

# Brandeis

## Club and Organization HANDBOOK

*for* Graduate Students

*Last Updated: November 2025*

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# Introduction

Congratulations on taking the initiative to learn more about graduate student clubs and organizations on campus. There are over [200 undergraduate and graduate student clubs](#) and organizations here at Brandeis! They each play a significant role in what makes our campus unique. Students and staff work together in order to provide a variety of social, cultural and educational opportunities both inside and outside the classroom for the university community. Your contribution through club activities and initiatives will serve towards a valuable contribution to the Brandeis community!

This handbook is a resource for the members of the graduate student community who are involved with planning events and activities and who have leadership roles within organizations. One of the aims of the [Office of Graduate Student Affairs](#) is to provide this information and resources necessary to support graduate student clubs and organizations in all of their initiatives. The staff at the Office of Graduate Student Affairs serves as liaison between graduate students and university administration, as well as advises and assists the [Graduate Student Association](#) and [Graduate Student Senate](#). We work to provide resources and services, assisting to coordinate events and programming between all graduate schools on campus.

We hope this handbook will guide you through a successful club and organization experience during your career at Brandeis. You can reach the representatives at the Office of Graduate Student Affairs via email at [gradstudeaffairs@brandeis.edu](mailto:gradstudeaffairs@brandeis.edu).

## **Life of a Club** This section of the handbook describes the different stages of forming

and managing a club. It covers how to formally create an organization, what resources are available to graduate student clubs and organizations, what responsibilities are placed on groups once they are established, what student leaders can do to strengthen those groups and how organizations can sometimes “pass on.”

## **Graduate Student Clubs and Organizations**

### **Graduate Student Association and Graduate Student Senate**

Brandeis University graduate students’ government consists of the Graduate Student Association and the Graduate Student Senate. The GSA comprises of all members of the graduate student body (THAT’S YOU!), which each year elects new members to the GSA Executive Committee. In addition to elected members of the Executive Committee, the Senate comprises student representatives from the School of Humanities and Culture, School for Social Management and Social Policy, School for Science, Engineering, and Technology and School for Business Economics.

#### **The primary purposes of the GSA and GSA Senate are:**

- To provide a forum for issues of concern to graduate students.
- To represent graduate student interests before Brandeis faculty and administration.
- To organize, promote and conduct activities beneficial to graduate student life.
- To disseminate information of interest to graduate students.
- To aid in the creation of and provide support to clubs and organizations.
- To select graduate students for appointment to faculty and university committees.

### **GSA Recognized Clubs**

The GSA Executive Committee is responsible for the recognition of student clubs and organizations at Brandeis University. This committee establishes guidelines and procedures that student clubs and organizations must follow to become recognized by Brandeis University. Recognized clubs must complete forms on file with the office of Graduate Student Affairs **on a yearly basis** in order to continue their club status. Once recognized, clubs are allowed to:

- Reserve university facilities.
- Use the Brandeis University name and logo.
- Have access to Brandeis University Campus Group web space
- Use GSA resources, including any GSA space on campus
- Request funding from GSA for club related initiatives

# Resources for Clubs and Organizations

There are a number of resources available to those graduate student groups who decide to officially register as a club or organization under GSA.

## Facilities of Campus

Recognized clubs and organizations have the right to reserve a variety of facilities on campus. These include:

- A/V equipment
- Space on campus
- Public Safety details
- Media

## Web Space

Recognized clubs and organizations will be officially listed on [Campus Group](#).

## GSA Resources

The Office of Graduate Student Affairs is currently located on the Gerstenzang 127. This office also maintains the Graduate Student Center. Recognized clubs may request free printing and other resources related to club activities from staff. Email us at [gradstudentaffairs@brandeis.edu](mailto:gradstudentaffairs@brandeis.edu) for more details.

# Establishing a Club or Organization

Establishing a club at Brandeis University is a relatively simple process, and we are always here to help guide you along the way.

## **1. Meet with the Office of Graduate Student Affairs**

Email [Jing Zhang](#) to schedule a meeting to discuss your ideas, ask questions, find out if there are similar clubs on campus and learn about various resources and materials that will help you in this process. Jing will help you navigate the easiest way to get your club started!

## **2. Draft a Constitution**

Every club is required to have a constitution. Guidelines are set out in the [Constitution Outline Worksheet](#). (**Note:** This document must be uploaded to the [online application form](#).)

