

# Constitution of the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Student Union

Established 2018

# Contents

## [Constitution of the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Student Union](#)

### [Contents](#)

#### [1 Introduction](#)

- [1.1 Preamble](#)
- [1.2 Membership](#)
- [1.3 Purpose of the BCBSU Goals](#)
- [1.4 Disputes](#)

#### [2 Council Positions](#)

- [2.1 General Duties and Requirements](#)
- [2.2 Executive Council](#)
  - [2.2.1 President\(s\)](#)
  - [2.2.2 Vice-President](#)
  - [2.2.3 Treasurer](#)
  - [2.2.4 Director of Events](#)
- [2.3 General Council](#)
  - [2.3.1 First Year Liaison \(optional\)](#)
  - [2.3.2 General BCBSU MembersVolunteers](#)

#### [3 Elections](#)

- [3.1 Eligibility](#)
  - [3.1.1 Voter Eligibility](#)
  - [3.1.2 Candidate Eligibility](#)
- [3.2 Chief Returning Officer \(CRO\)](#)
- [3.3 Election Classes](#)
  - [3.3.1 Annual Election](#)
  - [3.3.2 By-Election](#)
- [3.4 Calling of Election](#)
- [3.5 Nomination Period](#)
- [3.6 Campaign Period](#)
- [3.7 Voting Period](#)
- [3.8 Resolution of Missing Positions](#)
- [3.9 Advance Voting](#)
- [3.10 Ballots](#)
  - [3.10.1 Collecting Votes](#)
  - [3.10.2 Tabulation](#)

- [3.10.3 Recount](#)
- [3.10.4 Finality of Results](#)
- [3.10.5 Transfer of Authority](#)
- [3.10.6 Scrutinization of Process](#)

#### [4 Impeachment and Replacement](#)

- [4.1 Resignation](#)
- [4.2 Just Cause for Impeachment](#)
- [4.3 Impeachment Proceedings](#)
- [4.4 Replacements](#)
  - [4.4.1 Executive Council Replacements](#)
  - [4.4.2 General Council Replacements](#)
  - [4.4.3 Interim Positions](#)

#### [5 Meetings](#)

- [5.1 Council meetings](#)
- [5.21 General Membership Meeting](#)
  - [5.21.1 Notice](#)
  - [5.21.3 Quorum](#)
  - [5.21.4 Motions](#)

#### [6. Miscellaneous](#)

- [65.2 Amendments](#)
- [65.3 Official Language of Communication](#)
- [65.4 Exclusion Rule](#)
- [65.5 Term of Office](#)
- [6.6 Contracts](#)

#### [76 Meta](#)

- [76.1 Publishing](#)

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Preamble

This document will serve as an agreement between undergraduate students in the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology community at the University of Toronto St. George Campus, and the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Student Union (BCBSU). It is the goal of this document to define the organizational structure and processes used to maintain order within the BCBSU.

## 1.2 Membership

Membership to the group is open to all the University of Toronto members (students, staff, faculty and alumni).

U of T members are permitted to run, nominate, and vote in elections and constitutional amendments. The group is open to non-U of T members. However, these members do not hold the aforementioned rights. Members must register with a designated executive by submitting their full name and a valid email address.

Membership in the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Student Union is intended for any undergraduate student that is enrolled in a Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Program of Study, or has taken a BCB-labeled course in the Faculty of Arts and Science, or has an interest in the Bioinformatics and Computational Biology field of study, provided such students are also:

- Full-time undergraduate students, OR Part-time Arts and Science students OR Bioinformatics and Computational Biology alumni

## 1.3 Purpose of the BCBSU

- To promote the interests of and represent the students in the BCB Program of Study
- To engage the BCB community
- To encourage students to partake in the BCB Program of Study

## 1.4 Disputes

Any disputes regarding the interpretation of this document will be resolved by the program coordinator.

# 2 Council Positions

Executive Council refers to the BCBSU Executive Council members and General Council refers to all BCBSU Council members that were not elected. Council members refers collectively to members of both councils.

## 2.1 General Duties and Requirements

Each position on the Executive and General Councils will require at least 1 hour of work per week. Council members will also be expected to attend regular Council meetings or provide the President with at least 24 hours advance notice of absence.

Each Council member must be a BCBSU member as defined in 1.2 "Membership".

