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# Graduate Student Council

of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## 65.gsc.2 Amendment to the Bylaws concerning the issuance of statements

Authors: Katie Shulenberger, Orpheus Chatzivasileiou, Lisa Guay, Peter Su

The Graduate Student Council of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, taking into consideration

1. Article X.2 of the GSC Constitution
2. The need for greater flexibility and accountability in the issuance of statements on behalf of the GSC,
3. The fact that the Board of Advisors has been inactive for the past many years decides to amend the Bylaws as follows:

1. The GSC periodically releases statements internal and external to MIT to help fulfill its mission "to represent the graduate students on all matters pertaining to their general welfare." The existing processes for issuing a statement are the following:
  - i. The full statement is approved by the Council
  - ii. The position taken in the statement has been previously approved by the Council in a Platform Document and the full statement is approved by the External Affairs Board (EAB).

The second process has now been in operation for over two years, and it has allowed the GSC to issue statements on external issues in a timely fashion while still maintaining engagement with the Council through at least annual updates to the Policy Platform. The GSC also makes statements on issues internal to MIT, and the first process, because it is tied to the General Council Meeting schedule, is sometimes too slow to allow the GSC to respond in a timely fashion. In addition, time in General Council Meetings may be better spent debating and revising the positions of the GSC rather than approving specific statement text.

To address this issue, a new process for passing written statements has been developed, modeled on the second EAB process. This new process allows other committees of the GSC to approve statements, provided that such statements are grounded in Platform Documents and voted on by a well-defined and robust subset of committee members, referred to as the committee's statement-voting membership. This process is described below. The previous Article VII, which described the GSC Board of Advisors, is eliminated because the Board of Advisors has been inactive for at least the past three years, and existing and less formal



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relationships with former Executive Committee members are better able to support the work of the GSC.

Therefore Article VII is amended as follows:

## Article VII. Statements

### A. Definitions

A "statement" is any written public communication expressing the position of the GSC. Private or verbal communications and event or activity announcements and publicity are not considered statements so long as the ideas presented do not contradict previously communicated GSC official policies/statements. All statements reflect the position or opinion of the entire GSC. Committees and subcommittees of the GSC or individuals in their capacity as GSC members or officials may not make or sign on to statements representing their own independent positions.

"Platform Documents" enumerate the positions of the GSC on issues relevant to graduate students.

### B. Process for issuing statements

Statements may only be issued via one of the two following methods:

1. The Council may authorize or issue any statement pursuant to the passage of legislation as per Article V.C.
2. A standing committee may issue statements in the following manner:
  - a. Statements may only communicate the positions contained in Platform Documents.
  - b. GSC Platform Documents can be created and amended pursuant to the passage of legislation as per Article V.C.
  - c. Standing committees can issue statements subject to Article VII.B.2.d-k if they have a well-defined and previously approved statement-voting membership that must be composed of at least seven graduate student members with well-defined positions and must include the committee chair(s) and the designated Officer Liaison. The statement-voting membership must be a subset of the full membership of the committee specified in Article II.C. The Executive Committee will approve a committee's proposed statement-voting membership unless said membership is defined in the GSC Bylaws or otherwise approved by the Council and incorporated in a committee's operating

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procedures. If a committee does not have an approved statement-voting membership, the chair(s) of the committee may introduce a statement to the Executive Committee, which can vote on the statement. A simple majority of statement-voting members of a committee shall constitute a quorum to carry out business relevant to this section.

