

# **Synapse: Transmitting Awareness in Neuroscience (SYNAPSE) Constitution 2024 - 2025**

## **Article I: Name of Organization**

1.1 The official name of the organization will be “Synapse: Transmitting Awareness in Neuroscience”.

1.2 “Synapse: Transmitting Awareness in Neuroscience” may be referred to, and will hereby be referred to, by the acronym “SYNAPSE”.

## **Article II: Purpose**

2.1 The purpose of SYNAPSE will be to promote discussion, inspire interest, and bring awareness in the fields of neuroscience and neuropathology.

2.2 SYNAPSE will enhance the educational, recreational, social, or cultural environment of the University of Toronto Scarborough by upholding the following values:

2.2.1 To embrace knowledge in neuroscience and neuropathology;

2.2.2 To take initiative to learn beyond the classroom;

2.2.3 To encourage interaction and exchange of ideas between students and faculty from all disciplines, as well as the general public, concerning neuroscience and neuropathology;

2.2.4 To welcome interest in neuroscience for all students, regardless of educational pursuits;

2.2.5 To promote discussion and encourage all levels of inquiry;

2.2.6 To take part in the growing and innovative fields of neuroscience and neuropathology.

2.3 SYNAPSE fundamentally serves a non-profit function within the University of Toronto Scarborough, and will not engage in activities that are essentially commercial in nature.

2.4 SYNAPSE operates as an independent entity working within the University of Toronto Scarborough community subject to the values and policies of the University.

## **Article III: Membership**

3.1 Membership in SYNAPSE is open to all students, staff, faculty, and alumni of the University of Toronto.

3.2 The term of membership for SYNAPSE will be from September 1—April 30 each year.

3.3 Members who choose to continue their membership after April 30 of a given year may be contacted, or may engage in club activities, during the period of May 1 - August 31 in preparation for the upcoming term of membership.

3.4 Each member shall be afforded the following rights through membership in SYNAPSE:

3.4.1 The right to participate in meetings;

3.4.2 The right to communicate and to discuss and explore all ideas;

- 3.4.3 The right to organize/engage in activities/events that are reasonable and lawful;
- 3.4.4 The right to freedom from discrimination based on sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation;
- 3.4.5 The right to be free from censorship, control, or interference by the University based on the organization's philosophy, beliefs, interests, or opinions unless and until these lead to activities which are illegal or which infringe on the rights and freedoms already mentioned above;
- 3.4.6 The right to distribute on campus, responsibly, published material provided that it is not unlawful;

3.5 Each member shall possess the following responsibilities relative to participation in SYNAPSE:

- 3.5.1 Support the purpose of the organization;
- 3.5.2 Uphold the values of the organization;
- 3.5.3 Contribute constructively to the programs and activities offered by the organization;
- 3.5.4 Attend general meetings;
- 3.5.5 Abide by the constitution and subsequent official organizational documents;
- 3.5.6 Respect the rights of peers and fellow members;
- 3.5.7 Abide by University of Toronto policies, procedures, and guidelines;
- 3.5.8 Abide by the Laws of the Land, including but not limited to the Criminal Code of Canada.

3.6 SYNAPSE will not collect a mandatory membership fee from each member each year.

3.7 SYNAPSE values and respects the personal information of its members. SYNAPSE secures its members' information at all times and will not supply names or other confidential information to third parties.

3.8 SYNAPSE will protect the privacy of member information and must use it only for the delivery of service and not for commercial gain.

3.9 The process for becoming a member of SYNAPSE is as follows:

- 3.9.1 Submit an application form and attend an interview to become an executive member;
- 3.9.2 Submit an application form to become a volunteer member; OR
- 3.9.3 Subscribe to SYNAPSE's mailing list to become a general member.

