

SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR BIOINFORMATICS STUDENT COUNCIL CONSTITUTION

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PREAMBLE:

The purpose of the Constitution of the South African Society for Bioinformatics Student Council is to:

set the ground rules for the effective governance and management of SASBI SC ;

to assist and promote the competence, control and running of SASBI SC;

to ensure the growth of SASBI SC;

facilitate in the creation of a good name for SASBI SC amongst the students of South Africa; and

to assist in the promotion of a good name for SASBi and Bioinformatics.

INTERPRETATION

In this Constitution, unless context otherwise indicates;

- (i) 'AGM' means Annual General Meeting;
- (ii) 'Member' means student who is a member of the SASBi mother structure or any student in Bioinformatics in South Africa;
- (iii) 'Council' means the elected Council of SASBi SC;
- (iv) 'SASBI ' means South African Society for Bioinformatics;
- (v) 'SC ' means Student Council;
- (vi) 'ISCB' means International Society for Computation Biology;
- (vii) 'Term' refers to the term of the council, which is a period of two years commencing after Council selection at the AGM and ending after Council selection the following years AGM;

In the event of a dispute as to the meaning of a word or words in this Constitution, the decision of the council by simple majority shall be conclusive as to the meaning or interpretation.

SECTION 1: NAME AND MEMBERSHIP

(1) The body herein referred to as South African Society for Bioinformatics Student Council, will be called SC in this document.

(2) Membership shall be open to all students within South Africa involved in the Bioinformatics or Computational Biology field of study or research;

- (3) The SC will not discriminate on any of the grounds specified in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- (4) Members shall be responsible and accountable to the SC for any actions associated with the council.
- (5) Corporate Existence:

The Council is a non-profit organization that acts in its own name, disposes of its assets, is accountable for its liabilities and is competent to act in its own name as plaintiff or defendant in any lawsuit. The members of the Council are not personally or jointly accountable for the obligations of the Council and acquire no assets of the Council during its existence or when it is dissolved. Provided that the following rules are followed:

SECTION 2: OBJECTIVES

- 1) The objectives of SASBI SC shall be:
 - a) stimulate and encourage the pursuit of high quality research at the frontiers of the discipline to promote best practices;
 - b) promote bioinformatics and computational biology as an area of research and a profession;
 - c) identify, stimulate and nurture students with ability in bioinformatics and computational biology to realize their full potential, irrespective of their social, economic and cultural background;
 - d) encourage and provide opportunities to members of all groups, especially those from under-represented communities, in the various facets of bioinformatics and computational biology;
 - e) explore the contributions that bioinformatics and computational biology can make in addressing societal needs and promoting a strong economy that will contribute to an improved quality of life for all South Africans;
 - f) promote an appreciation and public understanding of bioinformatics and computational biology
 - g) establish links and promote cooperation between itself and related societies in Africa and throughout the world.
 - h) Stimulate and encourage development of interdisciplinary curricula that stimulate bioinformatics skills development.
 - i) to promote the increase of knowledge in bioinformatics and computational biology, and the use thereof;
 - j) to promote instruction and the dissemination of knowledge at all levels in bioinformatics and computational biology;
 - k) to promote best practices in the bioinformatics and computational biology

- community
- l) to provide a national web portal as a communication medium among the bioinformatics community.

SECTION 3: COMPOSITION AND FUNCTION OF THE COUNCIL

(1) The Council comprises of the: Each portfolio will have a vote, in the case of two portfolios being held by an individual, two votes will be allowed for that individual.

- a) President
 - b) Secretary
 - c) Media Officer;
 - d) Development Officer;
 - e) Staff Member/ Mentor.
- f) Council may determine such additional portfolios and make such additional appointments to these further portfolios as it may deem fit; provided that these additional portfolio holders shall be answerable to Council but, unless already a member of Council, do not by this appointment become members of Council.

