

# **Charta of the Graduate Students Association at International University Bremen**

## **§0. Preamble**

The graduate students of International University Bremen recognize that they need a platform which serves the communication with the administration and Undergraduate Student Body of International University Bremen as well as communication and the enhancement of mutual appreciation among the graduate students, their fields of work and their research.

In order to further this goal, the graduate students at International University Bremen found the Graduate Students Association.

## **§1. Membership and Definitions**

- (1) The Graduate Students Association (GSA) of International University Bremen (IUB) represents the entirety of all graduate students. All persons who are enrolled at IUB as graduate students, and who pursue either a Master's or Doctorate degree, are from the day of their enrolment members of the GSA.
- (2) The GSA is the only organization at IUB representing all graduate students.
- (3) Membership, including all offices held, ends on the day a member stops being enrolled at IUB as a graduate student.
- (4) The term "USB" denotes the Undergraduate Student Body and its Parliament.
- (5) The language of conversation during all official GSA meetings shall be English.
- (6) A day refers to a working day according to German federal and Bremen state law. It starts at the next midnight and lasts for 24 hours.
- (7) For reasons of consistent readability, when referring to abstract persons who may either be male or female, we uniformly choose the female form without any implied gender preference.

## **§2. Organizational Structure**

- (1) The GSA consists of the following bodies: The Executive Board, the GSA Council, the General Assembly, and the Members.

## **§3. The Executive Board**

- (1) There shall be an Executive Board, hereafter referred to as the Board, which is responsible for the administration of the GSA, the enforcement of this Charta and all by-laws, and the implementation of all resolutions passed by either the Board itself or the General Assembly. The Board shall determine the GSA's policies and plan and implement social, cultural and scientific events. The Board is in charge of the budget of the GSA. The Board shall establish rules for the greater good of the graduate students at IUB and issue resolutions for the advancement of graduate studies at IUB. The Board represents the GSA towards the outside world.
- (2) The Board meets monthly during the academic semesters; time and place of such meetings are to be publicly announced at least 3 days in advance. Additional meetings can be called by any two Board members. All meetings of the Board shall be public. There shall be records of all meetings kept and published.
- (3) The Board shall consist of the following elected officers: the Treasurer, the Secretary and the Activities Coordinator. Furthermore, each school of IUB that enrolls at least ten graduate students (full-time or part-time) has the right to be represented in the Board by a Secretary General (SG).
- (4) The term of any Board member ends immediately after the election of a successor; re-election is possible.
- (5) During Board meetings, any attending members of the Council (see §4) shall have the full privileges of Board members, including the right to vote. During votes, attending Council members are counted towards the Board.
- (6) At most one Board member may be absent for the Board to be quorate. The Board passes resolutions by simple majority, votes are cast by hand raising. Each member of the Board shall have the power to introduce motions to the Board or to the agenda of the General Assembly for discussion and vote.
- (7) The Board shall have the power to call an extraordinary General Assembly.
- (8) The Board is free to appoint any Member to support the Board with the execution of a specific task.
- (9) All candidates for the office of SG shall be affiliated with the school they are running for. An office of SG is left vacant for a term of office if it cannot be filled at the beginning of the term. Each SG represents the graduate students of her school towards the university administration, faculty, staff, alumni, undergraduates and other bodies. All SG in unison may represent the entire GSA; if at some occasion only one representative can be heard, the SG may transfer their vote to one of their number on positions that all agree on. The SG shall take turns for such occasions. The SG hears motions and petitions from Members of her school. The SG work together to determine the agendas for meetings of the Board and the General Assembly. They oversee the implementation of all resolutions passed by either the Board or the General

Assembly. Each SG has the power to veto any resolution passed by the Board and thus delay its implementation by four days.

- (10) The Treasurer is responsible for the funds of the GSA and administers them in a way that benefits the GSA. She shall keep all funds in a bank account close to campus; only the Treasurer and an ombudsman of the administration shall have access to this account. The Treasurer submits an annual budget proposal to the Board for vote. She informs the Ordinary General Assembly (§5.1) of the financial situation of the GSA. She keeps records of all financial transactions for approval by the administration. The Treasurer disburses funds for activities provided for in the budget and approved by the Board or the General Assembly. She sees to it that the annual budget is not exceeded. The Treasurer collects donations, fees and all other monies that are transferred into the possession of the GSA.
- (11) The Secretary is responsible for the public presentation of the GSA. She keeps up-to-date lists of members at all times and is responsible for the GSA archive. She announces meetings of the Board or the General Assembly within the provided time frames. The Secretary chairs all meetings of the GSA and takes and publishes minutes within five days; she may delegate these tasks to other participants. The Secretary observes adherence to the agenda, calls for discussions and votes and enforces an orderly conduct of all participants. The Secretary oversees the GSA's public relations and coordinates the GSA's presentation in the media, both electronic and printed.
- (12) The Activities Coordinator (AC) is responsible for the improvement of graduate student life on campus. She oversees programs, services and events in which the GSA participates. She leads the organization of social and cultural activities for the graduate students. She provides a platform for the graduate students to familiarize each other with their academic fields and research projects. The AC is in charge of orientation events for new graduate students.

#### **§4. The Council**

- (1) The GSA Council represents the different graduate programs at IUB. Each graduate program may send one representative to the GSA Council, regardless of the number of students enrolled in this program.
- (2) The graduate programs are free in their decision on how to select their representative. Each representative is appointed to the Council for the duration of one academic year. Their term coincides with the term of the Board.
- (3) The Council supports the Board in its work and ensures equal representation of all academic fields present at IUB.
- (4) The Council does not hold separate meetings; all members of the Council have full voting rights at meetings of the Board (see also §3.5).
- (5) The members of the Council inform the graduate students in their respective programs of all resolutions of the Board.
- (6) The members of the Council hear all complaints, suggestions, petitions or inquiries by the students in their respective graduate programs and inform the Board of all topics thus addressed.
- (7) The members of the Council introduce new graduate students in their respective programs to the GSA and inform the Secretary of their arrival.

