.1.15.2. Detailed minutes shall be sent to the VP Service within two weeks following the meeting.

## 7. FUNDING

- 7.1 Only GSA recognized clubs shall be eligible for GSA clubs funding;
- 7.2 Funding shall follow a set criteria recommended by the VP Service and ratified by the Council yearly;
- 7.3 Funding shall be given in the form of grants only; no loans will be given to clubs;
- 7.4 Funding shall be given in the form of reimbursement only; no advances shall be issued to clubs;
- 7.5 Any club that has its fee collected by the University is ineligible for funding from the GSA;
- 7.6 Club grants shall be given out on an expense basis as follows:
  - 7.6.1. All clubs shall file a proposed budget for the upcoming year with the VP Service by e-mail, using the budget request form posted on the GSA website. Clubs shall refer to the website page dedicated to Clubs to download the budget worksheet, complete it, and e-mail the file to the VP Service by the deadline advertised;
  - 7.6.2. Clubs will only receive its money as it is spent, not in a lump sum at the beginning of the semester;
  - 7.6.3. A club will only receive money upon presentation of receipts, invoices, or valid written estimates to the Director of Operations. This documentation must accompany a completed club claims form, which shall be posted on the clubs website for download;
  - 7.6.4. Upon presentation of the documentation outlined above, the Director of

Operations

- will authorize the issuing of a cheque to the club, for the amount noted on the form, to a maximum of the amount allocated to the club for the year;
- 7.6.6. Funding shall only be granted for events held throughout the fiscal year; all receipts for reimbursement must be submitted by May 1st each year;
- 7.6.7. All clubs may be required to submit their books for a random audit within five (5) business days, on request of the Director of Operations, failure to submit books may result in funding being suspended and automatic probationary status will be applied;
- 7.6.8. No club shall receive in excess of \$1,000 for any event for which funding has been requested;
- 7.6.9. Any moneys remaining in the club's individual bank account at the end of the fiscal year shall be considered the sole property of that club;
- 7.6.10. Clubs shall be responsible for any/all debts remaining from previous years;
- 7.6.11. Funding appeals shall be taken to the Finance committee, through the VicePresident Administration; the Finance Committee's decision shall be final.

## 9. JUDICIAL POLICY

9.1 The Clubs Judicial Policy is maintained in addition to, not instead of, the McMaster University Student Code of Conduct, the University Alcohol Policy, the Residence Discipline Code, and other codes of conduct or regulations and disciplinary procedures.

The Clubs Judicial Policy is intended to address issues of conduct peculiar to Clubs that may or may not be addressed in other codes as well. The following offences shall constitute a material breach of the conditions under which clubs are recognized by the GSA and are subject to discipline as outlined in section 10.3:

9.1.1 Class A Offences: are actions that interfere with the right of an individual or group to enjoy life in the McMaster community. They include:

9.1.1.1 Intentionally running a club in a manner which negatively affects the ability of another club, non-club group, or individual to conduct their lawful affairs;

9.1.1.2 Any other actions, which unnecessarily cause a significant nuisance for an individual or group.

9.1.2 Class B Offences: are actions, which negatively affect the ability of the GSA to properly provide support to its clubs. They include:

9.1.2.1 Failure to fulfill a mission statement as provided to the Director of Operations;

9.1.2.2 Failure to abide by the rules of the clubs' space as posted;

9.1.2.3 Failure to uphold the terms of a mailbox;

9.1.2.5 Failing to abide by any part of this or any other GSA or University policies, the McMaster University Risk Management Policy notwithstanding;

9.1.2.6 Failure to comply with instructions or sanctions received from the Director of Operations ;

9.1.2.7 Conduct unbecoming of an GSA club;

9.1.2.8 Any other actions, which unnecessarily hinder the ability of the GSA to properly, support its clubs.

9.1.3 Class C Offences: are actions, which endanger the safety or security of any person or property. Class C Offences will always result in a punitive sanction. They include:

