

# CONSTITUENCY EXECUTIVE HANDBOOK



**ams**

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## Introduction

The goal of this handbook is to be a guide and introduction to the AMS for Constituency leaders. It is not intended to be a complete description of every procedure or job role. The current Code, Bylaws, and Policy are always referred to when acting and making decisions. The best source for any follow up questions is the Constituency Relations Lead in the President's Office who can be reached at [constituencies@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:constituencies@ams.ubc.ca).

## Constituencies

### Overview

At UBC, students within each faculty or school are organized into undergraduate societies or student associations—collectively referred to as Constituencies—such as the Arts Undergraduate Society or the Education Students Association. These groups run events, services, and representation efforts for their members. Most Constituencies elect representatives to sit on AMS Council, with representation based on enrollment: most Constituencies are guaranteed one seat, and larger groups receive an additional seat for every 3,000 students. While Constituencies operate with significant autonomy, they are not separate legal entities. All Constituency funds and assets are legally owned by the AMS. AMS Council holds the authority to issue directives to Constituencies and to amend their constitutions or bylaws—though this is uncommon and usually only occurs when internal quorum rules prevent a Constituency from doing so independently. Contracts entered into by Constituencies (e.g., venue rentals or space development agreements) must be reviewed and approved by the AMS and signed by AMS signing officers. Constituencies are also required to maintain their finances through accounts set up within the AMS Administration Office. A privilege of being an AMS constituency is that fees can be collected by the AMS to

be used to fund constituency activities and operations. Constituencies fees are separate from the fees collected by the AMS and must be approved by Constituency-specific referendums. If passed and procedurally sound, these referendum results are approved by AMS Council, and notice is given to the University's Board of Governors for fee collection. Ultimately, AMS Council retains the authority to recognize which student group represents each faculty or school as its official Constituency.

### Constituencies of the AMS

- Architecture
- Arts
- Commerce
- Dentistry
- Economics
- Education
- Engineering
- Forestry
- Indigenous Student Society
- Kinesiology
- Land and Food Systems
- Law
- Library/Archival
- Medicine
- Music
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
- Planning
- Science

## Affiliated Institutions and Societies

- Graduate Student Society
- Regent College
- St. Mark's College
- Vancouver School of Theology

## AMS Council

The voting members of AMS Council act as the Board of Directors of the Alma Mater Society and as the legislative, highest governing body of the Society. Your elected representative is a voting member of Council.

AMS Council is responsible for guiding the overall direction of the Society and holding the Executive team accountable for day-to-day decisions that have been delegated to them. This includes approving the AMS Budget and major expenditures, appointing committee members and officers (such as the Chief Electoral Officer), receiving updates on advocacy efforts to the University and government, and more. Council members hold a fiduciary duty to the AMS, meaning they are obligated to act in the best interests of the Society. The specific rights and responsibilities of Council are outlined in [Section II](#) of the AMS Code of Procedure.

Constituencies may submit motions to be added to the AMS Council agenda by passing them at their own council meetings and forwarding them to the AMS President. While this formal process is permitted, a more effective approach is to engage the AMS President early and collaborate on drafting motions together to ensure clarity, alignment, and strategic impact.

## Presidents Council

Presidents Council brings together the elected leaders of all AMS Constituencies to discuss shared priorities, challenges, advocacy efforts, and other matters that affect the broader student body. It serves as a vital forum for collaboration between Constituencies and the AMS Executive.

The AMS President is required to provide a monthly update to Presidents Council, ensuring transparency and alignment on organizational goals. Executives may also use this space to consult with Constituency leaders and gather feedback. Presidents Council may pass motions to make recommendations to AMS Council and may provide advice or pose questions to any AMS body, including committees. The specific roles and responsibilities of Presidents Council are outlined in [Section XVI, Article 1 \(9\)](#) of the AMS Code of Procedure.

## Vice President Caucuses

Vice President Caucuses are issue-specific working groups composed of the elected Vice Presidents from each Constituency, chaired by the corresponding AMS Vice President. These caucuses provide a space for collaboration, coordination, and shared strategy in key areas of student government.

Current caucuses include Academic, Finance, and Student Life, each aligned with a distinct area of responsibility. These groups help streamline communication between the AMS Executive and Constituency leaders, support policy alignment, and facilitate joint initiatives.

The duties and authority of each caucus are outlined in [Section XIV, Article 2](#) of the AMS Code of Procedure.

