Constitution of the

Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Organization

1. Name

The name of this organization shall be the Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Organization, officially and hereafter abbreviated “PAGSO”.

2. Purpose and Goals

2.1 General Purpose

The general purpose of PAGSO is to provide professional and social support for graduate students in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Iowa State University. This will be accomplished by providing ways for graduate students to communicate with the administration of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, connect with other graduate students, and further their education and careers by creating a strong collaborative environment.

2.2 Compliance

The Physics Graduate Student Organization abides by and supports established Iowa State University policies, as well as all state and federal laws, and follows local ordinances and regulations. Iowa State University and PAGSO do not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information or status as a U.S Veteran.

3. Membership and Types of Members

There will be two different types of PAGSO members: General members and Council members.

3.1 General Members

All graduate students who are enrolled in the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Iowa State University or who are officially connected in some way with that department are eligible general members.

General members may bring proposals to the group and help plan and participate in group activities. Any member may leave the PAGSO for any reason by notifying the Secretary.

3.2 Council Members

The council will consist of a President, Vice President and Treasurer, as a minimum. Upon election, council members will be contacted by Student Engagement and must confirm their elected positions.

4. The Council

4.1 Requirements

The Council members of PAGSO must meet the following requirements:

1. Have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.00 in the semester of election/appointment and during their term of office.
2. Be in good standing with both the university and the Department of Physics and Astronomy.
3. Must be enrolled as at least a half time student.
4. Have passed both qualifying exams (Modern and Classical) prior to being elected to serve as the President or Vice President.
5. Have a reasonable expectation of being able to serve out their term before graduating.
6. Have a reasonable expectation that they will not be away from Iowa State University for a period of more than three months during their term excluding university holidays but including the summer semester.

Any Council member will be ineligible to hold an office should they fail to maintain the requirements as prescribed above.

4.2 The Regular Election

The PAGSO Council election will be held during the Spring semester of each year, after March 1st, and before Prep Week and as needed to replace members throughout the year. Voting will be done electronically and will be open for at least a full week. This election is meant to fill the seats on the Council being vacated by members whose appointments will or have expired. The Council members selected through this election are referred to as elected Council members. The PAGSO Treasurer, Advisor and an unbiased third party (a PAGSO member that is not nominated for any of the positions) are responsible for the election process and will be referred to as the Election Supervisors.

4.2.1 Nominations

All graduate students meeting the criteria outlined in Section 4.1, with the exceptions outlined herein, are eligible to run for election to a position on the PAGSO Council.

Candidates may be nominated by any graduate student, including themselves. All candidates nominated by students other than themselves should be informed of their nomination in a timely manner and may decline the nomination if they so choose.

Any nominated candidate, including self-nominated candidates, may choose to revoke their nomination at any time prior to the start of the voting period.

Nominations must be made at least one week prior to the election process. If a position has no nominees by the election process, then that prior notice may be suspended. After all nominations have been submitted, the Vice President shall offer a list of the nominees to the members of the PAGSO for consideration. The Election Supervisors may decide whether any member is allowed to be nominated for more than one Council position.

4.2.2 The Ballot

Each nominated candidate who is eligible and willing to run for a Council position will be listed on the ballot for their nominated position. Council members who are running for re-election should be identified as such.

4.2.3 Election Process

A PAGSO meeting shall be held for the purpose of electing Council members for the following year. This meeting will be announced by the Election Supervisors at least one week of anticipation and will be held at least one week prior to the end of the election period.

If the Election Supervisors decide to allow any member to be nominated for more than one Council position, the following rules should be followed:

1. The Election Supervisors should establish and communicate an order of seniority of the positions that are being contested, before the candidates are nominated.
2. The votes for the highest seniority position will be counted first, and then the rest of the positions, following the established order.
3. If a member is elected for a given position, they are excluded from contesting in all the lower seniority positions that they may have been nominated.
4. Each position will be contested among all the nominated candidates that have not been elected for a higher seniority position.

The method chose for computing and counting the votes should require a simple majority of the votes for each elected candidate. This can be done through different versions of ranked-choice voting, or through run-off elections held between the candidates with most votes. It is up to the Election Supervisors to decide on the specific method for the election, as long as it is following these requirements.

4.3 Length of Appointment

The length of appointment will be one year, beginning of the Fall semester and officially ending on the last day of the Summer semester.

There are no mandatory term limits.