9.1.3.1 Any illegal behaviour;

9.1.3.2 Failure to comply with the McMaster University Risk Management policy;

9.1.3.3 Any other actions, which unnecessarily jeopardize the safety or security of any person or property.

9.2 The Director of Operations shall be the primary investigative and judicial officer in the event that a club is suspended of any of the above offences. The Director of Operations shall exercise their best judgment in interpreting and applying these policies and shall conduct an investigation into any allegations of misconduct, and sanction any clubs found to be in violation at their discretion, subject to appeal at the Clubs Committee;

9.3 Clubs found to be guilty of any offences described in 11.1 shall be subject to the following sanctions:

9.3.1 The Director of Operations may hand out the following sanctions at their discretion, in consultation with the Vice-President Services. The Director of Operations shall notify the Clubs Committee within 72 hours of the clubs reaching a decision. Any punitive sanction may be appealed to the Clubs Committee and any clubs intending to appeal shall notify the Director of Operation of their intent to appeal within one (1) week of being sanctioned. Appeals will be held at the soonest possible Clubs Committee meeting:

9.3.1.1 Punitive letter of Caution: The Director of Operation may issue a letter to the club, advising them of the infraction and placing them on probation for a period of not more than one (1) calendar year. During the period of probation, clubs shall report all events and Executive meetings to the Director of Operation in advance and if found to be in violation of the clubs judicial policy again, will be subject to mandatory disciplinary action;

9.3.1.2 Proxy Appointment: If, in the opinion of the Director of Operation, the issue in question has been a result of poor or inadequate leadership on the part of the club's President or other Executive members, the Director of Operation may appoint a proxy to be present at all Executive and general meetings and any other events they deem necessary. This proxy shall report on a bi-weekly basis to the Director of Operation and act as a monitor of the club, with the authority to defer any decisions at Executive meetings pending approval or rejection by the Director of Operation and available to supervise any general meetings or events. The proxy shall report to the Director of Operation at least every 30 days and the Director of Operation shall decide whether or not to lift the sanction;

9.3.1.3 Monetary Sanction: If a club is found to be in violation of any clubs policies, the Director of Operation may fine the club up to one hundred dollars (\$100.00) per offence. These fines shall be levied against the club's current and future funding if the club fails to pay the fine. All proceeds from fines shall be added to the clubs grant budget line.

9.3.2 In the event of a more serious infraction, the Director of Operation may call a meeting of the Clubs Committee to hear the case and decide on a more severe penalty. The Clubs Committee may reach one of the following decisions. Sanctions that can only be handed down by the Clubs Committee include:

9.3.2.1 Disbandment: If in the opinion of the Clubs Committee, a club is either incapable of or unwilling to correct its behavior and the interests of the GSA and student body would be best served by the disbandment of a club, the Director of Operation has the right to recommend that the SRA rescind the GSA's recognition of the club. This sanction is subject to ratification by the Council and shall only be used in situations where all other reasonable courses of action have been pursued. This sanction shall remain in effect for a minimum of one (1) full calendar year and carries with it the stipulation that a club must present evidence to the satisfaction of the Clubs Committee that they have reformed in order for it to be lifted. All clubs that are removed from the disbanded list will be placed on probationary status for their first subsequent year of operations;

9.3.2.2 Membership restrictions: Where the Clubs Committee finds cause to sustain a charge of individual misconduct on the part of a club Executive, instead of sanctioning the club as a whole, that member shall be barred from holding Executive office in any GSA club for one (1) calendar year. That Executive position shall then be filled in accordance with the club's Constitution.

9.4 Any actions taken by the GSA shall be independent of those taken by any other judicial body;

9.5 All allegations of misconduct made on the basis of discrimination or harassment shall be referred to Human Rights & Equity Services.

## 10. EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

10.1. OPERATING POLICY 1.9.9 – GSA CLUBS shall not preclude the Director of Operation from devising creative solutions to novel situations. Such solutions shall be made in consultation with the Vice-President Services.