STUDENT GROUP SERVICES

Executive Transition Handbook

Welcome/ Introduction

Welcome to the executive team transition handbook! Inside you will find resources and tips for making a smooth transition from one team to the next, including how to write a year-end report, what to include in a transition notebook, and some guidelines for planning a great year for your student group!

The Purpose of This Handbook

The Executive Transitions Handbook is meant as a guideline. Following the instructions in this handbook is **not required** by Student Group Services, the University of Alberta, the Students' Union, nor the Graduate Students' Association. We want this to be a guide for ensuring the most important details of your student group's leadership are passed onto future generations.

This handbook is also not a rulebook: feel free to take our resources and make them your own, or use some but not all -- whatever works best for you and your team! The resources, exercises, and lists in this book have been compiled from a variety of places, and chosen based on the experiences of past student group and volunteer organization executives. If you have suggestions for additions to future editions of this handbook, please send them to Student Group Services at clubs@su.ualberta.ca.

General Best Practices

- **Create a binder or Google Drive folder for individual offices**, with a folder for each executive year; keep a historical record of each officer's accomplishments and best practices for the future!
- **Schedule a joint Transition Retreat for both the outgoing and incoming teams.** A retreat is a good time to establish expectations for the year, build a basic events calendar, and start your new team's term together off on a great foot! This can also serve you as a team experience to bond and build rapport. See later in this handbook for a sample agenda for this retreat.

Remember to complete your annual re-registration with Student Group Services! (This is the only thing in this handbook that you **must** do to operate as a recognized Student Group.) You have from the first of the month your elections take place to the last day of the month following to submit a registration form on BearsDen. This is required for your club to have access to privileges such as campus space bookings, equipment rentals, and more. If you have any issues with the registration form, please contact SGS at clubs@su.ualberta.ca!

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For Outgoing Executive Officers

Time to shine, finishing teams, and reflect on your accomplishments and challenges from the past year! All of the information you can provide to your successor can prevent them from making repetitive mistakes, and help them make the club bigger and better than before!

EXECUTIVE TEAM TRANSITION MANUAL

There are some materials that will be especially important to pass along to the new team in charge of your club, to ensure continuity and success in the future! **These can be put into each individual officer transition manual** or, if you prefer, transferred in a general team transition resource.

Transition Manual Checklist

- **Student Group Mission Statement, Vision, Values and Goals**
  - A mission statement ensures that your group will have continuity from year to year, and will help all its efforts be focused in the right direction.
  - Include both short and long term goals, and give new executives an overview of the progress that you've made in achieving them.
  - If your student group doesn't have at least a mission statement, you could incorporate the creation of one into your transition workshop or retreat.
- **Student Group Constitution and/or Bylaws**
  - Ensure that your new executive officers have copies of the constitution and bylaws to help prevent future problems with communication and procedure. Make sure it accurately reflects what your group does, and that you are following the rules everyone's agreed to.
- **Officer Roles and Responsibilities**
  - Include complete descriptions of all the executives' roles. This information should be in your constitution in its most basic form.
  - Provide detailed roles and responsibilities for each position in individual officer transition manuals.
- **Club Policies and Procedures**
  - These can be outlined in your constitution as well, but if you have separate policies on internal programming (such as granting or scholarship programs, committee assignments and compositions, etc), include these for easy reference as well!
- **University of Alberta Policies and Procedures**
  - **Student Groups Procedure**
  - **Registration and Training Deadlines**
  - **Code of Student Behaviour**
- **Financial Information**
  - **Bank Account Info** (home branch, account numbers, cheque books, current signing authorities…)
  - **Annual Budget**
  - **Tax Forms, Applications, etc.** (For Clubs that are also registered charities/societies) **and their deadlines**

