1. Bicameral Governance and Foundational Role

The University is governed bicamerally by the Board and GFC. The proper functioning of the Board and GFC are essential to the University's institutional autonomy and the processes of collegial academic governance. GFC is responsible for the academic affairs of the University, subject to the authority of the Board. The powers, duties and functions of GFC are set out in Sections 19, 26, and 31 of the PSLA. GFC may also make recommendations to the Board on any matters considered by GFC to be of interest to the University (Section 26(1)(o) of the PSLA) and the Board must consider GFC's recommendations (if any) before providing for decisions made by GFC pursuant to Section 19 of the PSLA.

2. Purpose of GFC

The primary purpose of GFC is to serve as the primary authority for the academic affairs (Section 26 of the PSLA) and general supervision of student affairs (Section 31 of the PSLA) at the University, subject to the authority of the Board. GFC achieves this purpose by:

2.1. *Academic Governance*: determining, regulating, and overseeing all academic programs, curricula, courses of study, and academic standards, including admission policies, examination timetables, and the granting and conferring of degrees;

2.2. *Student Affairs*: exercising general supervision over student affairs, which includes the authority to establish rules for student conduct, discipline students (including the powers to fine, suspend, or expel, subject to appeal), and delegate disciplinary powers as deemed appropriate;

2.3. *Appellate Authority*: hearing and determining appeals from the decisions of faculty councils on applications, requests or petitions by students and others;

2.4. *Strategic Recommendations*: formulating recommendations to the Board on matters of significant institutional import, including:

(a) the establishment of new faculties, schools (as that term is understood in the PSLA), departments, and programs;

(b) academic planning, campus planning, building programs, and budgets;

(c) procedures related to appointments, promotions, salaries, tenure, and dismissal for all academic staff; and

2.5. *Information Management*: providing for the preparation and publication of the University Calendar and establishing rules and regulations for the management and operation of libraries.

To ensure the efficient and effective discharge of its responsibilities, GFC has the express authority to delegate any of its powers, duties, and functions under the PSLA, including those related to student discipline. GFC may prescribe conditions for the exercise of such delegated authority, including the power of subdelegation.

3. Delegated Authority from the Board

In furtherance of the purpose of GFC, and as permitted by the PSLA, the Board has delegated to GFC the following powers, duties and functions:

3.1. *Academic Appeals*: The authority to hear and determine appeals arising from student discipline decisions made pursuant to Section 31 of the PSLA, the *Student Conduct Policy* and the *Student Academic Integrity Policy*.

3.2. *Academic Programs:* The authority to approve Non-Substantial Academic Programs as defined in the GFC Programs Committee Terms of Reference.[1]

3.3. *Facilities and Space Planning*:

(a) The power and duty to review and approve proposed General Space Programs for Academic Units.[2]

(b) Proposals concerning the design and use of all new facilities and the repurposing of existing facilities

3.4. *Student Health Requirements*: The authority to approve and oversee regulations concerning student health, including the Physical Testing and Immunization of Students.[3]

As set out in the PSLA, GFC exercises its powers, duties and functions subject always to the authority of the Board.

4. GFC's Authority and Principles for Delegation

In exercising its ability to delegate any of its powers, duties and functions under the PSLA, GFC is guided by the *Principles for General Faculties Council Delegation of Authority* (Appendix 17C of the GFC Governance Framework). These principles ensure that delegation, which is essential for timely and efficient decision-making, maintains accountability and transparency. Key tenets include: the delegating body retaining ultimate accountability, the requirement for delegations to be recorded in writing and reviewed regularly, and the power to impose meaningful restrictions on the same. For the complete list and detailed guidance, please refer to Appendix 17C of the GFC Governance Framework.

5. Reporting Obligation

GFC's formal relationship with the Board involves two key reporting functions. All recommendations formulated by GFC and directed to the Board are officially communicated by the Chair of GFC, in accordance with Section 26(2) of the PSLA. Furthermore, GFC ensures regular communication regarding its activities and decisions to the Board by means of the GFC nominee who serves as a member of the Board.

[1] Sub-delegated to the GFC Programs Committee.
[2] Sub-delegated to the GFC Academic Planning Committee.
[3] The authority to approve Physical Testing and Immunization of Students has been sub-delegated to the GFC Programs Committee.

6. Composition of GFC

Voting Members (158)

Statutory:

Ex-officio (26) – PSLA, Sec 23(a)

- President, Chair
- Vice-Presidents (5)
- Dean of each Faculty (17)
- Associate Vice President, Online and Continuing Education (Director of Extension)
- Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
- Vice-Provost and University Registrar

Students (3) – PSLA, Sec 23(c)

- 2 students nominated by the Students' Union
- 1 student nominated by the Graduate Students' Association

Elected Academic Staff(52) – PSLA, Sec 23(b)

- full-time academic staff (Category A) elected by Faculty/School Council in the numbers assigned by GFC

Appointed ***– PSLA, Sec 23(d)***:

Ex-Officio and Affiliate Members (8)

- Vice-Provost and Dean of Students, or delegate
- 3 College Deans
- President of AASUA
- President of NASA
- President of St. Joseph's College, or delegate
- Principal of St. Stephen's College, or delegate

Board of Governors Representatives (6)

- 1 academic staff member, nominated to the Board by GFC
- 1 academic staff member, nominated to the Board by AASUA
- 2 undergraduate students, nominated to the Board by the Students' Union
- 1 graduate student, nominated to the Board by the Graduate Students' Association
- 1 non-academic staff, nominated to the Board by NASA

Elected Students (52)

- undergraduate students (39)
- graduate students (13)

Elected Staff (11)

- 1 representative from Chairs' Council
- 2 non-academic staff; elected by NASA, up to 1 may be from excluded category
- 1 APO/FSO Representative, election conducted by University Governance

- 2 Academic Teaching Staff (ATS), election conducted by University Governance
- 3 library academic staff elected by the academic staff of the University Library
- 1 Postdoctoral Scholar, elected by the Postdoctoral Scholars Association
- 1 elected Management and Professional Staff (MAPS) representative, election conducted by University Governance

Non-voting Members:
- University Secretary
- General Counsel

6.1. *Reapportionment of elected academic staff* will be determined by the University Secretary and shall take place every three years with at least one academic staff member per Faculty with the following provisions:

(a) Each Faculty shall adopt a method of election for their respective elected academic staff representatives to GFC.

