Students' Academic Council (UG and PG)

Proposed by: Anurag Sahay, Senator, UG Y11

The Students' Senate, in the year 2011-12, amended the Constitution at the recommendation of the then Convener and President to remove two standing committees, namely UGSAAC and PGSAAC. These committees consisted of the student members of the SUGC and the DUGCs of the various departments for UGSAAC, and those of the SPGC and the DPGCs of the various departments and IDPs for PGSAAC. The rationale behind dissolving these committees was that in the several years preceding the 2011-12 session, the committees had not had even a single meeting in their entire tenure.

However, a need is felt for establishing a body similar to the UGSAAC and PGSAAC but differently structured so that it can function better. In particular, parts of this proposal are taken from the recommendations of Mr. Ankit Bhutani, the previous Chairman, Students' Senate, in his End-Term Report.

It is proposed that two new Standing Committees of the Students' Senate be constituted, which shall be called the Undergraduate Students' Academic Council (UG-SAC) and Postgraduate Students' Academic Council (PG-SAC). These shall, essentially, replace the earlier committees in a manner satisfying the current needs of the Gymkhana, as given below.

Major Differences from the earlier committees:

The earlier committees had no real connection to the Senate, barring two Senate nominees, the Chairman and the President. Furthermore, the Conveners of these committees were elected from among the members of the committees, thereby causing confusion regarding who conducts these elections.

It is my personal belief that the major reason that UGSAAC and PGSAAC did not really exist, while a committee like COSHA functions adequately is the incentive given by the Convener/Chair model, especially when the Chair is an *ex-officio* position and the Convener is elected from the Senate, and hence, is answerable to the Senate.

Thus, it is proposed that just like an In-charge, Hostel Affairs is elected from the Senate, who functions as the Convener of the COSHA, two posts be created, namely In-charge, UG Academic Affairs and In-charge, PG Academic Affairs, who shall respectively be the Conveners of the UG-SAC and PG-SAC respectively. Furthermore, just as the Convener, COSHA assists the President in implementing the decisions of the COSHA and representing the general requirements of students pertaining to hostel affairs, so shall the Convener, UG-SAC and Convener, PG-SAC assist the President and Chairman in implementing the decisions of the SACs, and in representing the general requirements of students pertaining to academic affairs.

Further, it is proposed that the Chairman, Students' Senate, being a special invitee to the academic Senate shall and should have a greater knowledge about academic affairs than other people. Correspondingly, it is proposed that the Chairman, Students' Senate be the Chair of both the UG-SAC and the PG-SAC, except in the special case where one of the President and Chairman is a UG and the other a PG. In such a case, it is proposed that the respective Office-bearer shall chair the respective SAC.

Composition of the SACs and motivation:

It is proposed that the following shall be members of both the UG-SAC and the PG-SAC, irrespective of whether they are UG students or PG students:

- Chairman, Students' Senate (*ex-officio* Chair)
- President, Students' Gymkhana
- Students' Senate nominees to all academic Senate standing committees other than the SUGC, SPGC and the SSAC.

It is proposed that the following shall be members of the UG-SAC:

- Students' Senate nominees to the SUGC.
- 2 UG students per department elected from and by the undergraduate students of that department.
- 2 UG Senators as Senate nominees.

It is proposed that the following shall be members of the PG-SAC:

- Students' Senate nominees to the SPGC.
- 2 PG students per department/IDP elected from and by the postgraduate students of that department/IDP with only one programme.
- 1 MTech student per department/IDP elected from the MTech students of that department/IDP and by all the postgraduate students of that department/IDP, if the department/IDP has both a PhD as well as an MTech programme.
- 1 PhD student per department/IDP elected from the PhD students of that department/IDP and by all the postgraduate students of that department/IDP, if the department/IDP has both a PhD as well as an MTech programme.
- 2 PG Senators as Senate nominees.

The elections of any elected members shall be conducted by the Chief Election Officer, Students' Gymkhana.

