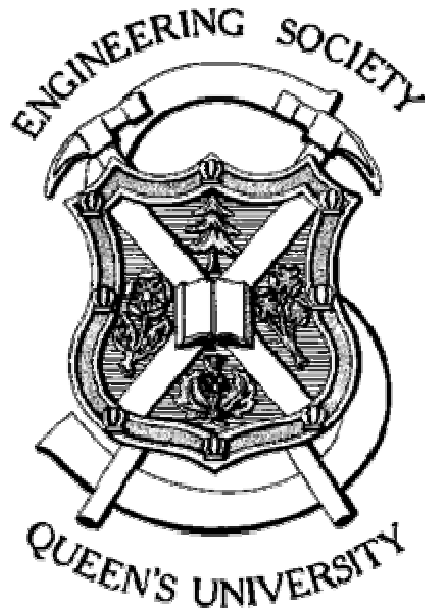


*The Engineering Society of Queen's University Presents:*

# **Academics Position Manual**



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Vice President Academic 2009-2010

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## **Job Description**

The Vice-President (Academic) is a unique position in that you will work with people well beyond your pay grade, so you must assert yourself and garner respect. You represent the entire engineering undergraduate student populace on large scale academic matters in the faculty as well as anything else that comes up which you feel requires student input. The Queen's way has typically been consensus building; you just need to make sure the student voice is heard. Students and administration will be looking for your input on a variety of issues, so it is imperative that you be well versed and knowledgeable about academic policy and regulations. The first few months of the job are spent learning and researching, so that you are then prepared to act as a resource and be consulted for your educated and well thought out views. As the year continues, you will keep up with the current happenings around the University and offer your help to any initiative that may arise or that you move forward.

Once you are elected, there is a large amount of transitioning so that you have a stable base to build your own ideas off of. Once you are officially in power, the term is almost over so you really just need to make sure everything from the year finishes up smoothly. There are no commitments for the April exam periods, and then you start work over the summer. The position comes with a summer job which is a great and necessary opportunity to research, develop relationships with all the important people, and get some projects and reports done which you will use during the school year. The job entails a lot of reading and report writing, but it is very rewarding when you dedicate a lot of time towards an idea or an issue and you are able to dramatically influence the outcome. There are always small victories to keep you motivated and you will get the sense that you have changed something and made it better. The faculty is full of very nice people who are very receptive to student ideas and input; in fact their biggest complaint is usually that they do not get enough of it.

One of the best aspects of the job is the incredible flexibility amongst what ideas and initiatives you can pursue. It is only a one year term, and the faculty runs on a much longer timeline, but you have the freedom to pursue an aspect and make it your own, whether it be internally or externally, and whatever facet you want.

As a member of the executive, you get to see many of the inner workings of the society (and probably other societies too) including parts that don't pertain directly to your portfolio. You will be required to stay up to date on the goings-on within the other portfolios, which is often a lot of fun, and in turn, your fellow exec (and directors) will keep up-to-date with your portfolio and provide you with a second, third and fourth opinion. Academics is an almost separate area in comparison to the rest of the Engineering Society, but there will always be opportunities to work with other people in the Society. This provides more opportunity to learn, and is a great way to bust out of your academic bubble.

Finally, one of the great benefits of the job is all of the people you meet and the connections you make. As a previous senator, I had many contacts within the general University administration, however; this job opened me up to a wide range of alumni, faculty and student leaders that I wouldn't have met otherwise.

## **People I Work With...**

### **Faculty**

I get to work with all the people up in the faculty office as well as the associate deans and the financial officer. Most of the work that I do with these people is through committee work that you can read about in the meetings section, but sometimes if you have an idea to discuss or an issue you will be meeting one on one. Occasionally you will work with professors and department heads; it all depends on what comes up and what you decide to work on.

### **AMS**

It has now become customary that the EngSoc VP Academic get involved with the AMS alignment with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). Involvement consists of a few meetings every couple of months, as well as one or two conferences in the year. You will also meet with the Academic Affairs Commissioner (AAC) on a regular basis just to discuss academics as they are a great resource to bounce ideas off of. The AAC will also have a few connections to upper administration that you may want to cash in on.