(b) Academic staff members serve three-year Terms, elected individuals may serve more than one term.

(c) Faculties may elect members to serve one or two-year terms in order to provide overlapping terms. Persons on leave normally do not serve.

6.2. *Reapportionment of elected undergraduate student representatives* will be determined by the University of Alberta Students' Union (UASU) with the following provisions:

(a) The UASU shall determine the process by which undergraduate student members are elected or otherwise selected.

(b) Student members serve one-year Terms and may serve more than one Term.

(c) At least one elected student seat must be allocated to each Faculty. To the extent possible, seats shall be allocated in proportion to the undergraduate student population of each Faculty, with the objective of ensuring that representation reflects relative faculty enrolment while maximizing the number of seats filled. In addition, the UASU may allocate student seats to represent students who are not organized primarily by Faculty, including but not limited to student constituencies as determined by the UASU.

6.3. *The President will chair GFC*. In the absence of the President, GFC will be chaired by the Provost or by the Dean serving on the GFC Executive Committee.

7. Definitions and Interpretation

7.1. In these Terms of Reference, and in addition to terms otherwise defined in these Terms of Reference, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "**Academic Program**" means a group of credit Courses that, on completion, leads to the granting of a Credential, along with their associated Course Designators;

(b) "**Academic Centre or Institute**" means an academic centre or institute that exists at the University and is controlled by the University, and, for greater certainty: (i) an academic centre or institute may exist solely within the University or may be created by one or more partnerships between the University and one or more entity or entities; and (ii) such other entity or entities may include other universities, governments, public authorities (such as health authorities), and/or non-profit organizations;

(c) "**Academic Units**" include Faculties and Departments, or any other unit subject to a General Space Planning exercise;

(d) "**Bicameral Governance**" means a shared governance model in which decision-making is divided between two governing bodies. In Alberta, the PSLA establishes that comprehensive academic and research universities, including the University of Alberta, will govern themselves bicamerally under a Board of Governors, charged with responsibility for the university's business affairs, and a General Faculties Council ("GFC"), charged with responsibility for the university's academic affairs. Notwithstanding this division of authority, the PSLA also establishes that the Board of Governors has senior oversight of the institution, and specifies that GFC's authority is subject to the authority of the Board of Governors.

(e) "**Board**" means The Governors of The University of Alberta, a corporation continued under the PSLA;

(f) "**Department**" means an academic department established within a Faculty and which is empowered to determine such policy as may come within its purview by delegation of a faculty council subject to the policies and regulations of the University;

(g) "**Faculty**" means a division of the University governed by a faculty council that is entitled, among other things, to determine the Academic Programs for which the faculty is established;

(h) "**GFC**" means the General Faculties Council, an unincorporated body formed pursuant to the PSLA;

(i) "**Physical Testing and Immunization of Students**" means, collectively, regulations for testing and/or immunization of students as a precondition to admission to, or a condition to continuation in, individual programs within Faculties;

(j) "**PSLA**" means the *Post-secondary Learning Act*, S.A. 2003, c. P-19.5, as the same may be amended from time to time;

(k) "**Repurposing**" means significant changes to the use of a facility, as determined by the Vice-President (University Services Operations and Facilities) or delegate.

(l) "**School**" means: (i) a Faculty which, as a matter of common parlance at the University, is called a "school"; (ii) a Department that performs or is designed to perform the functions of a "school"; or (iii) an Academic Centre or Institute which holds the title of "school";

(m) "**Term**" means: the period which a member of GFC will serve on the body running from July 1 to June 30.

(n) "**University**" means the University of Alberta, a body politic and corporate continued under the PSLA;

7.2. For the better understanding and interpretation of these Terms of Reference:

(a) A **General Space Program** describes the current state of an academic, research and/or administrative unit's activities in terms of their space needs, including student, staffing and support requirements. A space program includes a space budget that outlines how much space the unit has currently, how much it will require in the near future, and also predicts what amount of space may be required over a long-term planning period.

(b) As used in these Terms of Reference:

(i) the term "**Full-time academic staff members (Category A)**" means employees designated by the Board of Governors as Academic Staff including Academic Faculty Members, Administrative and Professional Officers, Faculty Service Officers, and Academic Teaching Staff as defined by the Recruitment Policy (Appendix A) in UAPPOL.

(ii) the term "**collegial academic governance**" is drawn from the Guiding Principles set out in the GFC Governance Framework; and

(iii) the term "**ex officio**" has the meaning given to such term in the PSLA as the persons who are members by virtue of their offices and may refer to both statutory ex officio members and additional ex officio members. Only statutory ex officio members and the Vice-Provost and Dean of Students may send a delegate to GFC meetings.

8. Supplemental Information

Links
- GFC Apportionment Table and Reapportionment Procedure
- GFC Governance Framework

Approved by General Faculties Council (GFC): April 27, 2026