# AMS Executives

The AMS Executive team consists of six elected officers: President, Vice-President Academic and University Affairs (VP AUA), Vice-President Finance, Vice-President Administration, Vice-President External Affairs, and Vice-President Student Life. Each Executive leads a defined portfolio that helps guide the strategic, operational, and advocacy efforts of the Society. Together, they ensure the AMS fulfills its mandate to support students academically, socially, and professionally. Each Executive also serves as a resource to Constituencies in their respective areas.

## President

*Chief Executive Officer and senior-most elected student leader*

The President leads the AMS Executive team, oversees senior management through the Managing Director, and upholds the Society's Bylaws and Code. They are responsible for ensuring internal coordination, providing direction to Vice-Presidents, and guiding the Society through periods of change or pressure. The President also serves as the primary spokesperson for the Society and represents the AMS in high-level institutional and external relationships.

The President's Office is the central point of contact for Constituencies, especially for matters of governance or liability. The President is one of two individuals authorized to contact AMS legal counsel.

General inquiries can be directed to: [presidents.office@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:presidents.office@ams.ubc.ca)  
Constituency-specific questions: [constituencies@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:constituencies@ams.ubc.ca) (Constituency Relations & Project Lead)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 5](#) for a full list of duties.

## Vice-President Academic and University Affairs (VP AUA):

*Chief Advocate to the University*

The VP AUA leads the Academic and University Affairs portfolio and is the primary liaison between students and university governance bodies—including the UBC Senate, Board of Governors, and Administration. Their responsibilities include advocacy around tuition, affordability, housing, equity, and academic issues. They also oversee key research initiatives such as the Academic Experience Survey and chair the University Advocacy Committee.

Email: [vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpacademic@ams.ubc.ca)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 6](#) for a full list of duties.

## Vice-President Finance

*Chief Financial Officer of the AMS*

The VP Finance oversees the Society's financial operations, including budgeting, financial reporting, subsidies, and fee allocation. They ensure financial integrity, transparency, and sustainability across AMS departments, clubs, Constituencies, and subsidiaries. The VP Finance also chairs the Finance Committee and the VP Finance Caucus, acts as primary signing officer of the AMS, and is responsible for managing compliance with fiscal procedures.

Email: [vpfinance@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpfinance@ams.ubc.ca)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 7](#) for a full list of duties.



## Vice-President Administration

*Chief Administrative Officer of the AMS*

The VP Administration manages AMS facilities (mainly the Nest), clubs administration, capital projects, and sustainability initiatives. They act as the primary liaison for student groups regarding access to AMS-managed spaces and ensure alignment with the Society's infrastructure and sustainability goals. The VP Admin also chairs the Building Operations Committee and the Clubs & Societies Committee.

Email:

[vpadmin@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpadmin@ams.ubc.ca)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 8](#) for a full list of duties.

## Vice-President External Affairs

*Chief Advocate to the Government on behalf of students*

The VP External leads the AMS's government relations, lobbying for student priorities at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. This includes work on housing, transit (e.g., U-Pass), financial aid, and affordability. The VP External also coordinates political engagement activities on campus, such as voter drives and debates, and chairs the External Briefs and Communications Committee.

Email:

[vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpexternal@ams.ubc.ca)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 9](#) for a full list of duties.

## VP Student Life

*Lead for campus engagement, events, and student wellness programming*

The VP Student Life advances student engagement through large-scale programming (e.g., AMS First Week), campus spirit initiatives, and support for student-led events and mental

health efforts. They collaborate with AMS groups, university departments, and external partners to foster a vibrant and inclusive student experience. They also work closely with club leaders and event organizers to provide training and resources.

Email: [vpstudentlife@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpstudentlife@ams.ubc.ca)

See Code: [Section VI, Article 10](#) for a full list of duties.

## Permanent Staff of the AMS

The permanent staff play a vital role in the day-to-day running of the AMS. The hard work, expertise, and institutional knowledge they bring to AMS is essential. Relevant members of the current staff can be found on the contact list: [AMS Contact List](#)

### **Managing Director**

*Chief Operating Officer and senior-most staff member of the AMS*

The Managing Director is responsible for overseeing all non-governance functions of the AMS. This includes managing the Society's operations, finances, student services, commercial enterprises (such as AMS Catering & Conferences), Building Operations, Human Resources, and organizational development. They supervise a team of six senior managers and over 300 staff and are responsible for administering a \$30+ million annual budget.

