

Public Health Students' Union Constitution

Updated 2025

Purpose

The Public Health Students' Union at the University of Toronto organizes social activities and academic seminars, as well as provides resources and assists students with academic concerns. We are committed to building connections between students interested in health and enriching the experience of the students in our program. We hope to facilitate an open environment in which students can participate in an ongoing dialogue about the socioeconomic, political, cultural and biomedical determinants of health and healthcare systems. We encourage all students to get involved by joining the executive, coming to general meetings, and attending events.

Membership

Membership is automatically extended to all students registered within the Public Health/Health Studies program. All Executive members, with the exception of the two General Junior Executives, must be enrolled in the Public Health/Health Studies major program and/or should have taken at least 1.0 FCE of the major requirements.

Executive and Junior Executive positions are filled through annual formal elections held in the spring. Applicants may be asked to complete an application form or attend an interview as part of the election process as the presiding Executive members see fit.

Elected Positions

There shall be ten Senior Executive positions consisting of:

- (a) Co-Presidents (2)
- (b) Vice President: Academic
- (c) Vice President: Social
- (d) Treasurer
- (e) Director of Marketing
- (f) Director of Communications
- (g) Secretary
- (h) Director of Health Equity
- (i) UPHJ Chief Operating Officer

There shall be up to 4 additional Junior Executive positions:

- (1) 4th Year Junior Executive
- (1) 3rd Year Junior Executive
- (1) 2nd Year Junior Executive
- (1) General Junior Executive

Each Junior Executive will be working in direct partnership with a group of Senior

Executives. Junior Executive members can be re-assigned to other Senior Executives as they see fit.

In addition to their own responsibilities, the Junior Executive members shall take on the responsibilities of the Senior Executive as needed to support the work of the Union as a whole. The Junior Executive roles shall be filled according to need and availability of interested candidates.

The Editors in Chief of *Health Perspectives*, the Undergraduate Public Health Journal, is an appointed position and shall not be considered an executive member of the PHSU. The responsibilities of the Editor in Chief are outlined in detail in the Undergraduate Public Health Journal (UPHJ) constitution. As the funding source of the UPHJ, the UPHJ team is expected to liaise with the Public Health Students' Union throughout the academic year regarding their progress, expectations, and/or concerns. The UPHJ is expected to attend the PHSU executive meetings, but they **do not hold any executive voting privileges**. For the sake of clarity, selected responsibilities relevant to the PHSU are summarized at the end of this document.

No individual may fill more than one executive position on the PHSU at any given time.

Meetings

Executive meetings will be held on a weekly basis. A 60% attendance of the Senior and Junior Executive members will form a quorum. Members are expected to put the foremost effort into attending all meetings. Meeting times and dates shall be determined by the Executive. General meetings will be held at least twice a year (one per semester), which will be open to all members within the Public Health program.

Use of Funds

No funds may be spent without majority consent. The President and Treasurer are the only members permitted to act as signing officers for the union.

Elections

All executive members must be elected by the student body. Both the Senior Executive and Junior Executive elections are held annually in the spring. Elected executives take office on the last day of the winter sessional academic calendar.

Junior Executive members leave office on the last day of the winter session as per the academic calendar; thus the positions are vacant during the summer session, and it is expected that the presiding Senior Executive team ensures the smooth handover of all responsibilities to the new Senior Executive team at the end of the academic year.

In the event that a position is vacated during the executive term, a bi-election will be held to fill the position. This bi-election can occur at any time during the executive term with two weeks notice provided to Public Health students.

Removal from Office

Any such member that engages in the following behaviours can be removed from their position:

- Failure to perform their roles or fulfill the responsibilities outlined in this constitution.
- Misuse of funds.
- Any inappropriate behaviour or grievance identified by the student body.

Any student who holds membership in the Public Health Student Union may approach the executive to voice a concern regarding any member of the executive. 50% of all executive members must agree to open discussion on the removal of an executive member, and 80% of all executive members must vote in favour of removal for a member to be removed from office.

As previously stated, the Editor in Chief of *Health Perspectives* is not an executive member of the PHSU. However, because funding of the UPHJ is obtained, in full or in part, by the PHSU, the Editor in Chief may be removed from their position through the same voting process. The details of this removal from office process are outlined in the [UPHJ constitution](#).

Constitutional Amendments

The constitution can be amended at any executive meeting provided general union members are given two weeks' notice of the amendment, and given the opportunity to attend the meeting and vote on the proposed changes. A majority vote from the Executive team is required to pass/implement any changes to the constitution.

Student Grievances

Student grievances are to be reported to the appropriate year representatives. In such cases, it is the Junior Executives' responsibility to inform the President and/or Vice President: Academic in a timely manner and act as a representative for the student(s) if necessary. If the three aforementioned executives (President, Vice President: Academic & corresponding Junior Executive) consider it appropriate to proceed, the President will present concerns to the acting Program Director.

