

# Robarts Association of Trainees and Students

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## Constitution and Bylaws

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## **Table of Contents**

### Lay Summary

#### Article 1.    Name

#### Article II:   Object

##### II.1    Mission Statement

##### II.2    Purview

#### Article III:   Definitions

#### Article IV:   Membership

##### IV.1   Eligibility

##### IV.2   Affiliation

#### Article V:    Council

##### V.1    Sessions

##### V.2    Composition and Eligibility

##### V.3    Duties and Powers

##### V.4    Convocation

##### V.5    Notice

##### V.6    Secretary

##### V.7    Quorum

#### Article VI:   General Meetings

##### VI.1   Sessions

##### VI.2   Convocation

##### VI.3   Members and Proxies

##### VI.4   Notice

##### VI.5   Secretary

##### VI.6   Powers

##### VI.7   Election to Council

##### VI.8   Annual Feedback Survey

##### VI.9   Quorum

[Article VII: Referenda](#)

[VII.1 Initiation](#)

[VII.2 Procedure](#)

[VII.3 Resolution](#)

[Article VIII: Collapse and Dissolution](#)

[Article IX: Parliamentary Authority](#)

[Article X: Amendments and Review](#)

[X.1 Amendments](#)

[X.2 Review](#)

## Lay Summary

This document outlines the minimal structure, procedures and purview of the Working Group. Its goal is to provide a framework that is both flexible enough to allow the Society to function, but detailed enough to ensure that it does so with fairness and transparency.

Articles 1, 2 and 3 provide the background for establishing the Society including the Society's name, a short description of its purview and a number of definitions to minimize ambiguity in interpreting this document.

Articles 4 to 9 describe the basic structure of the Society which is organized as a self-governing Parliament. As such, there are two tiers of organization: the membership and the Council. Article 4 describes the basic membership in the Society belonging to all Robarts trainees, which exercise their power through general meetings (Article 6) and/or referenda (Article 7) which hold the most power in terms of creating or overturning decisions of the Society. The next tier is a small Council elected from the membership with procedures described in Article 5. Council is designed to be made up of a number of trainees interested in helping to organize events and advocate on behalf of trainees. In the case that the Society eventually comes to the end of its useful life, Article 8 describes how it will be dissolved. This is the majority of the constitution where the division of responsibility should be outlined with the most detail. Certain aspects, such as a one-year term limits, the month of election, voting procedures, and feedback survey are expressly written into the constitution to ensure their continued existence.

Lastly, Articles 9 and 10 describe how to put this document into practice. Article 9 states that *Robert's Rules of Order* are used in cases not covered by the constitution, and these rules are largely interpreted by Council, although a point-of-order can be raised if anyone feels that these rules are being used improperly or unfairly. Article 10 provides information on how this document can be amended and outlines a process of review and archival.

The last point to be made is that the lay summary presented here is not formally a part of the constitution as is only intended to initiate readers rather and not formally designate procedure. In the case where the lay summary and the formal text of the document appear to conflict, the formal text takes precedence.

## **Article I.           Name**

The full name of the Society shall be "The Robarts Association of Trainees and Students"; its short name shall be "RATS". The Society may use its full name or short name in all publicity materials and correspondence.

## **Article II:           Object**

### **II.1   Mission Statement**

"To serve and represent trainees of the Robarts Research Institute, to advance their academic and professional development, to represent their interests within the University community, and to build awareness of their scientific research within the broader community."

### **II.2   Purview**

The object of the Society shall be to serve, represent, and promote the interests of trainees at the Robarts Research Institute by:

- Representing and advancing the interests of trainees to other persons and organizations at the Robarts Research Institute;
- Organizing internal academic, scientific, social and professional development events;
- Encouraging and coordinating trainee participation in academic, scientific, social, and professional development events;
- Maintaining financial sustainability with the aim of financial independence;
- Encouraging cooperation, communication and collaboration between trainees; and
- Increasing the awareness of trainee accomplishment to the outside community.