Reporting to the AMS President and Council, the Managing Director provides continuity, ensures effective delivery of services, and supports the Executive in fulfilling their governance responsibilities. They also play a key role in implementing Council's strategic priorities and maintaining the day-to-day functioning and long-term sustainability of the organization.

### **Senior Manager of Student Services**

*Lead administrator for all AMS Student Services*

The Senior Manager of Student Services is responsible for the oversight, coordination, and strategic development of all AMS Student Services. This includes Peer Support, the AMS

Food Bank, the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC), AMS Advocacy, Safewalk, and AMS Tutoring.

As the primary liaison between Student Services and the AMS Executive, the Senior Manager ensures that services are well-managed, properly resourced, and aligned with the Society's goals. Their responsibilities include supervising service coordinators and the SASC Manager, arranging training and orientation, managing service budgets, and coordinating biweekly meetings with service leaders.

They also represent the AMS to University Administration on matters affecting student services at the request of the AMS Executive, assist with the triennial review of AMS services, and report to AMS Council twice annually with operational updates, service metrics, financial data, and strategic plans.

*Full responsibilities outlined in Code: [Section X, Article 3](#).*

## **Ombudsperson**

*Independent advocate for fairness and accountability within the AMS*

The AMS Ombudsperson is a non-voting member of AMS Council who serves as an impartial resource for any AMS member—student or staff—experiencing unfair treatment, maladministration, or rights violations within the Society, including its Constituencies. They operate independently of AMS governance structures and report directly to Council.

Appointed by Council on the recommendation of the Human Resources Committee, the Ombudsperson must remain fully independent and may not hold any other elected or appointed role within the AMS or its Constituencies. Students or staff encountering issues within the AMS—especially those involving procedural fairness or internal complaints—are encouraged to contact the Ombudsperson directly.

The Ombudsperson can be reached at [ombudsperson@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:ombudsperson@ams.ubc.ca)

*Detailed responsibilities and authority are outlined in Code: Section X, Article 10.*

## **Human Resources**

The AMS Human Resources Department oversees all aspects of staff management, including hiring, onboarding, conflict resolution, performance management, and workplace policy development. Supporting over 300 staff members across AMS operations, HR ensures fair and consistent employment practices across the organization.

## **Marketing and Communications**

The Marketing and Communications team manages the AMS brand, promotional strategy, and media relations. They oversee the Society's social media channels, support marketing campaigns for AMS businesses and initiatives, and coordinate media responses in alignment with the AMS Media Policy. They also assist Executives and staff with strategic communications planning and outreach.

## **Archives**

The AMS Archives preserve the institutional memory of the Society, maintaining historical records, documents, and past policy decisions. This office is a valuable resource for Constituencies seeking historical context or guidance when drafting new policies, resolving governance issues, or understanding precedents.

## **AMS Events**

AMS Events is the team behind the Society's large-scale programming, including flagship events such as Welcome Back BBQ and Block Party. They plan and execute campus-wide experiences that promote student engagement, campus spirit, and community connection throughout the year.

# Standard Structure of Constituency Executives

While the makeup of every constituency varies, most constituencies have a few key executives that are crucial in ensuring that they fulfill their responsibility of representing their faculty to the University and the AMS.

## **1. President:**

Every constituency has a president, whose job usually consists of being the ‘face’ of the Undergraduate Society to the University, the AMS, and the student body. In addition, the President is primarily responsible for supporting the other executives of the Society in their goals.

## **2. Advocacy**

Every constituency has some sort of advocacy executive, which is usually the VP Academic. They are usually the liaison between the Society’s council and the University on everything related to co-op opportunities for students, new programs in the faculty, mental wellbeing, etc. The VP Academic also meets with the AMS VP Academic Caucus, chaired by the AMS VP Academic and University Affairs.

## **3. Governance**

Most constituencies have an executive who oversees the writing and implementation of changes in their governance documents. This tends to be the VP Administration or the VP Internal, but sometimes, it will fall to the President.

## **4. Finance**

Every constituency has an executive responsible for the Society’s budget, overseeing finances of the Society, reimbursements, and contracts. This tends to be the VP Finance, although some constituencies may refer to them as the Treasurer.

## 5. Student Life

A growing number of constituencies have a VP Student Life or similar position, an executive focused on student engagement, campus spirit, and events programming. This executive represents their constituency in the VP Student Life Caucus, chaired by the AMS VP Student Life.