(2) the duties of the council shall be as follows:

President

- (i) shall maintain and convene all meetings;
- (ii) shall maintain order at all meetings;
- (iii) shall ensure that a final decision is reached on each item discussed at the meeting;
- (iv) shall ensure that all Council members carryout their duties;
- (v) shall assist and provide advice to any other member of the Council regarding the execution of the duties of the member;
- (vi) shall take the necessary action, according to Section 11: Disciplinary action, should a Council member not perform their duties or not attending meetings and functions hosted by the SC;
- (vii) shall attend, answer as well as sign all correspondence and relevant documents, incoming or outgoing, that is binding on SASBI SC;
- (viii) shall, together with the Secretary, authorize all expenses and payments; and
- (ix) shall define the goals of the organization and outline a strategy to successfully reach the goals.

Secretary

- (i) shall be responsible for the taking down of all minutes at each and every meeting, as well as the distribution thereof within two weeks after a meeting;
- (ii) shall be responsible for setting up all meetings for the council;
- (iii) shall, with the correspondence of the President, draw up, type and distribute agenda's regarding all meetings (prior to all meetings) as well as all correspondence with members;
- (iv) shall ensure that all incoming correspondence is timeously distributed to the relevant Council members;
- (v) shall be responsible for the creation and maintenance of a mailing list;
- (vi) shall maintain up-to-date financial record;
- (vii) shall draw up the yearly budget to be submitted to the SC;
- (viii) shall draw up and submit a complete balance sheet and budget to the members at the AGM;
- (ix) shall organize all documentation, ballots, arrangements etc. for the AGM.

Media Officer

- (i) shall ensure that all activities undertaken by SASBI SC are well publicised;
- (ii) shall, along with the President, be a representative of SASBI SC at all social events;
- (iii) shall be responsible, for updates on the website;
- (iv) shall be responsible for all social media platforms of the SC (including but not limited to Twitter and Facebook);
- (v) Shall be responsible for all social events organised by the SC.

Development Officer

- (i) Shall be responsible for the organisation of all development initiatives undertaken by the SC;
- (ii) shall be responsible for the organisation of fundraisers;
- (iii) shall be responsible for all grant applications submitted by the SC;
- (iv) shall draw up an action plan;
- (v) shall be responsible for liaison with potential and current sponsors;
- (vi) shall maintain an up-to-date database of all potential and current sponsors and;
- (vii) shall be responsible for all feedback to sponsors.

Staff Member/ Mentor.

- (i) shall be responsible for the supervision and guidance of the SC;

- (ii) shall ensure that all undertakings of the SC are in line with the greater vision of the council as well as the mother body of SASBi and the ISCB;
- (iii) shall ensure that all required proceedings are carried out fairly at the AGM.

SECTION 4: NOMINATION, SELECTION OF COUNCIL AND TERM OF OFFICE

- (1) A Member who has been nominated in a specific Council position may not vote in the selection of that position.
- (2) The outgoing Council shall elect the incoming President from a member of the outgoing council.
- (3) The incoming president should be a member of the SC that has already served on the SC for one term in any position of the council. If such a person is not available and willing to serve on the council then any individual may be elected to the position as long as they have been a member of the society for a minimum of 1 year. In such a case the council members shall provide motivation for their nomination.
- (4) Should the majority of members (via simple majority), holding election rights, not agree to this nomination/election, they will put forward their reasons in writing and put forward a new nomination(s) in writing.
- (5) All criteria for Council positions must be made available.
- (6) Nominations for Council shall be solicited at least 30 days before the AGM. Any member of the Society in good standing may stand for election to Council, propose or second a nominee. Each nomination shall be submitted in writing by the proposer, the seconder and the nominee.
- (7) The election will be by secret ballot at the AGM. Members with the most votes will be elected into the committee. In the case of a tie the outgoing council holds both a deliberate and a casting vote to any electable position.
- (8) Two non-council members will be appointed to count the votes at the AGM.
- (9) A member may vote in proxy provided the vote is received prior to the AGM in writing.
- (10) No member may run for a position on the council if they have had a previous offence or transgression against SASBI SC, SASBi or ISCB, or if they have

been removed from a SASBI SC position or resigned from a SASBI SC position, they are then deemed unsuitable for any future positions that may become available;