## **Article III: Definitions**

In this and any other document of the Society, the following definitions shall hold unless otherwise specified:

### **University**

The University of Western Ontario

### **Robarts**

The Robarts Research Institute

### **Scientist**

A primary investigator at Robarts Research Institute

### **Imaging**

Imaging Research Laboratories, The Robarts Research Institute

### **Molecular Medicine**

Molecular Medicine Research Laboratories, The Robarts Research Institute

### **Neuroscience**

Translational Neuroscience Research Laboratories, The Robarts Research Institute

### **Director**

The Executive Director of the Robarts Research Institute

### **Council**

The Council of the Society

### **trainee**

Any individual affiliated with a scientific laboratory located within the Robarts Research Institute currently pursuing undergraduate studies, graduate studies, or post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Western Ontario.

### **academic year**

A calendar year beginning and ending in May

### **decision of the Society**

A decision confirmed by a majority vote on Council, a general meeting, a referendum, or any other body to which the power to make said decision was duly delegated, or a document duly enacted by one of the above.

## **Article IV:           Membership**

### **IV.1   Eligibility**

Membership in the Society is granted automatically and indiscriminately to all trainees. This membership grants the holder the right but not the obligation to:

- Attend general meetings of the Society and meetings of Council;
- Vote at general meetings of the Society and in a referendum of the Society;
- Sign petitions of the Society;
- Vote in an election to any seat on Council;
- Nominate for, stand as candidate for, or hold a seat on Council;
- Participate in all events organized by the Society; and
- Inspect the financial records of the Society at their own expense.

Membership in the Society is automatically revoked upon official departure of the holder from Robarts.

Limited membership in the Society may be granted by a decision of the Society, to other individuals.

Limited membership grants the holder the right but not the obligation to:

- Attend general meetings of the Society; and
- Participate in all events organized by the Society.

Limited membership in the Society may be revoked by a decision of the Society.

### **IV.2   Affiliation**

Every member of the Society must be affiliated with a scientist at Robarts, and may be affiliated with either Imaging, Molecular Medicine, Neuroscience, or any other group sanctioned by Robarts. This affiliation is determined by the affiliation of the student's supervisor. If the trainee has multiple supervisors at Robarts or a supervisor with multiple affiliations, provided that this causes probable ambiguity, the trainee may determine their own affiliation.

## Article V: Council

### V.1 Sessions

Each meeting as called in accordance with this document, plus its adjournments, constitutes a single meeting of Council. All decisions of Council, unless otherwise stated, must be majority decisions of Council.

### V.2 Composition and Eligibility

The Council is composed of between 4 and 10 voting members who are full members of the Society. Furthermore, complete representation of the diverse scientific specialties within Robarts will be encouraged where possible:

- At least one Imaging, Molecular, and Neuroscience trainee

These members shall be elected at a general meeting of the Society and shall serve a term of one academic year. Once elected, this elected Council takes the place of the prior Council after a transition period of two weeks. During this transition period, the elected Council may sit as *non-voting* members of the sitting Council.

Additionally, there will be two additional voting members who will be designated representatives of the BioNext accelerator and the Biomedical Imaging Research Centre (BIRC), bringing the final maximum size of the Council up to 12 voting members.

Additionally, there are non-voting members of Council:

- The Director or representatives thereof;
- Elected members of the subsequent Council;
- The chairs of any committees or boards established by the Society or by Council; and
- Any representatives appointed by decision of the Society.

### V.3 Duties and Powers

Council has full power over Society affairs except as such would conflict with this document or a decision made at a general meeting or by a referendum. Council is a fully-constituted assembly in its own right and does not report to general meetings although is accountable to them and to trainees at large. Council can enact policies of the Society and direct the affairs of the Society, excepting internal affairs of a general meeting unless such power is otherwise delegated to them. Council has the power to create and dissolve committees under the purview of the Society. Council has the responsibility to report to the Director or representative thereof a minimum of once per academic year, any portions of this report created by unanimous decision of Council.

Council is responsible to uphold the purposes of the Society and to ensure that the Society is not abused. It is responsible to hold all persons involved in the affairs of the Society to account. The identity of



Council as well as the University or Roberts email contact information of individual Council members must be made available to all trainees.

Individual Councilors are expected to attend meetings of Council regularly. If a Councillor has unexcused absences from more than six meetings over two months or a total of 10 meetings over the course of the term, said Councillor may be removed from Council for the remainder of the academic year by a supermajority decision of Council. Prior to removal, the Councilor should be provided with written notice after 6 missed meetings. Any member of Council may voluntarily remove him-or-herself from Council providing written notice to Council. Any removal which violates the composition as defined in Article V.1 must be proceeded with an election within one month.

