

Constitution of “Graduate Peer Support Network”

Version 5.0

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1. Name

The official name of this recognized student group is the “Graduate Peer Support Network”

The acronym or abbreviation of this group is: GPSN

2. Mission and Values

The purpose of the GPSN is to provide Temerty Faculty of Medicine graduate students, students in professional and second-entry undergraduate programs (e.g. BScN, BScPA, PharmD, DDS, MD), and additionally, senior undergraduate students preparing for graduate or professional programs with mental health and wellness support and resources via educational seminars and peer mentorship. The program will be volunteer based and peer-driven, allowing students to quickly receive support in their time of need. There are three components to the program’s mission:

1. Peer mentorship: GPSN aims to provide students (mentees) with mental wellness-oriented, on-demand peer mentorship to help mentees navigate their wellness concerns and relevant mental health resources available at the University of Toronto. GPSN will recruit and train a directory of volunteer graduate students equipped to provide safe, reliable and non-judgemental support. Mentors will then be matched with mentees on the basis of mentor areas of expertise/training and mentee requests submitted through a secure intake website. It should be noted that peer mentors are not counsellors or health care providers, but are a source of emotional support for mentees and a bridge to gaining professional and academic support when needed.
2. Graduate Student Life Seminar Series: GPSN aims to provide students with perspectives and tools to overcome tentative challenges through a formal seminar series. The series comprises of monthly seminars in which the foci will alternate between (i) student life and (ii) physical exercise. Following these seminars, students may partake in optional small peer group discussions regarding their mental health status and general wellness. Modelled after peer support group therapy programs, these sessions will be facilitated by our student mentors and designed to create a safe space for students to share personal and academic obstacles.

3. **Research and Advocacy:** GPSN will collaborate with University of Toronto Faculty, academic programs and non-academic groups to survey the mental health and wellness needs of students and advocate for any associated changes at the administrative level. GPSN will also disseminate mental health and wellness resources widely to students un-contingent on student participation in the GPSN Peer Mentorship or Seminar Series programming.

GPSN and its members here forth will abide by a set of core values upon which all decisions, future events and modifications to the program must meet.

1. Openness to the participation of members in all activities

2. **Tolerance** –This program will operate as a non-judgemental and open dialogue support for students that have otherwise unmet mental health needs within the University of Toronto. Any member of the University of Toronto will be welcome to program events and will be encouraged to take part in events held by GPSN, unless the member or participant is disruptive to the program. In which case, the Executive members have the right to remove said individual from GPSN membership via due process. Members must accept all members of the University of Toronto student and staff, including trans people, people of color, marginalized people and will not discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity. Improper conduct will be taken with seriousness, confidentially with those involved and action will be taken with the University of Toronto.
3. **Collaboration** – Members will uphold a professional and social environment in which to conduct all program related events. Members must maintain a professional relationship with all those involved within the program, including participants until termination of involvement within the program. Members are encouraged to work together with their peers to establish an effective program.
4. **Accountability** – The impact on student mental and physical well-being will be prioritized by members when making program decisions. All members must take into consideration the safety of all individuals prior to conducting events. Members will be accountable towards proper management of student mental health initiatives, confidentiality of any disclosed information and their impact on student well-being within the program. Responsibilities of executive roles as outlined in this constitution must be fulfilled to the utmost capability. Members will follow the code of student conduct outlined by the University of Toronto.
5. **Advancement** – Advocacy for change in the way student services and experience is managed at the University of Toronto. The program will improve and be modified based on the needs of students. All members and students taking part in this program will challenge themselves to continuously grow and use the knowledge gained to apply it to evolving everyday situations.
6. **Well-being** – The health of all members within the program is of utmost importance. All participants and members may apply for a leave of absence or resignation from the program and any executive roles with prior notice. The member may choose to come back and continue their role until the end of term or terminate their position.

7. Discretion – Participant information is to be held with discretion and privacy and will not be shared with other individuals, unless self-harm or harm to others is suspected.

3. Membership

3.1 Membership

GPSN membership is divided into: 1) Executive members, 2) Ambassadors, 3) Departmental Representatives, 4) Advisors and 5) Mentors. **Executive members with voting privileges must be currently registered students of the University of Toronto.** The GPSN Executive will consist of:

1. Program Coordinators (2)
2. Graduate Student Life Leads (2)
3. Mentorship Program Leads (2)
4. External Affairs Leads (2)
5. Research and Advocacy Leads (3)
6. Fitness Series Leads (2)
7. Social Media Managers (2)
8. Ethics Officer (1)
9. Sunnybrook Lead (1)
10. Treasurer (1)

Executive members will be elected by GPSN members (existing Executive Team, mentors, ambassadors, alumni, departmental representatives). At the time of their election they must hold status as registered University of Toronto students. If the Executive member is planning on graduating before their one year GPSN tenure, they must still fulfil their leadership responsibilities for the full Executive membership term (October through to September).