- d. When a committee decides to begin work on a new statement, the chair(s) must notify the Executive Committee. The notification must include an intended audience for the statement and an intended time for initiation of voting procedures (hereafter referred to as the "voting initiation time") that is at least 72 hours after the notification is sent. If said time is changed to be earlier than the original notification specified, committee chair(s) must notify the Executive Committee, with notice of at least 72 hours of the new time. Voting initiation times less than 72 hours after the notification is sent may be approved with a simple majority vote by the Statements Subcommittee of the Executive Committee.
- e. Once notification has been received by the Executive Committee, if another committee wants to produce a separate statement on the same topic, be involved in drafting a joint statement, or has objections to issuing a statement on the topic, it must notify the Executive Committee. If it intends to produce a separate statement, it must also follow the rules outlined in Article VII.B.2.d.
- f. Once notification has been received by the Executive Committee, the GSC Secretary or their appointed proxy must review historical statements and notify the following of any relevant statements: the committee(s) identified in Article VII.B.2.d and Article VII.B.2.e, the committee(s) that passed the relevant historical statement(s), the Statements Subcommittee, and the Officers.
- g. All committees identified in Article VII.B.2.d and Article VII.B.2.e are expected to come to a mutually agreed upon solution for passing all relevant statement(s), including which committees will approve said statement(s). For joint statements, statement-voting memberships of different committees cannot be split or mixed together. The Executive Committee will be notified of this solution. If said committees cannot come to such a solution, any of their chairs may make a motion to the Statements Subcommittee of the Executive Committee to resolve the conflict. Any statement which passes a committee before the



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Statements Subcommittee has resolved the motion or is not consistent with the resolution by the Statements Subcommittee is not valid.

- h. For a committee to approve a statement, votes of approval must outnumber votes of disapproval, and the sum of all votes, including abstentions, must be greater than 50% of the statement-voting membership.
- i. Any time a standing committee other than the Executive Committee approves a statement, the Officer Liaison, one of the committee chairs, or a majority of the Officers may place that statement under Review. Any Officer can place statements approved by the Executive Committee under Review. A statement under Review shall not be issued unless the Review is resolved positively.
- j. Reviews of statements approved by any standing committee may be resolved positively by either:
  1. Passage of a motion by the Executive Committee approving of the statement by a two-thirds vote; or
  2. Passage of a motion or resolution by the General Council approving of the statement by a simple majority; or
  3. Passage of any other motion or resolution by the General Council clarifying that the statement is appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, updates to Platform Documents relevant to the statement.
- k. A Review is closed:
  1. If the Executive Committee resolves the Review positively; or
  2. If the Review has been considered by the General Council; or
  3. If another motion or resolution by the General Council passes indicating that the statement is appropriate.
- l. Reviews of statements approved by the Executive Committee cannot be resolved by the Executive Committee as described in Article VII.B.2.j.1.

## Article VII. Board of Advisors

### A. Purpose of the Board

~~The GSC Board of Advisors (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") will serve in a purely advisory capacity to the GSC leadership team, and will consist of past GSC leadership who have a deep understanding of the GSC and of MIT.~~

### B. Structure & Operation

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~~The Board will consist of up to six members, with each member serving a two year term. Appointments will be staggered so that up to three members are appointed every year. Board members will elect a chair from amongst themselves to serve for a period of one year. This chair shall be responsible for organizing meetings and coordinating between fellow Board members. The GSC Officers will serve as the main point of contact for the Board and will be required to report semesterly to the Board on their progress and goals.~~

### ~~C. Election of Members~~

~~New board members will be nominated by the GSC Executive Committee and presented to the Council at the April GCM of every year. Board members will be confirmed by the Council through a majority vote at the May GCM of each year. In the event a Board member resigns before the end of their term, the GSC Executive Committee may present a replacement to the Council, to be voted upon at a subsequent GCM.~~

### ~~D. Removal of Members~~

~~A Board member may be removed by a unanimous vote from the remaining Board members.~~

2. Parts of Article II are also updated for consistency with the new Article VII. In particular, the Statements Subcommittee is defined, the statement-voting memberships for the Executive Committee and EAB are defined, the formerly informal Officer Liaison position on committees is formalized, and the EAB statement-voting membership election timeline is updated to allow the Board to pass statements during the first month of the term. Therefore, a number of amendments are made to Article II:
  - i. Article II.C is amended as follows:

The membership of standing committees shall consist of graduate student volunteers who serve at the pleasure of the Council and ex officio members as appointed by the Council as specified by the Constitution, Bylaws, or committee guidelines, or as appointed by the Council as specified by the Constitution, Bylaws, or committee guidelines. Assuming the standing committee is not chaired by an Officer, the committee membership shall include an Officer Liaison. The Officer Liaison is either an Officer specified in the Bylaws as an ex officio member of the committee or an Officer appointed by the Officers in a recorded decision announced to the Council. The