Each executive member must have access to an email account and check it regularly. Each Council member must have access to the primary method of communication for internal correspondence as determined by the Executive Council for the current session.

## 2.2 Executive Council

The Executive Council shall be comprised of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Director of Events. The President and Vice-President must be enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Science during both Fall and Winter semesters of their term in office and must be currently enrolled in the BCB Program of Study. Only Executive Council members will have the authority to sign on behalf of the union. Any decision on matters of expenditure or property of the union must be approved by a two thirds majority of the Executive Council, except where otherwise specified by this document.

All Executive Council positions are chosen by an annual election, exception given for the 2018-2019 Fall-Winter term for the inception of the BCBSU. For the 2018-2019 Fall-Winter term, positions will be appointed. The positions will then approved by the program coordinator. All Executive Council members will be responsible for maintaining a transition document throughout their term, and for training and transitioning the incoming Executive at the end of their term.

### 2.2.1 President

The President will be responsible for the governance of the union as a whole.

The President shall have authority over all space and materials assigned or donated to the union.

The President shall have the authority to assign a reasonable set of tasks to any Council member.

The President will have signing authority on the BCBSU financial account(s) in addition to the Treasurer.

The President will be responsible for performing a review of this constitution once per year and suggesting necessary amendments to maintain the document (see 6.2).

### 2.2.2 Vice-President

The Vice-President will assist the President in administrative matters.

The Vice-President will supervise and monitor implementation of Presidential directives.

The Vice-President will be responsible for calling 3 Council meetings per semester, and for selecting Council members to chair them and take minutes.

### 2.2.3 Treasurer

The Treasurer will be responsible for the keeping of the union's funds.

The Treasurer will be responsible for dispersing and receiving of funds.

The Treasurer must keep a record of all transactions, especially the retention of physical receipts on behalf of the organization.

The Treasurer shall, upon request, provide details regarding the current financial state of the union to the President.

The Treasurer will be responsible for preparing and presenting all budget documents.

The Treasurer will provide access to a regularly updated document outlining the current financial state of the union.

The Treasurer will have signing authority on the BCBSU account in addition to the President (Took out: The Treasurer will be responsible for preparing a budget for the year and presenting it to the Executive council before the first day of classes in the Fall term. )

### 2.2.4 Director of Events

The Director of Events will be responsible for the formulation, preparation, and execution of a minimum of 2 (3) events in the Fall semester and 2 events in the winter semester. This will include a POST information session for prospective BCB students which must be organized before the first date to enroll in the POST.

The Director of Events will be responsible for advertising on all BCBSU advertising channels.

## 2.3 General Council

The General Council consists of all BCBSU Council members that are not elected. Once elected, the Executive Council must announce the availability of General Council positions at least via the official communication channels, and solicit applications from the BCBSU membership. Any applicant may be appointed to any General Council position provided that the majority of the Executive Council agrees to the appointment.

If possible, the Council will consist of at least one member in each of the following years as determined by the Faculty of Arts and Science: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th or greater.

### 2.3.1 First Year Liaison (optional)

Duties:

- Assign first year students to general council members and organize a buddy system to aid their transition to university life. A cap may be placed on the number of participating students, at the discretion of the First Year Liaison
- Recruit first years and provide information regarding the BCB program
- Plan and promote an informative seminar near the end of the winter semester targeted toward first year students

Skills & Requirements:

Ability to establish trust and credibility with first year students

Have started their second academic year at the University of Toronto, as it appears on Acorn.

## 2.3.2 General BCBSU Council Members

Duties:

- Help any appointed position member with tasks, especially with events

Skills & Requirements:

- Organized
- Responsible
- Willing to work in different positions

# 3 Elections

## 3.1 Eligibility

### 3.1.1 Voter Eligibility

Voting privileges shall be awarded to all BCBSU members as defined in 1.2, "Membership". Each eligible voter will receive exactly one vote per issue.

### 3.1.2 Candidate Eligibility

Any candidate in any election must meet the requirements specified in 1.2, "Membership".

## 3.2 Chief Returning Officer (CRO)

The CRO shall be nominated by the President and appointed by unanimous approval of the existing Executive Council and two-thirds vote of the General Council to oversee election proceedings. The CRO shall, at their discretion, with the authority of the President, appoint Council members to aid in the elections. Neither the CRO nor any appointed aides may be candidates in the upcoming election.

The CRO will have discretionary powers to interpret and execute the defined election protocols as outlined in section 3 of this document.

