

GSA Charter

CHARTER OF THE GRADUATE STUDENT ASSEMBLY OF YALE UNIVERSITY

1. This Charter enumerates procedures for the constitution and functioning of an assembly of graduate students at Yale. In order to assure that graduate students can be represented and can participate effectively in Graduate School policymaking about matters that are relevant to their education and their lives as students, an Assembly of Graduate Students (hereafter “Assembly”) shall be constituted by the election of representatives. The constitution and functioning of this Assembly shall not infringe upon the formal authority and responsibilities that are assigned to the Dean and the Graduate Faculty.

A.1 Representatives to the Assembly will be elected on a departmental basis. Each department or degree-granting program (including joint-degree programs) defined by the Graduate School is guaranteed a minimum of one representative. Departments having 40 or fewer registered students in all years will be entitled to one representative, departments having between 41 and 80 students will be entitled to two representatives, and so on.

B.1. All students currently registered in the Graduate School during the term in which elections occur (including those registered in absentia) will be eligible to participate in the election of the Assembly as voters and candidates. Students serving in the Assembly must be currently registered in the Graduate School and in residence. Exceptions to this include a student actively working towards a degree in a joint-degree program, and the current student was, is, or will be registered in the Graduate School at some time; in that case, the Assembly considers that student an eligible candidate for the Assembly, regardless of registration status at the time of candidacy for the Assembly (e.g., an MD/PhD student currently registered in the Medical School meets the criteria for eligibility).

B.2. The Assembly shall determine its electoral process as set out in the Assembly by-laws. Elections will be held toward the end of the spring term of each academic year. The Assembly will determine the dates of its elections. The Assembly may

hold one by-election per term and additional elections as needed, including recall elections as established in the by-laws. -Issues and concerns pertaining to elections, including complaints about electoral procedures, will be directed to the Committee for adjudication. Moreover, the Committee is empowered to hold a recount of the vote, or conduct a new election, in any department or degree-granting program in which the Committee judges that a violation of electoral rules has occurred. Implementation of the electoral process will be governed under the provisions of the appropriate by-law.

B.3. A candidate for election to the Assembly must be nominated by one or more students who are (i) currently registered in the Graduate School, and (ii) registered within the candidate's department or degree-granting program. Candidates may nominate themselves. Candidates must stand for election in the department or program in which they are currently registered. Students registered in combined-degree programs may stand for election in only one department in each election. Students registered in combined-degree programs may stand as a candidate in the department of their choosing for each election.

B.4. Students vote in the department or program in which they are currently registered or, in the event of eligibility in more than one department or degree-granting program, in one department or program as they so choose. They may vote for one candidate for each representative position allocated to their department.

C.1. The Assembly will meet at least once a month during the academic year. It should report regularly to the graduate students in each department or degree-granting program on its proceedings. Also, the Assembly shall determine a mechanism as set out in the Assembly by-laws for holding special meetings outside of the academic year.

C.2. The Assembly will elect by a majority a chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, and other officers as it deems appropriate. The Steering Committee of the Assembly will consist of the four officers named and, in addition, six representatives, to be chosen by the Assembly, such that each Division, as determined by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, is represented by at least two of the ten Steering Committee members. If, after a certain point in the academic year to be determined at the discretion of the Chair, the Divisional requirement cannot be met, the Assembly will fill the vacant positions with representatives from any Division. Officers and Steering Committee members may be removed from their positions as per the Assembly by-laws.

C.3. The Steering Committee will generally meet twice a month during the academic year. It will set the agenda for meetings of the Assembly and be responsible for regular communication between the Assembly and the administration. Any decision that the Steering Committee reaches will be subject to approval by the Assembly. The chair and vice-chair will share responsibility for chairing all meetings of the Steering Committee and the Assembly. The secretary will be responsible for keeping a written record of all Assembly and Steering Committee meetings and deliberations and for overseeing the circulation of information about those meetings and deliberations to graduate students.

C.4. The Assembly will establish a process as set out in the Assembly by-laws by which all graduate students can place items on its agenda.

C.5. A quorum of the Assembly will consist of one-half of the total number of elected representatives.

C.6. The Assembly may hold referenda including all graduate students on matters that the Assembly deems of particular significance. The Assembly shall have full responsibility for preparing and carrying out such referenda independent of the Dean and Faculty. A referendum may be authorized by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly. A referendum may also be authorized by a three-quarters majority of the representatives of a single Division, provided that the number of representatives voting is at least one-fifth of the total number of Assembly seats allocated to that Division. The Charter can only be revised according to the procedures described in article 3.

C.7. The Assembly may introduce by-laws to determine the process or mechanisms by which the Charter provisions are implemented. Changes to the by-laws will be drafted as a bill and must be presented at an Assembly meeting occurring at least two weeks prior to approval or rejection by the Assembly. Approval will require a two-thirds majority vote of votes cast.

D.1 The Assembly shall receive funding to cover the cost of its activities, including but not limited to costs associated with elections and referenda. An annual budget of expenditures for the Assembly will be developed by the Steering Committee in consultation with the Dean and submitted to the full Assembly for its approval by a two-thirds vote of votes cast. The Assembly shall, at its sole discretion, determine the expenditure of funds supplied in its budget, provided that this expenditure is in accordance with University guidelines.