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members of ad-hoc committees shall be determined by the Council.

ii. Article II.G.1 is amended as follows:

The Executive Committee shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Council, have overall coordination of finances, and budgets not delegated to other committees, prepare an agenda for each Council meeting, and may deal with all matters pertinent to the Council. All decisions on finances and budget must be made after open hearings and be approved by the Council. The President, or another Officer in the President's absence, shall chair the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall convene at the call of the President, or at the request of two members of the Council. Any graduate student may attend an Executive Committee meeting. The voting membership of the Executive Committee shall consist of the officers of the Council, non-Officer chairpersons of standing committees, and other persons appointed (and removable) by the Council. [The statement-voting membership is the same as the full voting membership of the Executive Committee.](#)

[A permanent subcommittee of the Executive Committee shall be the Statements Subcommittee. The Statements Subcommittee shall handle the relevant duties specified in Article VII.B.2. The Statements Subcommittee shall consist of the following members, who are not necessarily members of the Executive Committee: the GSC Secretary, who chairs the Statements Subcommittee, and 1 other Officer, appointed by the Officers; 1 member of each committee, other than the Executive Committee, with an approved statement-voting membership, appointed by their respective committee; and up to 3 At-Large Executive Committee members who are not members of the Subcommittee by other means. The At-Large Executive Committee members of the Statements Subcommittee shall be elected by the single transferrable vote method \(using the Droop quota and fractional transfer\) by the members of the Executive Committee in the first Executive Committee meeting held after the election of the Officers or by the members of the Executive Committee-elect for the upcoming term if said meeting occurs before the end of the term of the outgoing Executive Committee. Vacant At-Large positions may be filled by](#)





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the same election procedure at any time during the term. All appointed members will be presented to the Executive Committee at the Executive Committee meeting following their appointment. The members of the Statements Subcommittee shall have a term of one year, which starts and ends at the same time as the term of the GSC Officers. All decisions by the Statements Subcommittee shall be made by simple majority vote. A simple majority of members of the Statements Subcommittee shall constitute a quorum.

iii. Article II.G.11.iv is amended as follows:

The External Affairs Chair shall be assisted by the External Affairs Vice-Chair, who shall be elected by the members of the Board in the first Board meeting held after the first ~~ExComm~~ Executive Committee meeting to occur after the election of the Chair- or by the members of the Board-elect if said Board meeting occurs before the end of the term of the outgoing Board. The Vice-Chair shall have a term of one year which ends at the same time as the term of the GSC Officers. The Vice-Chair shall perform the duties of the Chair in the Chair's absence. The Vice-Chair shall maintain the records of all meetings and activities of the Board. If the Vice-Chair must preside over a meeting of the Board in the Chair's absence, the Vice-Chair may delegate responsibility for records of the Board to another member of the Board until the Chair is able to resume their duties.

iv. Article II.G.11.v is amended as follows:

The GSC President shall be an ex-officio voting member of the Board. Up to two Chairs of the Committee on Housing and Community Affairs (HCA) shall be ex-officio voting members of the Board. Up to two Chairs of each Subcommittee of the Board shall be voting members of the Board.

The Board may have At-Large voting members, up to two or up to ¼ of the sum of the maximum number of each other type of position on the Board besides At-Large positions at the time of the election (whichever is larger). At-Large members shall have a term of one year which ends at the same time as the term of the GSC Officers. At-Large members are elected by the Executive Committee ~~ExComm~~ by the single transferable vote method (using the Droop quota and fractional transfer). At-Large members may be elected



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[for the upcoming term by the Executive-Committee-elect any time after the election of the Chair.](#)

Vacant positions on the Board may be filled by the appropriate election procedure at any time during the term. The replacement member will serve out the remainder of the term.

No member of the Board may ever exercise more than one vote on business of the Board.

There are no term limits on any Board positions.