4.4 Impeachment and Replacement

Members or officers may be impeached and removed from PAGSO if they, for example, commit wrongdoing against another club member, abuse public resources and authority, or fail to uphold the duties of their position.

In case a member decides to call for an impeachment of another member, the Council should call for a general meeting, scheduling it at least one week in advance. During that meeting, the different members involved may give their arguments, present their case, or defend themselves. The Election Supervisors will organize an electronic secret vote open for exactly one week, to decide whether the accused member is impeached or not. Impeachment requires 75% of the votes without counting abstainers. All members, including those involved in the accusation, should be allowed to vote. All those who do not vote will be considered abstainers.

If the accused member occupies a Council position, that position will be put on hold immediately after the meeting and until the electronic vote is closed. If a Council member is impeached, a special election will take place no more than one month after impeachment.

4.5 Duties of the Council

4.5.1 Meetings

It is the responsibility of the council to organize and hold at least one Council meeting and one general meeting once a semester, excluding the Summer semester. This includes determining times, obtaining locations, and announcing said information to all PAGSO members.

Meetings will provide opportunity for the Council members to update PAGSO members on activities, allow the group to vote on business, and provide a forum for general member input and discussion.

4.5.2 Communication with the Physics Department Administration

One responsibility of the PAGSO will be to facilitate communication between the student body and the administration. This will be accomplished by meetings in the fall and spring semesters with the department chair, which will be open to all graduate students.

Additional communication between the Department Administration and PAGSO will be undertaken as necessary for the organization of department events and to facilitate smooth collaboration between the two groups.

PAGSO is intended to represent the majority of ISU physics graduate students as a collective. If major issues are raised to be presented to the administration a general meeting should be called at least one week in advance. During the meeting, the issue will be presented to all PAGSO members, discussed, and voted on. In order for the issues to be presented as the position of PAGSO, they must be approved by 75% of the members present at the meeting, not counting abstainers.

4.5.3 Communication with the Physics Graduate Student Body

Communication between graduate students and with the graduate student body as a whole will be facilitated by monthly meetings and social events. If somebody wishes to make an announcement during a PAGSO meeting they will contact the vice president to be added to the agenda. If someone not on the council wishes to send an announcement to the entire PAGSO they can notify the Secretary and their e-mail will be sent or they will be added to the schedule at an appropriate meeting.

4.5.4 Organize Social and Educational Events

It will be the duty of the council to organize various social and educational events for the physics graduate student body, including but not limited to the yearly department picnic, the preparatory course for the qualifying exam, and surveying graduate students to gauge interest for departmental colloquium topics, as well as a new graduate student only social outing.

4.5.5 Assignment of Peers and Mentors for Incoming First-year Students

One responsibility of the physics graduate student organization is to facilitate the academic, and emotional success of incoming graduate students, and to foster a feeling of community within the department. Towards this end, PAGSO will be responsible for assigning peers and mentors to incoming graduate students.

4.5.6 Qualifier Exams Preparation Course Teachers

The PAGSO Council will identify individuals who are willing and able to teach any of the Qualifier Exams (Modern or Classical) preparation course. This possibility should be open for any current graduate student in the Department of Physics and Astronomy who passed both Qualifier Exams. A form should be distributed to those graduate students, in order to gather information about their teaching experience, awards and recognitions, their assistantship status for the Summer semester, and whatever other information the PAGSO Council considers to be relevant. In case there are many individuals interested and eligible, the PAGSO Council will select the teacher(s) based on the information completed in the distributed form, with the goal of selecting the candidate who would most benefit the students who are preparing for the Qualifier Exam.

5. Elected Council Member Positions

5.1 President

The President’s duties will include:

1. Presiding over PAGSO general and council meetings. If the president is unavailable the next council member in seniority will preside
2. Setting the agendas of the PAGSO general and council meetings
3. Presiding over any general meetings of the physics graduate student body
4. Organizing and presiding over the Physics and Astronomy Student Colloquia
5. Supervising normal operations of the PAGSO
6. Representing the physics and astronomy graduate student body during faculty meetings
7. Ensuring physics and astronomy graduate student participation in select committees
8. Attending annual President’s training in compliance with student organization regulations
9. Handling risk management responsibilities associated with minimizing potential risks for club activities and recommending risk management policies or procedures.