#### **§5. The General Assembly**

- (1) The General Assembly (GA) is the convention of all Members. There shall be an Ordinary General Assembly (OA) every academic semester; Extraordinary General Assemblies (EA) can be called by the Board or as determined in §5.9.
- (2) The GA defines three types of majorities: *absolute majority* (at least 50% of all votes cast, rounded up), *qualified majority* (at least 50% of all votes cast, rounded up, and at least 50% of all votes from each school) and *rigorous majority* (at least 66% rounded up of all votes cast and at least 50% of all votes from each school). The Secretary announces at the opening of each assembly how many votes will be necessary for each type of majority.
- (3) Any decision made by a GA shall be considered passed if the required majority is met and at least 20% of all Members cast their vote – be it in person or by absentee ballot – except where stated otherwise. Elections require no quorum.
- (4) The GA conducts, at the written request of 5% of all Members –at least 10 persons–, a vote of no confidence against single members of the Board. It must be supported by a rigorous majority with a quorum of at least 30% of all Members casting their vote. After a successful vote of no confidence, the affected office is immediately refilled by an election. Candidates must be nominated along with the request for a vote of no confidence. The replacement is elected for the rest of the regular term. An intended vote of no confidence must appear in the agenda.
- (5) The Ordinary General Assembly (OA) meets during the third week of every academic semester. The Secretary notifies all Members five days in advance of time, location and agenda.
- (6) The agenda contains reports of the SG, the Treasurer and the Activities Coordinator. It provides time for elections and five minutes for each candidate to present herself. Any two Members may request from the SG

that a topic of their concern is put on the agenda. Such a request must be made before the agenda is published.

- (7) The OA elects the Board each spring semester. A SG leads the election. Details are regulated in §6.
- (8) Amendments and changes to the Charta require a rigorous majority and must be announced in the agenda. Overturning decisions of the Board requires a qualified majority. All other measures require an absolute majority. The Board cannot overturn decisions made by the GA. The GA may not pass motions that exceed the budget. Decisions passed by the GA are binding for all Members.
- (9) At the written request of 5% of all Members –at least 10 persons–, the Secretary shall call an EA. The EA must be held at least one day and at most 3 days after the request reaches the Board. The agenda of the EA must be contained in the request. The Secretary must inform the Members of an impending EA and its preliminary agenda immediately. Up to one day before the EA, any 5% of the Members or any Board officer may add topics to the agenda as long as such added topics do not contain changes or amendments to the Charta. The EA may vote only on motions contained in the agenda.
- (10) A member of the Board shall call for an EA to refill her office if circumstances occur that make it impossible for her to stay her term.

#### **§6. Elections and Resolutions**

- (1) All elections shall be free, equal and secret. All Members get a chance to cast their vote.
- (2) Elections for office take place during the OA, except in situations as described in §5.4 and §5.10.
- (3) Nominations must be indicated to the leader of the election (§5.7) in writing before the agenda is published. No Member shall run for more than one office. Candidates must indicate their willingness to run for office before their names are published.
- (4) If there are less than three candidates running for a specific office, this office is filled by absolute majority vote (§5.2). The losing candidate becomes the substitute of the winner.
- (5) If there are at least three candidates, the top two contenders are selected by cumulative voting.
- (6) Cumulative voting means that every voter gets as many votes as there are candidates. The voter may divide these votes among all candidates at will. The two candidates with the most votes proceed to the second round.
- (7) The election of a candidate becomes effective after she accepts her election.
- (8) Votes on resolutions and other motions are called by the Secretary. Such votes are conducted by hand raising. At the request of one Member, these votes shall be held secretly. The necessary majorities are determined in §5.
- (9) All Members have the right to vote by absentee ballot. These must be submitted to the Secretary on a ballot form in a white unmarked envelope inside another envelope bearing the Member's name before the voting begins. Absentee voters cannot take part in a possible second round.

#### **§7. The Members**

- (1) All Members shall have the right to attend meetings of the Board and of the GA.
- (2) All Members have the right to vote at the GA and run for office.
- (3) Any two Members shall have the right to introduce motions to the OA through the Secretary. These shall then be incorporated in the agenda.
- (4) All Members have the right to submit petitions, complaints, suggestions etc. to the SG of their school and their Council member. All petitions submitted by at least two Members must be discussed by the Board at their next meeting. The minutes shall reflect this.
- (5) The Members have the right to express their opinions and concerns on all matters pertaining to the GSA to the Board.
- (6) Membership in the GSA cannot be transferred, refused or withdrawn.
- (7) Members may refuse to pay contributions established by the GA or the Board and not overturned by the GA. Such Members may become ineligible to attend the thus financed events.

#### **§8. Amendments and By-Laws**

- (1) Important and general circumstances that the Charta fails to recognize shall be regulated in amendments. Amendments can only be passed by a GA.
- (2) By-Laws shall be established to facilitate the execution of GSA decisions and to regulate its proceedings, elections and programs when it becomes necessary to be more specific than the Charta or its amendments.
- (3) By-Laws and amendments shall become effective immediately if they were passed by a GA. By-Laws passed by the board shall become effective after they have been published for five days.

#### **§9. Dissolving of the GSA**

- (1) The GA dissolves the GSA with rigorous majority. The dissolution takes effect immediately.
- (2) Appropriate representation of the graduate students' interests must be ensured after the dissolution of the GSA.