Technically, you don't have to attend AMS Assembly, but I've always found it useful to do so (plus someone might proxy you a vote).

### **Committees**

There are a few committees under the academic portfolio, including Students for Engineering Education Development, and the Better Education Donation Fund representatives, and the Faculty-Student Liaison Committee which is really in need of a better name. Your level of involvement will depend on your own interest and the committee chair.

### **Exec/Director Team**

Clearly, you get to work closely with your fellow Executive and Directors. Beyond that, you will see lots of Science Quest and the service managers while you are there over the summer, even though you don't actually work with them directly. There will be a few occasions where your knowledge or connections will be needed by other people within the Society and it provides a nice opportunity to expand outwards from your sometimes secluded world.

You'll have a chance to work closely with the Director of First Year, especially if changes are happening within the first year curriculum. In addition, there's been a growth in overlap between Academics and Professional Development, so you'll have common interests with this person too.

### **General Manager**

You'll get to know the GM of EngSoc over the summer, as you'll be seeing them every day. Although the GM was mainly hired to provide support for the services, they also serve as long term memory for the society. It's important to work with the GM to teach them the Academic portfolio so that they may be a great resource in this area in the future.

## Relevant Policy Manual Sections

This is the relevant policy sections which apply to the Vice-President Academic. Keep in mind, once you are elected you can always propose changes to council, so feel free to expand elsewhere and modify the position so that it fits your own vision. One of the great parts of the job is its inherent flexibility in the areas of work that can be done. The policy is always a good reference so you do not forget anything that you need to do.

### **Part I: Vice-President (Academic)**

*(Ref. By-Law 4, Part IV, Section 16)*

- 1.** The Vice-President (Academic) shall represent the Society to the Faculty of Applied Science and to Queen's University on all academic and curricular matters, and in matters related to the implementation of the Integrated Learning philosophy. The Vice-President shall act to enhance the quality of education delivered to all students of Queen's Applied Science.
- 2.** The Vice-President (Academic) shall have direct responsibility and authority over the following elements of the Society:
  - a.** The Faculty-Student Liaison Committee.
  - b.** The Better Equipment Donation (B.E.D.) Fund.
  - c.** Englinks, the Engineering Society's tutor-matching program.
  - d.** Students for Engineering Education development.
- 3.** The duties of the Vice-President (Academic) include, but shall not be limited to:
  - a.** Attending all executive meetings as described in By-Law 4, Part III.
  - b.** Representing the Engineering Society membership in all matters related to academics and curriculum.
  - c.** Developing and implementing initiatives of a curricular nature in order to enhance engineering education
  - d.** Being an ex-officio, voting member of the Better Equipment Donation Fund Board, as defined in By-Law 16.
  - e.** Being a voting member of the Faculty Board of Applied Science
  - f.** Serving on the Academic Planning Committee of the Faculty Board of Applied Science
  - g.** Acting as a member of Students for Engineering Education Development and monitoring its activities.
  - h.** Serving on the Operations committee of the Faculty Board of Applied Science
  - i.** Representing the Engineering Society on the Faculty-Student Liaison Committee
  - j.** Monitoring and acting as a resource for the discipline club academic representatives
  - k.** Monitoring the activities of the Queen's University Senate and its associated Committees and Subcommittees in consultation with the Engineering Student Senators
  - l.** Overseeing Faculty Board representatives.
  - m.** Being a liaison with all groups described within the portfolio of this position and representing these groups to EngSoc council.