5.2 Vice President

The Vice President’s duties will include:

1. Assuming the responsibility of the President in the case of the President’s absence
2. Ensuring representation of the physics and astronomy graduate students in the Graduate and Professional Student Senate
3. Facilitating communication before general PAGSO meetings with the aid of the rest of the Council, including announcing meetings and distributing agendas, polls, etc.
4. Reserving meeting venue locations
5. Organizing the Graduate Learning Community (GLC)
6. Being responsible for the Most Valuable Instructor award
7. Recording and distributing notes as necessary

5.3 Treasurer

The Treasurer’s primary duties will include:

1. Keeping an accurate and complete record of the money and expenditures of PAGSO
2. Collecting and safekeeping the money of PAGSO
3. Disbursing money as approved by PAGSO or according to other procedures
4. Recording the names and email addresses of active members and renewing memberships
5. Creating ballots and administering elections
6. Attending annual Treasurer’s training in compliance with student organization regulations
7. Handling risk management responsibilities associated with submitting documentation to ISU’s Risk Management Office and ensuring proper waivers and background checks are on file with Risk Management for events.

5.4 Selection

All council members will be selected by nomination, followed by general election among all members.

6. Additional Council Members

6.1 Auxiliary Council Members

The purpose of auxiliary council members is to delegate stated responsibilities of council members or assign new responsibilities as they arise. Auxiliary council positions may be opened for election by the council via a unanimous council decision. The procedure for the election process will be identical for those of council members. These auxiliary positions can be extended for another term by a council vote. In that case, new candidates will be elected for the upcoming year.

6.2 Temporary Council Members

If a council member must leave their position during any point of their term, a temporary council member must be appointed by the council with a 75% vote of the council members. This must be done within a reasonable time frame, or one set by Student Engagement, such that the organization remains in good standing. A new member will be elected by the general membership during the next council election.

7. Advisor

7.1 Requirements

The Advisor of PAGSO must be a faculty member in the Physics Department. Their primary duties include:

1. Maintaining communication with the President of PAGSO
2. Approving and overseeing financial expenditures
3. Ensuring that the organization is operating in accord with the standards set forth by Iowa State University and Student Engagement
4. Completing the annual Advisor Training as required by Iowa State University
5. Overseeing elections and the counting of votes

7.2 Election and Term of Service

The election for an advisor is carried out every year during the Spring semester as part of the PAGSO Council Elections and may be re-elected indefinitely.

If an advisor must leave their position during any point of their term, a temporary advisor must be appointed by the council with a 75% vote of the Council members. This must be done within a reasonable time frame, or one set by Student Engagement, such that the organization remains in good standing. A new advisor will be elected by the general membership during the next council election.

7.3 Removal

The Advisor of PAGSO can be removed through the following procedure. Upon request of any PAGSO member, the Council should call for a general meeting, scheduling it at least one week in advance. During that meeting, the different members involved may give their arguments. The Advisor should be given the choice to attend and defend themselves if they want to. The Council will organize an electronic secret vote open for exactly one week, to decide whether the Advisor is removed or not. Removal requires a 75% of the votes without counting abstainers. All those who do not vote will be considered abstainers.

In the case that the Advisor is removed, a temporary advisor may be appointed by the council with a 75% vote. A new advisor will be elected during the next council election.

8. Finances

The finances of PAGSO will be administered by the Treasurer in coordination with the PAGSO Advisor for the benefit of the physics graduate student body.

8.1 Accounts

All money belonging to PAGSO will be deposited and dispersed through a bank account established for this organization at the Campus Organizations Accounting Office, and/or through an institution or office authorized by the Campus Organizations Accounting Office. All funds must be deposited within 48 hours after collection. The advisor must approve and sign each expenditure before payment.

8.2 Dues

No dues will be required of either General or Council members.

8.3 Dissolution

In the event that PAGSO dissolves, any remaining funds shall be donated to the Iowa State University Department of Physics to use for the benefit of graduate students.

9. Amendments and Ratification

This Constitution may be amended, and subsequently ratified, at any time, through the following procedure: upon request, the PAGSO Council should call for a meeting to present the proposed amendment. The meeting should be scheduled and communicate at least one week before it is held. During the meeting a vote on the approval of the amendment will take place, and the amendment will take effect only with the unanimous approval of the Council members and with a simple majority of the remaining members present in the meeting, not counting abstainers. The members present in the meeting may also decide to table the amendment for a future meeting, if further considerations are needed. Ratified amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the Student Engagement within ten (10) days of ratification.