#### **V.4 Convocation**

Meetings of Council may be called upon petition in writing by any of the following:

- Any member of Council;
- The Director; and
- A decision of a general meeting.

During each academic year, Council shall meet no less than once every month.

#### **V.5 Notice**

Notice must be provided by at least one member of Council at least 48 hours in advance of any meeting to every member of Council who have not explicitly waived their right to notice before the start of the meeting. Council may designate a mailing list or similar forum as the office forum of Council in which case, notice relayed using said forum is considered to have been sent to every member of Council.

Where notice is required of a motion requiring a supermajority or unanimity of Council, notice of said motion must be provided to every member of Council at least seven days in advance of the meeting at which the motion is to be considered. A full description of the intended motion, such as the text of a proposed proposal, amendment, or agreement, must be provided, but said motion may be amended after it is moved as long as the changes remain within the scope of the motion for which notice was given.

#### **V.6 Secretary**

The first order of business of a meeting of Council is to elect a secretary for said meeting. If no secretary is nominated for said meeting, the role of secretary will be assigned to one of the Council members present fair and equal random chance. The secretary has the following duties:

- Record attendance of the meeting of Council; and
- Ensure that a summary of the Council meetings be provided to the RATS community on a monthly basis to provide updates to general members of the Society

## **V.7 Quorum**

Meetings of Council may only proceed with a quorum of at least half of the members of Council in order to form majority decisions. Decisions of Council must reflect the entirety of Council including members not present.

## **Article VI: General Meetings**

### **VI.1 Sessions**

Each meeting as called in accordance with this document, plus its adjournments, constitutes a single general meeting of the Society.

### **VI.2 Convocation**

General meetings of the Society may be called by any of the following:

- A majority decision of Council;
- A general meeting;
- The Director or representative thereof upon written petition; or
- Any twenty identified members of the Society upon written petition.

### **VI.3 Members and Proxies**

All trainees are entitled to be present and to participate at all times in a general meeting. Only trainees are entitled to vote in a general meeting. Other members of the Robarts community including, but not limited to, the Director, scientists, staff, and administrative personnel are entitled to be present at a general meeting but may be removed from the meeting at particular times as outlined in this document.

No trainee is entitled to designate anyone as a proxy to participate in their place. All voting rights and speaking time are entitled solely to the trainee and are non-transferable.

### **VI.4 Notice**

Notice and a complete agenda must be provided by Council at least fourteen days in advance of any general meeting to every trainee unless that member explicitly waives their right to notice before the start of the meeting. Council may designate a mailing list or similar forum as the office forum of the Society in which case, notice relayed using said forum is considered to have been sent to every trainee.

Where notice is required of a motion, notice of said motion must be provided to every trainee at least seven days in advance of the meeting at which the motion is to be considered. A full description of the intended motion, such as the text of a proposed proposal, amendment, or agreement, must be provided, but said motion may be amended after it is moved as long as the changes remain within the scope of the motion for which notice was given.

### **VI.5 Secretary**

The first order of business of a general meeting is to elect a secretary for said meeting. If no secretary is nominated for said meeting, the role of secretary will be assigned to one of the Council members present by fair and equal random chance. The duty of the secretary is to distribute the minutes of the general meeting to all trainees.

## **VI.6 Powers**

A general meeting has full power over the Society and its affairs, except as limited by this document or by a decision made by referendum or at a general meeting. A general meeting can exercise any power that Council can exercise including, but not limited to, powers related to Council's internal affairs.

## **VI.7 Election to Council**

As stated in Article V.2, members of Council shall be elected at a general meeting in May.

Candidates for council must be nominated at least one week prior to the general meeting. All candidates must be trainees with reasonable expectation to remain at Robarts for the upcoming academic year. All candidates must produce a nomination form. Current members of Council may run for re-election to the maximum of three terms.

The election shall be administered by a Chief Returning Officer who is ineligible for election. The Chief Returning Officer shall be appointed by council and announced at least one month prior to the election to all trainees. The Chief Returning Officer may appoint delegates to assist in administering the election provided that said delegates are announced prior to or during the election and are not candidates for a position. The results of the election must be communicated to all trainees by the Chief Returning Officer within one week of the election.