- n. Representing EngSoc at external committee meetings whose mandates fall within the portfolio of the Vice-President (Academic).
- o. Liaising with the AMS Academic Affairs Commission and sitting on the AMS Academic Caucus
- p. The Vice-President (Academic) shall have a paid summer position, as detailed in  $\alpha$ .B, and will be required to be in Kingston for the summer to develop Applied Science curricular initiatives, to represent the Society's academic interests and serve as resource for the Engineering Society members. The Summer activities shall consist of:
  - i. Those activities and initiatives outlined in the Vice-President (Academic)'s Summer Plan, as detailed in  $\alpha$ .B.2
  - ii. The Summer Plan Regular Task List including:
    1. Submitting biweekly reports to the Executive
    2. Submitting monthly reports to Council
    3. Assisting Executive who are geographically unable to visit Kingston during the summer months
    4. Finalizing the annual operations of the Better Education Donation (BED) Fund.
    5. Liaising with the Faculty of Applied Science on Academic Issues
    6. Meeting frequently with the Applied Science Summer Projects Office
    7. Liaison with the AMS Academic Affairs Commission

## Daily Tasks

The time commitment for VP Academic varies over the year from the 40+ hours in the summer months (when you're paid to work) to maybe 5 hours on a slow week. Don't worry, pretty much everything stops throughout exam time, all you have to do is stay up to date and check your email. You should anticipate about 10-15 hours a week being spent on various EngSoc related things, not all of which will pertain directly to your portfolio. I found that I purposely scheduled less EngSoc during weeks where there was a lot of school to do, but made up for it by scheduling everything EngSoc into weeks where there was less school to do. Naturally, council weeks are a bit heavier.

E-mail: 0.5-2 hours a day

Answering questions: .5-1hrs

Attending meetings: 5-15hrs/week

Office Hours: 3 per week

## Meetings I Attend

**Exec/director meetings** are every week and are approximately one hour depending on how busy the week is and how talkative everyone is feeling. There is an exec meeting and an executive/director meeting.

**Operations Committee** meets once a month. This is a very important body that makes most of the decisions and reviews for the faculty. It is probably the most interesting of all

the meetings you attend as the decisions made within it have far reaching implications for students. This is the time for you to voice a strong opinion and keep a watchful eye out for students. You will often find yourself arguing against a lot of people because it is in the best interest of students, so do not be afraid to stand up for your judgements.

**Academic Caucus** – This is a biweekly meeting consisting of the Academic Affairs Commissioner and the academic representatives from every undergraduate faculty. It is a great venue to see what is going on academically outside of engineering. It usually accomplishes one or two minor things a year but it is invaluable for meeting people who share your interests.

**EngSoc council** – Every second Thursday, you must submit a report the Saturday before and think of some well phrased and smart questions to ask others. It can be a bit long sometimes but usually very interesting. Get ready to defend everything you have done.

**Faculty Board** – The third Wednesday of every month, and about 1 to 2 hours. You will be in charge of preparing the year representatives as well as the senators in advance. This is where changes to the Faculty get approved, and it is a great place to ask pointed questions. It is important that students ask good questions so the faculty knows that students are involved and aware of the current happenings in the faculty.

**Students for Engineering Education Development** – A great group of people, they usually run free without needing a whole lot of guidance, but a really good place to discuss new ideas and get some support if you need it. Meetings are every two weeks and you do not have to attend all of them but they are usually a lot of fun.

**BED fund** – There will be a large meeting in September with all the representatives, and then a lot of e-mailing to make sure everybody is on top of getting the proposals done. Then a final meeting or two to finalize everything before you bring it to council. Do not let this one get away from you. Fortunately, you have a coordinator that will do most of the legwork for you.

## **Projects I Completed Over the Past Year Thus Far**

This is the highlight reel of a few notable projects that were accomplished in the past year.

- i. Policy Updates: The fun world of policy! I've been updating much of the academic policy to adhere with what actually occurs within the portfolio. Bringing this to council for approval confirms the direction that this position is headed in.
- ii. EngLinks Revival: Due to IT problems of the past, the EngLinks service died last year. Bringing back the service was a matter of hiring a great coordinator and supporting them in whatever they needed. We'll be continuing to lay the framework to ensure that the service continues for years to come.
- iii. Curriculum development: A major part of my portfolio during the school year has been working on curriculum development. We've been designing a "design spine" for the program to ensure that all years and disciplines are getting enough design

experience. In addition, we'll be bringing forward some new changes in the first year curriculum.

