



# THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BLACK LAW STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Revision history:

September 2013

July 2017

July 2020

*We are mindful of the presence and the experience of Black law students attending law schools and completing articling across the country, and are determined to provide a forum of unity, opportunity, encouragement, and collective action to students at the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa.*

*We hereby establish the following Articles which shall be binding upon the Executive Board and members of the Black Law Students' Association of the University of Ottawa.*



## **Article I - General Provisions**

- 1.1. This organization shall be known as the Black Law Students' Association at the University of Ottawa (BLSA Ottawa) or l'Association des étudiant(e)s noir(e)s en droit de l'Université d'Ottawa (AÉND Ottawa), hereinafter BLSA Ottawa.
- 1.2. The financial records of this organization shall be made available to BLSA Ottawa members upon request.
- 1.3. BLSA Ottawa does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sex, religion, disability or age in any of its policies, procedures, or practices.
- 1.4. In accordance with the official languages of the University of Ottawa Students' Union. The BLSA Ottawa recognizes both English and French as the official languages of the organization.
  - a. All BLSA Ottawa events will be conducted in both English and French.
  - b. The Constitution of the BLSA Ottawa will be available English and in French.
  - c. In the case of a discrepancy between the English and French versions of this Constitution, the English version shall be deemed authoritative.

## **Article II – Mandate**

BLSA Ottawa exists to:

- 2.1. Represent Black law students at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law;
- 2.2. Advocate for the welfare, professional needs, and interests of Black law students of the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law;
- 2.3. Provide services, events, and publications, which address black students' needs;
- 2.4. Enhance the educational, cultural, and social experience of its members at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law;

- 2.5. Strengthen the relationship between black law students, black lawyers, and the Canadian legal system; Foster and encourage professional competence;
- 2.6. Analyze the relationship between the black community and the Canadian legal system and spread awareness on the topic;
- 2.7. Instil in law students a greater awareness and commitment to the needs of the black community;
- 2.8. Combat anti-Black racism in Canadian Universities and the Canadian legal system
- 2.9. Influence law schools, legal fraternities and associations to utilize their expertise to initiate a change within the legal system that will support the needs and concerns of the black community;
- 2.10. Increase accessibility to legal resources and legal education for black students; and
- 2.11. Collaborate with other organisations in similar goals.

### **Article III – Membership**

- 3.1. A BLSA Ottawa membership is available to students who are interested in participating in the club's activities and who are:
  - a. Current full-time students enrolled at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
  - b. Current part-time students enrolled at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
  - c. University of Ottawa Faculty of Law alumni.
  - d. Pre-law - high school or University of Ottawa undergraduate students - interested in attending law school.
- 3.2. Becoming a member of the BLSA Ottawa is free of charge.
- 3.3. A registered member attends events on a regular basis.
- 3.4. Members shall be part of the BLSA Ottawa mailing list.

## **Article IV – The Executive**

### 4.1. The Board

4.1.1. The executive of the BLSA Ottawa will be comprised of the following:

- a. **2 Co-Presidents**
- b. **The Vice President Academic Affairs**
- c. **The Vice President Advocacy**
- d. **The Vice President Communications**
- e. **The Vice President Finance**
- f. **The Vice President Francophone**
- g. **The Vice President Mentorship & Community Outreach**
- h. **The Vice President Social Affairs**
- i. **The Moot Coordinator**
- j. **1L Representative - English Common Law**
- k. **1L Representative - French Common Law**

4.1.2. The BLSA Ottawa executive team will meet once a week.

### 4.2. Powers and Duties

#### 4.2.1. **Co-Presidents**

- a. Act as the Chief Executive Officers of the Association.
- b. Charged with the final responsibility of carrying out the legislation, policies, Constitution, and By-Laws of the Association.
- c. Be ex officios on all BLSA Ottawa Committees.
- d. Coordinate and supervise the affairs of the BLSA Ottawa.
- e. Call and preside over the BLSA Ottawa weekly meetings.
- f. Maintain contacts with the executive members of the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers (CABL) and Black Law Students' Association of Canada (BLSA Canada).
- g. Act as representatives of BLSA Ottawa at events and functions as required.
- h. Ensure the continuity of BLSA Ottawa's operations.
- i. Recruit students to become members of BLSA Ottawa.
- j. Keep files of all minutes of meetings.