- **Previous Correspondence, Agendas, and Meeting Minutes**
  - Include any correspondence records you have to give the incoming officers a good idea of where they should start. Agendas and old meeting minutes can also help an executive stay on track from the previous year, and they should be kept up throughout the year.
- **Resources**
  - **Templates and Forms:** Agenda templates, copies of forms (eg. grant applications, event proposals, marketing plans), and any other relevant resources can be included in a solid Transition Manual.
  - Did you have particular people or websites that were instrumental in helping you succeed? Make sure you list them here. Also provide your executive with a breakdown of any supplies they'll need to buy or would find useful in their position.
- **Calendar and Deadlines**
  - Keep a calendar of all important deadlines and timelines for your student group, and highlight anything coming up. If you don't want to or can't plan out the next year, include the calendar from the past year and a blank template for the new executives to fill in themselves.
  - **Event Descriptions:** timelines, budgets, planning charts, lists, evaluations, and statistics. Outline the reasons why you made certain choices and decisions, what the goals were of the event and whether they were achieved, and make future recommendations based on these. Recording your thought processes lets a new executive avoid pitfalls and make sure they keep what worked well, rather than changing for the sake of change.
- **Contact List**
  - Include Student Group Services, as well as any important contacts like an advisors or liaisons at affiliated or parent organizations

You can organize these materials into a physical, hard-copy binder or folder, or upload them onto a shared Google Drive for easy reference anywhere. The most important part is making them accessible to everyone!

If your club has any materials that are crucial to the functioning or general operations that do not appear on this list, of course include them as well! This list is the most generally applicable to our experiences with student groups so far. If you have any questions or would like any additional support, feel free to reach out to Student Group Services.

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INDIVIDUAL PORTFOLIO TRANSITIONS

Use this checklist to make sure that you've completed your responsibilities and tied up all loose ends for your successor! Check out templates and worksheets that can help you with this checklist, either included in this resource package or online at uasu.ca/studentgroups.

ITEM	✔
Create an ACTION PLAN for transitioning your successor. Things to include in this action plan: ○ Schedule One-on-one training time ○ Deadlines for yourself to complete transition manual, assorted worksheets ○ Invite them to shadow you at meetings you chair or attend as part of your officer duties (if applicable) ○ Introductions to relevant parties or contacts, either in person or via email ○ Important tasks, including time-sensitive duties for the new person to complete ○ ____ ○ ____ ○ ____ ○ ____	
Create a **Transition Manual** (based on the checklist on pages 3-4) for the specific position, containing the following: ○ Officer Roles and Responsibilities (as found in the Constitution, with additional details you might think are helpful to know) ○ a CALENDAR with your outgoing executive team, including all events, deadlines, and meetings from the past year and anything you have planned for the upcoming year. ○ **ACCOMPLISHMENTS WORKSHEET** (page 6) ○ a contact list relevant to their office in particular (if applicable) ○ An EXPENSES LIST for the duties/portfolio of the office, even if they are approximations or the actuals from the previous year ○ Committee descriptions and reports (if applicable) ○ all passwords and account access for social media, officer email, etc. (if applicable) Add more if you need/want here: ○ ____ ○ ____ ○ ____ ○ ____	
Complete introductions for your successor to meet your important contacts, either in person or via email.	

Wrap up all outstanding communication and let other parties know that your position is in transition.	
FOR PRESIDENTS/PRIMARY CONTACTS: Ensure Annual Registration with Student Group Services is completed (deadline is the last day of the month following your election month).	

Additional Tips:

- It may be helpful to break down calendars into tasks that should be done by the end of each month, especially if your club has recurring events or ongoing projects from year to year.
- Encourage your successor to keep notes throughout the year to make writing this report easier for them to write at the end of *their* term.
- **TOP TIP:** Designate one or two executive positions to have the secondary or backup email address for social media and other online apps. Just in case someone loses the passwords to their accounts, it's best to have a backup!

DID YOU KNOW?

The University of Alberta IST can set up CCID email addresses for your club! This will give you access to additionally secure Google Apps on the University of Alberta's servers. IST can also reset lost passwords through verification with Student Group Services if the worst should happen and you get locked out.

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Resources and Templates

Accomplishments Template

ACCOMPLISHMENTS	BARRIERS/ LIMITATIONS	RESOURCES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS	NEXT STEPS

Additional resources are available on the Student Group Services Website, uasu.ca/studentgroups, under "**Resources and Downloads**."

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For Incoming Executive Officers

Congratulations on your new leadership role in your student group! No matter what position you hold, you are on your way to making a great impact on the organization. Use the following questions and tools to help start off your term on a good foot!

