

Constitution

of the
McMaster Astronomy and Physics Graduate Student Association

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Contents

1	Name & Purpose	3
1.1	Name	3
1.2	Purpose	3
2	Membership	3
2.1	Eligibility	3
2.2	Dues	3
3	Association Structure and Executives	3
3.1	Structure	3
3.2	Constituencies	4
3.3	Representatives (Elected by Standing Members)	4
3.4	Officers (Elected by Representatives)	4
3.5	Other Positions – Coordinators and Tsars	4
4	Responsibilities and Expectations	5
4.1	Standing Members	5
4.2	Representatives	5
4.3	Meeting Representatives	5
4.4	The Chairperson	5
4.5	Communications Officer	6
4.6	Treasury Officer	6
4.7	Visitor Coordinator	6
4.8	Events Coordinator	6
4.9	Election Tsar	7
5	Elections (September)	7
5.1	Election for Representation	7
5.2	Election for Officers	7
6	Communication and Meetings	7
6.1	Mass Communication with Constituents	7
6.2	Communication Among MAPSA Executives & Representative Voting on Matters	8
6.3	Yearly Review and Appreciation Event	8
6.4	State of the MAPSA Address	8
6.5	Graduate Orientation by Graduate Chair	8
6.6	Election Email	8
7	Changes to the Constitution	8
8	Removal and Replacement of Representatives and Officers	8
8.1	Dismissal of Representatives	9
8.2	Dismissal of Officers	9
8.3	Replacement of Representatives and Officers	9

Abbreviations and Terminology

- MAPSA – McMaster Astronomy and Physics (Graduate) Students Association
- Standing Member – Graduate students in the Department of Physics and Astronomy (membership automatic from date of program start until graduation as indicated by congratulatory email by the Graduate Chair)
- academic year – Sept 1 to Aug 30
- calendar year – Jan 1 to Dec 31
- ‘unanimous approval’ – All Representatives must Approve (motion is without Abstain or Reject)
- ‘majority approval’ – There are more Approves than Rejects by the Representatives (ties dictate failure of the motion, Abstains counts to neither Approve or Reject)

- ‘without disapproval’ – No Representative has Rejected (motion is only with Approves or Abstains)
- ‘by rank’ – Work down the Executive rank: first approach the Chairperson, if they are unavailable then approach the Communication or Treasury Officer, if they are unavailable then approach the Representatives, and so on (outlined by Subsection 3.1)

This document is the go-to for all foundational questions regarding MAPSA and its operations. On the chance MAPSA fails due to lack of participation, interest, or support from its members; this document shall serve to outline its mission and regulations to those seeking to revive it. This Constitution is the second, with first MAPSA order (created in 2020) having fallen in 2025.

1 Name & Purpose

1.1 Name

The organization of McMaster physics and astronomy graduate students shall hereafter be referred to as the **McMaster Astronomy and Physics Graduate Student Association**, abbreviated to MAPGSA (“map-G-S-A”), but commonly nicknamed and referred henceforth as **MAPSA** (“map-sah”).

1.2 Purpose

MAPSA is a collection of peers among the Department of Physics and Astronomy graduate student body volunteering to improve the quality of life of its members by the following purposes:

- To provide a platform for graduate student concerns to be expressed to the department and university and to represent the interests of graduate students at department meetings.
- To disseminate important information to the graduate student body.
- To coordinate, promote, and enhance graduate student social events.
- To assist graduate students in obtaining support for issues related to harassment, discrimination, mental health, and inter-personal conflicts.

It is important to emphasize that this association must not take away from the personal and academic growth of participating members. Members participating in executive roles in MAPSA must be able and willing – there shall be no coercion of participation from peers, faculty, or likewise.

2 Membership

2.1 Eligibility

Membership in MAPSA shall be automatic and only for all graduate students in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at McMaster. Such members are Standing Members and remain such between the beginning date of their program until their graduation date (indicated by the congratulatory email by the Graduate Chair). Standing Members are eligible to vote and participate in MAPSA regulatory matters, but participation in MAPSA events is open to all, in accordance with all criteria enumerated in the “GSA Clubs Operating Policies” document and is offered irrespective of race, religion, gender, class, age, nationality, ability, marital status, veteran status, or sexual orientation.

2.2 Dues

There shall be no dues for participating in MAPSA.