#### 4.2.2. **Vice President Academic Affairs**

- a. Responsible for all educational, curricular, and academic affairs of the BLSA Ottawa.
- b. Responsible for informing all BLSA Ottawa members of networking and academic opportunities occurring at the faculty, at the University, and in the greater Ottawa community.
- c. Collaborate with the Vice President Mentorship & Community Outreach to provide and facilitate mentorship and networking opportunities for BLSA members.
- d. Organize events centered around academics in collaboration with the Vice President Social.
- e. Provide academic support and workshops to members of the BLSA Ottawa.
- f. Organize and facilitate the *1L Exam Preparation* and *OCI Preparations* events.
- g. Collaborate with the Vice Mentorship & Community Outreach to organize and facilitate the *See Yourself Here* and *Youth Futures* events for pre-law students.

#### 4.2.3. **Vice President Advocacy**

- a. Direct the organization's advocacy efforts and strategy.
- b. Work with the University administration to improve the experience of Black Law students.
- c. Collaborate with BLSA chapters and University of Ottawa clubs to advocate for Black students.
- d. Engage in pro-Black community initiatives and activities.
- e. Consult with Black Law students.
- f. Represent and voice the needs of Black Law students.

#### 4.2.4. **Vice President Communications**

- a. Communicate to students the goals and activities of the BLSA Ottawa.
- b. Publish a regular email to members.

- c. Maintain BLSA Ottawa's online presence, including but not limited to the BLSA Ottawa website and social media accounts.
- d. Manage the promotion and publicity of the BLSA Ottawa and all of its activities, events, opportunities, etc.
- e. Keep minutes of the BLSA Ottawa meetings in a form approved by the Executive.
- f. Manage the BLSA Ottawa digital magazine and encourage, as well as provide creative and artistic opportunities for BLSA Ottawa members.
- g. Perform administrative duties including updating and maintaining the BLSA Ottawa membership list, and bookingrooms for weekly meetings.
- h. Generally facilitate all communication to the members of the Association.

#### 4.2.5. **Vice President Finance**

- a. Advise the BLSA Ottawa executive on all financial matters.
- b. Prepare the BLSA Ottawa's budget in accordance with the regulations of the AÉCLSS.
- c. Keep permanent, as well as accurate accounts and records of all of the BLSA Ottawa's financial activity.
- d. Ensure that all fees are spent in a manner consistent with the mandate of the BLSA Ottawa.
- e. Present a written report of the financial status of the Association to the Executive Board at least once a semester.
- f. Be a member of any commission or committee involved in the financial affairs of the BLSA Ottawa.

#### 4.2.6. **Vice President Francophone**

- a. Work to fulfill the BLSA Ottawa's commitment to bilingualism and inclusive communication.
- b. Responsible for ensuring that BLSA Ottawa is actively advocating for our French constituents.
- c. Assist the Vice President Communications in translating promotional and marketing materials.
- d. Assist in the translation of any and all documents.

- e. Hosts events for francophone law students and/or ensure that all BLSA Ottawa events are at least bilingual.

#### 4.2.7. **Vice President Mentorship & Community Outreach**

- a. Provide and facilitate mentorship opportunities for BLSA Ottawa members with peers and lawyers in the Ottawa community.
- b. Provide and facilitate networking opportunities for BLSA Ottawa members with lawyers and legal professionals.
- c. Responsible for seeking out community organizations which the BLSA Ottawa Association can collaborate with to achieve its objectives.
- d. Responsible for informing all BLSA Ottawa members of networking and mentorship opportunities occurring at the faculty, at the University, and in the greater Ottawa community.
- e. Organize events centered around mentorship and community building in collaboration with the Vice President Social.
- f. Organize and facilitate the BLSA Ottawa Peer-to-Peer Legal Mentorship and Student-Lawyer Legal Mentorship programs.
- g. Collaborate with the Vice President Academic Affairs to organize and facilitate the *See Yourself Here* and *Youth Futures* events for pre-law students.

#### 4.2.8. **Vice President Social Affairs**

- a. Organize and coordinate social and cultural events or activities for the BLSA Ottawa members.
- b. Collaborate with the Vice President Academic Affairs and the Vice President Mentorship & Community Outreach to organize events.
- c. Assisting the Vice President Communications in the promotion of the BLSA Ottawa's events.
- d. Hosting various annual events, including but not limited to, a "Welcome Back" event and a Black Students Forum.
- e. Responsible for room booking, catering, and attendance management for social events.
- f. Collaborate with other clubs to host community building events.

#### 4.2.9. **Moot Coordinator**

- a. Recruit students to participate in the BLSA National Julius Alexander Isaac Moot.
- b. Collaborate with professors, faculty, and legal professionals to find moot coaches and faculty supervisors for the University of Ottawa moot team.
- c. Attend the BLSA National Julius Alexander Isaac Moot.
- d. Organize meetings and preparation sessions.
- e. Secure external funding when needed, to cover travel and accommodation costs for students attending the Julius Alexander Isaac Moot.