Before Your First Meeting With Your Predecessor And Your New Team

Reflecting on your motivations and preliminary goals that you have for yourself in this position can help guide your transition and training. Use the prompts below as a tool to help you prepare for taking on your new role!

- This is my understanding of my roles in the position I have:
- Things I want to know about my position (forms, duties, processes, policies, procedures):
- I have these expectations for myself in this position
- I have these expectations for the rest of the executive team
- These are areas of opportunity or improvements I want to focus on in my role this year
- This is my vision for the upcoming year

After you have done one-on-one training with the previous officer, revisit these reflections prior to meeting with the rest of the new team. With more context, have any of your ideas or expectations changed?

During Your Transition Meeting With Your Predecessor

Use these questions as a guideline for what you should ask the last person who held your position. If you are beginning a second term in the same role, feel free to ask yourself these questions to reflect on how you would like to improve from last year. There's no such thing as a silly question -- we've left some extra room for you to brainstorm additional questions to ask at this meeting.

- Who on the executive team should I be working with most often? How does my position fit in the context of the executive team as a whole?
- Am I responsible for any committees or working groups in the student group? What is my role on these boards?
- What should I be doing immediately in this position?
- Who should I meet? What services or contacts should I know to make my job easier?
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Goal Setting

It is important to set goals to guide your activities throughout the year. Below, there are two tables to help you with goal-setting, which can be helpful to do before, during, or after you have your first meeting with either your predecessor or new exec team. It all depends on your preference! You also don't have to use these tables: they're simply here as a resource for you.

We also think it's important to set short-term goals, or "quick wins" to build yourself some positive momentum as you start your year. Think of them as a way to begin on the right foot, and as learning opportunities to help figure out your place on your new team and in your new shoes!

Revisit these tables with your team or at specific times throughout the year to track your progress!

Things I Want to Accomplish First (Short-Term Goals)

GOAL	TIMELINE	SPECIFICS
1.		
2.		
3.		

Things I Want to Accomplish By the End of the Year (Long-Term Goals)

GOAL	TIMELINE	SPECIFICS
1.		
2.		
3.		

Consider using the SMART Goal model:

For more on SMART Goal Setting, visit: https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals.php

- **S**pecific: What do you want to accomplish? Make it more detailed than "Make sure the club has money for next year."
- **M**easurable: What are the metrics that you will use to determine whether you have achieved your goal? (eg. How much money do you want the club to have for next year?)
- **A**ttainable/Actionable: How are you going to accomplish the goal? What supplies or resources do you need?
- **R**elevant: How does this goal relate to the priorities of your office? The priorities or vision of the organization?
- **T**ime-Based: What is the schedule or timeline for accomplishing this?

Transition Retreat

Effective turnover in your executive team is the key to continued success for your student group. A year can be a long time for some, but a short time for other projects, and to ensure effective, positive and consistent change, intentional and efficient transition time is invaluable. Executive transitions are like training at a new job: it helps to set the tone for the term, and can make or break the entire experience.

When planning a retreat, a relaxed, open atmosphere should be encouraged so that your group can benefit from an honest evaluation of the accomplishments and issues from the previous year. This outline can help you figure out how to organize your meeting/retreat.

Setting Up the Transition Retreat

Depending on the time of year your group is completing its transitions, scheduling may be difficult. If at all possible, try to find a weekend or other day when your members might be able to spend a handful of hours together. You can also break up the Transition Retreat into multiple sessions -- our recommendation is to set goals to get through a specified amount of content at each session if that's the route you choose!

Note: This model can be useful but does not necessarily mean your group has to use it, nor do we guarantee that your group will have a successful transition by following these guidelines.

For the best results, we recommend that the outgoing President (or equivalent) takes on the planning of this event, in collaboration with the incoming President (or equivalent).