GPSN ambassadors are also required to be registered University of Toronto students at the initiation of their tenure and must stipulate when applying whether they will be able to hold tenure for a full year. Ambassadors will be recruited and selected by Executive members through an application process disseminated across the university. Ambassadors will form the body of the following GPSN committees:

1. Mentorship Program Sub-Committee
2. Graduate Student Life Sub-Committee
3. External Affairs Sub-Committee
4. Research and Advocacy Council

Departmental Representatives and Advisors can consist of registered University of Toronto students, staff, faculty or alumni. These are non-elected, voluntary positions that are designated by the administration or if applicable, departmental student council within GPSN's associated Faculty of Medicine Departments, Institutes and Centres (<https://medicine.utoronto.ca/education/departments-institutes-and-centres>). Staff, faculty, or alumni members may hold these non-voting, non-executive positions limited to a maximum of one ten per cent (10%) of the full GPSN membership body. Persons holding these nonvoting non-executive positions cannot serve as an officer (including financial signing officer) or contact person of GPSN.

Non-voting membership may be extended to interested staff, faculty, and alumni, or persons from outside the University, without restriction on those grounds outlined by the Ontario Human Rights Code's Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination. However, these members do not hold the aforementioned rights. Members must register with a designated executive by submitting their full name and a valid email address.

For recognition by the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), the group must maintain a minimum of 30 members, a total of 51% of membership are UTSU members. The group must also maintain recognition from the Office of Student Life. These requirements are subject to change and should be checked with UTSU annually to ensure qualifications are met.

3.2 Membership Rights

Members hold the right to:

1. Attend any/all GPSN Executive meetings and Annual General Meetings
2. Partake in the above meetings
3. Provide feedback to any component of the GPSN membership body
8. Resign via written and signed letter (electronic or hard copy) to the Executive Members with 4 weeks notice or in the case of emergency/extenuating circumstances, one week notice. Resignation will be deemed effective upon receipt and acknowledgement by all Executive Members. In the event that an Executive Member resigns, a Program Coordinator will temporarily fill the role of the executive member upon their leave until the executive member returns or until the next election. Should a Program Coordinator not be able to replace the leaving executive member role, the remaining executive members may decide to hold an internal election to fill the role. Resignation will absolve members from any further obligations to the program and will require re-election for an executive position in the following election.

3.3 Membership responsibilities

Members must:

1. Abide by the GPSN constitution
2. Refrain from making commitments (financial or otherwise) on the behalf of GPSN without the agreed consent of Executive Members
3. Conduct themselves collegially and respectfully. Members deemed to act in conflict with the mission and values of GPSN (including but limited to demonstrating discriminatory behaviour, non-disclosure of conflicts of interest, creating a negative and unsafe space for fellow Members and students) can be terminated (Section 5.0).
4. Keep all mentor and mentee information confidential during and indefinitely beyond their tenure with GPSN. The only exception to breaking confidentiality are under circumstances where members believe that a mentor or mentee may harm themselves or others.
5. Fulfil their duties as per Section 4

3.4 Voting membership

Voting membership is open to all registered students at the University of Toronto. Voting membership is open only to registered students at the University of Toronto. Voting members have the right to attend all general and Executive meetings. All voting members of the Executive Committee must be currently registered students of the University of Toronto as stated in Section 3.1.

4. Member Duties

4.1 Executive Members

Each Executive Member is responsible for ensure that the activities of GPSN they preside over meet regulations and policies of the University of Toronto. All Executive Members must take part in some/all mentor training, to fill mentor roles within the mentorship program or to act as facilitators for post-seminar peer group sessions within the graduate life series, should it be deemed necessary. The following is a list of roles and responsibilities associated with each GPSN Executive position:

Program Coordinators:

1. Organize and chair monthly GPSN Executive meetings. This includes setting the agenda and taking meeting minutes
2. Provide counsel to all other Program members
3. Oversee the operation of all Programming and enforce milestones and tasks
4. Be the spokesperson for GPSN
5. Handle GPSN communications alongside the External Affairs Leads
6. Facilitate communication between other Program team members
7. Ensure the completion of year-end reports to GLSE until GLSE funding ends and conduct presentations to participating Faculty of Medicine Departments as necessary
8. Write, uphold and/or maintain the Program Constitution