#### **Article IV: Executive**

4.1 The executives of the organization shall include:

- 4.1.1 President (2)
- 4.1.2 Vice-President of Public Relations (1)
- 4.1.3 Vice-President of Communications (1)
- 4.1.4 Vice-President of Academic Affairs (1)
- 4.1.5 Vice-President of Advocacy (1)
- 4.1.6 Vice-President of Operations (1)
- 4.1.7 Vice- President of Publicity (1)
- 4.1.8 Director of Scientific Outreach (4)

- 4.1.9 Director of Communications (4)
- 4.1.10 Director of Academic Affairs (3)
- 4.1.11 Director of Advocacy (2)
- 4.1.12 Director of Operations (1)
- 4.1.13 Director of Publicity (3)

4.2 The broad responsibilities of each executive position are as follows:

4.2.1 The President is the official spokesperson of SYNAPSE and provides direction for all components of the organization in a manner consistent with SYNAPSE's constitution and policies. They are also responsible for organizing and leading executive and general meetings, managing club logistics, training executive members, delegating tasks, overseeing all events and content for accuracy, and leading executive member recruitment. They are also responsible for communication with non-members and maintaining the club's brand.

4.2.2 The Vice-President of Public Relations will train and supervise the Directors of Scientific Outreach in creating meaningful neuroscience communication posts. They will act as the head of operations during events that do not fall under the purview of other Vice-Presidents and will be involved in the logistics of these events alongside the President by corresponding with and recruiting presenters (i.e. professors, researchers, graduate students, etc.).

4.2.3 The Vice-President of Communications will be in charge of all non-faculty communications and be involved in promoting team events and engaging in student affairs. They will train and supervise the Directors of Communications and prepare public announcements for all media. They will be responsible for directing all levels of social media and working with the other Vice-Presidents to create digital media content. They are also responsible for communications with club members and maintaining the club's website and newsletter.

4.2.4 The Vice-President of Academic Affairs will train and supervise the Directors of Academic Affairs in creating meaningful academic content. They will also correspond with professors and students to plan and host academic-related events. They are also responsible for curating academic and research content for the newsletter, hosting office hours, and moderating an online neuroscience student community group.

4.2.5 The Vice-President of Advocacy will train and supervise the Directors of Advocacy in creating meaningful advocacy content. They are responsible for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the club operations and coordinating with campus and external organizations to plan and host fundraisers, awareness campaigns, volunteer program partnerships, and workshops.

4.2.6 The Vice-President of Operations is responsible for attending finance training sessions and managing the general financial operations of SYNAPSE. They will work with the President and other Vice-Presidents to develop sponsorships, submit grants, manage fundraisers and create financial reports. They will also train and supervise the Director of Operations in grant, sponsorship and bursary applications along with the ethical and accountable management of funds. In addition to these roles, the Vice-President of Operations will assist the President in creating and maintaining records of club affairs, including taking minutes during club meetings. The Vice-President of Operations will monitor the attendance and performance of all other club members to ensure that they are eligible to receive Co-Curricular Record recognition for their work. They will also work alongside the President to edit and fact-check content created by the executive and volunteer teams before publication on social media. They will also assume the

responsibilities of the President in the event that the President is unable to fulfill these responsibilities.

4.2.7 The Vice-President of Publicity shall train and supervise the Directors of Publicity in fact-checking all SYNAPSE content intended for publication on social media. Their role is critical in ensuring that SYNAPSE promotes accurate and audience-appropriate representations of scientific works and information.

4.2.8 The Directors of Scientific Outreach will work alongside the Vice-President of Public Relations and Directors of Communications in preparing scientific posts/communications regarding current neuroscience news and topics. They will be required to be well versed in scientific research and writing.

4.2.9 The Directors of Communications will work alongside the Vice-President of Communications to prepare public announcements, design promotional materials, maintain SYNAPSE's social media presence, and take photographs of events. They will be required to be well versed in graphic design and social media management.

4.2.10 The Directors of Academic Affairs will work alongside the Vice-President of Academic Affairs in creating practice questions and hosting review sessions and office hours. They will also create academic content and moderate an online neuroscience student community group.

4.2.11 The Directors of Advocacy will work alongside the Vice-President of Advocacy in creating advocacy content from a neuroscience lens. They will also assist in the planning and execution of advocacy-related events.

4.2.12 The Director of Operations will work alongside the Vice-President of Operations to submit grant, sponsorship and bursary applications to external organizations and will assist in the ethical and accountable management of funds. They will also assist the Vice-President of Operations in creating and maintaining records of club affairs and in editing and fact-checking content created by the executive and volunteer teams.