Sample Agenda For Transition Retreat

I. Welcome and Introductions................................[Outgoing President]
II. The Year in Review.. [Outgoing President]
A. Goals
B. Programs and Activities
C. Membership and Recruitment
D. Officers and Organizational Structure
E. Operations and Finances
F. Advisor Involvement
G. Public Image
III. Legacy Passoff
IV. Officer Transition
V. Wrap Up

Breakdown of Items

I. Welcome and Introductions

This is a great opportunity for icebreakers, if you're a big group that doesn't know each other very well. If you're a really tight-knit transferring executive, it's also a great way to get a sense of the kind of teams you want to build.

Work on team-building games, do a strengths assessment, or start with a fun activity. (Check out the Resources on page 14!) Before this meeting, be sure to send out an agenda, and at this point at the meeting, review the agenda to make sure everything everyone wants to cover is included.

An activity that can be particularly helpful is **expectation-setting**. On a flipchart or whiteboard (something that everyone at the retreat can easily reference throughout the day), brainstorm as a group the expectations everyone has of themselves, of others, and of the facilitators/leaders of the retreat, so that everyone feels comfortable throughout.

II. The Year in Review

The first goal of your Transition Meeting should be to evaluate and review the past year. This will ground the meeting, especially if you started with a more fun or silly activity, and will make sure that the incoming executive is aware of what the successes and challenges were for your group over the last year. The incoming executives need to know what kind of a group they are expected to manage, what kind of a team the group is used to dealing with, what problems they'll be facing, and what things have been going really well.

Preparation: Assign sections to officers on the outgoing team to prepare a general summary, based on the questions provided under each heading (examples of the officer(s) that could summarize each section are provided in parentheses).

During the Retreat: Have each officer present their summary to the group, allowing time for questions and discussion from the incoming team as needed.

A. Goals (President)

1. Review the group's goals for the previous year, and use the following questions as starting points for evaluation. Make sure both the outgoing executives and incoming executives get a chance to express their feedback. If a goal is particularly complex, it's good to know how it appears to different people.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
   a. What did we hope to accomplish?
   b. How well did we do on each goal?
   c. Which goals should be continued this year?
   d. Which goals need to be changed?
   e. Which goals are no longer feasible?
   f. Which goals do we need to better communicate to our group?

B. Programs and Activities (Vice President, VP Programming, VP External)

1. Evaluate what your group did. Did you host events last year? Did you implement new programming or guidelines? Again, make sure to hear from all parties.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
   a. How effective were the programs / activities we sponsored?
   b. How did we measure their effectiveness?
   c. Did we have a good balance in our schedule of programs and activities?
   d. Were our programs and activities consistent with our goals?
   e. What activities and programs do we want to repeat?

C. Membership & Recruitment (President, VP Recruitment, VP Operations)

1. Evaluate the number of members you have and their commitment. The incoming executive may need to be aware of tensions between members, factors that could negatively impact your group's membership, and the kind of members that have really stepped up in group operations.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
   a. Do we have too many, too few, or just the right number of members?
   b. What actions did we take to recruit members?
   c. Were our recruitment efforts successful? How?
   d. Are our members as actively involved as we want them to be?
   e. What are the opportunities for members to get involved in a meaningful way?

D. Officers and Organizational Structure (Secretary, VP Operations, President)

1. Evaluate the position requirements for each member of your executive team and make sure that each member understands what they do, as well as what their colleagues do.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
    a. Are officer roles and responsibilities clearly described? How?
    b. Did officers work as a team last year? Is more teamwork needed?
    c. What contributed to the team dynamic?
    d. Are there other opportunities for executive members to collaborate?
    e. Is the time and effort required in each position comparable? If not, what could be done to re-balance team responsibilities?
    f. Is there two-way communication between officers and general members?
    g. How do members feel about the officers?
    h. Are committees used and if so are they effective, or could time and resources be used more effectively?