While the above positions are usually considered ‘need’ to have positions in a constituency, there are multiple other potential executive positions that serve crucial purposes in helping a constituency function. This may include:

- Communications/media
- Sponsorships
- Professional development/Alumni engagement
- Sustainability
- Building management (for those constituencies with a faculty building [ESC, Abdul Ladha, etc.])
- Clubs

## Resources and Policies

The AMS has many policies that dictate how executives, constituencies, and all members are to conduct themselves. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the relevant policy, especially when acting as a student leader, to ensure best practices and outcomes. There are also many resources and benefits that are provided to Constituencies.

## Interactions with the Media

The AMS has a media policy which outlines basic protocols for which steps to take if/when approached by the media. This includes campus publications and television news reporters. This policy applies to all constituents of the AMS, which includes all Undergraduate

Societies. Executives are required to make themselves familiar with the policy and abide by it **when media requests are directed towards them in their executive position**. If the media request is directed towards an executive for their perspective as a student rather than an elected student leader, they do not need to follow this policy. Please refer to the AMS website for the policy: [AMS Policy: CM1 - Media Interactions and Statements](#)

## Insurance and Liability

AMS has a Commercial General Liability policy, with a deductible of \$1,000 claim, and a limit of \$5,000,000 per claim. The policy covers all AMS Constituency and Club members, as well as registered volunteers. The coverage is for bodily injury and property damage. All incidents should be reported to the AMS VP Administration immediately. Should there be a social event or special occasion, there is a specific protocol to be followed to ensure that AMS Insurance Requirements are met. Please note, all event contracts/agreements **must be approved by the AMS signing officers prior to insurance requests**.

## Off Campus, Non-Alcoholic Events

*(if proof of insurance is required)*

Fill out a certificate request at least **3 weeks prior** to the event at the AMS Admin office. Please ensure to bring a copy of the signed contract. The information required is the venue address, contact person, and the fax number of the venue requesting the insurance certificate (available in the contract). A copy of the booking contract that includes the details of the event is also required. The booking contract must be signed by the necessary parties. **The AMS Admin office will arrange for certificates to be issued.**

## Elections Policy

Each constituency holds an annual general election to elect the executive team for their respective Society, usually sometime in Winter Term 2 semester. Some constituencies may

hold by-elections, to elect year-representative positions, in the Winter Term 1 semester. In both instances, each constituency must follow the following rules outlined by the elections policy ([GV5–Elections Rules and Regulations](#)). Questions surrounding elections should be directed to the AMS Elections Administrator at: [elections@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:elections@ams.ubc.ca)

## Clubs and Societies Policy Manual

The Clubs and Societies Policy Manual details how clubs and Constituencies are managed by the AMS in several key areas of interaction. For Constituencies, these primary areas are financial requirements, room bookings, and privileges held by Constituencies. The full policy can be found on the AMS website: [Clubs and Societies Policy](#)

## Sponsorship Guidelines

A specific document for Clubs and constituencies to refer to is currently being developed. The sponsorship guideline will outline how constituencies are to secure sponsorships from external organizations. This will apply to all types of sponsorships: money, events, venues, and in-kind gifts.

## Funding

Constituencies have access to funding from the AMS in several ways. Application for funding can be filled out on the AMS website [AMS Constituency Funding](#). Loans or emergency funding can also be provided to Constituencies on a case-by-case basis. Any questions relating to loans or emergency funding should be directed to the finance office [vpfinance@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:vpfinance@ams.ubc.ca).

## Legal Consultation

If a Constituency needs legal counsel, the AMS can offer an initial consultation free of charge. If a constituency feels the need to reach out for help from legal counsel it is best to first contact the AMS president and work together to establish the best path forward.



## Room Bookings

During the advance room booking period, Constituencies receive priority access to booking rooms in the AMS Nest and Life Building. Outside of advance booking periods, bookings are provided first come, first serve. Any questions about room bookings can be sent to: [amsbookings@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:amsbookings@ams.ubc.ca)

## Credit Cards

The AMS may issue credit cards to Constituencies, removing the need for reimbursements on small transactions. The [FN2 Credit Card Policy](#) outlines the application process and proper use of AMS credit cards.

## Google Workspace

Constituencies have access to apply for free Google workspace hosted by the AMS. For Constituencies wishing to apply, the following form can be filled out and sent to IT: [AMS Constituency Google Workspace Application Form.pdf](#)

## Governing Documents

Like the AMS, a constituency is governed by a set of documents and principles. Every constituency is required to have a Constitution and Bylaws, and it is best practice that these are kept up to date. A constituency should also have additional policies and procedures to guide decision making, often called a Code of Procedures or Policy Manual. The constitution and bylaws of constituencies cannot contradict the AMS's Constitution, Bylaws, or Code of Procedure.