Role of the Executives

The general role of the executive body is as follows:

- Shall hold decision-making power with respect to the events and services offered by the Public Health Students' Union
- Shall oversee organizational decisions affecting the roles and membership of the Public Health Students' Union

All members of the executive are responsible for the following:

- Shall be present in the PHSU office for office hours as assigned, such that the

Public Health Students' Union as a whole provides the option of scheduling an appointment with an available executive member, over at least three separate days, each week. The executive shall assign office hours; it is expected that office hours are made accessible with a schedule that is accommodating to executive members' courses and employment.

- Shall attend a **minimum of 75% of all meetings and 50% of student events (including the General Meetings)**. Exceptions to this rule, based on exceptional circumstances, must be approved by the President. Should a member be unable to attend a meeting or event, the President must be notified of their absence at least 24 hours in advance.
- Shall assist with and attend PHSU student events.
- Shall respond to the PHSU e-mails regarding their specific roles and responsibilities.
- Shall assist in keeping students in the Public Health program informed of relevant events and initiatives.
- Shall assist in keeping the faculty and staff informed and updated on PHSU events and initiatives.
- Shall maintain open communication with faculty and staff in a professional manner.
- Shall be aware of their responsibilities as outlined in this constitution.
- Shall fulfill responsibilities outside of their individual role as necessary to support the work of the Union as a whole.

Individual Roles and Responsibilities

President

- Shall chair all meetings.
- Shall uphold the mandate of PHSU.
- Shall act as a liaison between ASSU and the PHSU by attending all necessary ASSU meetings and communicating information with the Executive Team.
- Shall be responsible to ASSU for all funds allocated to the PHSU.
- Shall act as a liaison between PHSU and the Public Health Program Director.
- Shall provide reference letters to union members when requested.
- Shall provide an atmosphere that encourages all members of the PHSU to share and learn throughout the year.
- Shall follow up with executive members regarding failure to fulfill responsibilities and duties as outlined in this constitution.
- Shall act as a signing officer for the PHSU checking account.
- Shall oversee all operations within the union.

Vice President: Academic

- Shall assume or delegate all President's duties in the President's absence.
- Shall act as liaison between the PHSU and campus groups, university officials and staff, and guests of the Public Health program and its events.
- Shall attend ASSU meetings in the absence of the President.

- Shall coordinate with the Vice President: Social before the start of the academic year regarding the division of academic and social events.
- Shall chair the organization of accessible academic events for Union members of all ages and all years.
- Shall organize **one academic event per semester**.
- Shall provide an atmosphere that encourages all members of the PHSU to share and learn throughout the year.
- Shall follow up with executive members regarding specific tasks, and in cases where there is a failure to fulfill responsibilities and duties as outlined in this constitution.
- Shall act as a signing officer for the PHSU checking account.
- Shall ensure events held comply with funding guidelines imposed by ASSU, the UCLit and other funding bodies and maintain event budgets as necessary.
- Shall keep a list of all relevant contacts for use by future executives.

Vice President: Social

- Shall coordinate with the Vice President: Academic before the start of the academic year regarding the division of academic and social events.
- Shall chair the organization of accessible social events for Union members of all ages and all years.
- Shall ensure events held comply with funding guidelines imposed by ASSU, the UCLit and other funding bodies and maintain event budgets as necessary.
- Shall organize **one social event per semester**.
- Shall manage the planning of one PHSU general meeting per semester, and as necessary in response to student concerns.
- Shall keep a list of all relevant contacts for use by future executives.
- Responsible for organizing initiatives to recruit first year students into the Public Health program.
- Shall book rooms with the Office of Space Management/LSM for all PHSU events and meetings.

Treasurer

- Shall be responsible to the Union for all funds, including those granted by ASSU, the UCLit, and other funding bodies.
- Shall attend annual ASSU budget training and communicate necessary information to members of the union regarding funding guidelines and restrictions.
- Shall create and submit detailed budgets as required for funding from ASSU, the UCLit and other bodies.
- Shall collect and file all PHSU receipts and submit them to the ASSU and any other funding bodies as required.
- Shall keep a record of all account balances and collect all financial records.
- Shall act as a signing officer for the PHSU checking account.

Director of Marketing

- Shall be responsible for maintaining the PHSU social media accounts.
- Shall respond to student inquiries received as messages on the social media platforms and/or direct those inquiries to the appropriate member of the executive.
- Shall respond to all private messages from other student groups regarding the promotion of their events.
- Shall share promotional materials with other student groups to increase student outreach.
- Shall oversee the design and distribution of promotional materials for all PHSU events.
- Shall be responsible for advertising program merchandise.

Director of Communications

- Shall coordinate with the University College program staff to maintain and update the website pages for the PHSU and UPHJ.
- Shall coordinate with the University College program staff to share event/initiative information with the Public Health student body (e.g. student newsletters).
- Shall collect executive biographies each fall and submit them for publication on the University College website.
- Shall manage the PHSU email and respond to students' inquiries or direct those inquiries to the appropriate member of the executive.
- Shall share event information with faculty, staff, and students via the Public Health Students' Union's listserv.
- Shall be responsible for communications regarding program merchandise; serving as a liaison between vendors and the union.

