

Doc. T95-095, as amended

Passed by the Board of Trustees on December 6, 1995

Latest revision: September 26, 2025

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH
GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE CONSTITUTION**

ARTICLE I: PURPOSE

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, consistent with Trustee Policy T73-098 as amended, encourages and endorses the active engagement of students in shared governance. The principles of shared governance require that all constituencies are able to deliberate and express opinions on matters related to their programs and activities and have the opportunity to recommend appropriate actions to the Chancellor.

The complex nature of today's University requires that students have a meaningful voice in shaping the activities and programs that affect them directly. Working collaboratively with the Office of Graduate Studies and the Division of Student Affairs and more broadly with the administration and faculty, the Graduate Student Senate is intended to be a vibrant organization representing the goals, interests, concerns, and professional development of graduate students at UMass Dartmouth.

- A. The official name of the graduate student government organization under this Constitution shall be “The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Graduate Student Senate” (GSS).
- B. The membership of this organization shall be the governing body for all graduate students of The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, as described in the GSS By-Laws.
- C. The GSS shall strive to enrich the quality of academic and social life of the graduate student body of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. To accomplish this, the GSS shall:
 - 1. Serve as a resource and advocate for the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth graduate students;
 - 2. Represent the interests, concerns, and professional development of the graduate student population of the University;
 - 3. Facilitate community and communication among graduate students in different Colleges, Schools, and departments;
 - 4. Identify and address current and emerging needs of graduate students.

ARTICLE II: RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The general responsibilities of the GSS shall be as follows:

1. All graduate student legislative power shall be vested in the GSS;
2. It shall be the purpose of the GSS to promote graduate student activities and professional development and to provide for the student welfare. It may recommend and/or make changes in rules and regulations (By-Laws) as deemed necessary for the accomplishment of these purposes;
3. It shall be the responsibility of the GSS to foster mutual understanding and cooperation between the administration, the faculty, and the students;
4. It shall be the responsibility of the GSS to consider all matters that are pertinent to the interests of the graduate student body of The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and take such actions as may be deemed necessary and proper or make recommendations to the administration;
5. It shall be the responsibility of the GSS to conduct representative elections for its membership;
6. It shall be the responsibility of the GSS to formulate a graduate student government budget approved by a majority vote of GSS;
7. In the exercise of its responsibilities, the GSS of The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth shall not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, age, sex, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, economic status, or handicap.

B. The GSS shall have the authority:

1. To elect a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. These positions shall constitute the Executive Board.
2. To create commissions, committees and boards as needed. Permanent commissions, committees, boards, and their respective chairs shall be subject to majority approval of the GSS membership.
3. To speak and act in the name of the graduate student body of the University in all appropriate contexts and arenas; which includes, but shall not be limited to, relations with University administrators, trustees, staff, and faculty;
4. To organize and administer, and/or to join with other groups within and outside the University community in organizing and administering projects and programs benefiting graduate students and building mutual aid and cooperation among graduate students and in the larger society;
5. To enact, amend and repeal By-Laws for its internal functioning. All By-Laws and other documents approved by the GSS shall conform to Trustee and University of Massachusetts Dartmouth policies, not contravene this Constitution and are subject to approval by the Chancellor.

ARTICLE III: GRADUATE STUDENT SENATOR MEMBERSHIP

- A. The graduate students in every unit offering a graduate degree, as recognized by the Office of Graduate Studies, shall have the right to elect members of the Graduate Student Senate as defined by the GSS By-Laws.
- B. All GSS Senators must a) be in good academic standing as defined by their academic program b) be in good student conduct standing having no record of violation within the academic year, up to and including the time of election c) be full-time enrolled as a degree seeking graduate student during the entire academic year at The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. d) be enrolled full-time for the following academic year.
- C. To provide for equitable representation of graduate students, GSS shall be composed of a total 21 Senators, three (3) from each college/school who are enrolled full-time. 1. The Charlton College of Business shall have three (3) senators, 2. The College of Arts & Sciences shall have three (3) senators, 3. The School for Marine Science and Technology shall have three (3) senators, 4. The College of Nursing & Health Sciences shall have three (3) senators. 5. The Law School shall have three (3) senators. 6. The College of Engineering shall have three (3) senators. 7. The College of Visual & Performing Arts shall have three (3) senators.
- D. Each representative is charged to vote on behalf of the interests of their school, college and/or program in GSS meetings.
- E. A representative of the Graduate Studies/Provost's Office and/or a representative of the Student Affairs will be ex-officio members of the GSS, without voting privileges.

ARTICLE IV: GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE EXECUTIVE BOARD

- A. The Executive Board is the leadership body of the GSS.
- B. The Executive Board consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, as described in the By-Laws.
- C. The Executive Board shall be elected by the Senators of the GSS in an annual election and shall hold their offices for a term of one academic year.