### **3. Obtain Member Signatures**

Clubs must secure commitments of at least three individuals in order to gain official status. Please use this [club member list](#) (pdf) to collect your signatures. **(Note:** This document must be uploaded to the [online application form](#).)

### **4. Create a Yearlong Plan Outline**

To ensure that your club is sustainable and the mission is met, you are required to create a plan outline for your club's first year of existence. **(Note:** This document must be uploaded to the [online application form](#).) This plan could include:

1. Number of meetings you plan to hold and what you hope to accomplish during these meetings.
2. Performances in which you plan to participate.
3. Events and/or guest speakers you would like to host.
4. Lessons, rehearsals and practice sessions.

Keep in mind that recognized clubs may not be offered funding immediately upon approval. For this reason, consider co-sponsoring an event with another club, hosting group discussions or holding student-led practices or lectures for the first few meetings. You can try to plan for independent events and practices with professional instructors for later in the semester, in your second semester or as soon as funding requests are approved. All activities described in this plan must be defended as contributing to the goals of the club and demonstrate that the club will be vital and utilized.

### **5. Complete the Online Application Form**

The [online application form](#) allows us to collect all your information at one time. Don't forget to have these three documents ready to attach to the form: draft constitution, member signature list and first-year plan outline. Application responses are usually made by the GSA Executive Committee within 24 to 48 hours of submission.

### **6. Create a Google/Facebook Group Page (optional)**

It is helpful to create a social media page to help advertise and market your organization and initiatives!

# Meetings

The heart of every club or organization can be found during its meetings. Meetings can range from lighthearted, informational gathering of general members to an important decision-making session for executive board members. Good meetings are always a result of careful planning and preparation! There are different styles to running a meeting. Whether you use parliamentary procedure or a more relaxed format, it is important to know what your purpose and goals are, how you hope to accomplish your goals, and how you communicate.

## **Agendas**

Preparing an agenda not only communicates to your group what the meeting is about, but also makes you think in advance about what information you would like to cover during the meeting. When creating an agenda, keep in mind who will be at the meeting, in what kind of space the meeting will be held, and how long you wish the meeting to run. The following is a generalized checklist that you can use when creating your agenda:

- Name of club/organization
- Title of meeting
- Who is calling the meeting
- People attending
- Date
- Starting time
- Ending time
- Desired outcomes, tasks (who hangs flyers, reviews constitution, etc.)
- Decision-making method (voting agreements of all members)
- Sequence of items
- Person(s) responsible for each item
- Procedure for dealing with each item
- Time allotted for each item

## **Running Meetings**

Here are some helpful tips to help guide you through a productive meeting.

1. Begin meetings on time, and don't interrupt your progress to fill in stragglers on what they have missed.
2. Have all resources easily available to all participants.
3. Do not waste time reading through information that can be easily distributed or posted.
4. Establish time limits for potentially lengthy agenda items and make all participants aware of these limits
5. Stick to your agenda
6. Accomplish purposes; re-state conclusions as needed
7. Encourage individuals to speak up and respect each other's opinion
8. Finish on time, and on a positive note
9. Leave meeting with clear purpose of action for the next meeting

## **Delegation**

Delegation, one of the keys to being an effective leader, is the process of granting the authority and responsibility for performing a task to another individual. Strategies for delegation are:

- Set overall goals for organization
- Break goals into smaller projects that can be delegated
- Determine deadlines for each portion of the project
- Assess members' abilities and strengths
- Challenge members of the group to volunteer and help achieve larger group goals

# Transitions

Every year, there is a time of transition when outgoing and incoming officers relieve and accept their positions. This is a critical time period for any organization. This timing can be the difference between a successful year or one in which the officers feel like they are always trying to catch up. The key to ensuring a successful transition is to make sure the new officers are aware that their participation is a fundamental obligation to holding an office or a position.

Some topics that outgoing and incoming officers might want to discuss include:

- A historical perspective of the organization as well as a review of the formal organizational structure.
- Documents, such as the constitution and bylaws, job descriptions, and policies and procedures.
- The previous year's goals, projects and activities, descriptions of the successes and failures, and necessary resources that were needed to lead the organization.
- Review financial procedures and discuss the summary/projection of the budget.
- Familiarity with files, use of equipment and other organizational resources.