Secretary

- Shall take meeting minutes of all executive and general meetings and distribute them promptly to executive members, and to the Public Health student body upon request.
- Shall keep records of all information necessary to facilitate a smooth union turnover at the end of the term and pass on this information to future executives (e.g. organizing Google Drive so information is easily found and accessible).
- Shall collect executive members' fall and spring timetables to coordinate meeting times and office hours.
- Shall update and distribute executive member contact information lists to the executive and pass it along for posting on the University College website.
- Shall be available to support any member regarding written documentation.
- Shall be responsible for communicating/reminding executives of scheduled office hour appointments and meetings.
- Shall monitor and manage office hour appointment bookings.

Director of Health Equity

- Shall promote equity in the Public Health program, meaning they advocate for an inclusive, accessible, and equitable environment within the student union, the Public Health Department, and the university as a whole.
- Shall coordinate with the President and UofT Student Life to organize equity training for the PHSU Executive Team, the general Public Health student body, and encourage Public Health professors and admin to partake in equity training.
- Shall be the point of contact for Public Health students experiencing accessibility or equity issues in their courses or learning environment. Any concerns that warrant further action from administrative staff should be communicated directly to the Program Director.
- Shall ensure equity, representation and accessibility within all PHSU events and programming.
- Shall lead the PHSU and Public Health students in engaging in health advocacy at UofT and in the broader community by planning or collaborating with student or community advocacy groups on a **minimum of two events/initiatives per academic year**.
- Shall host at least **one** event related to health equity or community health during the academic year. Additional events may be held if the budget/team allows for them.

UPHJ Chief Operating Officer

- Develop and oversee the journal's workflow from submission to final publication.
- Establish and reinforce a timeline for the project's workflow that meets the deadline requirements laid out by the PHSU Executive.
- Shall coordinate with the Editor in Chief for the organization and planning of the journal launch.
- Act as a liaison between the PHSU and the UPHJ, providing progress updates during Executive meetings.
- Facilitate communications regarding the journal with the Director of Marketing, Treasurer, and any other executive members as needed.
- Work closely with the UPHJs Editor in Chief to make strategic decisions, enforce guidelines outlined under the UPHJ constitution.
- Identify areas for improvement in the journal's operations and implement best practices.
- Responsible for conducting interviews and/or elections for the UPHJ team positions including the Editor in Chief.

Second Year Junior Executive (1)

- Must be in their second academic year and enrolled in the Public Health major

and/or at least one 200-Level Public Health course as listed under the program requirements.

- Shall act as a liaison with the second year class and incoming Public Health students via class announcements and e-mail.
- Shall direct any concerns from second year students to relevant core executive members.
- Shall give assistance to their assigned Senior Executive member as needed.

Third Year Junior Executive (1)

- Must be in their third academic year and enrolled in the Public Health major and/or at least one 300-Level Public Health course as listed under the program requirements.
- Shall act as a liaison with the third year class via class announcements and e-mail.
- Shall direct any concerns from third year students to relevant core executive members.
- Shall give assistance to their assigned Senior Executive member as needed.

Fourth Year Junior Executive (1)

- Must be in their fourth academic year and enrolled in the Public Health major and/or at least one 400-Level Public Health course as listed under the program requirements.
- Shall act as a liaison with the fourth year class via class announcements and e-mail.
- Shall direct any concerns from fourth year students to relevant core executive members.
- Shall give assistance to their assigned Senior Executive member as needed.

General Junior Executive (1)

- Must be enrolled in at least 0.5 FCE of Public Health courses as listed under program requirements.
- Shall give assistance to their assigned Senior Executive member as needed.
- Shall act as a liaison with the first year class via class announcements and e-mail.
- Shall direct any concerns from incoming/prospective students to relevant core executive members.

Editor in Chief of the Undergraduate Public Health Journal (UPSJ)

Note: The Editor in Chief of Health Perspectives is not an executive position on the PHSU, and is appointed rather than elected through a process outlined in the UPHJ constitution. The [UPHJ constitution](#) also outlines in detail the responsibilities of the Editor in Chief, as well as other journal staff.

The responsibilities which pertain to their role as liaison between the UPHJ and the PHSU are specified below:

- Shall attend **all executive PHSU meetings** as required to provide regular updates on the progress of the UPHJ alongside the UPHJs COO.
- Shall coordinate with the UPHJ Chief Operating Officer to carry out recruitment of journal staff in the fall.
- Shall communicate changes in UPHJ's staff to the PHSU to ensure contact information is up to date.
- Shall coordinate with the UPHJ's Chief Operating Officer to ensure the UPHJ is following the appropriate guidelines to ensure adequate funding, and to obtain funding from the PHSU as necessary.
- Shall communicate any relevant information from the PHSU to the UPHJ staff.
- Shall ensure that the UPHJ is upholding the mandate of the PHSU to serve the needs and interests of Public Health students.
- Shall follow up with UPHJ staff regarding their failure to fulfill responsibilities and duties as outlined in the [UPHJ constitution](#), and inform the UPHJ COO of any issues.