



Constitution of the Graduate Public Affairs Council

To Serve and Lead

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ARTICLE I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1.01. Name and Purpose. The name of this organization is the Graduate Public Affairs Council and its purpose is to:—

- (1) Act as the primary advocate and sole voice of LBJ students;
- (2) Serve as a forum for the expression of student views concerning life within the LBJ School;
- (3) Commit to understanding the needs of students and enhancing the student experience by collaborating with students, faculty, staff, and administration to facilitate or otherwise cause positive change for LBJ students;
- (4) Assist students with the transition from undergraduate school, or professional life, into graduate school; and
- (5) Assist with the cultivation of the skills which are necessary and proper for a public affairs practitioner.

Section 1.02. General Definitions. In this Constitution, the following terms and abbreviations carry the following definitions except where otherwise stated:—

- (1) References to “UT,” or “UT Austin,” or the “University,” or the “Institution” refer to the University of Texas at Austin;
- (2) References to “LBJ,” or “the LBJ School,” or the “School,” refer to the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs;
- (3) “GPAC” means the Graduate Public Affairs Council”;
- (4) The “Board” means the Executive Board;
- (5) The “Assembly” means the General Assembly;
- (6) The “Dean” is the Dean of the LBJ School or the Dean’s designee;
- (7) A “UT Student” is any student who is enrolled at UT Austin;
- (8) A “Student” or “LBJ School student” is a student who is enrolled at the LBJ School as a degree-seeker or is otherwise, as determined by the Dean, eligible for membership in GPAC;
- (9) The “Student Body” is the entire student population of the LBJ School;
- (10) A “Community Member” or “LBJ Community Member” means:—
 - (a) An LBJ School student;
 - (b) A faculty member who is appointed to the LBJ School; or
 - (c) A staff member who is employed at the LBJ School;
- (11) A “UT Community Member” means:—
 - (a) A UT Student;
 - (b) A faculty member appointed to any academic unit or department at UT; or
 - (c) A staff member employed by UT;
- (12) “Member” means a student who holds a recognized elected or appointed office established and ordained within GPAC;

(13) “Deciding Vote” means a vote which may not be exercised unless it would materially affect the outcome of a vote after the regular members of the body have voted;

(14) “General Election” means an election which creates a new term of office;

(15) “Byelection” or “Special election” means an election to fill a casual vacancy in an office for the remainder of the underlying unexpired term; and

(16) “ASO” means the Administrative Services Officer.

Section 1.03. Quorum Requirements. Any group of members established in GPAC requires a quorum to do business, defined as a majority of its filled membership. A minority number may adjourn meetings of the body, recess, or request the attendance of absent members.

Section 1.04. Prohibition Against Conflicts-of-Interest. (a) No member may oversee, in any way, any policy, process, business, or otherwise where a conflict of interest exists.

(b) Whenever a conflict-of-interest exists, the member must declare in writing to the Administrative Services Officer—or, if the Administrative Services Officer has the conflict, must declare to the President—their conflict-of-interest and what steps are being taken to remediate or otherwise minimize the conflict

(c) The Assembly, or the Board if the Assembly cannot be convened, shall determine the steps to remediate or minimize the conflict in extraordinary occasions.

Section 1.05. Nondiscrimination. Neither GPAC, nor any member of GPAC, shall discriminate, nor tolerate the discrimination, nor advocate for the discrimination against of any protected class as defined by the University.

Section 1.06. Student Classification. (a) A student is a:—

(1) “First Year Student” whenever they have not completed a full academic year of their degree program at the LBJ School; and a

(2) “Senior Student” whenever they have completed one or more full academic years of their degree program the LBJ School.

(c) Additional classifications, or subclassifications, may be established in the bylaws.

(b) The Dean determines a student’s classification.

Section 1.07. Parliamentary Authority. The latest edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order* is the parliamentary authority of GPAC and is controlling in all cases except where precluded by the Constitution, the bylaws, or by the Assembly.

Section 1.08. Voting. Unless otherwise specified, all votes must be by an absolute majority.

Section 1.09. Membership. (a) The membership of GPAC consists of those students who hold elected or appointed office.

(b) Any student in good standing, as determined by the Dean, is eligible for membership in GPAC.

Section 1.10. Minimum Number of Votes. No provision of this Constitution or the bylaws may prescribe a minimum turnout in a referendum to validate the results of the referendum unless approved by three-fourths of the Assembly.

ARTICLE II. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Section 2.01. The General Assembly. The General Assembly is the legislative body of GPAC and is the final authority in expressing the opinion of LBJ students.

Section 2.02. Membership. The membership of the Assembly shall consist of student representatives elected to GPAC Committees and, on a nonvoting basis, organizational delegates.

Section 2.03. Organization Representatives. (a) The President of each GPAC-recognized student organization, unless the bylaws of that organization state otherwise or assign the duty elsewhere, may sit in the Assembly as a nonvoting representative.

