

Mississauga Freethought Association - Constitution

1. Name

The organization will be known as the "Mississauga Freethought Association." The organization may be referred to as the "MFA." The MFA will be affiliated with the with community and student groups whose overall goals and values are in line with those of the MFA.

2. Purpose

The concept of freethinking is founded on a method of addressing the validity of any and all statements or knowledge put forth as truth. Freethinking means that one should approach a problem (or dogmatic principle) through the use of logical principles, scientific inquiry and the accumulation of facts assessed by these means. In particular, through such efforts, a conscious effort is made to avoid depending on the constraints imposed by cultural bias, conventional wisdom, prejudice, sectarianism and other similar fallacious principles.

The primary aim of the MFA is to create a community of conscientious citizens who can gather to discuss current local and/or global issues from the perspective of a freethinker, irrespective of religious or cultural affiliation or lack thereof. Issues can range from socio-political to science and technology to the pure arts. Particular emphasis will be applied to how secularism can be a tool for inter-faith dialogue, seeking to resolve pertinent issues such as faith-based extremism and the environmental crisis. The ultimate goal is to create a community of individuals who are interested in approaching the resolution of current issues from non-conventional perspectives, always being critical of socially acceptable norms. The MFA will be allied with similar groups locally and abroad and members will be encouraged to participate in the initiatives of said groups should the need arise.

The primary activity of the MFA will focus around discussions, talks and readings given by members. Lectures will also be given by invited guests. Social events and political activism will also be part of the mandate, involving collaborations with other groups with similar visions.

3. Membership

3.1. Member status: Any University of Toronto community member (students, staff, Faculty and alumni) who wishes to join the MFA will be granted full member status. Full voting rights are granted to all members. These rights include the ability to nominate and run for executive positions as specified times and the ability to propose and vote on constitutional amendments. Others outside of the U of T community are eligible for associate member status but are not granted full voting privileges.

3.2 Membership fee: The membership fee will be one dollar. All members are granted voting privileges, but these do not extend to the Annual General Meeting. Membership in the MFA confers each individual with inclusion in an electronic mailing list, to be maintained by the Secretary.

3.3. Member agreement: Given the often controversial nature of the topics to be explored, appropriate etiquette shall be demanded during all meetings and in all communication related to the MFA. Members must agree to show respect for each other's opinions and to refrain from expletives, insults and threatening or humiliating language. Participation in demonstrations opposing the general purpose and mandate of the MFA will result in the removal of members involved in said actions from the MFA, by the executive. The executive may remove members from the MFA who fail to comply with this agreement after repeated warnings.

4. Meetings

4.1. Executive Meetings

a. There will be no fewer than four executive meetings each year. Notice of the meeting will be given at least four days in advance. Emergency meetings will be allowed, provided 24 hour notice is given to all executives.

b. Executive meetings will be called by the President or Vice President or by a petition signed by 3 members of the executive. Quorum will be established by the presence of at least 3 members, including the President or Vice President.

c. Executive meetings will be open to all members, unless explicitly decided by the executive to go in camera.

d. The President will chair executive meetings and have the responsibility of drawing up an agenda to be presented to the executive at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

e. All executives and officers are expected to make brief progress reports at every general meeting on projects which they have been assigned.

f. Decisions will be made with support of a majority of present executives.

g. The executive may choose to bring an issue to a referendum of the membership either at a general meeting or over the electronic listserv. Referenda brought to the general membership will be decided by the majority of responding members within a week and such decisions will be immediately binding. Once brought to referenda, the decision is binding.

h. A representative from the MFA will be assigned to attend Club Information Meetings hosted by the University of Toronto at Mississauga Student Union.

4.2. Discussion Meetings:

- a. There will be discussion-based meetings as frequently as the membership and executive deems appropriate. Notice of the meeting will be given at least 7 days in advance.
- b. Discussion meetings are open to everyone.
- c. Discussion meetings shall conform to the mandate as outlined in Purpose (see 2)
- d. A chair will be assigned for each discussion meeting. The chair will keep brief, informal minutes at discussion meetings. Minutes of each meeting will be made available on the MFA website and to the electronic group within a reasonable time following the meeting.

4.3. Annual General Meeting (AGM):

- a. The AGM will take place before the end of each scholastic year. The AGM will be open to everyone. Quorum will be established by the presence of at least 4 registered members.
- b. Proxies will not be allowed at the AGM.
- c. Decisions shall be made by a majority of registered members and such decisions will be immediately binding.
- d. A Chair shall be appointed by the executive and responsible for leading the meeting in an efficient, reasonable manner.
- e. Activities should include a year-in-review presented by the President, a year-end financial report presented by the Treasurer and adopted through the support of a majority of registered members, and executive elections, to be governed by Article 6.
- f. Activities may include constitutional amendments, which are binding immediately if passed by a majority of registered members.