[The statement-voting membership is the same as the full voting membership of the Board.](#)

v. Article II.G.11.vii is amended as follows:

~~Anytime the Board takes an Action or approves a Resolution, the GSC President or the External Affairs Chair may place that Action or Resolution under Review. An Action under Review shall not be taken unless the Review is resolved positively; a Resolution under Review shall not be implemented unless the Review is resolved positively.~~

~~Reviews of Actions of the Board and Resolutions of the Board may be resolved positively by either:~~

~~1. Passage of a motion by ExComm approving of the Action or Resolution by a two-thirds vote; or~~

~~2. Passage of a motion or resolution by the General Council approving of the Action of the Board or the Resolution of the Board by a simple majority; or~~

~~3. Passage of any other motion or resolution by the General Council clarifying that the Action of the Board or Resolution of the Board was appropriate. This may include, but is not limited to, updates to Platform Documents relevant to the Action of the Board or Resolution of the Board.~~

~~A Review is closed:~~

~~1. If ExComm resolves the Review positively; or~~

~~2. If the Review has been considered by the General Council; or~~

~~3. If another motion or resolution by the General Council passes indicating that the Action of the Board or Resolution of the Board was appropriate.~~





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## vi. Article II.G.11.viii is amended as follows:

The Board may create Subcommittees to carry out work in any area relevant to the Purpose of the Board or any issue described in a Platform Document. The Board shall specify the Purpose of the Subcommittee and the work to be carried out when a Subcommittee is created. The General Council shall be informed of the creation of a Subcommittee and of the Purpose of the Subcommittee during the next General Body Meeting after the Subcommittee is created. Creation of a Subcommittee, or modification of a Purpose of the Subcommittee, requires the approval of a simple majority of the Board. Subcommittees of the External Affairs Board will continue to operate for a term specified in the Purpose of the Subcommittee (the term may be indefinite). Each Subcommittee shall have one or two Chair(s). Subcommittee Chair(s) shall have a term of office of one year, ending each year at the same time the term of the GSC Officers ends.

Subcommittees shall have the opportunity to nominate up to two members to become the ~~new next~~ Chair(s) ~~at the end of each term~~. Any subcommittee that conducts such a nomination shall present the nominees to the Board during the meeting in which the Vice-Chair is elected, after the election of the Vice-Chair, or to the Board-elect if the meeting occurs before the end of the term of the outgoing Board. If the Board(-elect) takes no action, the nominee(s) become(s) the ~~new next~~ Chair(s) of that Subcommittee. If the Board(-elect) resolves to disapprove of the nominees by a simple majority, the Board(-elect) shall elect Chair(s) of the Subcommittee.

Subcommittee Chair(s) are elected by the Board(-elect) by the single transferable vote method (using the Droop quota and fractional transfer) following the Board meeting in which the Subcommittee was created or immediately after the passage of a Resolution of Disapproval of presented nominees. A Subcommittee Chair may not simultaneously serve as an At-Large member of the Board; if an At-Large member of the Board becomes a Subcommittee Chair, then this member must immediately vacate their At-Large position.



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of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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3. Scrutiny of the Bylaws reveals sections which are redundant or in need of update to improve consistency. Thus, the following amendments are made to the Bylaws:

i. Article II.D.1 is amended as follows:

The chairpersons of standing committees shall be elected by the committee's graduate student membership, unless an alternative procedure is otherwise specified in the committee's formal operating guidelines. A committee sets its own election procedure provided that any chairperson elected receives at least majority support of voting committee members. The Vice-President, or his or her appointed designee, shall supervise the election and certify the results, but he or she shall not modify the committee's established election procedure except where it conflicts with the Bylaws or the Constitution.

~~Unless otherwise specified in the committee's formal operating guidelines, all standing committees must set the date for the election of new chairpersons at least one month prior to the official transition between the old and new Officer teams.~~

All standing committees must set the date for the election of new chairpersons under the upcoming Officer team at least one week prior to the official transition General Council Meeting between the old and new Officer teams.

In the event of a chairperson vacancy because of resignation, graduation or any other reason, the vacancy may be filled in the same manner as electing a chairperson, unless otherwise specified in the committee's formal operating guidelines.

ii. Article IV is renamed as follows: Election and Removal of Officers

The above shall take effect immediately. The Secretary of the Graduate Student Council is ordered to publicize this document by any means appropriate.