(b) Organization representative may sit upon Assembly Committees but shall have no vote therein; and shall not be required to attend Assembly meeting. within the Assembly.

Section 2.04. Deciding Vote. The Officer chairing the meeting may exercise the deciding vote; otherwise, no other Officer may vote unless two-thirds of the Assembly grants that position concurrent voting—a grant that must be renewed annually.

Section 2.05. Meetings. (a) The Assembly shall meet at least once per month.

(b) The Assembly may provide for fixed meeting times in the bylaws, but in all other cases the Board will determine the meeting times of the Assembly.

(c) The Administrative Services Officer shall call the Assembly into a special session whenever a petition bearing the signatures of one-third of the Assembly members is delivered.

Section 2.06. Equitable Representation. (a) The Assembly shall regulate its membership, affix the number of voting representatives, and will determine criteria for membership amongst the classifications and degree programs.

(b) The Assembly shall take care that all groups at LBJ are represented before the Assembly, including but not limited to:—

- (1) Race and ethnicity;
- (2) Gender identity and sexual orientation;
- (3) Political ideologies;
- (4) Degree programs; and
- (5) Classification.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS; THE EXECUTIVE BOARD.

Section 3.01. Board Composition. The Board shall consist of the principal officers and additional officers of GPAC, the chairs of the standing committees of the Assembly, the supplemental officers created in the bylaws, and—on a nonvoting basis—any other student invited by the President and chairs of Assembly ex officio committee.

Section 3.02. Types of Officer. (a) The principal officers of GPAC are the President, the Finance Officer, and the Administrative Services Officer.

(b) The Assembly may provide for Additional Officers and Supplemental Officers in the bylaws.

(c) An “Additional Officer” is any Officer who:—

- (1) May vote on an issue which must be decided by the Officers;
- (2) Is not subordinate to another Officer.

(d) A “Supplemental Officer” is an Officer who:—

- (1) May not vote on an issue which must be decided by the Officers;
- (2) Is subordinate to another Officer.

(e) An “Officer” is a generic term which:—

- (1) Will usually describe a Principal Officer or an Additional Officer, but may also refer to a Supplemental Officer depending on the context;
- (2) Otherwise will be used to refer to all classes of Officers.

(f) “Subordination” in this section shall not be construed to mean reporting lines or reporting relationships.

Section 3.03. The President shall:—

- (1) Be the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Representative of GPAC;
- (2) Be the primary liaison between GPAC, LBJ and UT administration, and all external organizations;
- (3) Chair meetings of the Assembly and the Board.

Section 3.04. The Finance Officer. The Finance Officer shall:—

- (1) Oversee the financial accounts, records, and activities of GPAC;
- (2) At the end of each semester, provide to the Assembly and the Board a report of all GPAC financial activity;
- (3) Promulgate the financial regulations of GPAC in consultation with the President and the Dean.

Section 3.05. The Administrative Services Officer. (a) The Administrative Services Officer shall:—

- (1) Record and preserve the minutes of the Assembly, of the Board, and of the Appellate Committee, in addition to all the other non-financial records, documents, and correspondence of GPAC;

- (2) Provide the minutes of all Assembly, Board, and Appellate Committee meetings to their respective members before their next meeting or within 30 days of the meeting—whichever comes first;
- (3) Provide a copy of all GPAC documents upon request;
- (4) Receive student petitions;
- (5) Maintain the official list of membership; and
- (6) Conduct GPAC elections consistent with the bylaws.

Section 3.06. Succession. (a) In the absence of a line of secession determined in the bylaws, the line shall be: President, Finance Officer, Administrative Services Officer.

(b) Whenever an officer superior in the line of secession is absent, the officer below shall exercise and discharge the duties of that office.

(c) If the office superior in the line of secession is vacant, the officer below shall assume that office and a byelection shall be called for the office below which they once held.

Section 3.07. Election. (a) Officers must be elected by a majority of the votes cast in their election; pluralities are not accepted. Whenever an candidate fails to be elected by a majority, a runoff election will determine the outcome.

(b) If a candidate who obtains a majority does not assume office for whatever reason, the runner-up will be offered the position regardless of the number of votes they received.

(c) If a candidate runs for an Officer position uncontested, the Board may immediately install them into office without an election if the bylaws so provide. The incoming officer and outgoing officer shall concurrently hold their office, with the outgoing office on a pro tempore basis, until the expiration of the outgoing officer's term.

ARTICLE IV. JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS; DISCIPLINE; IMPEACHMENT.

Section 4.01. The Judicial Power. (a) The Judicial Power is vested in the Appellate Committee and the Executive Board.

(b) Inferior judicial officers may be established in the bylaws, who shall operate under the supervision of the Appellate Committee and the Executive Board.

Section 4.02. The Appellate Committee. (a) The Appellate Committee is the supreme judicial authority of GPAC who's decisions may only be overturned by either:—

(1) The Dean exclusively, upon certification by UT's legal counsel of a potentially illegal or otherwise grossly problematic decision; or

(2) By judicial recall, as specified in this Constitution.

