

# **Constitution of Surgical Skills Working Group**

**Updated as of September 19, 2025**

## **Article I: Name and Purpose**

**1.1 The official name of the Campus Group will be Surgical Skills Working Group**

***Note: The organization reserves the right to petition the Board of Regents or Board of Directors of the University of Toronto for approval to incorporate "University of Toronto" into the official name at a future date.***

**1.2 The campus group may be referred to by the acronym SSWG**

**1.3 The purpose, objectives, mission and/or mandate of the organization is to refine and develop the operative skills of the University of Toronto community through evidence-based training methodologies, expert instruction, and comprehensive skill assessment programs.**

## **Article II: Membership**

**2.1 The group shall maintain a list of group members.**

**2.2 Voting membership is open to all registered students of the University of Toronto.**

**2.3 Voting membership is open only to registered students of the University of Toronto.**

**2.4 Non-voting membership is open to University of Toronto staff, faculty, alumni, and to persons from outside the University. Unless otherwise stated, non-voting members do not hold any rights awarded to voting members.**

**2.5 The membership fee will be \$0.00 per year.**

## **Article III: Rights of Members**

**3.1 All members may apply for a full refund of their membership fee within one (1) month of becoming a member.**

**3.2 All voting members have a right to attend all general meetings of members.**

**3.3 All voting members have a right to cast votes at all general meetings of members.**

**3.4 All voting members have a right to stand for election unless otherwise stated in this document.**

**3.5 All voting members have a right to cast votes in all group elections and referenda.**

**3.6 All voting members have a right to propose and vote on amendments to this constitution.**

**The rights prescribed in Article Three are not awarded to non-voting members as described in Article Two.**

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

**4.1 The term for all positions on the Executive Committee shall be from May 1st to April 30th.**

**4.2 The Executive Committee shall be comprised of three (3) voting members.**

**4.3 All voting members of the Executive Committee must be currently registered students of the University of Toronto.**

**4.4 Non-voting members may hold only non-voting positions on the Executive Committee.**

**4.5 The maximum amount of non-voting positions on the Executive Committee shall be one (1) position or ten per cent (10%) of the positions on the Executive Committee, whichever is greatest.**

**4.6 Persons holding non-voting positions on the Executive Committee cannot serve as an officer, financial authority, signing authority, primary contact, or secondary contact.**

**4.7 No person may serve as a financial authority or signing authority for the group if they are currently serving as a financial authority or signing authority for another recognized student group at the University of Toronto.**

**4.8 The Executive may appoint Directors or Coordinators for various committees who do not hold executive decision-making authority and are not eligible to cast votes at meetings of the Executive Committee.**

#### **Article V: Elections**

**5.1 All voting positions on the Executive Committee shall be filled through an annual election.**

**5.2 All voting group members shall be eligible to seek nomination to and cast a ballot for each voting position.**

**5.3 All non-voting group members shall be eligible to seek nomination only for non-voting positions on the Executive Committee.**

**5.4 Non-voting group members shall not be eligible to cast a ballot for any elected position.**

**5.5 The nominee winning the plurality of votes cast in the election for each position shall be deemed the winner.**

**5.6 On the condition that multiple candidates are to be elected for a single position, the nominees winning the largest share of the votes cast shall be deemed the winners until all positions are filled.**

**5.7 The elections must be held in a nonbiased manner. No individual who is seeking election may participate in planning or administering the election.**

**5.8 For all unfilled positions, the remaining officers will share the duties and responsibilities until someone can be found to fulfill the positions(s) through a by-election and vote of simple majority (50% + 1)**

#### **Article VI: Termination of Membership**

**6.1 The Executive Committee may revoke the membership of 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.**

**6.2 A vote to revoke membership must be held at a meeting of the Executive Committee.**

**6.3 A two-thirds majority of the Executive Committee is required to approve any motion to revoke membership.**

**6.4 Any member facing removal shall have the right to appeal the decision of the Executive Committee to the general membership.**