#### 4.2.10. **1L Representative - English Common Law**

- a. Represent the interests and be the voice of Black 1L english common law students at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
- b. Share updates with and promote events, opportunities, and resources to 1L english common law students at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
- c. Build community amongst Black 1L students.
- d. Share the comments and concerns of Black 1L english common law students with the rest of the BLSA Ottawa executive team.

#### 4.2.11. **1L Representative - French Common Law**

- a. Represent the interests and be the voice of Black 1L french common law students at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
- b. Share updates with and promote events, opportunities, and resources to 1L french common law students at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law.
- c. Build community amongst Black 1L students.
- d. Share the comments and concerns of Black 1L french common law students with the rest of the BLSA Ottawa executive team.



#### 4.3. Reimbursements

4.3.1. The Vice President Finance will provide a cheque requisition form to the Executive Board at the start of the term.

4.3.2. The BLSA Ottawa Executive Board members are responsible for submitting a cheque requisition form to the Vice President Finance of the BLSA Ottawa within 10 business days of their purchase for expense reimbursement.

4.3.3. Reimbursements must be completed in the form of a cheque.

4.3.4. The Vice President Finance will process and provide reimbursements within 2 to 3 business days of the cheque requisition form submission date.

#### 4.4. Transition

4.4.1. Each member of the Executive Board shall be responsible for hosting a transition session with their successor in the month of May following the election results.

4.4.2. The transition meeting shall cover the responsibilities of the executive role in question, and will be an opportunity to share any and all recommendations, comments, and pertinent content.

4.4.3. Each outgoing Executive Board member will submit a written report providing an overview of the past academic year, along with any recommendations, comments, or information that needs to be shared with their successor.

### **Article V – Elections**

#### 5.1. General Elections

5.5.1. The BLSA Ottawa annual elections will be conducted during a general meeting held in the month of March of each academic year.

- 5.1.2. Voting at the General Election shall be conducted by secret ballot. There shall be one ballot submission per voter.
- 5.1.3. The elections will be organized and facilitated by a graduating or exiting Executive Board member.
- 5.1.4. Winners in the elections process will be ascertained based on the number of votes received, wherein the nominee who receives the highest number of votes shall be declared the winner and ultimate successor of the Executive role they have the highest number of votes for.
- 5.1.5. In the event of a tie, a revote will be conducted. Should a tie occur during the second procedure, the Executive Board members will conduct an internal vote to break the tie. Executive members who are running for the contested position shall not partake in the tie-breaker voting process.

## 5.2. Eligibility

- 5.2.1. All Black BLSA Ottawa members in satisfactory standing, as determined by the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, are eligible to run for a position on the Executive Board in the elections.
- 5.2.2. Please refer to Article II for the definition of a “BLSA Ottawa member”.
- 5.2.3. Only 1L students of the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law can run for the position of 1L Representative.
- 5.2.4. All elected individuals must remain enrolled at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law to remain on the BLSA Ottawa Executive Board.

## **Article VI – Removal from Office**

- 6.1. Any Executive Board member of the BLSA Ottawa may be removed from office for impropriety, or violation of the provisions of this Constitution, as well as for delinquency of duties or misappropriation of funds.
- 6.2. A motion to remove an Executive Board member must be presented in writing to the Co-Presidents and signed by at least three (3) members of the BLSA Council. The motion to remove will then be added to the meeting agenda of the next BLSA Ottawa to be discussed.
- 6.3. A person against whom a motion to remove is directed shall be afforded the opportunity to respond to the allegations made at the meeting.
- 6.4. Passage of a motion to remove shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote (7 of 10 Executive Board members) by the BLSA Ottawa Executive Board.

### **Article VII – Equity**

- 7.1. This document reaffirms the BLSA Ottawa’s commitment to equity through:
  - a. combating sexism, racism, and discrimination;
  - b. combating gender based and sexual violence;
  - c. being allies to our BIPOX and LGBTQIA2S+ communities;
  - d. inclusive and accessible events and services; and
  - e. the promotion of respect, equity, and diversity

### **Article VIII – Amendments to the Constitution**

- 8.1. Amendments to the Constitution must be made according to the majority rule; that is, over half of the votes of the Executive Board and/or over half of the votes of BLSA Ottawa members.

8.2. All amendments to this Constitution shall be adopted in both official languages.