- iv. **Technical Seminars:** This is a project that I've been working on with the VPSD and Director of PD. This is a pilot program; we'll see how it turns out in January.
- v. **Accreditation System:** CEAB (Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board) has tasked a few schools to look into the development of a new "outcomes based" accreditation system. I've been working with the faculty to help develop a system that will be beneficial to both students and the University.

## Upcoming Projects

**Budget Cuts** – The University is dealing with less funding every year, and it has reached the point where they are looking for some creative ways to save a few dollars. It will be important for students to help by providing feedback and ideas, as well as monitor final decisions.

**Government Issues** – The recession is hitting Ontario hard, and the government will be attempting to moderate its effects. The current funding program for universities will end next year, and the future is unknown. Keeping informed and communicating these changes to students will be a high priority. There is also the question of AMS alignment with a national lobbying body that would require the help of faculty societies.

**Curriculum Changes** – Changes to accreditation standards will force Applied Science to shift around courses and alter the curriculum to adapt to the new policies. Good thing you sit on the committee that approves all curriculum changes, as you will be the student voice that reviews and provides feedback. This will require a lot of research and collaboration with students from all the programs.

## Timeline

This is what happens when on this rollercoaster journey of knowledge.

**February:** You are now elected, start reading, do some hiring, and more reading along with transition meetings.

**March:** You are now in power, but you likely have no idea what is happening. Start talking to people, and attend the spring assembly of OUSA. Think about your strat plan, and complete your summer plan. Try to implement any major policy changes that can't wait for September either at the AGM or final two councils of the year

**April:** Pass exams, it looks really bad when the VP Academic fails

**May:** Yay summer! Get ready for the best summer of your life. Write your strategic plan, and read through endless piles of reports like it's your job, oh wait, it is!

**June:** Start everything, make sure you have a handle on everything and make a point of meeting all the people upstairs as they have a tendency to go on vacation and disappear.

**July:** Begin to drown in endless amounts of work, book your vacation, and keep going.

**August:** Wrap up everything in progress and get ready for the school year. You are about to have a lot less time so get everything in order before classes begin.

**September: FROSH WEEK!** You will be expected to help out during frosh week even though you are not officially affiliated with it, as well people will be returning to Kingston and judging everything you accomplished over the summer. Get all of your committees and people up and running.

**October:** Midterms, everything else should be going alright, so study hard and do some work on all of your individual projects during this time.

**November:** Continue to work, get everything done before exams.

**December:** Looks bad if you fail, but there will always be a few exam issues that you will have to deal with. Take it in stride.

**January:** Finish up everything before the new person gets elected, begin writing transition manual.

**February:** Time to transition, tie up loose ends if you must.

**March:** Hand over your keys and hope your exams go well.

## Contact Information

If you have any more questions about this position please don't hesitate to contact me. You can reach me at [vpa@engsoc.queensu.ca](mailto:vpa@engsoc.queensu.ca) any day of the week. I also have regular office hours which are posted in the EngSoc lounge in Beamish-Munro Hall.

## Conclusion

The position of Vice President Academic is a unique one. You strive to encourage the students to take an active interest in their education which can often be overlooked despite that that it is the primary reason for attending this institution. There are times when you will be an advocate for students, and other times when you will be a cheerleader. It is such a broad and diverse portfolio, ranging from academic regulations, to tuition policy, teaching quality, and government lobbying. You will have a great opportunity to make this position your own, to concentrate on an aspect that interests you and make it your goal to improve it. The VP Academic position is well respected by the faculty, students, and university administration, thus if you want to focus on internal versus external aspects then the choice is yours. Being prepared to schmooze with confidence is a must, and the job will force you to acquire this ability.

It does take a unique mindset to take on this role, as you must have a genuine interest in the subject matter in order to be successful. If academics seems interesting to you, then the position will provide a great prospect to gain some experience which is applicable to real life. You will learn a great deal about yourself, as well as students and the University. This job gives you the chance to be a part of something amazing; if I had to do it again, I'd do it without hesitation.

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