9. Organize Program leadership transitions, including chairing elections (unless running for an Executive role) and leading the assessment of applicants for Program Committees
10. Maintain Slack (or other organizational application) account

Graduate Student Life Series Co-Leads:

1. Organize speakers and oversee logistical details such as inviting speakers, hosting and setting up virtual or in-person seminars
2. Facilitating post-seminar peer group sessions
3. Disseminate, collect, and analyze feedback surveys for every seminar session
4. Work with the External Affairs Committee and Sunnybrook Co-Leads for live casting and promotion
5. Lead and manage the Graduate Student Life Sub-Committee, including: i) Delegating tasks among committee members, ii) organizing and conducting subcommittee meetings, iii) coordinating logistics and communication between Ambassadors within the Sub-Committee, iv) ensuring Sub-Committee responsibilities (Section 4.2) are fulfilled
6. Work with the Research and Advocacy Leads to design and analyze surveys student wellness surveys
7. Collaborate and consult with University of Toronto academic and student groups external to the GPSN to ensure the delivery of quality seminars that take into account expert recommendations including, but not limited to conflict resolution, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Mentorship Program Co-Leads:

1. Coordinate with the External Affairs Leads to promote the program and recruit mentors/mentees
2. Oversee the organization and delivery of mentor training
3. Maintain a secure database of mentors, updated on a rolling basis and at minimum annually
4. Match mentors to mentees on a rolling, ongoing basis.
5. Ensure mentee information is secured
6. Disseminate, collect, and analyze feedback surveys for both mentors and mentees 1, 6 and 12 months after matching.
7. Consult with appropriate experts to appropriately train mentors and conduct mentor-mentee matches, including but not limited to University experts in conflict resolution, equity, diversity and inclusion, student finances, and health and wellness.
8. Generate a database of health and wellness resources to distribute to mentors and mentees
9. Generate and update annually a mentor and mentee package
10. Lead and manage the Mentorship Program Sub-Committee, including: i) Delegating tasks among committee members, ii) organizing and conducting subcommittee meetings, iii) coordinating logistics and communication between Ambassadors within the Sub-Committee, iv) ensuring Sub-Committee responsibilities (Section 4.2) are fulfilled

External Affairs Co-Leads:

1. Serve as the lead on any external communication from the GPSN and Program promotion
2. Lead the promotion of GPSN Programming amongst Faculty of Medicine departments, centres and institutes
3. In collaboration with the Program Coordinators, handle official correspondence of the organization
4. Collaborate with the Mentorship Program Leads to recruit mentors and mentees
5. Collaborate with the Graduate Student Life Series Leads to recruit attendees for the associated fitness and wellness seminars
6. Establish collaborations with Faculty of Medicine departments/centres/institutes and student associations
7. Coordinate between various departmental representatives to ensure programming is relevant and well-promoted
8. Serve as the GLSE liaison
9. Lead and manage the External Affairs Sub-Committee, including: i) Delegating tasks among committee members, ii) organizing and conducting subcommittee meetings, iii) coordinating logistics and communication between Ambassadors within the Sub-Committee, iv) ensuring Sub-Committee responsibilities (Section 4.2) are fulfilled (ex creating and maintaining the GPS-N website, social media accounts, and email accounts, and attending external meetings as needed)

Research and Advocacy Co-Leads:

1. Collaborate with other Executive Team members to design, conduct and gather surveys on Faculty of Medicine students surrounding their perspectives on health and wellness, including their wellness needs and areas for improvement within the University of Toronto resources and infrastructure
2. Seek partnerships with the Graduate Student Union, Faculty members, administration and other University of Toronto wellness groups to facilitate changes on the basis of these surveys
3. Advocate for student wellness
4. Generate a database of existing advocacy groups within campus that work with staff and students in the areas of student wellness.
5. Keep up to date with student wellness resources and initiatives at other Canadian universities
6. Refer resources and partnerships to the Mentorship Co-Leads
7. Lead and manage the Research and Advocacy Council, including: i) Delegating tasks among committee members, ii) organizing and conducting subcommittee meetings, iii) coordinating logistics and communication between Ambassadors within the Sub-Committee, iv) ensuring Sub-Committee responsibilities (Section 4.2) are fulfilled

Fitness Series Co-Leads:

1. Organize and schedule fitness classes
2. Recruit fitness instructors

3. Brainstorm and design events that would improve the health and wellness of students
4. Oversee logistical details of the above events
5. Work with the Research and Advocacy Leads to design and analyze surveys student wellness surveys
6. Communicate with participating students and class instructors
7. Work with the External Affairs Committee and Sunnybrook Co-Leads for live casting and event promotion
8. Act as the liaison between the Executive team and the fitness program
9. Disseminate, collect, and analyze feedback surveys for every fitness session

