

Operations

COMP PRO-5.0 v. 1.0 Graduate Group Procedures

Purpose

In keeping with the purposes of GSA as a student organisation, GSA encourages the formation of graduate student societies. GSA recognises that these graduate groups are an effective way of promoting student interaction, welfare and cohesion within the University's diverse graduate student population.

GSA encourages graduate groups to affiliate with the GSA, in order to directly gain benefits from GSA's support services and to collaborate with GSA to provide benefits to the graduate student community.

Affiliation with GSA is generally open to groups of students who share a similar academic discipline or location, (e.g. course, department, school, faculty, research centre, outstation or field of research), the same interests in activities, or a common social interest that helps build and sustain a community of students.

Each graduate group must be unique and therefore not have substantially the same aims or membership as another affiliated group. A new group which has similar membership to an existing affiliated group must demonstrate a clear need for the affiliation of the new group.

Scope

These Procedures apply to the committee leaders of graduate groups as well as GSA staff and office bearers. They outline the way in which GSA affiliates, supports and collaborates with these groups. They set out the procedures by which the following will take place:

- Affiliation of graduate student groups with GSA;
- Reporting required of affiliated groups;
- Disaffiliation and discipline;
- The obligations and compliance of graduate groups in relation to GSA; and
- How graduate student groups may receive funding from GSA.

Procedure

1. Process for affiliation

The nature of affiliation is that of a contract between GSA and the group seeking affiliation. The terms of this contract are that the group is a separate entity to GSA, and GSA is not liable for the actions of the group, nor for the actions of its committee officers and members.

1.1. Requirements for Affiliation

1.1.2 A group wishing to affiliate with GSA must provide the information and documents meeting the requirements as published on the GSA's website from time to time.

1.1.3 Requirements for affiliation may differ for newly-established groups compared to established groups.

1.1.4 The group must pass a resolution at a general meeting (which may be the inaugural general meeting for

newly-established groups) which resolves to affiliate with GSA; or in a manner that is consistent with the existing constitution of the group.

1.1.5 The basic requirements for any affiliated graduate group are as follows:

- a) at least 6 members who are University of Melbourne graduate students;
- b) at least 75% of total members being University of Melbourne graduate students;
- c) a valid constitution which has been ratified at general meeting of the group and is the only constitution that governs the group;
- d) a membership list that is defined by a roll of individually contactable and identified University of Melbourne graduate students who have given their consent to be members and for details to be collected, including student number, degree and expected completion listed;
- e) a group bank account with a registered Australian financial institution which has at least two signatories to make authorised transactions;
- f) a general group email address;
- g) a short description explaining group aims and purposes;
- h) a valid membership list as determined by GSA;
- i) a current list of group committee members with their contact details; and
- j) at least one digital or social media account (e.g. facebook, Instagram, website, twitter etc.).

1.2. Constitution

1.2.1 Every group must have a current, valid, constitution which has been ratified at a general meeting of the group and which describes, as a minimum:

- a) procedures and quorums for general meetings (inaugural, and annual and special);
- b) the executive structure of the group (i.e. committee and officers);
- c) a restriction that the group operates as a not-for-profit entity, and that on the winding up of the group any assets may not be distributed to group members, but may only be transferred to another not-for-profit group which has similar objectives;
- d) the aims of the group, in accordance with regulation 2.3 below;
- e) membership requirements, in accordance with regulation 2.4 below; and
- f) appropriate disciplinary and dispute resolution procedures.

1.2.2 No group can have more than one constitution and their existing constitution must be compliant with GSA's requirements as above.

1.2.3 Where there is an existing affiliation with UMSU, groups must follow the joint affiliation guidelines as outlined in the Graduate Group Management Manual. Information regarding group constitutions will be available from GSA's website.

1.3. Aims

1.3.1. Groups must identify at least one aim in their constitution that shows that the key aim(s) of the group satisfies one or more of the following:

- “To enhance the academic and professional life of [Dept. or Location Name] Graduate students.”
- “To provide academic support to fellow graduates and thus foster communication of research ideas and collaborations.”
- “To promote interaction, welfare and cohesion between graduate students.”
- “To support the academic endeavours of graduate students and to act as a representative group of graduates within the department.”

1.3.2. GSA will not approve the affiliation of any group whose constitution:

- a) Does not have at least one legitimate and achievable aim;
- b) Contains aims that promote racial, sexual or religious discrimination, or vilify any person or group;
- c) Does not have at least one aim that differentiates it from other affiliated graduate groups;
- d) Suggests activities that would not be covered by the group’s (or GSA’s, as the case may be) public liability insurance;
- e) Has an aim or purpose which contradicts a University statute; or
- f) Is not the only constitution of the group (e.g. more than one constitution is not allowed).

