



Graduate Representative Organization

E-Board Communications Policy

OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Passed by the E-board: September 17th, 2022

Statement of Purpose

Written and oral communication among executive board members, regarding official GRO business¹, during or regarding all Executive Board, GC meetings, and interactions with the student body at large, will be respectful and professional². This includes timeliness in responding, use of clear language, providing detail and clarification when needed, as well as willingness to receive feedback. Allowances should be made for Executive Board members who may be delayed due to their other responsibilities (so long as reasonable effort at communication is made). At the beginning of each semester the Executive board will review this policy for educational and training purposes.

Email Communications & Privacy

The content of communications to any GRO E-board member regarding official GRO business, including personal experience relevant to the GRO mission and policy are shareable with the rest of the Executive Board. Emails from all Executive Board email accounts (@jhu accounts or otherwise) should include a disclaimer signature to this effect. Requests for anonymity shall be honored unless identification is vital³ to address the subject matter. It is incumbent on each Executive Board member to inform students of the member's responsibility to report on the content of any messages regarding official GRO business to the Executive Board. The party concerned should be informed that sharing partial content⁴ of their communication with the Executive Board will not be allowed except under extraordinary circumstances as determined by a two-thirds majority of the Executive Board. Non-routine⁵ emails from the Executive Board to the GC require review by no fewer than three Executive Board members.

Email communications from the GRO to the full graduate body or bodies external to the university should undergo a rigorous review process. In order for the GRO to forward an email about event(s) from a group⁶ to the full graduate body, there the following requirements must be met:

1. The group must be a Homewood based graduate organization
2. The event(s) must be open to all Homewood graduate students

¹Official GRO business includes but is not limited to meeting proceedings, advocacy efforts, communications with representatives, elections, events, wellness efforts, funding and administrative tasks.

²The phrase "respectful and professional" here includes positive, constructive, informative and supportive. Communication that falls within these guidelines should also respect the guidelines set forth by the Office of Institutional Equity and the Student Conduct Code.

³Action cannot be taken without direct knowledge of intimate personal details.

⁴Regardless of de-identification

To send non-routine emails, there are two possible tracks for the review process, depending on the status of the Communications Chair:

- If the position of Communications Chair is filled, then all non-routine emails should be drafted initially by the relevant chair(s) and then distributed to the executive board for a 24-hr open commenting period. The 24-hr commenting period may be extended if at least two executive board members request such extension. Once the commenting period is closed, it is the responsibility of the Communications Chair to confirm that the review process has been completed and to handle the distribution of the finalized correspondence.
- If the position of Communications Chair is not filled, then the responsibility for communications in each instance falls solely to the chair in charge of the subject of correspondence. The corresponding chair must draft the initial communication and then send it to the executive board for a 48-hr open commenting period. In this case, it is the responsibility of the Chair or Co-Chair to confirm that the review process has ended and to distribute the finalized correspondence.

In the event that a communication from the GRO to the full graduate body or other external body is of a time-sensitive nature, the Executive Board may vote to expedite review to be processed by no fewer than three Executive Board members. Those three members must, at the time of the Executive Board vote, have confirmed that they will be available for the expedited review of the communication. If the communication request from the GRO to the full graduate body is from a university office, no discussion period is needed and the Communications, or other appropriate, Chair can directly forward the message.

Frequency of Updates

Updates should be given to the Executive Board on ongoing GRO efforts at or before the next Executive Board meeting, especially in the event that there are any changes which: 1) may impact the graduate community as a whole, 2) concern or may fall under the purview of other GRO Executive Board members, 3) impact the outcome of a public-facing, GRO-sponsored action (e.g. advocacy messages or events), 4) may warrant feedback or suggestions, or 5) result from the actions of external administrative and campus committees. Feedback, suggestions or concerns should always be solicited following an update. Refer to the GRO Bylaws for additional information regarding update frequency.

Requests for Information and Information Sharing

Any executive board member may request information from any other executive board member regarding any executive board or GRO effort. No information regarding GRO efforts should be protected from Executive Board members on a “need-to-know” basis; all members of the Executive Board have the right to fully understand any area of GRO business should they make a request for information.

Violations Policy

In the event of the report of a violation of any of these policies by an Executive Board member, the remediation process is the responsibility of the communications officials. In the case a complaint is made that falls under the purview of other institutional organization (e.g. OIE) the communications officials are required to inform the complainant of reporting options, but will not handle the manner as a violation of GRO policy. By default, the Chair and Co-Chair shall

⁵Emails with content not regularly distributed where content regularly distributed includes but is not limited to agendas, logistics, notifications for coffee/happy hour, travel grant lotteries, group funding, reminders about previously announced activities, forwarding pre-written information from Deans or other administration to the student body, etc

⁶Groups do not need to be LEED Office recognized (RSO's) in order for the GRO to forward emails from their group.

serve as the communications officials. If either the Chair or Co-Chair is the subject of the report, then the Communications Chair⁶ shall take the place of the reported member in pursuit of remediation.

The process must be initiated by the communications officials within one week of a report made by any Executive Board member. The communications officials shall send an email to the subject of the report notifying them of the complaint; likewise, the communications officials shall inform the member who filed the complaint that the process has been initiated. Subsequently, the communications officials shall meet with (in order) the complainant, the subject of the complaint, and any witnesses of the violation named by the complainant or the subject of the complaint.

Upon determination of a violation, the communications officials shall meet with the complainant and the subject of the complaint to mediate a discussion of the incident and possible approaches to resolution. Such resolutions could include, but are not limited to:

- A statement issued by the communications officials on the violation that occurred
- A statement issued by the subject of the complaint to the Executive Board or GC
- A further mediated discussion with administrative bodies

Following the resolution of the first violation (or lack of resolution thereof), the communications officials shall classify the violation as minor or major. If they determine that the violation is minor, a warning shall be issued. If the communications officials classify the violation as major or it is not the first violation, the communications officials shall bring a detailed report to the Executive Board. The Executive Board shall vote whether or not to bring a report of the violation to the GC. A two-thirds majority of voting members of the Executive Board is required to determine either action. Should a second violation occur, at minimum a report must be issued by the communications officials at the next GC meeting for further consideration.

Email Disclaimer Template:

General Disclaimer:

“The contents of emails received by and sent from this account, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are not confidential and can be shared with the GRO Executive Board.”

If forwarding an email from a Homewood student group:

“The following email is a forwarded email from a student group at JHU. While the GRO is forwarding an email from this group this does not mean the contents of the email are from the GRO or are the beliefs, statements, actions, plans, ideas, or endorsements of the GRO. We are forwarding this email upon request of the student group and as approved by the Executive Board as per our Communications Policy and Bylaws.”

⁷In the absence of a Communications Chair, the following chairs, in order, should take their place: Secretary, Treasurer, Funding and Administration Chair.