3 Association Structure and Executives

3.1 Structure

Standing members are to be part of Constituencies, categorized by their specialty in each field of physics and astronomy according to their supervisors’ specialty. Standing members vote at the beginning of each academic year for their Constituency’s Representative. The Representatives then goes on to nominate and elect Officers and Coordinators among the Standing Members (including the Representatives themselves). Officers hold the executive roles in MAPSA, but must seek majority approval from the Representatives for most motions.

The rank hierarchy is (at the top) The Chairperson, remaining Officers, Representatives, Coordinators, Meeting Representatives, and then Standing Members. This order is stated strictly for effective MAPSA operations and must not be abused. Those found or accused of flaunting their position are considered a serious offender against MAPSA's core mission and purpose. Said offenders are immediately entered into Dismissal considerations (Section 8) without petition.

3.2 Constituencies

- **Astronomy:** e.g. students under supervision of A. Chen, L. Parker, R. Pudritz, A. Sills, J. Wadsley, C. Wilson, B. Harris, H. Couchman, D. Welch.
- **Theoretical Physics** (Condensed Matter & High-Energy): e.g. students under supervision of C. Burgess, S. Sibiryakov, D. O'Dell, H. Kunduri, S. Lee, E. Sørensen.
- **Soft Matter and Biophysics:** e.g. students under supervision of K. Dalnoki-Veress, C. Fradin, P. Higgs, M. Rheinstadter, A. Shi.
- **Experimental Condensed Matter:** e.g. students under supervision of B. Gaulin, T. Imai, G. Luke, D. Venus.
- **Rad-Grad:** e.g. students under supervision of F. McNeill, D. Chettle, S. H. Byun, J. Juhasz
- **International Students:** Non-permanent-residents or non-citizens of Canada.

3.3 Representatives (Elected by Standing Members)

Those seeking the role of the Representative of their constituency should first address peers of their constituency before conveying their nomination to the Election Officer.

- **Representatives:** To be nominated and voted upon by their corresponding Constituency. There shall be one Representative from each Constituency. Representatives hold approval and veto power over the Officers.
- **Meeting Representative:** To be nominated and voted upon by the Standing Members. Meeting Representatives do not have voting power over the Officers as opposed to Representatives. There shall be two Meeting Representatives elected from the Standing Members.

3.4 Officers (Elected by Representatives)

The following officers are to be nominated and voted into their positions by the Representatives. Such officers may be nominated persons among the Representatives or any standing member. No one person shall conduct the role of multiple officers. Officers must be in year 1, 2, or 3 of their Ph.D. program in good academic standing.[†]

- **The Chairperson**
- **Communications Officer**
- **Treasury Officer***

[†]this is the Continuation Clause. The past collapse of MAPSA has been accredited to high ranking members graduating, not insuring a smooth transition of power and carry-on of traditions and purpose.

*the Treasury Officer position shall only be available when MAPSA is approved as a GSA club or when there is otherwise financial reporting that is required for the procurement of finances

3.5 Other Positions – Coordinators and Tsars

Through appointment or recognition of organizational service to the graduate students, the following roles may be granted to Standing Members:

- **Visitor Coordinator(s)***
- **Event Coordinator(s)***
- **Election Tsar[†]**

*a maximum of one of each coordinator may be appointed from each Constituency

[†]this person holds this title from their appointment to the conclusion of the Election

4 Responsibilities and Expectations

Brave souls in the McMaster Physics & Astronomy Department seeking betterment of their peers' and own experience during their graduate studies through MAPSA activities shall abide to the following *responsibilities* (of which they are held accountable) and *expectations* (of which others will be concerned if not fulfilled):

4.1 Standing Members

- MAPSA standing members are expected to vote for their corresponding Representative and voice dejection of the Executives when any arises.
- Standing members (and participants) at MAPSA-sanctioned events are also expected to conduct themselves in manner befitting of Department and University interests—that is to treat all (participants and bystanders) with a high level of mutual respect, professionalism, and courtesy.
- Otherwise, members are encouraged to enjoy their academic journey with this group of friends—MAPSA is founded on attempting to support and enhance this notion.

4.2 Representatives

Representatives are elected individuals by their peers to voice their opinions and voice their concerns. This position holds the most power in the MAPSA Structure, as they hold the Officers of higher rank to accountability as many of the Officers' actions are regulated by approving votes from the group of Representatives.