4.2.13 The Directors of Publicity will work alongside the Vice-President of Publicity to edit and fact-check content created by the executive and volunteer teams prior to publication on social media.

4.3 The President position must be filled by at least one executive.

4.4 There is no requirement to fill executive positions other than the President position, or to fill such positions to their maximum capacity.

4.5 The President reserves the right to add, amend, or remove executive positions after the current term of membership ends and before the application period begins.

4.6 Only student members of the organization may hold executive positions.

4.7 The executive positions collectively will form a committee that acts as the primary steward of the organization.

4.8 This committee is collectively responsible for the day-to-day decision-making of the organization, including but not limited to monitoring finances, event planning and execution, member services, and advocating on behalf of members to the Administration and student government.

4.9 This committee cannot make amendments to the constitution without the approval of the general membership at a valid general meeting.

4.10 In cases where general membership is characterized by little to no involvement in the Administration or in executive processes, the requirement outlined in section 4.9 that this committee cannot make amendments to the constitution without the approval of the general membership at a valid general meeting may be voided.

4.11 The term of each executive will last from September 1 to April 30 of the following year.

4.12 Any executive of the organization may resign, provided that such resignation is made in writing, given one month in advance, and delivered to the President. Unless any such resignation is, by its terms, effective on a later date, it shall be effective on delivery to the President, and no ratification by the organization shall be required to make the resignation official.

4.13 Any vacancy of executives shall be filled by the President or designate of the organization until such a time when an application process is conducted.

4.14 If the President resigns, a notice of such resignation must be submitted in writing and delivered to the executive committee at a valid executive meeting with a minimum of two months' notice. Unless any such resignation is, by its terms, effective on a later date, it shall be effective on delivery to the executive committee, and no ratification by the organization shall be required to make the resignation official.

4.15 Any vacancy of the President shall be filled by the Vice-President of Operations.

4.16 Any vacancy of the President and Vice-President of Operations together shall be filled by another executive committee member, appointed by a simple and clear majority of the executive committee, until the application period begins.

#### **Article V: Removal of Members and Executives**

5.1 The process for removing a member or executive may be initiated when a committee of no less than three (3) non-executive general members or presenters, and two (2) executives appointed by the general membership to investigate a complaint determines that:

5.1.1 A member or executive has engaged in unlawful actions or activities;

5.1.2 A member or executive has violated the constitution;

5.1.3 A member or executive has violated University of Toronto policies, procedures, or guidelines;

5.1.4 A member or executive has violated the rights of a fellow member;

5.1.5 A member or executive has not fulfilled their organizational responsibilities;

5.1.6 Other criteria deemed to be appropriate by the Executive Committee in consultation with and approved by a majority of the general membership.

5.2 The process for removing a member or executive may also be initiated when:

5.2.1 A petition calling for a vote and bearing the signatures of a majority of the general membership is submitted to any member of the executive.

5.2.2 A motion for a removal vote is put forward by any member of the executive and passed by a two-thirds majority vote of the executives. The individual facing potential removal vote is entitled to vote on the motion if they are an executive or be given an opportunity to explain themselves if they are a non-executive general member.

5.3 The removal of members and executives will be facilitated by a three tier procedure which operates as follows:

5.3.1 First Tier:

- a. The executive or member will be warned both verbally and in writing that their behaviour constitutes grounds for removal from the organization and that it should cease effective immediately.

5.3.2 Second Tier:

- a. Initiated because the member or executive has violated section 5.1 after receiving a first tier warning relative to a particular action or behaviour.
- b. The President will be responsible for contacting the executive or member and facilitating training or suggesting best practices on how to correct the issues of concern.
- c. The President must address all complaints in writing by formulating an action plan and timeline to correct any issues involving executives or members within fourteen (14) calendar days.
- d. The executive or member accused of violating section 5.1 will be given fourteen (14) calendar days from receiving the President's written response to demonstrate progress or correction of behaviour.