The CRO will have the authority to disqualify any candidate disobeying election protocol. Once appointed, the CRO may only be replaced after a formal request issued by two-thirds of the current Executive Council members.

## 3.3 Election Classes

### 3.3.1 Annual Election

An annual election must be held near the end of every Winter semester to determine replacements for the upcoming academic year. The election date will be set at the discretion of the current President, however it must be within six weeks of the conclusion of the Winter semester. The election may not be held during the final week of classes.

### 3.3.2 By-Election

A by-election will be held when necessary to determine a candidate for a vacant position. The date will be set by the CRO.

## 3.4 Calling of Election

Upon deciding on an appropriate date and successful nomination of a CRO, the President shall publicly declare the election process to have begun. The President should ensure through reasonable means that the community is aware of when and where the election itself is occurring, and confirm the identity of the CRO. This includes, at a minimum, notification through the BCBSU external communications channels. The election must take place no earlier than two weeks after the announcement to the official communication channels. In the case of a presidential by-election, the Interim President (as defined in 4.4.3) will perform the aforementioned duties.

## 3.5 Nomination Period

To become a candidate for an elected position, one must provide a government issued photo ID or Tcard. The CRO may determine the exact format in which these are provided and must retain copies of them for at least and no longer than 3 business days following election day.

Nominations may only be made by eligible voters, as laid out in 3.1.1, "Voter Eligibility". Details of this process shall be determined by the CRO and made publicly available in advance of the nomination period. The CRO may not nominate any candidate.

The nomination period must last at least 5 complete business days. During the nomination period, no candidate may engage in campaigning.

In the case of an uncontested Executive Council nomination a yes/no vote must still be held.

## 3.6 Campaign Period

After the nomination period has ended, the candidates may campaign up to and excluding the Voting Period.



Campaign rules will be determined by the CRO and made known in advance of the campaign period. The campaign period must last at least 5 complete business days.

### 3.7 Voting Period

The Voting Period must begin and end within the same business day, and must last at least 6 hours.

The CRO will select a Voting Area, which must be reserved exclusively for election matters during the Voting Period.

Each candidate may choose to submit one 8.5" × 11" advertisement to be displayed within the Voting Area, placed at the CRO's discretion. There must be a secluded area within the Voting Area for each voter to privately complete his/her ballot.

No candidate may attempt to communicate with voters entering or within the Voting Area. A candidate may enter the Voting Area only to complete his/her ballot, and must leave immediately afterwards. At the CRO's discretion, a candidate may be barred from the Voting Area for the duration of the Voting Period.

Any volunteers managing the voting area must be provided with a list of advance voters who have already submitted their advance vote. They must refuse to allow anyone on the list to vote.

### 3.8 Resolution of Missing Positions

In the event that nobody is nominated for a position, or in the event that a tie results from the final tally of votes, a by-election must be held for the empty position (and any other empty positions) either immediately, if time permits as judged by the CRO, or else during the first month of the next school year (in the Fall semester).

### 3.9 Advance Voting

Any eligible voter may choose to vote in advance of the voting period. The CRO must provide Advance Voting forms online and advertise them on the BCBSU external communication channels before the campaign period begins. Instructions on how to fill out the ballots must also be provided.

A voter wishing to cast an advance ballot must provide a completed Advance Voting form to the CRO no less than 48 hours prior to the Voting Period, at which point he/she will be given a ballot.

The voter must return the ballot to the CRO before the start of the Voting Period, folded inside a sealed completely unmarked envelope. Any breach of this protocol may result in the ballot being declared spoiled, at the discretion of the CRO. The CRO should make available his/her contact information for the purpose of coordinating these transactions.

Once the envelope is handed to the CRO, the voter is marked down as an advance voter, and may not amend his or her vote, and may not vote in person.

The CRO must keep all advance ballots in his possession until tabulation takes place. No advance ballot envelope may be opened until tabulation takes place as outlined in 3.10.2, "Tabulation".

The CRO must verify that all persons casting advance ballots are eligible voters as defined in 3.1.1.

## 3.10 Ballots

Each ballot will contain a list of positions and for each a list of candidates. The candidates will be ordered from top to bottom, sorted in alphabetical order.

