

PGSA EXECUTIVE MANUAL

Thank you for putting your hand up to serve on the PGSA Executive! Without students like you, the Association wouldn't have such a good standing within the University. This document outlines the time commitments of an Executive member. Time requirements and specific responsibilities are largely flexible, recognising that PGSA commitments exist alongside the significant demands of postgraduate study.

THE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Postgraduate Students' Association (PGSA) is the representative body for postgraduate students at Victoria University of Wellington. Postgraduate students are students enrolled at 400-level or above, including taught and research students (with the exception of Law, for which Honours is included as an undergraduate course). The PGSA works to ensure a consistent and high-quality experience for all postgraduate students, building community, maintaining postgraduate student representation and promoting the excellence of postgraduate research.

The PGSA was formed in 1994 to provide services to postgraduate students that were not already provided by the University, and was formally recognised as a representative student association by VUWSA in 1997. In 2009, we became an Incorporated Society (Incorporation Number 2224179). The student representation environment has continued to evolve at VUW and the enactment of the Education (Freedom of Association) Amendment Bill in 2011 means the PGSA and other Students' Associations in New Zealand now operate as fully autonomous entities.

THE EXECUTIVE AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

PGSA Executive members are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year to guide the Association. The Executive comprises **up to thirteen voluntary postgraduate students**. The PGSA also employs an Executive Assistant to complement and support the activities of the Executive and to function as the association's Secretary.

Although Executive members are formally elected and re-elected at each AGM for the successive year, there is no fixed term commitment; Executive members may resign to the President at any time. Additional co-options to the Executive may take place at the Initial General Meeting (IGM) or in monthly Executive meetings as needed.

GENERAL EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The primary responsibility of an Executive member is to safeguard the decision-making of the PGSA. The quality of decision-making is significantly improved when multiple viewpoints contribute to the decision. Monthly meetings play a vital role in formalising and recording the decisions of the PGSA Executive. As an Executive member, you will be expected to attend all meetings to provide leadership to the Association. You will need to attend **one meeting a month lasting for 90 minutes**, with up to one hour of preparation time before each meeting. Meeting procedure is outlined in the PGSA constitution.

GENERAL MEETINGS

You will also be expected to attend general meetings that are held at least twice a year. **Each of these meetings will last between one and two hours.** An **AGM** is held in **October** each year to elect the Executive, consider annual reports, raise important issues for postgraduate students, and exercise the constitutional power of the membership body. An **IGM** is held in **March** each year to adopt the Financial Report for the previous year (January-December), update the membership on matters discussed at the preceding AGM and conduct additional business, such as ratifying the PGSA's events calendar and advocacy plan.

INITIAL PLANNING SESSION

This session is vital to the proper functioning of the PGSA. It allows us to set the direction of the Association, confirm our strategies for the coming year and strengthen our bonds as a team. These sessions will last about **3-4 hours and will be held once a year in October, after the AGM.**

MAIN EVENTS

The PGSA runs two major events every year: 3 Minute Thesis (usually July) and the Victorias Awards (November). Additionally, the events we run during Orientation Week in February are important in establishing our presence among new postgraduate students. The Executive may also choose to hold a cultural evening and/or fundraising events that require organisation and dedication from all Executive members. The quality of these events is directly tied to the reputation of our Association.

REGULAR EVENTS

Our regular events (including Postgrad Talks, Writing to Finish and Breakfast Socials) are important opportunities to interact with our members and foster a postgraduate community at VUW. It is therefore important each event is well attended by Executive members. **Each event requires a few Executive helpers, and an Executive member to lead and/or chair the event**, as guided by the Vice President (Community). **Each Executive member is expected to lead at least one event a year.**

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Engaging in group discussion is a vital aspect of your position on the Executive. We use the communication platform Microsoft Teams to stay connected and discuss issues as they come up. The Microsoft Teams app is available via the VUW Software Centre on university computers, on mobile/PC devices or through the Office website. **Coordinating discussion through this platform also helps the Executive to make the most of the limited time at our Executive meetings.** Executive members are expected to communicate with other Executive members and check in on discussions on the Microsoft Teams platform regularly. Working documents are also collaborated on through Microsoft SharePoint, and can be accessed through Teams.

COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE POSITIONS

The PGSA ensures postgraduate representation on relevant university committees and boards that determine policies. The association also appoints postgraduate representatives to current university boards and seeks to ensure representation on new committees that are set up. **Executive members are expected to sit on one board or committee when an appropriate position becomes available, either at faculty or university level.**

OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

As well as the responsibilities above, there are opportunities for you to be involved in other important activities. We try to assign Executive members to projects that not only fit their current skills but also provide them with opportunities to learn new skills. Executive members are encouraged to indicate areas of interest to make the most of the development opportunities offered by the PGSA.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

The following is a brief summary of the main activities the Association undertakes. Executive members, as leaders of the Association, are responsible for facilitating these activities.

ADVOCACY

Our Association is a respected voice on campus. We have excellent relationships with key members of the community and can use our influence to ensure that the postgraduate experience remains at a high quality. The President and Vice President (Advocacy) lead the Executive membership on advocacy matters. They meet with senior staff members to negotiate the Minimum Resources Agreement, provide feedback on university services and resources, and lobby for any matters that may arise. **Executive members may be asked to contribute to group discussions, document writing and strategy planning in pursuit of advocacy matters.**

COMMUNITY

The PGSA is committed to developing a thriving, dynamic postgraduate community. We work to ensure our members have many opportunities not only to extend their academic ability but

also to carry out the all-important task of networking. Of course, there are also times when we just need to take a break with a group of like-minded people and the PGSA also offers this. Our regular events provide postgraduate students with a fulfilling, holistic experience. **The success of these events depends on the support of all Executive members.**

COMMUNICATION

One of our challenges is to maintain communication with our community. We communicate with our members through our monthly newsletter, email updates and website (www.vuwpgsa.ac.nz), as well as our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter profiles. These are maintained by the Communications Officer. Our newsletter, the Postgraduate Informer, keeps the postgraduate community informed about PGSA initiatives and events, as well as highlighting important information and workshops from a number of university services. **Executive members may be asked to contribute to the newsletter and perform other communication tasks according to their interest.**

EXCELLENCE

Every year, at the Victorias Awards, we celebrate the excellence of postgraduate teaching, supervisors, research students and more. The awards are presented at an end-of-year function that is a chance to not only acknowledge individual excellence but also reflect on the achievements of the community throughout the year. In the middle of each year we run a 3 Minute Thesis competition, from which the highest achieving competitors are sent to the Doctoral international and Masters national finals. **The whole Executive works together to make these high profile events are successful and achieve this core aim of the Association.** We also award PGSA International Conference Grants throughout the year, as decided by the Executive members.