

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION COURSE UNION MANUAL 2023-2024



UTGSU

University of Toronto Graduate
Students' Union 16 Bancroft Avenue
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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have been elected as a representative to the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union (UTGSU). This manual will explain what the UTGSU is, what your responsibilities are, how to obtain course union funding, and recommendations for financial practices. Please note additional information can be found on our website: www.utgsu.ca.

WHAT IS THE UTGSU?

The UTGSU is the student-run, membership-driven organization that represents over 20,000 graduate students at the University of Toronto. Virtually every Department, Centre and Institute at U of T has a course union, which is our name for a departmental student council. Each of the 80+ course unions sends one or more representatives to the UTGSU Assembly — one of which is you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

The UTGSU offices are located in the basement of 16 Bancroft Avenue. Staff members work remotely when the offices are closed.

Full Time Staff Members

- **Executive Director:** TBD
 - o Email: executivedirector@utgsu.ca

- **Communications and Engagement Specialist:** Siva Sivarajah
 - o Email: communications@utgsu.ca

- **Financial Administrator:** Nusrat Huq
 - o Email: financeadmin@utgsu.ca

- **Health Plan Administrator:** Shain Abdulla
 - o Email: health@utgsu.ca

- **Membership and Advocacy Coordinator:** Gail Fernando
 - o Email: membership@utgsu.ca

- **Union Affairs Coordinator:** Susana May Boateng
 - o Email: unionaffairs@utgsu.ca

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

UTGSU Reps hold their office for 12 months, or until they are officially replaced.

- 1. Send Updated Contact Information:** In September (or after your election), email membership@utgsu.ca and provide contact information for your newly elected president and UTGSU rep(s), and the names of those you are replacing. The UTGSU needs the full name, email address, and position for your president and rep(s).
- 2. Submit the Head Grant Application:** Ensure your Head Grant Application is completed and submitted to UTGSU (grants@utgsu.ca) by the appropriate deadlines each semester (please see page 4 for more detailed information). *The Course Union Executive is responsible for ensuring that these forms are completed. YOU are responsible for ensuring they complete them.*
- 3. Attend UTGSU Assembly Meetings:** UTGSU Assembly meetings are held at least three times per year between September to April, with additional meetings called as needed. Attendance at these meetings determines your second Head Grant installment (see page 4 for more detailed information). If you are unable to attend a meeting, please send a replacement (proxy) and email both membership@utgsu.ca & internal@utgsu.ca at least 2 business days in advance to let us know of the change. Attendance will be taken at each meeting and if at least one rep does not attend, your course union will be marked as absent. UTGSU Assembly meeting dates will be emailed out in advance. Register your attendance for each meeting by email at register@utgsu.ca. Meetings for 2023-2024 may be held in-person or remotely via Zoom. It is recommended that you download the Zoom app to your computer to fully participate.
- 4. Complete Course Union Orientation:** It is your responsibility to complete the annual course union orientation requirement, along with one other representative from your course union. See page 4 for more details. The first installment of your head grant depends on your completion of the orientation.
- 5. Read the UTGSU Meeting Mailout:** We send UTGSU Assembly meeting mailouts via email. These packages may contain proposed Bylaw or Policy amendments, minutes of previous meetings, reports, and other relevant documents. Please read carefully prior to the meeting. Mailouts will also contain instructions for attending meetings remotely.
- 6. Distribute UTGSU Communications:** The UTGSU may send you emails with instructions to forward the email to the students in your department. You must forward these communications to all members of your course union.
- 7. Report UTGSU Assembly Information:** You must report back to your course union concerning UTGSU Assembly activities. This is essential if graduate students are to have a say in what policies & regulations affect their lives. You are an elected member of your course union and, should have a regular slot on their agenda.
- 8. Report to UTGSU Assembly:** You may contact one of the UTGSU Executive members via email on issues or problems in your department (for example: funding package problems, student space issues, etc.). You may also raise issues during "Course Union Reports" during Assembly meetings.

COURSE UNION FUNDING

ALL GRANT APPLICATIONS CAN BE FOUND AT: www.utgsu.ca/funding/

HEAD GRANT FUNDING

The UTGSU returns a large percentage of the UTGSU incidental fee to course unions in the form of an annual Head Grant. This grant is distributed in two installments (fall and winter) and is available to all course unions, contingent upon submission of a Head Grant application form, rep attendance at Assembly meetings, and completion of a course union orientation. Application forms can be found on our website. **Note that course unions cannot pay their executives an honorarium with UTGSU funds. An introduction to ethical financial practices can be found on page 7.**

The manner in which head grants are calculated will be determined by the UTGSU Board of Directors, and will be subject to opt out rates of UTGSU fees.

Fall Head Grant Installment:

Your Head Grant application form must be submitted to the UTGSU as soon as possible:

- a) Applications submitted prior to October 16th will have their fall cheque ready by the end of October (instructions on pickup/mailing will be given).
- b) Applications submitted prior to January 1st will get 100% of fall installment
- c) Applications submitted January 1st - April 15th will get 50% of fall installment
- d) Applications submitted after April 15th will get 0% of fall installment
- e) Pursuant to Policy O1.12.3, each course union must have two representatives complete a course union orientation. The two members must consist of one Course Union Representative on the UTGSU Assembly, and one Course Union president, co-president, treasurer, or equivalent. Unless an exception is requested, failure by both members to attend one Course Union Orientation will result in 50 percent reduction of the fall installment. The orientation link can be found on the UTGSU Head Grants webpage.