1.3.3. GSA reserves the right to refuse affiliation on reasonable grounds (including without limitation groups which are closely affiliated with political parties, or whose aims or objectives breach prevailing social, religious or ethical norms), but must provide reasons for any such refusal.

1.4. Membership

To obtain and maintain affiliation with GSA, a group must:

- a) have at least six members who are graduate students; and
- b) have at least a seventy-five percent share of members who are graduate students.

1.5. Initial Affiliation

1.5.1. To affiliate, a group must provide GSA with the requisite documentation required from time to time. Details of this documentation are available on GSA’s website.

1.5.2. GSA will consider a group’s affiliation application and, if successful, the GSA will send written acknowledgment of the group’s affiliation.

1.5.3. A group is affiliated from the date of approval by GSA for an indefinite period, unless the group is disaffiliated because it fails to meet its obligations or fails to report to GSA and provide the documentation required.

1.6. Maintaining Affiliation

1.6.1. There is no requirement for groups to re-affiliate once affiliated, but to maintain affiliation groups must report to GSA annually and meet its obligations.

1.6.2. The process for reporting is outlined below and the requisite form and documentation are available in the GSA Graduate Group Manual, published on the Graduate Group website.

- 1.6.3. If a group fails to meet its affiliation obligations, GSA may take actions as outlined in obligations, including disaffiliation (clause 1.9).

1.7. Graduate Group Management Manual

- 1.7.1. GSA will maintain a graduate group management manual on the GSA website for the use of affiliated groups.
- 1.7.2. All committee members of graduate groups must familiarise themselves with the Grad Group Management Manual and follow them as guidelines.
- 1.7.3. The Graduate Group Management Manual will be updated from time to time and is based on the GSA Grad Group Procedures. In the case there is a direct conflict between the manual and these procedures, the procedures will prevail.

1.8. Records

- 1.8.1. GSA will maintain on its website a list of all affiliated graduate groups and their contact details. An affiliated group must ensure that the information received by GSA is correct and they must also update any details for the website on request from GSA.

1.9. Communications

- 1.9.1. The group must maintain and provide GSA with a group-specific email address (i.e. the personal address of an office bearer will not suffice for a general email address), together with details of any other way it communicates with its members, and with details of each social media profile used by the group.
- 1.9.2. The group must provide GSA with updated details promptly after any change or addition to the general group or to individual office bearers.
- 1.9.3. Within two weeks of the initial affiliation, and within two weeks of the start of each subsequent semester after that, the group must send a communication to all of its members informing them of the group's affiliation with GSA and provide details about GSA and a link to GSA's website, as provided by GSA.
- 1.9.4. From time to time, GSA may request that groups send out communications to its members (by email and/or via social media platforms) about representative issues or key GSA events such as the Grad Ball and relevant GSA O-Week activities, and groups will comply with any such reasonable request.
- 1.9.5. Any website or social media homepage maintained by a group must feature the GSA logo, and (where possible) the GSA logo should be included on all communications sent to the group's members.

1.10. Obligations

- 1.10.1. All affiliated Grad Groups have the following obligations to maintain affiliation with GSA:
- a. Maintain ongoing communication about group activities and always inform GSA of any changes in group details (e.g. committee structure, bank details, social media etc.);
 - b. Attend important Grad Group meetings or events as requested by GSA;
 - c. Declare an accurate and current group size to GSA based on a membership list;
 - d. Spend GSA funds appropriately according to SSAF core functions;
 - e. Promote GSA including events and representative issues to graduate students via email, social media, as requested;
 - f. Use promotional materials appropriately;

- g. Submit annual report(s) to GSA at least every twelve months or more frequently based on group size;
 - h. Adhere to GSA Grad Group policies and procedures, as well as the general University policies and procedures at all times;
 - i. Comply with GSA's terms and conditions for insurance if they wish to access GSA's public liability insurance; and
 - j. All committee members must familiarise themselves with the guidelines in the Grad Group Management Manual and follow them at all times.
- 1.10.2. GSA may, within reason and by writing to a graduate group, suspend the administration of funding if the group repeatedly fails to meet these key obligations. If the group addresses these obligations in a timely manner or negotiates a clear timeframe for meeting its obligations, funding for the group will immediately continue.
- 1.10.3. If a group fails to address its obligations despite being notified or being given a chance to address its failure to meet these obligations, Disciplinary Action may be undertaken as outlined in these procedures (see clause 2).
- 1.10.4. Graduate groups can at all times seek further information about any administration decisions by writing to the relevant manager of graduate groups.

