



BYLAWS OF THE FACULTY SENATE
(as revised – March 22, 2023)

ARTICLE I Membership

Section 1.

The membership of the George Mason Faculty Senate shall be as prescribed by the Charter. Eligibility to vote on matters before the Faculty Senate shall be limited to duly elected faculty members of the Faculty Senate.

Section 2.

- a. The manner by which collegiate and independent academic units entitled to representation in the Faculty Senate elect their senators shall be determined by the faculty of those units.
- b. The presiding officer of each collegiate or independent academic unit shall certify to the Secretary of the Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Organization and Operations Committee the names of the Senators elected. Terms of Senators shall begin at the opening of the first Senate meeting of the academic year.
- c. Current records of the membership of the Senate shall be maintained by the Clerk for use by the President of the Senate and the Parliamentarian.

ARTICLE II Officers

Section 1.

- a. The President of the Faculty Senate shall be elected from among the elected membership of the Senate at the final regularly scheduled meeting of the academic year. Nominations shall be made from the floor. Except when a motion to cast a unanimous ballot is passed, voting for the President shall be by secret ballot. In the event that no candidate for this office receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who received the most votes.

- b. The term of the President of the Faculty Senate shall commence the day after Spring Commencement. In the event the Chair cannot serve for the remainder of their term, an election of a new Faculty Senate President will be held at the next regularly scheduled meeting, following the procedures in Article II Sec. 1a.
- c. The Senate shall elect from its own members a Secretary at the first regular meeting of the academic year. Nominations for this position shall be presented by the Nominations Committee; however, additional nominations may be made from the floor. Except when a motion to cast a unanimous ballot is passed, voting for this office shall be by secret ballot. In the event that no candidate for this office receives a majority of the votes cast, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who received the most votes.
- d. The President shall appoint a member of the Senate to serve when needed as President pro tempore and other members to be Parliamentarian and Sergeant(s)-at-Arms, to serve for terms of one year commencing with the first meeting of the academic year.
- e. Neither the Senate President nor Secretary of the Senate shall serve in the same office for more than three consecutive terms.

Section 2.

- a. The President of the Senate shall be the presiding officer. The President pro tempore shall be the presiding officer in the absence of the President.
- b. The Secretary of the Senate shall maintain the records of the Senate and shall give appropriate notification to officers of the University, Committee Chairs, and other individuals concerning Senate actions.
- c. The Sergeant(s)-at-Arms shall supervise balloting and assist the President in expediting the meetings of the Senate.
- d. The Parliamentarian shall assist the President in the interpretation of the rules of order.

ARTICLE III Responsibilities of the Senate

The responsibilities of the George Mason Faculty Senate shall be as prescribed by the Charter adopted by the General Faculty.

ARTICLE IV Meetings of the Senate

Section 1.

- a. Meetings of the Senate shall be conducted according to the current edition of “Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised” except in instances when Robert’s Rules are in

contradiction with Senate Bylaws or Standing Rules. In this case, the Bylaws followed by the Standing Rules will take precedence.

- b. The quorum for Senate meetings shall consist of a majority of the elected membership.
- c. Members of the Faculty Senate may participate in Faculty Senate meetings electronically, provided the technology used allows all members to hear each other simultaneously. Members of Faculty Senate Standing Committees and University Standing Committees may likewise participate electronically in meetings of the committees. Each entity may develop its own rules for how members meeting electronically may seek recognition, vote, and exercise other rights.

Section 2.

- a. Meetings shall be open to all members of the University community.
- b. For in-person meetings, all persons in attendance in a non-voting capacity shall be seated in a clearly delineated area so that they may not inadvertently influence a vote. For online meetings, the President and Sergeant(s)-at-Arms will determine the means of ensuring that only Senators participate in a vote.
- c. Any person recognized by the President may participate in the discussion of any item of business brought forth upon the floor, but only members of the Senate may make motions, second motions and vote.

Section 3.

To the extent permitted by law, the Senate may go into closed session by majority vote of those present and eligible to vote. Only members of the Senate and guests invited by the presiding officer may be present during a closed session.

Section 4.

- a. The President and the Secretary of the Senate shall jointly prepare the agenda for each meeting and distribute it seven days before the meeting to all members of the Senate. The agenda will also be made available to the general university community.
- b. Any member of the General Faculty may submit items of business for inclusion on the agenda. All items submitted which are consistent with the responsibilities of the Senate as defined in Article III are to be placed on the agenda. Members of the General Faculty who are not Senators may submit items for discussion only, but motions on those subjects may be made only by Senators.
- c. Explanatory or background information on all agenda items shall be prepared by the sponsor of the item and shall be attached to the agenda when appropriate.

Section 5.

Meetings of the Senate shall be convened on at least four Wednesday afternoons during each semester of the academic year.

Section 6.

- a. The President may call a special meeting of the Senate.
- b. In response to any petition signed by 20 percent of the elected members of the Senate, the President must call a special meeting to be convened within six instructional days.
- c. The written call to the special meeting shall include a statement of the purpose of the meeting and shall be distributed at least four instructional days before the meeting to all members of the Senate.
- d. Only business stipulated in the call to the special meeting may be transacted.

Section 7.