Social Media Managers:

1. Monitor the GPSN social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) daily
2. Make social media posts to advertise GPSN events and programming. This includes making promotional flyers in collaboration with the Ethics Officer and External Affairs Lead(s)
3. Promote other social media posts and accounts that align with the GPSN values and mandate
4. If no Social Media Manager is elected, the above responsibilities will fall to the External Affairs Lead(s) until the next election

Ethics Officer:

1. Review outgoing GPSN advertisements and social media activity to ensure that it abides by accessibility standards and is EDI sensitive
2. Work with Social Media and External Affairs Leads to facilitate this review
3. Consult on queries from other GPSN members on ensuring all activities are conducted ethically and equitably

Sunnybrook Lead:

1. Coordinate with Fitness series and Graduate Student Life Series Leads to facilitate planning of in-person seminars hosted at Sunnybrook
2. Ensure Programming is accessible to students at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre
3. Collaborate with other University of Toronto campuses and institutes that approach GPSN to facilitate virtual delivery of Fitness and Graduate Life Series Programming

Treasurer:

1. Maintain communication with business offices (Medical Biophysics, Graduate and Life Sciences Education (GLSE))
2. Process reimbursements for Executive Members for expenses pertaining to the program
3. Apply for funding and grants as needed
4. Identify new funding opportunities
5. Record all financial transactions

6. Comply with relevant University student group financial regulations, including those stipulated by GLSE
7. Prepare a budget annually

4.2 Sub-Committees

The GPSN Sub-Committees will be led by their associated Executive team members. They will comprise voluntary Ambassadors. Assigning specific roles to each Committee member, setting Committee meetings, milestones and tasks will be at the discretion of the associated Executive Leads. The following are the overarching goals of each Sub-Committee.

Mentorship Program Sub-Committee: The Mentorship Program Sub-Committee members will aid the Mentorship Program Leads in fulfilling Mentorship Programming tasks. These include but are not limited to:

- Developing and updating mentorship training sessions and welcome packages
- Developing and updating mentee welcome and resource packages
- Gathering and updating health and wellness resources available at the University of Toronto
- Aiding in developing mentor/mentee matching intake forms
- Aiding in feedback form delivery and analysis
- Provide support or information for mentors and mentees on an ongoing basis if required
- Other tasks associated with Mentorship Programming at the discretion of the Mentorship Program Co-Leads

Graduate Student Life Sub-Committee: The Graduate Student Life Sub-Committee members will aid the Graduate Student Life Series Leads in fulfilling tasks associated with the Series Programming. These include but are not limited to:

- Acquiring speakers
- Aiding in the logistics the day of each seminar
- Aiding in feedback form delivery and analysis

External Affairs Sub-Committee: This Sub-Committee has the following specific roles:

- Website Manager
- Departmental Representatives

Beyond these roles, the External Affairs Sub-Committee will work under the leadership of the External Affairs Co-Leads to:

- Promote GPSN and its initiatives
- Recruit mentors, mentees and seminar attendees

Research and Advocacy Council: The Council will work under the leadership of the Research and Advocacy Co-Leads to:

- Survey the mental health and wellness needs of students at the University of Toronto
- Collaborate with the Graduate Students Union, University of Toronto Health and Wellness, School of Graduate Studies and Faculty of Medicine
- Create partnerships between GPSN and other wellness-oriented student groups and advocacy initiatives

5. Termination of Executives or General Members:

Any member of the club who commits an act negatively affecting the interests of the club and its members, including non-disclosure of a significant or continuing conflict of interest, may be given notice of removal. The member up for removal shall have the right to defend his/her actions. A vote will be held at an executive meeting, and a two-thirds majority vote of the current executives present in favor of removal is required. The member must have the right to an appeal before the general membership, and the majority vote of the general membership will have the final say on the matter.

The member will be removed from GPSN's membership, absolved of any responsibilities to GPSN, and will lose any privileges associated with being a member of GPSN.

Executive members are subject to the same termination or impeachment process and, as determined by the vote, may lose their executive position, be absolved from any responsibilities to GPSN and lose GPSN membership.

6. Elections

The Program Coordinators will appoint one (1) Elections Officer (EO) and one (1) Scrutinizers from any of the voting members of the GPSN membership body to conduct and hold elections in September, starting September 2021. The EO and Scrutinizers can not themselves run for any of the Executive roles. All members of the Elections Committee shall be non-biased in the results of the election and shall be required to disclose any and all conflicts of interest in the election. Voting membership is detailed in Section 3.4.