**6.5 In the case of an appeal, a simple majority vote at a meeting of the general membership shall be required to sustain the revocation of membership.**

**6.6 Following a termination of membership, the member will be removed from the club's membership and will lose any privileges associated with being a member of the club.**

**6.7 Executive Committee members are subject to the same termination of membership process as general members.**

#### **Article VII -- Amendments**

**7.1 All constitutional amendments shall require a 2/3 majority vote to be passed at a general meeting.**

**7.2 All voting members may propose and vote on amendments to the constitution.**

**7.3 The Executive Committee shall submit the revised constitution to staff in the Student Life programs office at the University of Toronto Scarborough within two (2) weeks.**

**7.4 Amendments to the constitution shall take effect only once the revised constitution has been approved by staff in the Student Life programs office at the University of Toronto Scarborough.**

## **Additional Policies and Protocols**

### **Executive Committee Structure and Leadership**

**Policy 6: Executive Committee Composition** The Executive Committee shall be comprised of one (1) Director, one (1) Vice-President, and one (1) Secretary-Treasurer.

**Policy 7: Director Term Exception** The Director position shall continue until the incumbent graduates or is no longer a registered student at the University of Toronto, differing from the standard May 1st to April 30th term.

**Policy 8: Specialized Training Qualification** The Director position requires specialized surgical training credentials. Matthew Stephenson possesses exceptional surgical training, having completed advanced pediatric neurosurgical training under the direct supervision of Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni, MD, MSc, PhD, FRCSC (abhaya.kulkarni@sickkids.ca) at The Hospital for Sick Children, where he participated in actual pediatric neurosurgical procedures. This unique qualification is essential for providing specialized instruction and mentorship within the organization's educational framework.

**Policy 9: Current Executive Leadership** Matthew Stephenson (University of Toronto Student ID: 1011888334) shall serve as Director of the Surgical Skills Working Group.

**Policy 10: Director Appointment Authority** The Director maintains sole authority to appoint the Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer positions from the voting membership, ensuring organizational cohesion and specialized knowledge requirements are met.

### **Policy 11: Executive Committee Powers and Responsibilities**

- **Director:** Serves as the primary executive with comprehensive authority over all organizational matters, including strategic direction, training protocols, safety

procedures, financial oversight, member management, and operational decisions. The Director's decisions are final on all matters related to surgical training and organizational management.

- **Vice-President:** Assists the Director as requested and performs administrative duties as assigned by the Director.
- **Secretary-Treasurer:** Maintains organizational records and assists with basic administrative functions as directed by the Director.

**Policy 12: Director Authority** The Director possesses comprehensive executive authority and may delegate specific administrative tasks to other executive members while retaining final decision-making power on all organizational matters.

### **Election and Appointment Procedures**

**Policy 13: Executive Appointment System** The positions of Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer shall be appointed by the Director from the voting membership, except when the Director position becomes vacant under the succession procedures outlined in Policy 17.

**Policy 14: Appointment Eligibility** All voting group members shall be eligible for appointment to the Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer positions, subject to Director approval based on organizational needs and qualifications.

**Policy 15: Executive Appointment Process** Executive appointments shall be made at the Director's discretion based on organizational requirements, member qualifications, and the specialized nature of surgical skills training.

**Policy 16: Executive Position Tenure** The Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer serve at the pleasure of the Director and may be replaced at any time to ensure optimal organizational functioning. In the event of executive position vacancies, the Director shall make new appointments from the voting membership within thirty (30) days.

**Policy 17: Director Succession** The Director position shall only become vacant upon: (a) voluntary resignation by the Director, (b) graduation from the University of Toronto, (c) loss of registered student status at the University of Toronto, or (d) replacement by Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni, MD, MSc, PhD, FRCSC. In the event that Dr. Kulkarni is unwilling or unable to make succession decisions, the Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery or the Chair of the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto may exercise this authority. Upon vacancy, the outgoing Director maintains sole discretionary authority to appoint a successor from the organization's voting membership. Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni possesses concurrent authority to elect a new Director should circumstances require such intervention.