- Representatives are responsible for representing their Constituency by understanding motions put forth to them and voting Approve/Abstain/Reject in a timely manner.
- These individuals are expected to be engaged with colleagues in their Constituency to understand the concerns, blessings, and opinions of the Constituency. These opinions are to be conveyed via votes in motions and issues (if actionable) should be put forth to The Chairperson or appropriate Executive.
- Due to the limiting nature of MAPSA to mass-emails, Representatives are also expected to disseminate information regarding upcoming MAPSA events or other related information through word-of-mouth or bulletin board.

4.3 Meeting Representatives

- Meeting Representatives are responsible for attendance at meetings upon the Department's request as "Graduate Student Representation" or likewise.
This includes but is not limited to: Department Meetings, Department EDI Committee Meetings, Department Colloquium Meetings. Typically, two Meeting Representatives are preferred at these meetings (as requested by the Department), but one may suffice on instances of urgent absence.
- Upon realization of both Meeting Representatives being unavailable for a Meeting, it is the responsibility of the Meeting Representative(s) to seek an able and willing Representative or Officer to attend in their place. Only if the approached Representatives and Officers are also unavailable should the Meeting Representative approach a trusted Standing Member in requesting their aid. The Meeting Representative should report this temporary replacement to the MAPSA Chairperson and the appropriate Department meeting contact.
- The Meeting Representatives are responsible to convey useful and approved information gleaned at attended meetings to the Standing Members in a concise and accurate fashion. Intelligence gained from the meetings are not all relevant to graduate students and/or may need to remain confidential at the request of the Department. The Meeting Representatives are expected to compare notes with each other, draft a concise and easy-to-understand report, gain approval of its publication by the respective Department meeting contact, and only then disseminate the meeting notes.
- These meeting notes are expected to be disseminated within two calendar weeks of the meeting.

4.4 The Chairperson

- The Chairperson is the head of the association and therefore bears responsibility of being the first point-of-contact for any external bodies seeking communication with the P&A student body. They are expected to then relay the curious souls to the appropriate directories.

- They shall be held responsible for ensuring MAPSA activities, events, and demeanor are befitting of its mission and purpose.
- The Chairperson takes responsibility for the abiding of the procedures, regulations, and traditions of MAPSA as set out by this Constitution and its past members.
- The Chairperson is responsible for the organization and execution of duties outlined in Subsections 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5.
- Upon their appointment, the new Chairperson takes responsibility for the continuation MAPSA at the end of the academic year. That is, the Chairperson is expected to consider their own academic standing (and that of their fellow Officers) to then motion for a Deputy Chairperson (or suggest the appointment of other Deputy Officers) where applicable.

4.5 Communications Officer

- The Communications Officer shall bear responsibility of updating the MAPSA monthly calendar and printing the bulletin-board posts each month for each Representative to post in the appropriate channels.
- They are also responsible in fulfilling duties outlined in Subsection 6.4.

4.6 Treasury Officer

This position becomes available and must be filled upon MAPSA's approval as a GSA club (or in the off-chance it receives money and is able to set a budget).

- The Treasury Officer is responsible for the annual budget that is to be submitted to the GSA ahead of the GSA's September deadline.
- This Officer is also responsible for the accurate accounting of the finances spent in supporting Member-held events, such that MAPSA does not exhaust its finances before the end of the academic year.
- The Treasury Officer is also responsible for coordination with the Event Coordinator(s) in promptly submitting event proposals to the GSA (two weeks prior to the event), expected to remind and follow up with the event organizers of *both invoices and receipts* that need to be submitted to GSA to be reimbursed afterwards.

4.7 Visitor Coordinator

There are often researchers or prospective students visiting the Physics & Astronomy Department seeking a sit-down chat over a meal.

- The Visitor Coordinator is responsible in serving as the Department's point-of-contact for visitors to then relay them to the appropriate Constituent Representative or research group.
- If no clear research-field association is present, the Visitor Coordinator is responsible for either delegating the task of hosting the visitor to another Executive, or gather their own company to indulge in an accommodated meal. Said meal is expected to be reimbursed by the Department and will otherwise be reimbursed by MAPSA.