E. Operations and Finances (Treasurer/VP Finance, VP Internal, Secretary, President)

1. Review and evaluate your group's finances, communication plans, etc. Make sure that every executive member understands the group's constitution and knows where to find it if they have questions.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
    a. Were the finances adequate for our group? Were they managed properly?
    b. Were meetings run effectively? Was their frequency adequate?
    c. Did the committee structure work?
    d. Did we have scheduling conflicts with other groups or activities?
    e. Did we have any problems with the constitution this year? (eg. too vague, too specific, missing protocol)

F. Advisor Involvement (President, VP Operations/Secretary)

1. If applicable to your group, evaluate both the quality of your advisors and the quantity of them. Does every position communicate with your advisors? Make sure that you are checking into how things proceeded last year as well as reviewing what the current status of any relationships is.
2. **Questions to Consider:**
    a. Did our advisor provide the support we needed?
    b. Did we give our advisor(s) the chance to get involved with our group?
    c. What kind of relationship exists with our group and our advisor?
    d. How could we improve faculty and advisor involvement?

G. Public Image (VP External, VP Operations/Secretary, President)

1. Use this time to evaluate how other student groups and services on campus perceive you. You can use value-based exercises and word associations, as well as surveys, to figure out whether your vision for your student group is in line with the public image you're projecting.
2. For this section, it is important to separate the executives' work from their personalities; remember to take into consideration the different biases of each individual member of the teams.
3. **Questions to Consider:**
    a. How do we see ourselves? Is this how others see us? How can we make these two viewpoints congruent with one another?
    b. Do we create an environment where non-members are welcome, or treated as "outsiders"?
    c. What relationships presently exist between our group and other bodies on campus?
    d. How could we enhance our image on campus? Off-campus?

The incoming President and their team can also use these consideration questions in their goal-setting for the upcoming year.

III. Legacy Passoff

Review the following questions as an outgoing executive team – communicate these as clearly as you can to the incoming executive, and be honest where things are difficult. If you can, make sure that you let the incoming executive know when/if/how they are allowed to contact you past your term to get advice or help.

Preparation: Have flipchart paper or other materials for recording responses/discussion for the group.

During the Retreat: Take time for individuals to identify their answers to the questions, then move into small group (2-4 people) discussions to refine responses before bringing discussion to the whole group.

- What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the group?
    - You can do a SWOTT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Trends, and Threats) Analysis for your group at this point (see Resources, page 14)
    - If you want, you could have the outgoing and incoming teams prepare the analysis separately and then compare them, to better see where the differences in perspective are.
- What is the best advice you can give your successor?
- What were the major challenges and accomplishments in your term?

IV. Officer Transition

Set aside at least an hour for the incoming and outgoing officers to meet one-on-one. Outgoing officers and incoming officers could have very different perspectives or priorities, and should make time to understand these. In an individual session, executives should be discussing the contents of the Transition Manual and all other materials that the outgoing exec has prepared.

Things that are especially helpful to cover in person include:

- Timetables for position-specific duties and responsibilities
- Review of unfinished projects and initiatives
- Important contacts and resource people
- Mistakes that could have been avoided, and how
- Advice for the new officer
- How to reach the outgoing officer
- Review each of the worksheets included in the SGS Transition Materials

Preparation: Have all the outgoing officers prepare a Transition Report, using the Individual Portfolio Transition Checklist on page 4 - 5.

During the Retreat: Outgoing and Incoming officers pair up to review the contents of the transition manual. Emphasize that the Outgoing officer should focus on explaining how the transition manual is laid out to their successor.

V. Wrap-Up

Once each officer has had a chance to review the materials they've been given and had a chance to talk to their outgoing/incoming counterpart, it's a good idea to do one last activity as a whole. Many groups and organizations have ceremonies that involve the executive team or the entire group – create your own way to thank the outgoing exec and welcome the new exec. An official ceremony may not be necessary, but make sure that your group's incoming executive are leaving inspired and not dragged down!

Although this may go without saying, informal socializing can really help cement a group's relationships – take some time to let the new officers get to know each other more personally, especially after a pretty intensive transitioning session. This can be a dinner to wrap up the day, or some bonding time on another day too!

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Resources

Free strengths assessments + activities

- 5 Love Languages
- Myers-Briggs (free version)
- True Colours

Goal Setting and Vision Work

- Goal Setting Worksheets (smartsheet.com)

SWOTT Analysis

- The Startup Garage

Discover Governance (University of Alberta Students' Union)

- Transition Survival Kit

Other Recommended Programming/Training

- Emerging Leaders Program
- Alberta Student Leadership Summit
- Student Group Executive Professional Development