(b) The Committee shall consist of nine members:

(1) Five members of the Assembly chosen randomly by lot; and

(2) Four students not affiliated with GPAC chosen by the Dean by lot.

(b) The Assembly may, upon good cause, reject an appointment by the Dean by a two-thirds vote. Within two school days following the rejection, the Dean must name a replacement.

Section 4.03. Disciplinary Sanctions. (a) The Assembly may provide for sanctions for violation of GPAC rules and standards of conduct in the bylaws.

(b) The Board may provide for rules and standards of conduct for GPAC activities and event.

Section 4.04. Impeachment. (a) The Assembly may impeach any elected or appointed member with a majority vote at any time. An article of impeachment must have the written sponsorship of two members of the Assembly, excluding Officers.

(b) Causes for impeachment include:—

(1) Gross incompetence or maladministration when at least three written, documented meetings to discuss the issue have been had with the member and the member has shown no measurable improvement;

(2) Violation of the bylaws; or

(3) Violation of this Constitution.

(c) The Assembly may convict a member, removing them from office, with a two-thirds vote. The Assembly may disqualify a member from future membership with a majority vote.

ARTICLE V. STUDENT RIGHTS.

Section 5.01. In General. (a) Any student wishing to exercise their rights afforded by sections one through four this article must notify the President and the Administrative Services Officer in writing of their intent to do so and must, within the 21 class days following the notification, submit to the same a petition meeting the signature threshold.

(b) For the purposes of this article, "signature threshold" means a number of signatures upon a petition equal to a specified percentage of the total number of votes cast in the last General Election.

(c) When the signatures are delivered, the Administrative Services Officer shall cause the signatures to be certified by the Dean; for the purposes of this article, signatures are considered valid when they are both amongst the appropriate electorate and the undersigned is an LBJ student. This certification process must occur within five school days upon the delivery of the petition.

(d) A majority of the votes cast in any at-large election pursuant to this article shall be necessary for the question to be approved; the absolute majority requirement as specified in this Constitution is waived for all rights exercised in this Article.

(e) All LBJ students have an inherent right to participate in GPAC elections.

Section 5.02. Recall. (a) Students shall have the right to recall any popularly elected official of this government.

(b) The signature threshold to initiate a recall election is 20 percent.

(c) If the requisite number of signatures is collected within the specified time, a byelection shall be held amongst the appropriate electorate with two questions:

(1) Shall the official be recalled; and

(2) Who shall replace the official, should they be recalled?

(d) A recall election may only be levied against an official who has held their office for one-third of their total term and no unsuccessful recall petition may be repeated for the remainder of the official's term in office.

Section 5.03. Referendum. (a) Students shall have the right to a popular referendum which is defined as a school-wide vote by all eligible students upon a matter or issue.

(b) The signature threshold for a student-initiated referendum shall be 25 percent; a majority of members present and voting of the Assembly may refer any of its business to a student referendum.

(c) Once a referendum petition by the students is approved, or a motion to refer by the Assembly is adopted, a referendum shall occur within 14 class days.

Section 5.04. Initiative. (a) Student shall have the right to initiative, defined as original legislation or actions by the student body proposed by a member of the same. The notification to the President and the Administrative Services Officer must clearly state the issue to be voted upon and must have one subject.

(b) The signature threshold to initiate a referendum upon the matters presented in the notification is 30 percent.

(c) If the requisite number of signatures are collected within the specified time, the issues on the petition shall be presented to the students as a popular referendum. This referendum must occur within 14 calendar days of the delivery of the petition to the President, Administrative Services Officer, and the Advisor(s).

Section 5.05. Judicial Recall. (a) A popular referendum may overturn any judicial ruling or decision issued the Executive Board or the Appellate Committee.

(b) Any student wishing to exercise this right shall do so in the manner of a referendum.

ARTICLE VI. RATIFICATION AND AMENDMENT.

Section 6.01. Trust. If GPAC is ever dissolved, the assets of the same will be placed into a trust with the Dean until the next recognized LBJ student government is recognized.

Section 6.02. Ratification. This Constitution will be considered ratified, enacted, and in force once all of the following conditions have been met:—

- (1) It has been read and approved, by a majority vote, twice by the General Assembly under the previous constitution;
- (2) It has been ratified by LBJ students in a popular referendum.

Section 6.03. Amendment. An amendment to this Constitution will be considered ratified, enacted, and—for all intents and purposes—a part of this Constitution when all of the following conditions have been met:—

- (1) It has been read and approved by two-thirds of the Assembly or it has been read and approved twice by the Assembly; and
- (2) It has been ratified by LBJ students in a popular referendum.

Section 6.04. Transition Bylaws. (a) The bylaws as enacted under the previous Constitution will remain valid for a period not to exceed 90 days after the ratification of this Constitution. After the 90 days, any provision contrary to this Constitution will be null and void.

(b) The Assembly may terminate the 90 day grace period early by adopting a new set of revised bylaws or by a majority vote.