The major motivation for this structure is to collect all students who are student members or special invitees to committees and bodies that directly affect UG or PG academics in one place, viz., the student members of the DUGCs/DPGCs, the Students' Senate nominees to the SUGC/SPGC, the Students' Senate nominees to other Senate standing committees (SSPC, SEPC, SLC etc.) and the special invitees to the academic Senate itself, the President and Chairman.

Status Quo regarding DUGCs/DPGCs/SUGC/SPGC:

Each department/IDP has a DUGC and/or a DPGC that oversees the academic policies, rules and procedures pertaining specifically to that department. Furthermore, the SUGC and SPGC oversee the same matters for the entire institute in general. According to the rules laid out in the UG Manual and the PG Manual, the student representation in these committees is the following:

- 4 Students' Senate nominees to the SUGC.
- 4 Students' Senate nominees to the SPGC (2 from MTech programmes and 2 from PhD programmes).

- 2 students of the department "chosen" by the other students of the department in the DUGCs as well as DPGCs, with one student each from the MTech and PhD programmes respectively in departments/IDPs which offer have both.

Proposal regarding DUGCs/DPGCs:

In the past, apparently, student members to the DUGCs/DPGCs were elected by the students of the department in an election organized by the department's societies (eg. ACA for CSE, Stamatics for MTH etc.). However, in the past 20 years or so, these societies have died down to the point where elections are no longer held for these posts, and instead these members are sent as Students' Senate nominees by the Nominations Committee. Furthermore, for some departments, the Students' Senate nominees are not recognized by the department, who have some other, non-democratic procedure for selecting these students. This leads to a divide between the Students' Senate and the representation of students in Institute committees which is an untenable situation.

Hence, it is proposed that since the members of the SAC shall be elected by students of the department, in accordance to the rules laid down by the Institute, these students be made to serve, *ex-officio*, as the student members of their respective DUGCs and DPGCs. For this, it is proposed that a letter be sent to Chairman, Senate with copies to the Chairman, SUGC; Chairman, SPGC and all Conveners of every DUGC and DPGC clearly stating the status quo, the intention of the Students' Gymkhana to conduct the elections of these student members, and a request that the elections of these members be honoured by the Institute as it is in accordance with their rules.

Need for the SACs:

1. While Academics is, in principle, the highest priority for a student, it has been observed that items pertaining to academics rarely enter into senatorial discourse. It is hoped that the introduction of committees dealing with exactly this may change matters.
2. Oftentimes, matters of academic policy are sent the DUGCs and/or DPGCs by the SUGC and/or SPGC respectively for their opinion. An easy example of this for UGs is the Branch Change policy, which has undergone several changes in the past two years. The SACs shall present a forum wherein the student members to these various committees can formulate the student opinion on these policies.
3. There is a general lack of awareness among general students regarding the rules, procedures and policies of the Institute regarding academics. It is hoped that if elections are conducted for the SACs, it will generate, among other things, an interest in these things.
4. On the contrapositive, a lot of things that happen in the DUGCs/DPGCs/SUGC/SPGC, and even the academic Senate itself directly affect the academics and lives of the students, but do not percolate to them until too late. The SACs shall present a means of information dissemination among students regarding these issues.

Mode of Election and duration of charge:

Due to the differences between the Gymkhana calendar, and the calendar governing the various Institute level committees, it is proposed that unlike other standing committees of the Senate, the UG-SAC and PG-SAC shall not handover charge to the incoming committees. Instead, the

committees shall always exist, with individual members of the committee handing over charge as and when their tenure gets over. This charge handover shall be noted in the Minutes of the SAC meetings. If a student passes out or is for any other reason unable to hold office until his charge handover, his office shall relapse to the Chairman, Students' Senate, who shall handover charge to the incoming member of the committees. The following table shows the times, at present, at which the various charge handovers shall typically happen:

Joint Senate Meeting (Early March)	Chairman, Students' Senate
	President, Students' Gymkhana
	In-charge, UG Academic Affairs
	In-charge, PG Academic Affairs
First Students' Senate Meeting (March)	Students' Senate nominees to UG-SAC
	Students' Senate nominees to PG-SAC
Charge handover of SUGC/SPGC and other Senate standing committees (October)	Students' Senate nominees to SUGC/SPGC
	Students' Senate nominees to SSPC etc.
Charge handover of DUGCs/DPGCs (September)	Members elected by the departments

The elections for the various departments and IDPs shall be held in the months of July and August. It is proposed that these elections shall be conducted by the Chief Election Officer, Students' Gymkhana on behalf of the Students' Senate, and will be held in the following manner:

- The notice for the election of the UG-SAC or PG-SAC member from any given department will be sent by the Chief Election Officer to the electorate, as well as to the Students' Senate a week before the election is scheduled to occur. The mail may be forwarded to the corresponding mailing list by approaching faculty who shall have access, for example the Dean, Students' Affairs or faculty from the department.
- The election will be held in a manner similar to the Chairman elections: the electorate will be invited to a particular place at a particular time (it is suggested that lecture halls be used on a weekend; this will allow the conduction of elections for several departments at the same time.)
- After this, all members of the electorate shall be given an opportunity to nominate any eligible member of the electorate for the position. Once nominations are received, the list of people who have been nominated will be announced.
- If no nominations are received, this procedure will start again, until either a nomination is received or the CEO decides that no nomination will be received. He may then defer the election to a later date.
- When nominations are received and have been called out, all members of the electorate who have been nominated shall be given the chance to withdraw their nominations. Furthermore, all eligible members of the electorate may nominate themselves at this point. No one may nominate someone else at this point.
- When these nominations and withdrawals are received, the list of people who have been nominated will be announced for the second time. At this point, the list of candidates is final.
- A ballot paper will then be issued to each member of the electorate, for each election they will vote in. Each member of the electorate will give preferences to each candidate, so that no two candidates get the same preference and so that all candidates get some preference.

- The votes will then be treated as is done in a single-transferable voting system, wherein the person with the least votes will be eliminated, and all their votes will be transferred to the next preference, for each ballot separately.
- This process of elimination will continue till the number of candidates still in the running is equal to the number of posts. The candidates still standing will be declared elected.

General functioning and duties of the SAC:

- Since they shall be standing committees of the Students' Senate, all rules and procedures pertaining to such committees, such as quorum and attendance rules shall be applicable. Furthermore, all meetings of both SACs shall be open-door, and the notice and agenda for the same shall be sent to the General Body; though the councils may, if they wish, make the meeting closed-door by resolution. Furthermore, minutes of all SAC meetings will be sent to the Senate for its noting.
- For all purposes, if a single person serves as a member in a committee or a session for multiple reasons (for example, SUGC nominee as well as DUGC nominee, or SUGC nominee as well as Chairman, Students' Senate etc.), then such a person will be treated as singleton, and will not be counted multiple times for the purposes of quorum and voting.
- The Senate nominees to the SACs shall serve the function of a steering committee for the councils, owing to their large size, and shall assist the Convener and Chair in the discharge of their duties.
- If the Chair of either SAC believes that a topic of discussion in either SAC is relevant to both UG and PG students in an integral way, then he/she may cause the discussion on the topic to be deferred, and he/she may refer it to a joint session of both SACs. Furthermore, the Senate or the President may refer any item they wish to a joint session of the SAC. Joint sessions of the SAC shall be chaired by the Chairman, Students' Senate.
- The SAC shall, ordinarily, discuss the following items:
  - Any item, pertaining to academics, referred to it by the Senate, the Chairman or the President.
  - Any item proposed by a member of the SAC. If such an item requires an interaction with the administration at any level except the DUGCs/DPGCs, it will first be forwarded to the Students' Senate by the Chair for its consideration, before being implemented or forwarded to the administration.
  - Any item sent by the academic Senate, the SUGC or the SPGC to the DUGCs/DPGCs for departmental feedback.