In the event that there is only one candidate for a position, a Yes/No choice must be provided. A ballot's vote on a position is considered invalid under any of the following conditions:

- More than one choice for the position is selected
- Both "Yes" and "No" are indicated for the position, for a position with only one candidate running
- A marking has been made but it is unclear what choice is being indicated
- No mark has been made for the position.

A ballot is not considered spoiled if a vote on a position is invalid. An invalid vote shall be considered to indicate abstinence from a vote on a particular issue. The number of invalid votes for each position should be reported along with the tally of votes for candidates.

A vote for a position may be considered invalid at the CRO's discretion. In addition, an entire ballot may be considered spoiled at the CRO's discretion. Spoiled ballots will be discarded from the counting process entirely.

### 3.10.1 Collecting Votes

Voters must register their names, student numbers, and UTOR IDs at a booth run by BCBSU volunteers not running for any position. The BCBSU must verify that voters are BCBSU members to the best of their ability, and must exclude anyone who already submitted an advance ballot. Alternatively, votes may be collected online as opposed to a physical booth.

### 3.10.2 Tabulation

In the case of a paper voting system:

For each vote, a paper ballot must be placed within a sealed box.

Immediately following the end of the election period, the tabulation period begins. At this time, the advance ballot envelopes may be opened, and the ballots inside must be placed inside the sealed box.

Then the box must be shuffled (i.e. shaken). Only after this may the box be unsealed, and it must be unsealed under the supervision of the CRO.

The CRO must keep all completed ballots until they are deemed destroyable as per 3.10.4.

In the case of an online voting system:

The CRO must ensure that the online votes are only recorded during the designated voting period. The CRO must also ensure that the link to vote is shared on BCBSU communications channels as well as on a notice in the BCBSU office.

Ballot counting must be done under supervision of the CRO. Upon completion, the CRO must provide the current President with election results immediately. The current President must then make the results known publicly within 24 hours.

### 3.10.3 Recount

Any candidate may demand one recount if there is less than a 10% margin of victory in his/her category.

At least one recount must be performed if there is less than a 5% margin of victory. The CRO must personally perform each recount.

If the tabulation changes after a recount, an additional recount must occur.

Any current Executive Council member may demand one recount in any category, for any reason, regardless of victory margin.

### 3.10.4 Finality of Results

After 3 complete business days of election results or the latest recount being made available publicly, no more recounts may be demanded, and the ballots must be destroyed. At this point the election results are final and the CRO is dismissed from duty.

### 3.10.5 Transfer of Authority

Following an annual election, the outgoing and incoming Executive Councils must arrange a meeting before the end of the first week of Summer semester courses to transfer ownership of the primary bank account, transition documents, access to assigned space, and any keys. After control of the primary bank account has been transferred to the incoming Executive Council, they are considered the current Executive Council and assigned to their respective roles. The previous Executive Council is thus dismissed from duty.

If the transfer of authority is not made by the end of the first week of Summer semester courses, then the incoming Executive Council is still considered to be the current Executive Council, and must make its best effort to gain control over all BCBSU resources.

Following a complete by-election the winning candidate is immediately considered instated.

### 3.10.6 Scrutinization of Process

Each candidate may choose to appoint a Scrutineer to oversee election proceedings on his/her behalf. The candidate must inform the CRO 24 hours before the election period as to his/her choice of Scrutineer, and provide contact information. The Scrutineer may be present in the Voting Area and during tabulation and any recounts.

Should a Scrutineer observe any error or misconduct which will result in corruption of the democratic process, he/she must immediately make known the specifics of the complaint to

BCB Professor Boris Steipe. Should a Scrutineer be acting in an obstructive manner to the election procedures he/she may be barred from the Voting Area at the CRO's discretion. The CRO should immediately inform a member of the current Executive Council, as well as immediately inform the represented candidate that a new Scrutineer will be required. Tabulation must halt until a new Scrutineer is found, or until an hour has passed since the Scrutineer was removed and the candidate is successfully notified. If multiple successive Scrutineers are barred from the Voting Area, then the CRO may, at their discretion, remove the candidate from the election, or remove the candidate's right to a Scrutineer.

No candidate in the current election may function as a Scrutineer. Neither the CRO nor any appointed aide to the CRO may serve as a Scrutineer. A single Scrutineer may serve multiple candidates.

## 4 Impeachment and Replacement

### 4.1 Resignation

Any Council member is free to resign their position at any time. A resignation will be considered official when the President is notified in writing by the resigning party. If the President is resigning, the Vice-President must be notified in writing.