2. Disciplinary Action

2.1. Grounds for Disciplinary Action

GSA may take disciplinary action against a group which does any one or more of the following:

- a) deliberately fails to fulfil obligations under these procedures;
- b) acts in a manner that contradicts or breaches its own constitution;
- c) misappropriates funds received from GSA ;
- d) is not composed of at least 75% University of Melbourne graduate students;
- e) damages, defaces or steals property of GSA;
- f) fails to comply with requests from the GSA Executive or staff to produce a document, financial statement, record or other material, including failing to properly cooperate and /or provide reasonable assistance and documentation in the conduct of an audit under clauses 4.8 and 4.9 below;
- g) participates in or encourages criminal activity;
- h) promotes or engages in any discriminatory or violent acts, or acts which otherwise breach the policies of the University;
- i) defaults on a repayment of any debt to GSA or the University;
- j) loses or damages an asset that is owned by GSA, or misuses the GSA logo;
- k) breaches the University rules in a way that has a tangible negative impact on the facilities and services available to all Graduate Groups.

2.2. Types of disciplinary action

GSA may take one or more of the following disciplinary actions:

- a) disaffiliation;
- b) suspension of grants and funding for a period of up to twelve months;
- c) suspension of use of all GSA facilities available for graduate groups for a period of up to twelve months;
- d) placement of the group on probation for up to 12 months. If a graduate group breaches the terms of its probation, further disciplinary action may be taken;
- e) require re-payment of any unspent funds from the group that was provided by the GSA, or the amount of any funds already spent by the group that were not used for the purpose that the funds were provided.

2.3. Procedure

- 1.10.5. To consider a disciplinary action, the GSA Executive Committee must meet. If the GSA Executive Committee is reasonably satisfied that ground for disciplinary action may exist against a group, the GSA Executive Committee may issue a "Show Cause" notice to that group, using the contact email address provided by the group.
- 1.10.6. The Show Cause notice must specify with sufficient detail the nature of the ground for disciplinary action such that the group is able to investigate the claim and respond.
- 1.10.7. The group must provide a written response to the Show Cause notice within five academic days' notice or 10 non-academic days, as the case may be, which response must be sent by email to the General Manager of GSA or his or her nominee.
- 1.10.8. The GSA Executive Committee must meet as soon as is practicable after GSA receives the written response from the group, and must determine (by simple majority and acting reasonably in all the circumstances) whether the written response shows sufficient cause that disciplinary action should not be taken.
- 1.10.9. If the GSA Executive Committee determines that disciplinary action should be taken, then it will also determine (by simple majority and acting reasonably in all the circumstances) the nature of the disciplinary action to be taken, notice of which must be promptly given to the affected group.

2.4. Appeals

2.4.1. Making an appeal

The graduate group being disciplined may appeal to the GSA Council in writing within 10 academic days or 25 non-academic days of the final notice of discipline.

2.4.2. Status of group until appeal

Any graduate group which has been disciplined is not entitled to any benefits of the GSA until the period of appeal is finished, including funding.

2.4.3. Decision is final

The decision of the GSA Council is final.

2.5. Cancellation and Windup

- 2.5.1. The GSA Council may cancel the affiliation of a group if this action is requested by the group's committee of management, following a General Meeting of the group called for the purpose of winding up.

- 2.5.2. The group must provide GSA with a reconciliation of any funding provided to the group by GSA in advance; GSA may require that the group refund to GSA any unspent funds, or transfer to GSA any assets purchased by the group with funds provided by GSA.
- 2.5.3. The group must cease use of the GSA logo, and any other material which indicates affiliation with GSA, within 21 days after confirmation of cancellation of the affiliation. If the group fails to do so, GSA may take whatever legal or other action is required to enforce GSA's rights.
- 2.5.4. The group is liable to GSA for GSA's legal and other costs and charges in the recovery of funds or protection of GSA's intellectual property and goodwill as provided for in this clause 2.5.