5.3.3 Third Tier:

- a. Initiated because the member or executive has violated section 5.1 after receiving second tier warning relative to a particular action or behaviour.
- b. The removal vote must take place at a valid general meeting of the membership. A representative supporting the motion for removal and the executive or member facing removal (or an individual they designate), may speak for up to five minutes each.
- c. The removal of an executive or member requires a 2/3 majority vote of all of the members present at a valid general meeting (including executives). The executive or member facing removal is entitled to vote on the motion.

5.4 In cases where general membership is characterized by little to no involvement in the Administration or in executive processes, the process outlined in section 5.1 for removing a member or executive may be initiated with less than three (3) non-executive general members or presenters.

## **Article VI: Finances**

6.1 The funds of the organization shall be expended pursuant to the operating budget approved by the general membership at a valid general meeting.

6.2 Notwithstanding section 6.1, the executive committee may not approve any unbudgeted expenditure of the organization's funds above \$100.00 without the approval of the general members at a valid general meeting.

6.3 All Budgets shall be prepared by the Vice-President of Operations in accordance with the organization's priorities as determined by the executive committee in consultation with general members at a valid general meeting.

6.4 The Vice-President of Operations shall present a proposed operating budget for the next fiscal year to the general membership for its consideration at the final general meeting.

6.5 The operating budget shall be the major budget for the fiscal year and provide for all expenditures of the organization for the subsequent year.

6.6 The operating budget shall be approved by a majority vote of the general members present and voting at a valid general meeting.

6.7 The banking business of the organization, or any part thereof, shall be transacted with such bank, trust company, or other firm or body corporate as the Executive may designate, appoint, or authorize from time to time, and all such banking business, or any part thereof, shall be transacted on the organization's behalf by one or more Officers or other persons as the Executive may designate, direct, or authorize from time to time and to the extent thereby provided.

6.8 The President, the Vice-President of Operations, and the Vice-President of Public Relations, and only in special circumstances, the Vice-President of Communications, shall be the sole signing authorities of banking instruments for the organization.

6.9 SYNAPSE will ensure that proper and accurate financial records are maintained and passed on to incoming executives following each year's elections.

6.10 SYNAPSE will accept full financial and production responsibility for all activities it sponsors, plans, or executes.

## **Article VII: General Meetings**

7.1 The purpose of General Meetings is to provide a forum for executives to overview the activities of the organization and solicit feedback from members, to engage in policy-making, to propose amendments to the constitution, and to report on the financial status of the organization.

7.2 General meetings will be facilitated by the President, who will be responsible for:

7.2.1 Formulating the agenda with approval of the executive team for each general meeting at the previous executive meeting;

7.2.2 Ensuring appropriate conduct and leading the meeting in an efficient, reasonable manner;

7.2.3 Moderating the discussion at meetings according to the agenda;

7.2.4 Suspending members from participating in meetings for constitutional or procedural violations.

7.3 The procedure at meetings of members shall be governed in accordance with the process outlined in Appendix A.

7.4 There shall be a minimum of one (1) general meeting held each month. The date of each subsequent general meeting will be confirmed at the preceding general meeting and will be reiterated to members via email a minimum of two (2) calendar days prior to the meeting.

7.5 In cases where general membership is characterized by little to no involvement in the Administration or in executive processes, the requirement outlined in section 7.4 to have a minimum of one (1) general meeting held each month may be voided.

7.6 General meetings may be called to order by the President, through a petition signed by three (3) executive members, or by a petition signed by five (5) non-executive general members.

7.7 General meetings are open to registered members of the organization only. Quorum will first be established by the presence of a simple and clear majority of the executives.

7.8 For quorum to remain valid, the number of non-executive general members present at a general meeting must exceed the number of executives present at all times.

7.9 All executives are expected to make brief progress reports on their activities at every general meeting.

7.10 Minutes of all general meetings must be recorded and maintained for reference purposes.

7.11 Members must contact the President a minimum of one week before a general meeting to inform them of new business they wish to discuss. The President will then add the discussion item to the agenda upon approval of the executive team.

7.12 Any question at a valid general meeting shall be decided by a show of hands.

7.13 The President presiding over a meeting of members may, with the consent of the majority of members, decide to adjourn these meetings from time to time.

### **Article VIII: Executive Meetings**

8.1 The purpose of executive meetings is to provide a forum for the organization's executives to discuss and make decisions on day-to-day matters affecting the organization.