5. MFA Executive

5.1. Executive Positions:

- a. President: The President shall be responsible for the overall direction of the MFA. The President shall ensure the executives perform their duties and work together effectively, including active conflict resolution and guidance. The President shall be a

signing officer of the organization for all purposes including the bank account. The President is the official representative of the organization at all occasions.

b. Vice President: The VP will take over all Presidential responsibilities at any meeting where the President is unable to attend. His/her main responsibility is to oversee MFA relations with external organizations, especially in the context of political and social advocacy.

c. Treasurer/Secretary: The Treasurer/Secretary is the second signing officer in financial matters and holds the MFA's bank account with the President. As Treasurer, he/she shall be responsible for providing financial updates and reports following major events and as requested by the executive and performing a year-end annual report at the AGM. As Secretary, he/she is to retain the minutes of all executive meetings, establish and maintain the electronic mailing list and the separate discussion group, maintain the membership list, and keep copies of all communications publicly available online.

d. Publicity and Media Relations: This individual shall oversee promotions and publicity of all events and initiatives. This individual will also be the Secular Freethought Center's (SFC) media contact. He/she shall have knowledge of relevant philosophy, policies and the views of the membership. He/she shall be responsible for creating and maintaining liaison with all levels of media. He/she shall be responsible for ensuring press releases are issued on relevant issues and shall bring any requests to the immediate attention of the executive.

e. Community Relations: This individual shall be responsible for public relations, community outreach, and for building up a freethought community in Mississauga, by networking with other groups and interested individuals, helping run MFA intergroup activities, participating in other organizations' intergroup activities. This individual is tasked with overseeing the building of a secular freethought community through intergroup initiatives such as humanitarian and environmental causes.

5.2 Officer Positions

Officer positions will be appointed as required by the executive at any time. The executive will formalize the role of the position and the jurisdiction under which it falls. An officer does not have voting privileges at executive meetings.

5.3 Procedure:

a. The executive will be elected at the Annual General Meeting by the registered members. All candidates must be registered members.

b. Advertising for elections can take place over a period of at least 2 weeks. Advertisements will be submitted for approval and signature to the Clubs

Commissioner. Following this period a nomination period of at least one week will be held. Following this period a campaign week will be held.

c. Elections will take place at a location designated by the Clubs Commission over a period of 3 days.

d. Candidates may be nominated by themselves or others.

e. A Chief Returning Officer, to be approved by the club executive, will supervise the electoral process.

f. Short speeches may be given by each candidate, followed by a short question and answer period. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot, to be overseen by an impartial observer to be agreed upon by all candidates.

g. In the event of a candidate desiring re-election for an undisputed position, a vote of continued confidence will be conducted, overseen by an impartial observer agreed upon by all candidates, to determine if the individual shall remain in position.

h. All bi-elections shall follow an analogous format

i. The executive will fill or appoint vacant positions as needed. The President will assume any remaining positions.

j. Transfer of power will take place immediately following the AGM.

k. Outgoing executive members shall be highly encouraged to attend the next 2 meetings.

5.4. Removal from Office

a. Any executive member absent for two consecutive meetings will be deemed to have resigned, unless a satisfactory reason is communicated to the executive at least 24 hours prior to each meeting.

b. An executive shall be subject to dismissal if, following a warning from the executive, there is continued use of slander, profanity, or derogatory or discriminatory language in relation to other members or in the course of MFA dialogue at any time.

c. An executive shall be subject to dismissal for continued incompetence or willful negligence of duty.

d. The President or a Vice President shall investigate cases of a), b) or c) above and draw up a list of charges against the executive member in question. This list will be presented to him/her no later than 7 days prior to an executive meeting. Failure to

settle the situation will result in a vote for dismissal at the next executive meeting, requiring a 2/3 majority to pass.

6. Finances

The President and Treasurer will be signing officers for the MFA's fiscal affairs and hold the MFA's bank account. The Treasurer will maintain a chronicle of all transactions. The treasurer will prepare a financial report for the Annual General Meeting.

7. Amendments

Amendments to this document may be proposed at executive or general meetings or through discussion on the MFA's electronic discussion group. A written copy of an amendment must be presented to any executive officer. Two-thirds of respondents must approve the changes for ratification within one week of notification. The constitution may also be amended at the Annual General Meeting through support of a majority of attendant members.