4.8 Events Coordinator

Gatherings organized by the graduate student body in the Department shall not feel pressured to associate themselves with MAPSA. However, those wishing to associate their events with MAPSA shall be knighted the position of 'Event Coordinator.'

- Such coordinators are responsible in ensuring that the affiliated activities align with MAPSA's values and are within the Code of Conduct guidelines of the Department, Faculty, and University. Upon recognized violation or upon request from an Executive (with reason of such violations), the activity is to cease immediately.
- Event Coordinators organizing gatherings in which they expect reimbursement from MAPSA's financial budget from the GSA are also responsible for submitting funding proposals to the GSA at a minimum of two weeks prior to the event. The responsibility of requesting and keeping invoices and receipts also fall on to the Event Coordinator.
- The Event Coordinator(s) are not obligated to organize or agree with events suggested by Standing Members or Executives but should expect to be a point-of-contact for souls outside of the department seeking involvement with MAPSA.

4.9 Election Tsar

- An (willing) Election Tsar is to be appointed by the Chairperson *without disapproval* from any Representative before the Address (Subsection 6.4).
- The Election Tsar must not be a nominee in the Election.
- It is their responsibility to ensure the Election ballot reaches all Standing Members, all nominees are accounted for in the ballot, and that all casted votes are anonymous to all others.
- The Election Tsar, themselves, are expected to cast the first votes for their corresponding Constituency, nominated Meeting Representatives, and other ballot items.

5 Elections (September)

5.1 Election for Representation

Elections are to be held each year during the final week of September by all members for their respective constituency's Representatives. Nominations for the elected Representative and Meeting Representative positions will take place in the week prior to elections. Only Standing Members within a Constituency may vote for the Representative of that constituency, while all Standing Members shall vote on nominees for the Meeting Representatives.

- Elections are to be held in the “Ranked Choice Voting” format and must guarantee the anonymity of the voters.
- Newly elected Representatives take office from the end of the Election to October 1st of the following year (or end of the following Election), unless dismissed.

The Election ballot is to consist of 1) Nominees for Representative of each Constituency, 2) Nominees for Meeting Representatives, and (if application) 3) Approval/Abstain/Rejection of Constitutional matters. The Constitution recommends the ballot to be done digitally by means of Microsoft Forms without restriction of Members' votes for Representatives to be limited to their assumed Constituency – instead to prompt them for their supervisor and allow them to self-identify to their own Constituency. It is ***mandated*** that all votes in all ballot matters must remain anonymous to all parties other than the Election Tsar and that the Tsar to report the results accurately reflective of the student body and not their own interests.

The Election Tsar reports the results to the Executives and leaves the transition process up to the Executives. The Election Tsar is thanked and appreciated for their service and relieved of their duties once said results are conveyed.

To encourage engagement in this Election process and announce the Election results, The Chairperson is *encouraged* to hold an event to thank the Standing Members for fulfilling their democratic expectations.

5.2 Election for Officers

Once the new court of Representatives are assembled, they must nominate and elect (if applicable) Officer roles. They must conclude on filled positions for Officers before the end of October. Officers take office from their appointment until the next Officer is appointed, unless dismissed.

6 Communication and Meetings

6.1 Mass Communication with Constituents

It shall be ***mandated*** that MAPSA is allowed two mass-emails (to all standing members) per year, both in the month of September. These two are outlined in subsections 6.4 and 6.6. Any more mass-emails must be through *unanimous approval* of the Representatives, unless motioned by the Communications Officer where *majority approval* is needed.

Representatives and Officers are encouraged to promote events & MAPSA agenda by other means, such as the large Discord Community ‘Astronomy and Physics Coterie’ (as of Sept 2025), bulletin boards on the 2nd/3rd floor of ABB & in the office space in GSB & TAB, word-of-mouth, and the dedicated Teams channel.

Meeting Representatives are exempt from requiring approval to communicate information from meetings attended via mass-email.

6.2 Communication Among MAPSA Executives & Representative Voting on Matters

No re-occurring in-person or virtual meeting is required. Any Officer, Representative, Coordinator, or Standing Member may call for a meeting, upon which *unanimous approval* from the Representatives is required for The Chairperson to organize a meeting addressing the proposed agenda.