8.2 Executive meetings will be facilitated by the President of the organization. The President shall be responsible for:

8.2.1 Formulating and distributing an agenda for each meeting;

8.2.2 Ensuring appropriate conduct and leading the meeting in an efficient, reasonable manner;



8.2.3 Moderating the discussion at meetings according to the agenda.

8.3 The frequency of executive meetings occurring between May 1 and August 31 will be left to the discretion of the executive committee.

8.4 Executive meetings may be called to order by the President or through a petition signed by two other executive members.

8.5 Executive meetings are restricted to executive members only. Quorum will be established by the presence of a simple and clear majority of the total executives for the organization.

8.6 Minutes of all executive meetings must be recorded and maintained for reference purposes.

8.7 Executives must notify the President a minimum of one (1) calendar day before an executive meeting to inform them of new business they wish to discuss. The President will then add the discussion item to the agenda.

8.8 Each executive member of the organization shall be entitled to one (1) vote at a valid executive meeting.

8.9 Any question at an Executive Meeting shall be decided by a show of hands.

8.10 Whenever a vote by show of hands occurs, a declaration by the President that the vote has been carried, carried by a particular majority, or failed shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

8.11 In case of an equality of votes at an Executive Meeting, the motion will be recorded as having failed.

8.12 The President may, with the consent of the majority of executives, decide to adjourn these meetings from time to time.

### **Article IX: Emergency Meetings**

9.1 Emergency meetings can be called for extenuating or unforeseen circumstances that may arise from time to time.

9.2 These meetings must abide by the respective rules outlined in sections VII and VIII depending on the nature of the meeting.

9.3 Notice of these meetings must be provided a minimum of 48 hours in advance through email.

9.4 Less notice for emergency meetings may be provided at the discretion of the President in agreement with a minimum of five (5) general members.

9.5 In cases where general membership is characterized by little to no involvement in the Administration or in executive processes, the requirement outlined in section 9.4 that less notice for emergency meetings may be provided at the discretion of the President in agreement with a minimum of five (5) general members may be voided.

#### **Article X: Elections**

10.1 SYNAPSE will not be hosting elections.

#### **Article XI: Amendments**

11.1 The organization may make, amend, or repeal the constitution or certain sections therein.

11.2 Notice of a meeting called to consider such a resolution shall be given as follows:

11.2.1 Notice of the full text of the proposed constitutional amendment shall be given to each member at least fourteen (14) days prior to the date of the meeting called to consider the change;

11.2.2 A summary of the rationale for the proposed amendment shall be given to each member at least seven (7) days prior to the date of the meeting called to consider the change.

#### **Article XII: Transition**

12.1 All outgoing executives are required to transfer all organizational resources used relative to a particular role over the course of the preceding year to new executives upon leaving the position.

12.2 All outgoing executives are responsible for providing a detailed report to incoming executives that stipulates the status of ongoing projects in their portfolio and evaluations of previous projects and programs that they lead.

12.3 All outgoing and incoming executives will participate in a joint training session occurring as soon as reasonably possible each year to assist with the transition between new executive teams.

#### **Article XIII: Emergency Powers**

13.1 In the case of extenuating circumstances, the executive shall be afforded the ability to act without direction from the organization's members.

13.2 An extenuating circumstance is defined as any instance that may jeopardize the immediate functioning of the organization including but not limited to: executive vacancies, unexpected cancellations, removal from position, or lack of response from members.

13.3 Emergency powers may only be used for such a period of time as is needed to address an extenuating circumstance.

13.4 General members have the ability to remove emergency powers where appropriate through submission of a signed petition from at least two thirds of the entire general membership.

#### **Article XIV: Food Handling on Campus**

14.1 SYNAPSE will conform to Provincial and Municipal Health Regulations when events which include the sale and/or service of food products are held on the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

#### **Article XV: Precedence of University Policies**

15.1 SYNAPSE will abide by all pertinent University of Toronto policies, procedures, and guidelines. Where the University's policies, procedures, and guidelines conflict with those of SYNAPSE, the University's policies, procedures, and guidelines will take precedence.