- a. Voting shall commence upon a call by the presiding officer for the “ayes” and “nays” and will be public in nature (e.g., voice vote, show of hands, digital representation of “aye” and “nay”). Any Senator who believes the public vote is inconclusive may call for voting by a method that allows for precise counting of votes (e.g., an electronic vote).
- b. Any Senator may request that a secret ballot be taken for any vote. When such a ballot is requested, the Secretary of the Senate and/or the Sergeant(s)-at-Arms shall be responsible for preparing, distributing, and counting the ballots.
- c. Absentee and proxy ballots shall not be allowed during in-meeting voting.
- d. All motions to recommend alterations to existing University-wide graduation requirements shall be read and debated at two successive regular meetings of the Senate held in the same academic year. A meeting of the Senate called solely to complete the agenda of a previous meeting shall not count as a "successive" meeting within the meaning of this bylaw.

Section 8.

Items of new business not appearing on the agenda may be introduced from the floor by any member of the Senate after consideration of all agenda items has been completed. The disposition of any item introduced without prior notice may be carried over to the next regular meeting of the Senate if ten percent of members support a motion to carry it over. A motion carried over under this provision shall appear on the agenda of the next regular meeting as an item of old business and shall be supported by background information as provided in Section 5 of this Article.

Section 9.

- a. The Secretary of the Senate shall prepare the minutes of all meetings of the Senate. The minutes shall be made available to the general university community.
- b. A copy of the agenda and the minutes of every meeting shall be archived in the permanent University archives. These documents will also be made available to the general university community via the Faculty Senate website.

ARTICLE V Committees of The Senate

Section 1.

- a. "Standing Committees" shall be those permanent committees whose respective charges shall be established by the Senate and whose members, except for designated ex-officio members, are elected by the Senate.
- b. Election to standing committees shall be for two years unless otherwise specified in the committee charge.
- c. "Ad Hoc Committees" shall be those established by the Senate for consideration of special or time-limited issues. If no time limit is specified, the committee is deemed to serve until it issues a final report or until the Senate acts to dissolve it.
- d. Unless otherwise authorized by a majority vote of the Senate, standing or ad hoc committees shall issue formal reports only to the Senate.
- e. It shall be a duty of the Secretary of the Senate to prepare and maintain an accurate list of all committees of the Senate together with their charges and composition, which shall be open for inspection to all members of the University community. Annual reports will be filed with the Secretary of the Senate during the month prior to the end of the academic year. These will be made available to the general university community.

Section 2.

- a. Nominations for elected Senate positions to all standing committees except to the Nominations Committee shall be prepared by the Nominations Committee. The Nominations Committee shall nominate one person for each available position. Nominations shall consider factors such as willingness to serve, previous senate and committee experience, the need to develop future senate leadership, and the specifications of the committee charge. The Nominations Committee shall circulate its nominations to the Senate in written form with the agenda for the first meeting of the academic year. Members of the Senate with the permission of prospective nominees may make further nominations from the floor at the meeting when the elections are held.

- b. Committee vacancies with unexpired terms shall be filled for the remainder of the term by special elections at the first scheduled meeting of the Senate after such vacancies occur. The Nominations Committee shall make one nomination for each available position except for vacancies in its own membership, but in all instances, nominations may be made from the floor.
- c. All elections shall be by a majority of those Senators present and voting. In the event that no candidate for an office or for the last positions on an elected committee receives a majority of the votes, a run-off vote will be held between the two candidates who receive the most votes.

Section 3.

- a. Whenever the Senate shall determine by its vote that the creation of an ad hoc committee or of a new standing committee is a matter of urgent necessity, nominations shall be made from the floor following that determination. Election procedures shall be as in Section 2c of this Article.
- b. In the absence of an urgent necessity determined under Paragraph (a) of this section, the Nominations Committee shall prepare a slate for distribution with the agenda of the next Senate meeting. At that meeting nominations may be made from the floor and the election shall be held according to the procedures prescribed in Section 2c of this Article.

Section 4.

Except as otherwise specifically provided, each Senate Committee shall elect its Chair according to the committee charge from among its own membership. Each committee shall have a majority of members present for a quorum. Each committee shall maintain written records of its activities. At the conclusion of each academic year these records shall become part of the permanent archives of the University and the Faculty Senate website as stipulated in Article IV, Section 9, paragraph b.

Section 5.

The Senate may require, by majority vote, any Senate committee to provide a report at a specified later meeting on any matter referred by action of the Senate that falls within the charge of that committee. Upon receipt of such a report, the committee may be discharged of further responsibility for the matter by majority vote of the Senate.

ARTICLE VI Effective Date and Amendment

Section 1.

All motions to amend these bylaws shall be read and debated at two successive regular meetings of the George Mason Faculty Senate held in the same academic year. Following the second debate, a vote on the motion to amend shall be taken. A two thirds majority of the voting

members of the Senate present and voting shall be required for passage of such an amendment. A meeting of the Senate called solely to complete the agenda of a previous meeting shall not count as "successive" meeting within the meaning of this bylaw. Submission of changes to motions must be proposed no later than two meetings prior to the end of the semester.

Section 2.

Amendments to these bylaws shall take effect on the date contained therein, if such a date is provided; otherwise, they shall take effect immediately upon their passage.

Revised 10/6/10, Revised 2/7/18, Revised 12/8/22, Revised 3/22/23