ARTICLE V: VACANCIES

- A. Vacancies
 - 1. A vacancy in the office of the GSS President resulting from resignation, removal, or change of University status that disqualifies them from serving in this capacity, shall be filled by the Vice President followed by an official Senate vote;
 - 2. A vacancy in any Executive Board position shall be filled through an internal election at the next scheduled GSS meeting, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the GSS By-Laws;
 - 3. All elected Executive Board members shall serve the remainder of the unexpired term.

ARTICLE VI: ADVISOR

The advisor to the GSS will act as an advocate for the GSS and a liaison between the GSS and the Administration. The Advisor will be annually selected by the Associate Provost for Graduate Studies in collaboration with the Executive Board of the GSS.

ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS

- A. The GSS shall hold regular meetings at times determined by its members, with a minimum of one meeting per month during the academic year. An agenda will be prepared and distributed to GSS members and publicly posted at least 48 hours prior to each meeting.
- B. The President, with consent of the Executive Board, shall have the power to call special meetings of the GSS, or shall call special meetings on petition of at least three (3) Senators.
- C. A quorum for conducting business on the published agenda of a regular or special meeting shall consist of fifty percent plus one (50% + 1) of the total number of GSS Senators.

ARTICLE VIII: ELECTIONS

A. Spring Elections

All Senators shall be elected during the spring semester. These Senators-elect shall take office at the first meeting of the new GSS following the spring semester election.

B. Special Elections

Elections to fill vacant Senate seats shall be held as needed, in accordance with the GSS By-Laws. Senators-elect shall assume office upon acceptance of their seat and serve until the first meeting of the newly elected GSS in the spring, or until their earlier termination.

C. Elections of Executive Board

- 1. Each year, prior to the first meeting of the newly elected GSS, Senators shall elect the Executive Board from among the Senate members. The positions to be filled include the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- 2. The election shall be presided over by the GSS Advisor and/or Student Affairs.

ARTICLE IX: RESIGNATION FROM OFFICE, REMOVAL, AND IMPEACHMENT

A. Resignation

Upon submitting an official letter of resignation to the Executive Board, a Senator shall forfeit their seat. Any Senator who ceases to be enrolled and/or enrolled full-time at The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, as defined in the GSS By-Laws, automatically forfeits their seat as a Senator.

B. Removal

Any GSS Senator who fails to fulfill their duties by missing three consecutive meetings without an excused absence or valid justification, as defined in the GSS By-Laws, shall be dismissed from the GSS by the Executive Board. This dismissal may be appealed by the Senator and overturned by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the GSS.

C. Recall of an Executive Board member

Any Senator may propose a motion for a recall election of a GSS Executive Board member. The motion must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the GSS. If passed, a new election shall be conducted in accordance with the timeline established in the GSS By-Laws, and shall be open to all interested Senators, including the incumbent if they choose to run.

D. Impeachment

Any graduate student may initiate the impeachment of a Senator by introducing a motion citing an impeachable offense, as defined in the GSS By-Laws. The motion must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the GSS.

ARTICLE X: RATIFICATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT SENATE CONSTITUTION

A. Process of Initial GSS Constitution Ratification

The Constitution shall be reviewed and approved by the Senate, followed by the review by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and written approval of the Provost and the Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. The Chancellor will submit to the Board of Trustees for final approval.

ARTICLE XI: AMENDMENTS

A. Current Version

This Constitution supersedes any earlier GSS Constitution of The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

B. Submission

Proposed amendments to this Constitution may be submitted to the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) by any Senator. All proposed amendments must be publicized for a minimum of one week prior to any action by the GSS. The adequacy of this publicity shall be determined by the GSS President in concert with the GSS Executive Board.

C. Ratification

Any proposed Constitutional amendment must first be ratified by the approval of 50% plus 1 of the GSS. Any amendment to the Constitution must be approved by the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees of the University of Massachusetts.

D. Documentation

All official editions of this Constitution shall bear a current revision date on the title page, which shall coincide with the most recent date of ratification by both the GSS and the graduate student body and approval of the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees. An up-to-date list of ratified amendments shall be kept in the GSS office. This list shall contain the dates of submission, Chancellor's approval, and ratification by the Board of Trustees.

E. Constitutional Review

The GSS Constitution will undergo a review and/or revision annually.

ARTICLE XII: COMMITTEES

- A. The GSS shall have the power to establish and/or appoint ad hoc advisory committees to the GSS as are deemed necessary for successfully conducting business.
- B. The composition, powers and function of each standing committee shall be clearly set out in the GSS By-Laws.

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Revised:

August 6, 2003

March 19, 2008

September 19, 2018 (SGA Temporary Amendment)

May 2, 2019 (Temporary Amendment expired)

May 2, 2019

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