

GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

WHAT THEY ARE, WHY
THEY'RE IMPORTANT AND
HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN
ONE.





IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- A General Assembly (GA) is the highest form of student democracy.
- Every student association has different rules for calling a GA. Check out your MA or ASFA's by-laws on our website.
- The act respecting the accreditation and financing of students associations recognizes student unions as the legal representative body of students—just like labour unions.
- A student strike can only occur when members of a student association vote to cancel their classes in order to protest a given issue. The most common way to do this is through a GA.

What is a General Assembly (GA)?

A GA is a general meeting between members of an association planned and promoted by the executive team in order to **make any bylaw changes, review the budget and discuss issues important to the association's membership.**

Student unions have a **legal responsibility** to hold at least one general assembly per academic year. Additional GA's can be called any time, either by the association's executive team or through a petition by the members of an association.

In order for the GA to be legitimate, it needs to reach a 'quorum' of members. **Quorum is a minimum number of members who must be present in order to make decisions on behalf of an entire association.**

For example, ASFA GAs must have at least 30 members present— every MA is different.

Why are GAs important?

GAs create a community space which allows students to learn about their association's activities **and practice direct democracy by voting on collective positions on issues, endorse actions, make demands or go on strike.**

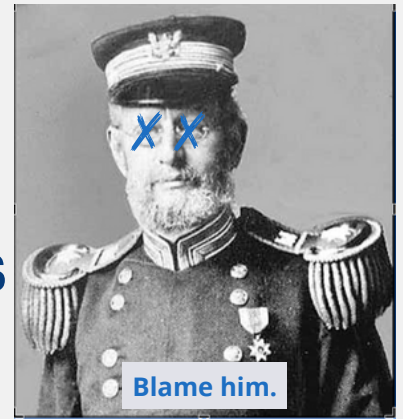


KEEP IN MIND

- Before a GA can start, Executives and Volunteers need to sign in members, taking their full name and student ID to that a sufficient quorum of members are present. Consider tracking this in Google Sheets.
- Any student enrolled in a major or minor in your department is a member of the association. This doesn't include exchange students—they're registered at their home university.

At the GA

Roberts Rules of Order



GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Only one item is dealt with at a time.
- Debate is limited to the merits of the item being discussed.
- Ensure many voices are heard, not just the loudest voices.
- Mediate between opposing points of view.

HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE

- Decisions are made through motions, debates and amendments to those motions.
- Example:

MOTION

BE IT RESOLVED THAT everyone on this videoconference will show us their dog.

AMMENDMENT

BE IT RESOLVED THAT everyone on this videoconference will show us their **pet** or **plant if they don't have one.**

DEBATE

- Members raise their hand to be added to a speakers list list kept by chair
- Every new motion requires a new speakers list
- Mover speaks first to "motivate"
- 1st-time speakers are to be prioritized
- Speakers should start by identifying if they're for or against the motion
- All comments are directed at the chair, not one another
- Speakers can share comments for or against a motion, ask points of clarification, questions or propose amendments;

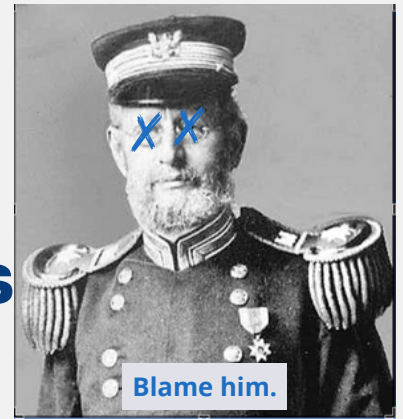


KEEP IN MIND

- If you have any vacant roles on your MA's Executive Team, the GA is where you can elect new Executives without needing to wait until the by-elections.
- GAs can be long—be respectful of one another's time.

At the GA

Roberts Rules of Order



TYPES OF MOTIONS

- **Point of Order**— Used to request that the chair enforce the rules of order to get the meeting back on track;
- **Request for Information**— Used to request specific information, like asking for "receipts";
- **Point of Inquiry**— Used to clarify the rules;
- **Appeal the chair's ruling**— Used when a member disagrees with a ruling by the chair or the facilitation style;
- **Point of Privilege**— Used to speak on something off topic—often used to call attention to a problem about the meeting, such as accessibility.
- **Nomination**— Used to appoint a Member at Large to serve in an Executive role;
- **Recess**— Used to call for a break in the meeting, generally before or after an agenda item that will take a long time
- **Adjourn**— Used to call the meeting to an end.

TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK:

- **Don't repeat points others have already made**, even if you're already on the speakers list. You can indicate visual support for a speaker by putting an ++ in the chat, snapping or waving your hands;
- **Ask questions using Point of Inquiry** if you don't understand what's going on;
- Stay on topic, share relevant **information**;
- Decide what you want to say before getting on the speakers list;
- Write out your motions in advance when possible;
- **PARTICIPATE**
- Be respectful & mindful of the space you take up. Who's voice hasn't been heard?