



Gender Empowerment Centre (GEM) Constitution

Updated 2025

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CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

This constitution is a living document.

The Gender Empowerment Centre Constitution

The Gender Empowerment Centre Constitution is a living document, one that requires constant discussion, revisitation, and critical analysis. This document was last updated in October 2025 at our Annual General Meeting.

The Gender Empowerment Centre welcomes your input. If you have any feedback or proposed amendments to this document, please contact the Gender Empowerment Centre Coordinator(s) at gemcentre@uvic.ca or 250-721-8353. Amendments to the Constitution can be made at Annual General Meetings, Semi-Annual General Meetings, and Special General Meetings.

ARTICLES

Article 1: Name

To be known unofficially as “The Gender Empowerment Centre” previously known as the “University of Victoria Students’ Society Women’s Centre”.

The Centre will hereafter be referred to as the Gender Empowerment Centre in this document.

Article 2: Purpose

The purpose of the Gender Empowerment Centre-is:

- 1. To provide an inclusive space that focuses on the needs of self-identified women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit and other gender non- conforming peoples, while making space for others on the gender continuum to learn, grow and support the values of intersectional feminism, bodily autonomy, collective liberation, and sex positivity.**
2. To offer programs and promote issues in keeping with the centre’s mandate and vision for members and/or the general public.
3. To provide a central location for the distribution of information.
4. To maintain an array of resources for student and public use, including but not limited to: books, art supplies, kitchen utensils, etc.

Article 3: Mission and Vision Statements

Mission: To be a strong, intersectional feminist voice on campus.

Vision: To create social change through political action, education and support of University of Victoria self-identified women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit and other gender non conforming persons.

Article 4: Core Values

The core values of the Gender Empowerment Centre exist for the purpose of guiding the activities, operations, and membership of the centre. The core values of the centre, and our definitions of these values, are as follows:

- 1) **Intersectional Feminism:** Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this term describes a theoretical and practical framework using gendered analysis to highlight the interconnectedness of patriarchy to other oppressive systems. These systems include white supremacy, capitalism, cisheteronormativity, colonization, environmental extractivism, ableism, and fatphobia. Intersectional feminism centers the voices, experiences, needs, and futures of women and gender diverse peoples whose patriarchal oppression is exacerbated by overlapping inequalities.

- 2) **Bodily Autonomy:** Recognizing that people are experts of their own experiences and needs, and advocating for people's right to make informed choices about their bodies. Bodily autonomy encompasses areas of decision making such as:
 - a) Healthcare — including reproductive choices and gender affirming care
 - b) Self-identification and self-expression
 - c) Sexuality and relationships — encouraging consensual exploration without judgment
 - d) Consumption — including substance use and diet

We advocate for bodily autonomy while holding the nuances of how personal choices impact self and others, and are deeply shaped by systems of power. This concept is foundational to changing the embedded bias and judgements we hold against the stigmatized groups. We assert that bodily autonomy is a necessary piece of personal and collective wellness, and take a consent-based, harm-reduction approach to bodily autonomy rooted in education, provision of resources, and compassionate support.

- 3) **Collective Liberation:** A political project of analysis and action which asserts that the freedom and safety for one individual or group requires the freedom and safety of all beings, because of the interlocking nature of oppressive systems.

- 4) **Sex Positivity:** The encouragement of intentional, informed, and resourced sexual expression and exploration. Sex positivity asserts that diverse sexual and romantic expressions can be healing and empowering, and places emphasis on enthusiastic consent and open communication.

We advocate for empowered and safer exploration of one's sexuality, through education, compassionate support, and fostering open conversations. We hold space for the nuances of power dynamics and potential for harm in sexual and romantic relationships. Our definition encompasses those who identify with aromanticism, asexuality, as well as those who choose to refrain from sex and/ or romantic relationships.

Article 5: Authority

Nothing in this Constitution and Bylaws shall be considered in variance with the University of Victoria Students' Society Constitution.

Article 6: Dissolution

In the event of dissolution of the Gender Empowerment Centre, funds and assets remaining after any debts and liabilities are cleared shall be used solely for the establishment and maintenance of a scholarship and/or bursary fund to provide assistance to women, non-binary, trans and gender non-conforming persons enrolled as students at the University of Victoria. Criteria for awarding such scholarships and/or bursaries shall be determined by the Gender Empowerment Centre Collective at the time of dissolution.