**Policy 18: Emergency Communication Protocol** Should the Director become unreachable by the Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU), organizational members, University of Toronto administration, or Dr. Kulkarni for a period exceeding ninety (90) consecutive days due to incapacitation or other extraordinary circumstances, Dr. Kulkarni may assume temporary organizational oversight until communication is reestablished or permanent succession is required under Policy 17. In the event Dr. Kulkarni is unwilling or unable to act, the Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery or the Chair of the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto may exercise this authority.

**Policy 19: Educational Standards Justification** All executive appointments must maintain the organization's commitment to excellence in surgical education and training standards. The specialized and technical nature of surgical skills training requires executive leadership with appropriate medical knowledge and training experience, justifying the appointment-based system for optimal educational outcomes.

### **Enhanced Membership Termination Procedures**

**Policy 20: Director Membership Termination Authority** The Director may revoke the membership of any member who commits an act negatively affecting the interests of the organization and its members, including non-disclosure of significant conflicts of interest. Membership termination decisions shall be made by the Director after consideration of organizational impact and member conduct.

**Policy 21: Director Immunity from Removal** Executive Committee members are subject to the same termination of membership process as general members, except that the Director may only be removed from the Director position through: (a) voluntary resignation, (b) graduation from the University of Toronto, (c) loss of registered student status at the University of Toronto, or (d) replacement by Dr. Abhaya Kulkarni, MD, MSc, PhD, FRCSC, or in the event Dr. Kulkarni is unwilling or unable to act, by the Chair of the Department of Neurosurgery or the Chair of the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto. The Director is otherwise immune from removal through any membership termination process, executive committee vote, or general membership action.

### **Constitutional Amendment Restrictions**

**Policy 22: Director-Related Amendment Requirements** All constitutional amendments shall require a 2/3 majority vote to be passed at a general meeting, except for amendments to sections relating to the Director position (including but not limited to Director term, succession, powers, and removal procedures), which require Director approval in addition to the 2/3 majority vote. All voting members may propose and vote on amendments to the

constitution, except for amendments to sections relating to the Director position, which require Director approval in addition to membership approval.

## **Safety and Professional Standards**

**Policy 1: Workspace Maintenance** Maintain immaculate working stations consistent with surgical sterility standards.

**Policy 2: Instrument Protocol** Utilize appropriate surgical instrumentation for all procedures and training exercises.

**Policy 3: Anatomical Reference Requirement** Maintain anatomical reference materials within immediate working vicinity. Verification of anatomical landmarks is mandatory when uncertainty exists.

**Policy 4: Deliberate Practice Methodology** Execute all procedures with careful attention to technique, precision, and methodological accuracy.

**Policy 5: Documentation and Privacy Protection** Mobile devices and cameras are strictly prohibited during training sessions. Documentation, videotaping, or photography of anatomical materials is expressly forbidden and constitutes grounds for immediate membership termination.

## **Organizational Mission Statement**

The Surgical Skills Working Group stands as a premier organization dedicated to advancing surgical excellence through hands-on training, mentorship, and the cultivation of technical proficiency. Under the guidance of distinguished medical professionals and through rigorous skill development programs, we foster the next generation of surgical practitioners within the University of Toronto community.

## **Acknowledgments**

*"The Surgical Skills Working Group extends profound gratitude to Dr. Albert Rhoton Jr., whose pioneering methodologies and educational philosophies serve as the foundation for our organizational policies and training protocols. His legacy continues to inspire excellence in surgical education worldwide."*

**Document Certification:** This constitution represents the governing framework of the Surgical Skills Working Group and supersedes all previous organizational documents.

**Executive Attestation:** Matthew Stephenson, Director Surgical Skills Working Group