Winter Head Grant Installment

Amount received is based on submitting a Head Grant application form and your attendance at UTGSU Assembly meetings during the academic year:

- a) Course unions who attend all 3 UTGSU Assembly meetings receive 100% of winter installment
- b) Course unions who attend 2 of the 3 UTGSU Assembly meetings receive 50% of winter installment
- c) Course unions who attend 1 or fewer UTGSU Assembly meetings receive 0% of winter installment

CONFERENCE & ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT FUNDING

The UTGSU provides funding for course unions organizing student-run conferences and academic events. There are two application rounds, one in fall and one in winter. Application forms and guidelines are available on our website.

THE EXECUTIVE AND GENERAL COUNCIL

The UTGSU Executive Committee is comprised of 6 executive officers. The Executive officers' job is to manage the Union. They have political, financial, and managerial responsibilities; they hold a weekly Executive meeting and attend University committee and board meetings, where they represent graduate students to various bodies; and they are members of UTGSU Assembly, trying to balance the various priorities of Assembly members and UTGSU responsibilities.

There are several Standing Committees at UTGSU. Each committee is responsible for fulfilling its mandate as outlined in Bylaw Article 6, the committee's terms of reference, and its legislative program. Via these committees, students gather as a group in order to concentrate their efforts on an issue, develop a working knowledge of the issue, and act on behalf of the UTGSU in regards to that issue. Committees are often chaired by a member of the Executive Committee, and all committees are responsible to the Board of Directors.

UTGSU Assembly:

- Consists of approximately 144 representatives from over 85 course unions
- Meets at least three times per year between September and April, and more as needed.
- Takes stances on issues ranging, over the years, from: tuition fee increases, activities and decisions of the U of T administration, new university policies, student income tax deductions, environmental concerns, international wars, student involvement in departmental committees, comprehensive exams, childcare, social housing, etc.
- Receives reports from the Executive, the Staff, and spokespersons from campus and external groups.
- Assembly Meetings are run according to Bourinot's Rules of Order, unless otherwise stated in the UTGSU Bylaws or Policy Handbook. A introduction to Rules of Order can be found on page 8.
- Representation is proportional, by departmental enrollment: A course union with up to 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) students has one representative; those with 101-200 FTEs have two representatives, those with 201-1000 FTEs have three representatives, those with > 1000 FTEs have four representatives.
- Each rep from each course union receives a mail-out via email before each meeting containing an agenda for the upcoming meeting, minutes from the previous meeting, and Executive reports, and supplementary documents such as bylaw or policy amendments and the annual budget.

Ethical Financial Practices for Course Unions

The UTGSU expects its course unions to practice ethical financial decision making and record keeping with the funds submitted to them by the Union. If you have any questions, or would like advice about how to make your course union finances more ethical and transparent, please contact finance@utgsu.ca. These practices include:

- **Annual Budget**

Your course union executive or other financial body should prepare an annual budget to be approved by the course union's membership or representative body (i.e. Executive and/or finance committee). The annual budget should include budget lines for expected revenue (UTGSU head grant, funds from your department, donations, interest, etc.) and expenditures (e.g., annual course union social, conference expenses, donations, IT support, etc.). The expected surplus or deficit should be clearly stated at the end of your budget. All expenses not accounted for in the budget, including the use of surplus, should be approved by the membership or representative body as stipulated in your constitution.

- **Record Keeping**

The person or body responsible for financial transactions should keep a detailed ledger of course union revenue and expenditures, including the date, amount, and purpose of each item. This ledger should be kept for a minimum of three years after which it can be destroyed.

Your course union should keep a record of financial decision making through motions and minutes taking. These decisions should be publicly available or available to all members of your course union at their request.

- **Reporting of Expenditures**

Finances should be reported to the membership at least once a year, in the form of an audit, or a financial summary. This report should include an assertion that expenditures fell within the approved budget. This ensures that your course union's money is being expensed as approved by the membership and/or a representative body.

- **General Financial Practices**

All expenditures should be approved by more than one person or a body invested with the authority to approve such expenditures by the membership or representative body. Individuals should not approve or sign off on their own reimbursement.

Understanding Bourinot's Rules of Order

The UTGSU uses Bourinot's Rules of Order at our meetings to ensure that our meetings stay organised and orderly. Under these rules, there are a few important things you need to know in order to be able to participate. Please contact executivedirector@utgsu.ca for more information.

Speaking Rights

All Course Union Representatives hold speaking rights. Anyone who is not a member is a guest and must ask for speaking rights when prompted by the chair in order to be able to participate in discussion at Assembly meetings.

Point of Order

A point of order can be called at any time to point out when something is procedurally incorrect.

Point of Privilege

A point of privilege can be called at any point should someone present at the meeting feel that their or another member's participation in the meeting is threatened or subdued for any reason, including accessibility needs and safety concerns.

Point of Information

A point of information CANNOT BE USED TO INTERRUPT SOMEONE. Points of information can be used at any time, but must follow the chair's speakers list and do not have priority over any debate or other points. Points of information must be questions or queries for the clarification of information. Points of clarification are not used by the UTGSU, and can be called as points of information.

Motions

Motions can only be made by Course Union Representatives. Guests are not able to make motions. Most motions should begin with the phrasing 'Be it Resolved That' ('BIRT') followed by the action or resolution an individual would like to proposed for debate and vote.

Calling the Question

For this action, the UTGSU uses Robert's Rules of Order. A member (not guests) may call the question at any time during debate in order to incite a vote on whether or not to end debate and move immediately to a vote on the motion at hand.

Challenging the Chair

If the chair of the meeting does something or passes a ruling that members believe to be procedurally incorrect, members are able to challenge the chair's ruling. At this point the vice-chair will take over chairing duties, and the challenge will be seconded and voted upon by the representatives.