- (11) Notice shall be given to all members regarding the changeover of Council.
- (12) Incoming council is to shadow the outgoing council for the duration of time between the AGM and the following year (i.e. between August/September when the bi-annual SASBi conference and the AGM is held till January of the following year).
- (13) Election to Council shall be for a period of two years or closest to the AGM.
- (14) The President will serve for only one term of two years.
- (15) After a period of absence from Council of at least one year, a member of the Society may be nominated for any position on Council.

SECTION 5: MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

- (1) Meetings shall be held at least once every four to six weeks where possible. This will be to the councils discretion and additional meetings can be scheduled as matters arise.
- (2) The President, at meetings of the Council, shall have both a deliberate and a casting vote.
- (3) All questions shall be decided by the simple majority of the members present and voting, providing at least half the active council is present.
- (4) At least seven days notice shall be given to council members of the ordinary Council meetings.

SECTION 6: VACANCIES ON THE COUNCIL

- (1) The seat of a member on the Council shall be vacant if:
 - (i) the member, unless his/ her studies are concluded, ceases to be a student;
 - (ii) the resignation of a Council member is submitted in writing with one calendar months notice;
 - (iii) a member of the council is removed from office according to the guidelines set out in Section 11: Disciplinary action

- (2) Any vacancy that occurs on the Council shall be filled by a member of SASBI SC. A bi-election shall be conducted to remedy the vacancy in accordance with the provision set out in Section 4, and within one month of the creation of the vacancy.
- (3) The council reserves the right to co-opt members into a vacant council position, provided the candidate has the necessary qualities.

SECTION 7: SUMMONING AND CONDUCT OF GENERAL MEETINGS AND AGM'S

- (1) All members who have been members for one year have the right to vote at AGM's and elections of SASBI SC .
- (2) A quorum at the meeting shall constitute 50% plus 1 of the SASBi student members, if quorum is not met after the second attempt the outgoing council shall decide on the incoming council by simple majority.
- (3) No member may vote in proxy.
- (4) The order of procedure at these meetings shall be as follows:
 - (i) Opening of the meeting;
 - (ii) President's Address;
 - (iii) Financial Report;
 - (iv) Notified motions – written notice of such motions shall be sent to the Secretary at least seventy-two hours before the meeting and the document made available to SASBI SC at least forty-eight hours before the meeting;
 - (v) Elections of the new Council (when applicable); and
 - (vi) General/ Miscellaneous.

SECTION 8: DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The Council may elect with two-thirds majority to:

- (a) cease membership of a SASBI SC member on any of the following grounds:
 - (i) if the member brings the council into disrepute;
 - (ii) if the member hinders the council from performing its designated functions;
 - (iii) evidence must be provided to support the above conditions in (i) and (ii)
- (b) Remove from office a council member who has been found guilty of at least one of the following transgressions;

- (i) Repeated unexcused absence from a meeting or organized event of the SC;
 - (ii) Failure to execute delegated responsibilities;
 - (iii) Performing any action which would bring the council into disrepute.
- (c) Evidence must be provided to support any accusations.
- (d) In the case of a council member performing any of these above stated transgressions a written warning will be issued for their conduct by a member of the SC.
- (e) If two written warnings are received a third written warning will result in the council member being removed from office.
- (f) The council also reserves the right to put forward a motion to have the specified council member removed immediately (without any previous written warnings) in exceptional circumstances.
- (g) Council members do not receive special treatment and should not expect to gain more than members of SASBI SC, any abuse of power will result in disciplinary action.