The EO shall accept nominations for the Executive Team membership. Candidates must be registered students within the University of Toronto. Candidates can apply for any of the Executive Membership positions.

Due to geographical considerations, the Sunnybrook Representative is recommended to be filled by a student whose primary placement is at Sunnybrook Research Institute. Additionally, it is recommended that one of the Program Coordinator positions be filled

by a prior GPSN Executive Member due to the number of responsibilities that require prior experience with the program portfolio to effectively lead the Executive team.

Candidates will submit their nominations electronically to the EO. Nomination submissions are not restricted to members of GPSN, but include any registered University of Toronto student. Candidates that are nominated (either self or by others) will submit a statement to the voting members. Statements will have a set word limit as directed by the EO. The EO will then disseminate these nominations to the GPSN membership body electronically alongside the electronic ballot. The ballot will list the nominees for each position alphabetically and only allow for a single vote per position. Nominees can run for only a single position. The EO can extend the nomination period at their discretion in the case of nomination vacancies for the open positions.

Voting members will then vote anonymously electronically over the course of one week. The dates for the nomination submission and voting period will be announced a minimum of 2 weeks in advance. The CRO and Scrutinizers will count the electronic votes. The CRO will then announce the election results directly to the GPSN membership body. Announcement of GPSN Executive team elections will be disseminated across all participating Departments.

In the case of a tie, the CRO will announce a re-vote for the Executive position for which there was a tie. Only candidates with the majority of votes that were tied will be included in this revote.

Vacancies in the Executive Team will be filled in a by-election in the proceeding January of each academic year, beginning in January 2022. Terms for Executive members will be from October 1 to September 30th.

All Executive Members are required to write and submit a Transition Report to their successor(s) and Program-Coordinators by October 1 of each election cycle. The contents of the report will be set by the Program Coordinators but will include a summary of the leadership role, tasks completed in the prior academic year, tasks to be completed in the upcoming year (indicating urgent priorities), pertinent contact information and general advice. They will also be required to hold a transition meeting with their successor(s) to ensure this information is relayed within the month of October following the election cycle.

7. Finances

The Treasurer shall keep records of all income and expenses. The Treasurer shall present the group's financial health at the annual general meetings. The Executive Committee will vote on expenditures of over \$500.00 by majority vote at Executive Meetings.

The group's executive or members may not engage in activities that are essentially commercial in nature. The group will not have as a major activity a function that makes

it an on-campus part of a commercial organization, will not provide services and goods at a profit when that profit is used for purposes other than those of the organization, and will not pay salaries to some or all of its officers.

8. Meetings

a) Annual General Meetings (AGMs):

The group shall hold general meetings at least twice per year

The Executive Committee will announce these dates two (2) weeks prior to holding the meetings. These meetings are intended to go over the group's annual activity plan, financial health and overview of milestones met.

b) Executive Meetings:

The executive committee shall meet on a monthly basis where date and times are to be set by the Program Coordinators. The quorum of Executive meetings shall be 50%+1 of all Executive Members. Executive Members are required to attend a minimum of 80% of meetings (barring unforeseen emergencies).

All Executive Members must attend monthly GPSN Executive meetings. With the exception of unforeseen circumstances, Executive Members must notify the Program Coordinators if they are unable to attend these meetings with the provision of 5 days of notice. In the case of absence, Executive Members must relay their meeting updates in written format to the rest of the Executive team in advance of the meeting, and ensure that the Program Coordinators or another Executive Team member relays their updates. If the Executive member is absent from a meeting during which a constitutional amendment was scheduled, they can assign a formal proxy to cast their vote.

c) Subcommittee Meetings:

All GPSN members can take part in a subcommittee meeting conducted by at least one Executive member. The organization of subcommittee members and meetings will be at the discretion of the Executive members in charge. Any concerns or conflicts arising within subcommittee meetings can be brought forth to the attention of all executive team members.

9. Amendments

All constitutional amendments shall require $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote to be passed at a general meeting or Executive meeting. All voting members (any registered student at the University of Toronto) may propose and vote on amendments to the constitution. The Executive Committee will administer the process of having amendments discussed at

general meetings. The voting member proposing the amendment will be allowed to present their proposal at an Executive Meeting prior to that scheduled for voting in amendments. All amendments must be proposed at a minimum of two weeks prior to the general or Executive meeting (either at a meeting or through electronic means) for all voting members to have adequate time to review the motion or request modifications.

The Executive team shall formally adopt the new constitution and submit the revised constitution to staff in the Division of Student Life at the University of Toronto within 2 weeks of its approval by voting members.

Amendments to the constitution shall take effect only once the revised constitution has been approved by staff in the Division of Student Life at the University of Toronto.