### 4.2 Just Cause for Impeachment

Should any Council member fail to meet the duties or requirements of their position, abuse their position for personal reasons, fail to respond to communications within a reasonable timeframe without just cause or otherwise fail to act in good faith, the member should be recommended for impeachment by some member of either the community or one of the Councils. Should one Executive Council member agree with the impeachment recommendation, impeachment proceedings will begin.

### 4.3 Impeachment Proceedings

The President (or Vice-President, if the President is being considered for impeachment) will notify the individual that he/she is being considered for impeachment, and explain the reasoning. A meeting will be set between the individual and the Executive Council at a reasonable time during which the individual will be questioned. After the Executive's questioning is complete, a vote will be taken in private as to whether the proceedings will continue. Should the individual fail to attend the meeting (*In the case of medical or personal emergency, the individual is expected to provide appropriate notice to the Executive Council no later than 24 hours after the intended meeting date.*) or refuse to compromise on a meeting schedule, the Executives may vote summarily. If an Executive Council member is being considered for impeachment, they will be allowed to vote in the proceedings.

A meeting that includes the General Council will then be called. Should at least two-thirds of the Council present at the meeting agree to impeachment, then the individual is considered impeached and dismissed from his or her position immediately. If the member in question is on the Executive Council then an official announcement must be made on the BCBSU communication channels within 24 hours of the vote.

## 4.4 Replacements

### 4.4.1 Executive Council Replacements

Executive Council members must be replaced by means of a by-election, the procedure for which is laid out in 3.3.2, "By-Election".

### 4.4.2 General Council Replacements

Should any General Council position become vacant, a replacement will be chosen in the manner described in 2.3.

### 4.4.3 Interim Positions

If a council position's duties require someone to hold the position immediately, then the President may appoint an interim council member. If there is no President, then the Vice President may do this, and if there is no Vice President nor President, then the Treasurer may do this.

An interim council member has all the duties of the position, but must step down immediately when a replacement is chosen by one of the above processes.

An interim council member may run in an election for the position they are filling, in accordance with 6.4.

## 5 Meetings

### 5.1 Council meetings

At least three council meetings must be held per academic semester, organized by the Vice President (as in 2.2.2)

Executive council and General council members are expected to attend these meetings, unless they have notified the Vice President of their absence.

For an issue being voted on in a Council meeting, any member may request that a blind vote is performed, and the vote must then proceed as a blind vote.

## 5.2 General Membership Meeting

At least one General Meeting must be held per academic semester, while classes are in session, for each of the Fall and Winter semesters. Any Executive Council member may (unilaterally) call a General Meeting.

### 5.2.1 Notice

Two weeks advance notice must be given to the student body before the date of a General Meeting. The meeting shall be chaired by the member of the Executive Council who called the meeting and they shall be responsible for appointing a minute-taker.

### 5.2.3 Quorum

The quorum at all General Meetings shall be at least 10 members or 20% of the Council membership, whichever is less.

### 5.2.4 Motions

Any matter of policy may be put forth to a vote of the general membership at a General Meeting.

## 6. Miscellaneous

### 6.2 Amendments

Changes to this document shall only be permitted by a two thirds majority of the membership in attendance at a General Meeting (as defined in 5.2, "General Meeting").

An amendment may only be discussed at a General Meeting if it is announced on the agenda, and with unanimous consent among Executive Council members.

### 6.3 Official Language of Communication

The union adopts English, the University of Toronto's language of instruction, as its official language.

All official and unofficial communications on behalf of the union, including but not limited to its constitution, website, advertisements, notices, and campaign materials on behalf of individuals running in a BCBSU election, shall be written entirely and exclusively in English.

### 6.4 Exclusion Rule

No candidate may run for more than one position during a given election.

No individual may hold more than one Council position simultaneously. An individual may run in a by-election while currently holding a Council position, however he/she must resign the previously held position if elected. The previously held position will subsequently be filled in accordance with the procedures laid out in 4.4, "Replacements".

## 6.5 Term of Office

Upon the new Executive Council being instated, all previous Council positions are dismissed.

## 6.6 Contracts

Only Executive Council members will have the authority to sign on behalf of the union (as in 2.2) No contract signed on behalf of the Council may be binding for greater than 1 year.

# 7 Meta

## 7.1 Publishing

This document must be linked to from the BCBSU webpage.