2. The Assembly and its Steering Committee shall have the following responsibilities:

A.1. The Assembly will nominate graduate student representatives to all standing committees of the Graduate School on which students serve. Graduate student representatives to these committees need not be members of The Assembly. These committees will include, but are not limited to, the Executive Committee of the Graduate School, the Dean's Advisory Committee on Student Grievances, and the Committee on Regulations and Discipline. Members of the Executive Committee will include the Chair, vice-Chair, and one Representative from each Division of the Graduate School. The Assembly will attempt to achieve a rough balance in representation among the Divisions in its selections for the other committees.

A.2. The Assembly will nominate graduate-student representatives to the Advisory Committees formed by the Graduate School (when these committees have been convened) that pertain to graduate education or graduate student funding and benefits. The Assembly will attempt to achieve balanced Divisional representation on these committees.

A.3. The Assembly will nominate graduate student representation to University wide committees. In keeping with past practice these committees include, but are not limited to, the Advisory Committee on Library Policy, the Advisory Committee on Resources for Students and Employees with Disabilities, the Committee on Sexual Misconduct, and the Human Subjects Committee.

A.4. The Graduate School will work to ensure Assembly nominated graduate student representation on all future standing and ad-hoc committees of the Graduate School and University on which students serve. Also, the Assembly may propose (by a process set out in the Assembly by-laws) that the Dean allow graduate students to serve on already existing committees when the Assembly determines that sufficient representation of graduate students is absent from the committee and that graduate student representation on the committee would be of great importance and value.

B.1. The Assembly shall nominate graduate students to serve on ad hoc committees created by the Dean and composed of faculty, administrators, and graduate students, including students who are not current representatives in the Assembly.

B.2. The Assembly may propose that the Dean create ad hoc Graduate School committees composed of faculty, administrators, and graduate students to study issues and to make recommendations to the Dean and to the Assembly. The

graduate students on these committees shall be selected by the Assembly, with each Division entitled to equal representation.

C.1 The Assembly may appoint committees consisting of representatives and, at its discretion, other registered graduate students, to consider matters pertaining to the Graduate School and Graduate School policy. Each Division is entitled to equal representation on these committees.

D.1 The Steering Committee shall meet regularly (normally every two weeks) with the Dean to discuss issues of interest to the Assembly or Dean, including recommendations that originate with the Dean or with the Assembly. Through these discussions, the Assembly will be consulted about changes in Graduate School policies. The Steering Committee will report the sense of these meetings to the general membership.

E.1 Given the particular importance to graduate students of Graduate School policies concerned with the Graduate School Teaching Fellow and teacher training programs, the grievance procedure, the disciplinary procedure, health services, career services, diversity and equal opportunity, and the programs of the McDougal Graduate Student Life Center, the Steering Committee will work closely with the Dean in the formation of policy in these areas with the goal of achieving consensus. No policy changes in these areas will be implemented without affording the Assembly or Steering Committee an opportunity to discuss and comment upon them. Failure to do so may result in a re-examination of policy under the provisions of article 2.F.

F.1 When the Assembly votes by a two-thirds majority that the Dean has violated the Charter, it will move to take that violation to the Steering Committee to resolve the matter. The Assembly must put in writing the specific language of the Charter that has been violated and a description of the manner in which it was violated. If the Steering Committee fails to resolve the matter with the Dean in a manner acceptable to two-thirds of its members, it will bring to the Executive Committee of the Graduate School the original written complaint and the written minutes of the Steering Committee meeting at which the matter was discussed. A faculty member of the Executive Committee will chair the meeting, the Dean will be present, and another faculty member will take minutes. The Executive Committee will make a formal written recommendation to the Dean that will also be sent to the Provost and to the Steering Committee for publication to the Assembly.

3. The following procedures shall govern the implementation, review and revision of the Assembly Charter:

A.1 In order for this Charter or any future revision of this Charter to take effect, it must be approved in identical form by a majority of all voting students in a referendum conducted among all currently registered graduate students, by the Graduate Faculty, and by the Dean. The approval of the student body, Dean, and Faculty shall be secured by the end of the academic year in which the Charter review process has been carried out. Once in effect, the provisions of the Charter may not be amended or curtailed except by means of the revision process described in articles 3.B. and 3.C.

B.1 A re-examination of the Charter will take place at the end of every fourth academic year. Charter review will be carried out by the Executive Committee of the Graduate School and a Charter Review Committee composed of six graduate student representatives equally representing the three Divisions, to be designated by the Assembly. The Committee will review the Charter and, if deemed necessary, propose modifications. The Committee will also supervise a referendum to approve a continuance of the Charter under the provisions of the existing Charter, a modified Charter, or other propositions. Acceptance of any proposition requires the joint approval of graduate students, Dean, and Faculty as described in article 3.A.

C.1 With a two-thirds vote, the Assembly may request that the Dean initiate a Charter review process earlier than specified in article 3.B. Early review can occur only with the joint approval of the Dean and two-thirds of the Assembly. The procedures for conducting an early review and approving the resulting Charter remain as specified in articles 3.A., 3.B., and 3.D.

D.1 If, upon completion of a Charter review process as described in article 3.B. or 3.C., the Charter recommended by the Charter Review Committee is not approved by graduate students, Faculty, and Dean as stipulated in article 3.A, the Assembly will continue to operate under its existing Charter for four years. At the end of the four-year period, another review and approval process will be carried out as specified in article 3.B.