The election shall be composed of a single-transferable-vote in which the candidate(s) with the lowest number of votes is/are removed, provided that said removal does not lead to a state in which fewer than one candidate from Imaging, Molecular, and Neuroscience are present. In the event of a tie, one candidate is removed through a process of fair and equal random chance. This process continues iteratively until the largest Council fulfilling the required stated in Article V.2 can be constituted from the remaining candidates. All ballots must be submitted to the Chief Returning Officer during or prior to the election.

## **VI.8 Annual Feedback Survey**

An anonymous feedback survey must be distributed to all members of the Society at least once per year. This survey must evaluate the performance of the Society and Robarts as a whole. The results of this survey must be reviewed in the proceeding general meeting; during said review, only members of the Society may be present.

## **VI.9 Quorum**

General meetings may only proceed with a quorum of at least one fifth of the Society including at least one trainee not on Council for every member of Council present. Every member of the Council must be present at each general meeting or to provide 24 hours notice of absence.

## **Article VII: Referenda**

### **VII.1 Initiation**

From time to time, the Society may consult trainees by means of a referendum. A referendum may be called by any of the following:

- A majority decision of Council;
- A general meeting; or
- Any twenty trainees upon petition in writing.

The decision or petition requisitioning a referendum must include the full and exact text of the question. The wording of the question must be direct, clear and understandable to the majority of trainees and must constitute a binary question.

### **VII.2 Procedure**

Notice and the full and exact text of the question must be provided by Council at least fourteen days in advance of the referendum to all trainees. Council may designate a mailing list or similar forum as the office forum of the Society in which case, notice relayed using said forum is considered to have been sent to every trainee. Only trainees that are not voting members of Council are entitled to vote in a referendum. Members of Council will act as Returning Officers in said referenda and are not eligible to vote.

Results of the referendum in full must be provided by Council within one week of the end of the vote to every trainee unless that member explicitly waives their right to notice before the referendum.

### **VII.3 Resolution**

The results of a referendum are fully binding on the Society until legally overturned. For a period of four years after a referendum, the referendum cannot be overturned except by a subsequent referendum. After four years, a referendum may be overturned by a decision of Council or by a general meeting.

### **Article VIII: Collapse and Dissolution**

The Society shall be deemed to be collapsed if, for a period of at least one year, no quorate meetings of Council nor general meeting is held. In the event of a collapse then notwithstanding the rest of this document, the Director or representatives thereof, may appoint an interim Council.

If no quorate meeting of Council nor general meeting is held for a period of at least four years, the society shall dissolve. Otherwise, the Society can dissolve only by a two-thirds majority referendum. In the event that the Society dissolves, all of its assets shall go to the Director to be used for the establishment of a new society for trainees or to otherwise benefit trainees.

### **Article IX: Parliamentary Authority**

The Society shall use the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* as its parliamentary authority, and it is binding on the Society where not contradicted by this document or any other decision made with due authority.

## **Article X: Amendments and Review**

### **X.1 Amendments**

Amendments to this document may be made by a two-thirds majority in a referendum, general meeting, or Council. Amendments to this document may be made by unanimous decision of Council.

Amendments to this document may take effect immediately or as specified in a proviso. Any amendment made by Council shall be subject to confirmation by a general meeting which may reject or confirm the amendment. If an amendment is rejected, no subsequent amendment by Council of similar substance has any effect until confirmed at a general meeting. Confirmation of any amendment must take place at a general meeting prior to any business with the exception of the election of the Secretary.

All versions of the Constitution of the Society shall be made available in perpetuity or until the dissolution of the Society to all trainees with the current version clearly identified.

### **X.2 Review**

This document shall be subject to a formal review by Council once every two years. This formal review shall result in a review document including, but not limited to, the following:

- Full and exact text of any amendments made including the previous text if said amendments replace any article(s);
- Full and exact text of any amendments proposed but not made;
- Plain language rationale for any amendments either proposed or made; and
- Record of trainee complaints regarding areas under the purview of this document.

The review document shall be made available to all trainees and members of the Robarts community in perpetuity or until the dissolution of the Society.