Leadership transition is a means to maintaining organizational productivity by having experienced officers assist in the training and sharing of information with their peers who are taking leadership positions.

# Budget

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This section discusses how clubs and organizations can receive funding, how to generate extra funding through avenues, such as co-sponsorship, and how to estimate some of the costs that might be incurred throughout an academic year.

## Graduate Student Activities Fee

Every graduate student, as part of the university fee structure, pays a graduate student activities fee. This fee is collected by the university and is given to the GSA for distribution. The GSA Executive Committee works with the GSA Senate to allocate these monies. A portion of these fees are set aside for graduate student clubs and organizations.

## Requesting Funding from the GSA

Recognized graduate student clubs are able to request funding from the GSA. To submit a request, you can complete the [Funding Request Form](#) online. All submissions are reviewed by the Director of Treasury of GSA. For requests of \$100 or less, decisions are usually rendered within 24-48 hours. Larger requests are usually taken up at the next scheduled GSA Executive Committee meeting, which occur monthly. In some circumstances, the Director of Treasury may ask to meet you in person or to attend the GSA meeting to further describe your funding request.

## Budgeting and Planning for Events

Here are some costs you will need to consider when planning an event on campus:

- Advertising
- Audio-visual equipment rentals
- Custodial and safety coverage
- Refreshments
- Space reservation

# Programming

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This section is about helping you organize your big idea into manageable steps to plan for a successful program or event. Recognized graduate clubs and organizations are encouraged to work with the Office of Graduate Student Affairs to reserve facilities on campus and plan your event. Please email us to set up a time and discuss your needs for your program.

## Event Planning

### Twelve Easy Steps to a Great Program

1. Brainstorm ideas for the program.
2. Evaluate the needs of the audience, facility and performers/speakers.
3. Choose top three preferred spaces, dates and times for the event (be mindful of holidays, vacations and other breaks).
4. Begin thinking about the details of your event.
5. Develop a budget.
6. Speak with Jing Zhang at Graduate Student Affairs to review program plans.
7. Promote your event.
  - a. Word of mouth
  - b. Fliers/posters
  - c. Email
  - d. Social media
  - e. Listservs/Campus Group
  - f. Graduate events calendar
8. Confirm details prior to event with vendors.
9. Day of the event.
  - a. Arrive 30-60 minutes early to make sure everything is set up correctly.
  - b. Get entrance ready (ticket table, money box).
  - c. Check equipment.
  - d. Meet and greet performer, public safety and staff and vendors.
10. Enjoy your program!
11. Evaluate your program. Make note of attendance, problems in planning or hosting the program, effectiveness, etc.
12. Follow up with any needed payments, thank-you notes, etc.

# Promotion

This section focuses on some tips of the trade and explains some of the resources that Brandeis offers in this endeavor.

Formulate a publicity campaign that stands out from the rest. Consider your event's purpose, audience and budget. Think about questions such as, why are we holding this event? What are the outcomes that we would like to achieve? Who do we want to attend? How does our marketing plan fit with our proposed audience? How much money do we have to spend? What resources do we have?

Once you formulate your plan, develop a timeline of when you want to implement each strategy. Assign people to each task and follow up with them. Plan ahead so that you have enough time! Word of mouth is one of the best strategies to marketing your event. In everyday conversations with your friends, professors, staff and others, talk about your program. Continue to do this even on the day of the event.

## **Media Options**

**Official Graduate Student Events Calendar:** Email your event information to [gradstudentaffairs@brandeis.edu](mailto:gradstudentaffairs@brandeis.edu) to have your program listed on the official graduate student events calendar.

**Social Media:** Add an announcement to the [Graduate Student Association Facebook page](#) by joining the page and posting your event information. Search Facebook for "Brandeis Graduate Student Association (official page)."

**Brandeis Campus Calendar:** Events can be posted on the [university campus calendar](#) section of the my.brandeis.edu website. This calendar is fed to the plasma-screen television in the Shapiro Campus Center atrium. Visit the website for more information.

**Email Announcements:** Announcements may be sent to your own club's mailing list and/or the entire graduate student body via email. For more information, contact the Office of Graduate Student Affairs.

**Posters:** Keep the design simple, interesting and clean. Include the who, what, where, when and why of the program. Make sure all spelling is correct! Use unique ideas: cut into different shapes, use colors — anything out of the ordinary. Post in appropriate areas that target your audience.