BYLAWS

Bylaw 1: Interpretation and Definitions

In the Constitution and Bylaws of the University of Victoria Students' Society Gender Empowerment Centre:

"The Gender Empowerment Centre," "GEM Centre," "Gender Empowerment Centre," "the Centre" means University of Victoria Students' Gender Empowerment Centre;

"feminist" means a mode of analysis that recognizes the right of every self identified women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit and other gender non-conforming person to develop to their potential free from oppression; "intersectional feminism" means understanding the complexities of gender identity, as well as other oppressive factors that may overlap for individuals (See manual)

"Member" means a general member of the Centre, in accordance with Bylaw 2;

"Collective" means the Gender Empowerment Centre Collective, in accordance with Bylaw 3;

"General Meeting" means Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting;

"The GEM Journal" previously "Thirdspace" is an autonomous feminist publication affiliated with and based out of the UVSS Gender Empowerment Centre.

Bylaw 2: Membership

1. General Membership: All people who self-identify as women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit, or other gender non-conforming; everyone who upholds the values of intersectional feminism, bodily autonomy, collective liberation, and sex-positivity and are registered at the University of

- Victoria.
2. Associate Membership: faculty, staff, alumni, and community members at large are considered associate members of the Gender Empowerment Centre provided they align with/ subscribe to the purposes of the Gender Empowerment Centre.

Bylaw 3: Gender Empowerment Centre Collective

1. People having met membership requirements as outlined in Bylaw 2.1 who:
 - a. Have attended at least two collective meetings in the past 12 months;
 - b. Have volunteered for at least one event in the past 12 months; and/ or
 - c. Have otherwise maintained a relationship to the collective through ongoing presence in the GEM space
2. Committee reps
3. People hired under the Work Study program
4. Gender Empowerment Centre Coordinators and student staff
 - a. Gender Diversity Directors
 - b. Communications Assistants
 - c. Community Partnership Advisors
5. Volunteers Leads

Bylaw 4: Rights of Members of the Gender Empowerment Centre Collective

1. Only members of the Gender Empowerment Centre Collective, as defined by Bylaw 3, shall have voting privileges at General Meetings of the centre.
2. Only general members shall be eligible to be on the Collective.
3. Collective members shall be entitled, upon request, to a copy of the Constitution of the Gender Empowerment Centre.

Bylaw 5: Signing Authority

1. The signing authorities for the Gender Empowerment Centre shall be the UVSS staffers: Coordinator and Student Staff. Additionally, the UVSS

Board Representative, two work study positions, and collective members as needed.

Bylaw 6: Duties of Collective Members

It is the duty of the Collective to:

1. Uphold the spirit and intent of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Gender Empowerment Centre in matters respecting the Centre;
2. Ensure the core values, mission and vision of the Gender Empowerment Centre are being followed;
3. Ensure minutes and agenda are kept and available to the membership;
4. Liaise with the UVSS Board of Directors on issues of concern to self identified women, non-binary, trans, two-spirit and other gender non-conforming persons;
5. Hold Collective meetings in accordance with Bylaw 10;
6. Manage, administer and control the space, revenue, business and affairs of the Centre;
7. Supervise Work Studies and unionized staff and ensure that the activities of staff are appropriate to the purposes of the Centre.
8. Appoint standing committees (Volunteer Leads), ad hoc committees and task forces to carry out functions specified by the Collective. The Collective reserves the right to make final and binding decisions in all matters.
9. Develop policies and procedures for the Centre and ensure they are current and practiced;
10. Ensure Organizational Committees are active and each Committee has a representative.

Bylaw 7: Volunteer Leads

1. The Volunteer Leads of the Gender Empowerment Centre shall be decided by the current collective members and can include working groups based on volunteer participation.
2. Volunteer Leads shall be composed of general members who uphold the spirit and intent of the Gender Empowerment Centre.