Motions put forth by Officers, Representatives, Coordinators, or Standing Members may seek approval by the Representatives by simple 'Reactions' in the Outlook email system or choice of messaging app. However the means of communication, all six Constituency Representatives *must* be given the opportunity to understand the motion and cast their vote of Approve, Abstain, or Reject, in a time limit of two calendar weeks.

6.3 Yearly Review and Appreciation Event

MAPSA is an organization made possible through volunteerism of the student body to take MAPSA positions and bear its great responsibilities. As such, The Chairperson is *encouraged* to hold an event of their choosing to appreciate the efforts of the year's Executives (all included in Subsections 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). This event is a good chance to review the year's MAPSA operations, its outcomes, and any changes to the constitution that may be needed (once GSA approved, motions to change the constitution may be included in the September Election).

6.4 State of the MAPSA Address

In the second week of September, the Chairperson is to address the Standing Members of the previous year's achievements, promote MAPSA and its values to newcoming graduate students, and to announce the imminent election. This is to be via a mass-email to the Graduate Student mailing list. The Communication Officer is to vet this address to ensure no damning comments are made (regarding any matter). No actions are required from the Representatives here.

6.5 Graduate Orientation by Graduate Chair

The Chairperson is responsible in providing slides to the Graduate Chair at minimum one week before the scheduled Department Graduate Orientation. The presentation shall be a condensed 2-minute version of the Address in subsection 6.4. The Chairperson is then expected to be in attendance and present the slides associated with MAPSA.

If the Chairperson is unavailable to attend this meeting, the Chairperson may pre-record their presentation and submit the video (maximum of two minutes) to the Graduate Chair (a minimum one week before) or the presentation may be delivered by the next willing ranking Executive.

6.6 Election Email

The appointed Election Tsar is allowed the one mass-email without authorization from the Representatives for the September Election.

7 Changes to the Constitution

- Due to the experimental nature of this MAPSA attempt, changes to the Constitution are allowed *without disapproval* of the Representatives before September 2030. Representatives who had Abstained to the motion may retro-actively Reject changes to void such changes during the academic year in which the motion was passed. During this time, Standing Members are allowed to table motions for changes at a limit of two per term, and Executives at no limit.
- After September 2030, *unanimous approval* of the Representatives is required for changes to the Constitution. Motions for changes may be put forth by any Executive at most once per term, and Standing Members at a limit of one motion per academic year.
- Motions for changes are only accepted outside the months of September and October.

8 Removal and Replacement of Representatives and Officers

Any Representative, Officer, or Coordinator may seek resignation of their position at any time by notifying the Chairperson. The Chairperson may resign by notifying the Representatives. The Election Tsar is ineligible for resignation and shall understand this burden when agreeing to the position.

8.1 Dismissal of Representatives

Standing Members of Constituencies may call for their Representative's removal by petition of more than one-third of its constituents. Such calls are brought to any member of the Representatives or Officers where it will be brought to the Chairperson's attention. The Representative is then dismissed of their duties. Dismissed Representatives who are also an Officer may continue to serve as Officer if agreed *without disapproval* upon by the Representatives (after the Representative vacancy has been filled).

8.2 Dismissal of Officers

Officers are dismissed by disapproving petition of one-third from each constituency or by *majority (dis)approval* of the Representatives. Dismissed Officers who are Representatives remain Representatives unless dismissed by their constituency (in Subsection 8.1).

8.3 Replacement of Representatives and Officers

In the case that multiple roles are vacant, the following is to be completed sequentially. Otherwise, only the procedure(s) relevant to the vacant position need to be followed.

- Open Representative positions are to be nominated elected by their constituency within two calendar weeks. An Election Tsar is to be appointed by the Chairperson (or by the Representatives *without disapproval*) to conduct these by-elections. By virtue of the regulations, Election Tsar(s) of the by-election(s) may be Representatives or Officers themselves. By-elections are to follow regulations of Elections (Section 5.1). An Election Email is allowed without to the authorization from the Representatives by the Election Tsar(s).
- Open Officer positions are to be nominated and elected by a *full court* of Representatives (that is all Constituencies must have Representation on this decision) within two calendar weeks after the establishment of a *full court*.
- Open Coordinator and Meeting Representative positions' roles are to be fulfilled by willing Representatives or Officers until replacements are found. Meeting Representatives are elected by *majority approval* of the Representatives when such vacant positions appear outside of the typical September Election period.