#### **Article XVI: Legal Liability**

16.1 The University of Toronto Scarborough does not endorse SYNAPSE's beliefs or philosophy, nor does it assume legal liability for the group's activities on or off campus.

#### **Article XVII: Banking**

17.1 SYNAPSE agrees to provide the name of the bank, the branch number and address, transit number, bank account number, and a list of all signing officers for all bank accounts opened in the organization's name to the Department of Student Life, University of Toronto Scarborough.

### **Appendix A: General Meeting Rules of Order**

#### **I. Call to Order**

1. The President may call the meeting to order only if a quorum of executives and non-executive general members is present in person. If a quorum does not exist, the meeting is not qualified to conduct business. A general member may not appear by proxy or mail ballot.
2. The meeting must be open to all applicable general members. General members must receive notice of the meeting in accordance with the constitution.

#### **II. Review of the Agenda**

1. The first draft of the agenda is prepared by the President prior to the meeting. Agenda items should ordinarily appear in the order set forth in these rules of order.
2. The agenda belongs to all general members. The agenda may be modified only by a majority vote. This power should only be used when necessary as proper functioning of meetings and the organization requires advance planning.

3. At this point in the agenda, general members may add or delete items from the agenda and may change the order of presentation.

4. When possible, changes to the agenda should be done by acquiescence of all general members. Formal voting on the agenda is only necessary where it appears to the President that there is a disagreement.

### III. Approval of Previous Minutes

1. The minutes need not be read aloud, but they should be entered into the organization's official minute ledger upon approval by the general membership.

2. The minutes are prepared by the President or another appointed executive.

3. Minutes should state precisely each motion considered by the general membership, and identify the general members voting in favour, against, or abstaining, and whether the motion was carried. Minutes need not reflect the comments made, except in those instances when the member desires to make his/her comments recorded.

### IV. Executive Reports

1. Executives may report their findings or recommendations to the general membership at this point of the agenda.

2. The full report should be presented and then general members, in turn, may ask questions or comment. It is not appropriate to make motions or discuss items of business during this portion of the meeting.

3. This time should also be used for any inquiries or comments to be made to the general membership.

### V. Open Forum

1. It is the custom and practice of most organizations to allow general members an open forum to ask questions and speak about their concerns to an executive after a report has been provided.

2. Strict time limitations should be imposed by the President and these limitations must be enforced. Each general member should address the President regarding an issue and must speak courteously and to the point.

### VI. Old and New Business

1. All items that were tabled during previous meetings must be revisited during the business portion of the agenda occurring after executive reports.

2. Except in the case of emergency business, all new items of business are heard only after all of the old items have been addressed by the general membership.

3. All business must be conducted in the form of motions or resolutions adopted by a vote of the general membership.

#### VII. Motions and Deliberations

1. When an item of business is to be discussed, the President announces the item to be discussed and opens the floor to discussion.

2. No general member may speak until recognized by the President. No general member may interrupt the speaker who has the floor.

3. The President may impose reasonable time limitations. All time limitations must be uniformly imposed upon all of the general members. The speaker shall be given a one-minute warning before time runs out.

4. The President's role is to recognize each general member in turn. Discussion shall be limited to the item of business at hand, and the President shall have the authority to take the floor from a speaker who does not limit discussion to the item of business at hand.

5. No general member may speak to an issue for a second time until all other general members have had the opportunity to speak to it for the first time. Likewise, no general member may speak to an issue for a third time until all other general members have had the opportunity to speak to it for a second time.

6. When it appears to the President that all general members have had the opportunity to fully discuss the matter at hand, the President should announce that the item of business is ready for a vote.

#### VIII. Voting

1. There are 3 basic motions for each item of business:

- a. A motion to adopt a specific action by the board.
- b. A motion to postpone the item to another meeting (including fact-finding assignments to a person or committee).
- c. A motion to remove an item from consideration.

2. The general membership is limited to discussing one item of business at a time, but there are no limits to the number of motions that may be considered as to how to dispose of that item of business.

3. After the general membership has had the opportunity to discuss each motion presented for consideration, the President will call each motion presented to a vote.

4. The fact that a motion has been adopted or failed does not prevent the item of business from being added to the agenda in the future, and all motions may be reconsidered at any time by the general membership.