3. Funding

- 3.1. The GSA Council may allocate a line item for the funding of graduate group activities in the annual budget, and determine an annual funding amount or basis per group.
- 3.2. Funding will be allocated to groups on an annual basis, according to the financial year of 1 January – 31 December.
- 3.3. The annual funding amount will not vary unless this is decided in the annual budget process according to GSA policy. Funding per group will be allocated by GSA staff on the basis of their accurate group size as recorded on the group's membership list (1.1 d).
- 3.4. There will also be 'special grants' funding available, subject to a separate application, approval and acquittal process for each grant request, and other small grants as decided by GSA Council or Executive.
- 3.5. Depending on the size of the group, funding may be provided via monthly reimbursement of receipts, via cash advances, via transfers or by a combination of these, as determined by GSA staff from time to time.
- 3.6. Graduate groups that receive funding may not use funds for any purpose other than those listed for the time being in Student Services and Amenities Fees – Categories of Services and Core Functions, a copy of which is available from GSA's website.
- 3.7. Each affiliated group must provide the GSA with the level of reporting required of a group of its size and within the reporting dates as detailed in the GSA Reporting Requirements, a copy of which is available in the Graduate Group Management Manual on the GSA website;
- 3.8. The administration schedule as published in the Graduate Group Management Manual on the GSA website contains guidelines on when funding will be administered by GSA staff and timelines within which graduate groups need to submit applications or forms.
- 3.9. All funding applications and reimbursements shall be submitted on the GSA website via digital forms.
- 3.10. Scanned ATO-standard tax receipts are required for all applications for funding and groups must keep tax receipts, either original or scanned copies, from all expenditure.

4. Reporting

- 4.1. All groups must report to GSA at least annually. Certain groups within the larger funding categories may be requested to report more frequently.
- 4.2. Requirements for reporting are outlined in the Graduate Group Management Manual on the GSA website, and may vary from time to time.
- 4.3. A basic requirement for graduate group reporting is that groups must hold an AGM every year, note GSA affiliation and obligations, and elect or reelect members onto their executive committee.

- 4.4.** Reporting must take place within two weeks after the group holds its AGM. The group must hold its AGM in a manner consistent with its own group's constitution.

5. GSA's right to audit

- 5.1.** By agreeing to affiliate with GSA, each affiliated group agrees that GSA may, from time to time, carry out audits of affiliated groups to ensure amongst other things:
- a) correct and accurate reporting of monies claimed and received from GSA, and how it has been spent (or not, as the case may be);
 - b) correct and accurate reporting of minutes of Group meetings, as submitted to GSA; and
 - c) correct and accurate reporting of membership numbers on databases, or numbers submitted to GSA for the purposes of calculating membership and funding entitlement.
- 5.2.** Groups to be audited may be selected at random or by design, and each selected group will provide all reasonable assistance and documents requested by GSA to facilitate the audit.
- 5.3.** GSA must ensure that any audit is carried out so as not to breach any applicable Commonwealth or University Privacy regulations, and will not result in databases or personal information being transferred from the Group to GSA.

6. Liability and Care

- 6.1.** GSA has no liability (joint, several, fiduciary or otherwise) for the activities of graduate groups, except that GSA's public liability insurance policy is extended to graduate groups if they comply with these procedures.
- 6.2.** If a group wishes to have an event or activity covered by GSA's public liability insurance policy, the group must comply with the basic health and safety requirements as outlined in the terms and conditions and Graduate Group Management Manual on the GSA website, which may reasonably vary from time to time based on insurance requirements.
- 6.3.** Complying with these terms and conditions is not negotiable, and includes the requirement of pre-event registration at least two weeks before running an event.
- 6.4.** If groups do not register their event on the GSA website at least two weeks prior to running the event, they may not be funded for their event or receive public liability insurance.

7. Transition

- 7.1.** These regulations take effect immediately.
- 7.2.** The transition period for current graduate groups will last until 31 August 2018. At this date a review will be undertaken by GSA staff. Any current groups who can demonstrate taking reasonable steps to meet the obligations in these procedures may be further supported to meet their basic obligations (e.g. membership list requirements) over a 6 month period. A final review will be undertaken in January 31 to determine if disciplinary or other actions to support current groups are required.

8. Definitions

In these regulations:

- 8.1.** 'academic day' means a day which is not a University or public holiday, state or Federal. The academic calendar

for graduate students is considered broader than the traditional undergraduate academic calendar: working days on which teaching occurs during first or second semester of the University's academic year and until the end of the examination period. However, where possible the discipline processes outlined in these procedures will take place during the traditional undergraduate academic calendar.

- 8.2. 'graduate student' means a student currently enrolled in a higher degree course offered by the University;
- 8.3. GSA staff refers to the management and administration staff involved in graduate groups;
- 8.4. The 'GSA' refers to the University of Melbourne Graduate Student Association;
- 8.5. 'GSA Executive Committee' means the GSA Executive Committee of Council; and
- 8.6. The 'University' refers to The University of Melbourne.

9. Related Documents

GSA Graduate Group Website
Graduate Group Management Manual
University of Melbourne Student Conduct Policy (MPF1324) - <http://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1324>

10. Record of Review

| Date | Reason for Review | Created/Revised by |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 16 February 2016 | Created | GSA Executive |
| 24 April 2018 | Introduce new procedural standards | GSA Executive |