Bylaw 8: Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors

- 1. Position of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors**
 - a. Pursuant to the Bylaws of the UVSS, a member of the Gender Empowerment Centre shall be selected as a Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors. The Representative shall serve as a voting member of the UVSS Board of Directors, and as an *ex officio* member of the Gender Empowerment Centre Collective
- 2. Term of Position of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors**
 - a. The term of the position of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors shall be in accordance with Bylaw 5, Article 2 (b & d) of the UVSS Constitution and Bylaws.
- 3. Selection of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors**
 - a. The Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors shall be selected at the Semi-Annual General Meeting or Annual General Meeting of the Gender Empowerment Centre. Candidates for the position of Representative shall meet the same eligibility and conduct requirements as those outlined in Bylaw 2.1 and Articles 2, 3, & 4 (*Purpose, Mission and Vision statements, and Core Values*) of the Gender Empowerment Centre. This position is limited to a current and active undergraduate student who self-identifies as women, trans, non-binary and/or gender non-conforming.
- 4. Abandonment of Position and the Removal of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors**
 - a. The Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors may be removed from the position in accordance with Bylaw 10, Articles 1, 3, and 5 of the UVSS Constitution and Bylaws. As per Bylaw 10, Article 2 of the UVSS Constitution and Bylaws, the Gender Empowerment Centre's Board Representative shall be permitted to take a leave of absence in order to participate in cooperative education work terms. When there is a vacancy in the position of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors, the Gender Empowerment Centre shall hold a by-election at the next General Meeting, or may call a Special General Meeting for the purpose of holding a by-election. The Gender Empowerment Centre Collective

may choose to select, by consensus, at a collective meeting, a temporary representative on the UVSS Board of Directors.

Bylaw 9: Duties of the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors

In addition to fulfilling those duties prescribed by the Bylaws of the UVSS Board of Directors, the Representative on the UVSS Board of Directors shall:

- a. Represent the interests and concerns of members of the Gender Empowerment Centre
- b. Have an understanding of and promote the rights of women, non-binary, gender non-conforming people and other traditionally marginalized persons or groups in the UVSS and in society at large;
- c. Attend collective meetings of the Gender Empowerment Centre; and Make a report to the membership at each General Meeting

Bylaw 10: Collective Meetings

1. The Collective shall meet no less than once per month between the months of September and April and at least twice during the summer period between May and August. All members are welcome to attend Collective meetings.
2. Quorum for Collective meetings shall be four Collective members.
3. Collective meetings shall use consensus as a decision making process, with a last resort fall back of a 75% majority rule after an impasse recognized by the chair.

Bylaw 11: General Meetings

1. There are three types of General Meetings:
 - a. Annual General Meeting (AGM);
 - b. Special General Meeting;
 - c. Semi-Annual General Meeting
2. There shall be at least fourteen days' notice prior to a General meeting consisting of advertising through physical and digital means, including, but not limited to, posters in multiple on-campus buildings,

communications sent to GEM collective members using the current mailing list, and advertisement on GEM social media platforms and / or website.

3. Scheduling of Annual General Meetings:
 - a. The AGM is to be scheduled between the first day of classes in September and November 30 as determined by the Collective
 - b. Special General Meetings may be scheduled as required by the collective. To schedule an SGM members can:
 - i. Bring a written petition endorsed by at least 4 collective members to the Centre's Coordinator; or
 - ii. Submit a request during a Collective meeting; or
 - iii. Request that the Coordinator convene an SGM when an issue is deemed time-sensitive or requires immediate collective input.
 - iv. The Semi-Annual General Meeting is to be scheduled between the first day of classes in January and March 30 as determined by the collective.
4. Quorum for the General Meetings shall be a minimum of seven general members of the Gender Empowerment Centre.
5. Rules of Order: Gender Empowerment Centre shall use consensus with a fall back of a 75% majority rule in case of irreconcilable differences. Meetings shall be facilitated by an outside resource person, or The Centre's coordinator as agreed upon by the Collective, who is practiced in the use of consensus.

Bylaw 12: Policy

1. Gender Empowerment Centre policy shall be established through consensus at Collective Meetings or a General meeting.
2. All policy will remain in effect until it is changed or retracted through consensus.

Bylaw 13: Amendments

The Constitution and Bylaws of the Gender Empowerment Centre may be amended through consensus at a General Meeting in accordance with Bylaw 11.5.