## Constitution

The Constitution is the master document that outlines the name and purposes of a Constituency. The Constitution of an organization is rarely updated.

## Bylaws, Code of Procedures, and Policies

Each Constituency is governed by a Constitution and a set of Bylaws, which together provide the foundational structure for its operations. The Bylaws outline the rules for year-to-year governance and must align with the overarching Constitution. The Code of Procedure supplements the Bylaws by offering detailed guidance on how they are applied in practice, supporting day-to-day decision-making and operational clarity.

While Code can be amended by a vote of the Constituency Council, Bylaw changes require a referendum of the membership. Because Bylaw amendments are difficult to reverse once passed, it is strongly recommended to consult with the AMS President early in the process—both before drafting a referendum question and again after the vote is complete.

It's important to note that Constituency Bylaws and Code must not conflict with the AMS Bylaws or Code of Procedure. In the event of a conflict, AMS governing documents take precedence and may override Constituency rules at any time.

Policies provide additional enforceable rules that govern daily activities within Constituencies. These may cover areas such as respectful conduct, external sponsorship of events, building use protocols, and internal communications.

## Publication of Documents

It is important for all Constituencies to keep records of all types of governing documents and make them public once approved by their Council (in the case of Code or policies) or the student body (Constitution or Bylaws). All Constituencies are required to upload this information on their website and send documents to the AMS Archivist for listing on the AMS website. Making this information public is essential for the students to know how their Constituency works and keeps the executives accountable for their work. Additionally, the

approved minutes of each Constituency Council must also be readily available to all its members, usually by means of the Constituency's website. It is best that these be available to members and the public.

## Privacy

Many Constituencies collect information about their members, staff, and volunteers; however, it is important to remember privacy laws, particularly BC's Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA).

PIPA is meant to protect individuals' privacy. It means that to gather information from an individual, one must get consent from that individual. The person whose information is being collected must be informed of what will be done with that information.

Personal information includes email addresses, phone numbers, student numbers, a person's age, marital status, etc. Even the fact that someone belongs to a club is personal information.

If there are clubs in the Constituency, they may collect information from the club members (their email addresses, for instance) to be able to contact them on club business. They should be informed what the information is for (for club business), and it should not be used for anything else.

Personal information collected for the purposes of administration of clubs cannot be shared with others, and this should not be used for any purpose besides club business. Never publish or release personal information.

If the constituency is hiring volunteers and collecting resumes and cover letters from applicants, they need to be kept secure. Only those involved in the hiring process should have access to and see resumes and cover letters.

Resumes and cover letters for volunteer and paid positions need to be kept for a year. The applicants are entitled to look at them to see what comments may have been written about them, both in the interview and elsewhere.

In short, collect personal information only for specific purposes and then use it only for those purposes. Questions, complaints, or comments can be directed to the Privacy Officer: [archives@ams.ubc.ca](mailto:archives@ams.ubc.ca).

## Transition

One of the most important responsibilities of Constituency Executives is ensuring a smooth and thorough transition to their successors. With annual turnover, it's easy for key documents to be lost, projects to stall, and valuable time to be wasted as incoming Executives try to piece together the expectations of their role—time that could otherwise be spent serving students and advancing platform commitments.

Every year, the AMS Executive receives complaints and urgent requests from students, university departments, and external partners when they are unable to reach Constituency leaders. Unpaid reimbursements, ignored emails, and unclear responsibilities are common outcomes of poor transitions. These oversights can have lasting consequences, damaging a Constituency's reputation and eroding trust among members, sponsors, and institutional partners.

A proper transition not only sets your successor up for success—it protects your Constituency's credibility and ensures continuity in service, advocacy, and operations.

Effective transitions usually include:

(a) A detailed report for each Executive position, including:

- Opening remarks
- Position description (duties & responsibilities)
- Useful contacts and account logins

- Timeline of major deliverables and duties
- Major deliverables and instructions for key duties
- Potential issues
- Personal perspective
- Closing remarks

(b) Individual meetings with the outgoing executive and any useful contacts.

(c) If it is budgeted, a retreat/dinner/outing for incoming and outgoing executives to discuss team building.

(d) It is also recommended that constituencies mandate their departmental clubs to do something similar.