



GRADUATE HOUSE RESIDENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)

February 2nd | 4:00 - 5:00 PM

Event Room, 2nd Floor, Oak House

Meeting Minutes

IN ATTENDANCE

Name	Role
Aisalyn Templin	Administration and Communications Assistant (Secretary)
Alicia Whitfield	Manager, Residence Admissions
Anjali	Resident
Derrick Gravener	Associate Dean, Residence Life (Chair)
Gabrielle	Resident
Lucy Chandler	Residence Administration and Project Coordinator
Michael Fernandes	Residence Life Coordinator
Mohamed	Resident
Nathan	Residence Council Co-President
Ryan Hopkin	Facilities Coordinator
Steven Masse	Dean of Residence and Director of Student Life
Tao	Residence Advisor
Yara	Residence Council Co-President
Victoria	Resident

REGRETS

Name	Role
Julian	Resident
Kevin Dancy	Director of Residence Operations
Laura Lysecki	Manager, Building Operations and Services
Samarendra	Resident
Sangeeta Jeyakumar	Manager of Finance, Administration and Operations



AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. 2026-27 Residence Budget Highlights *POSTPONED*
3. 2026-27 Residence Admissions Process Overview
4. Residence Council Updates
5. Facilities Project Updates
6. Digital Suggestion Box Review
7. Other business

Note: This meeting was chaired by Derrick Gravener, Associate Dean, Residence Life

WELCOME

Derrick Gravener welcomed meeting attendees and shared a land acknowledgment. All participants introduced themselves.

2026-27 RESIDENCE ADMISSIONS PROCESS OVERVIEW

Alicia Whitfield presented an overview of the timeline for summer residence admissions ([see slide 10](#)). Whitfield highlighted that summer and 2026-27 returner applications opened on January 22. Whitfield explained that residents can gain priority for re-entry by achieving the Graduate House Community Participant Status ([GCPS](#)). Eligibility for GCPS includes participation in residence programming, including pre- and post-event forms. Completed suitemate agreements are also part of the criteria for GCPS. She said that the first round of offers will occur on a rolling basis beginning on March 2 until space is filled.

Gabrielle asked whether a new form with the suitemate agreement was sent out, as she completed it already. Tao responded that the older suitemate agreement form would still count if completed at the end of August onward. Michael Fernandes said residents will not be penalized if they have completed the older form.

Nathan commented that the Council often receives GCPS questions.

RESIDENCE COUNCIL UPDATES

Nathan provided an overview of recent activities for the Graduate House Council (GHC). He explained that the Council has hosted 5-6 events so far this year. This included a pottery night at an Arts studio on Danforth, where 20 attendees participated. Another event was called 'Learn to Curl' and was held at the Varsity at UTSC. One of the Council members is on the varsity curling team and invited 15 residents to participate. This event was particularly popular and may be hosted again.

Nathan highlighted that the Council hosted a Winter break holiday dinner, to encourage students to meet others in the residence. There were 84 sign-ups. Other than this event, the Council took a Winter



break hiatus. The first event of the New Year was the recent 'Snow-Ball' event, hosted at Hart House. There were more signups than expected, at 87 in total. This past Saturday, the Council hosted a successful skating and movie night at Evergreen Brickworks.

Nathan explained that the Council has been speaking with Britney Glasgow-Osment, the Residence Education Coordinator, about collaborating with the Oak House Residence Council. The hope is that starting in April-May, they can work together on a collaborative event, once they become an official Council. There will be a meeting later this week, where there will be a panel to find out how to run a council, which will be helpful for them.

Nathan said that the Council will be connecting with the [GSU](#), for a coffee chat on how they can support each other. The GSU reached out about doing a wellness event, and the Council said yes. Other collaborators on this event include [Hart House](#) and [KPE](#). With respect to upcoming events, Nathan highlighted a Ski and Snowboard event, and they are planning to do something fun for Valentine's Day.

Yara explained that the Council is looking forward to collaboration with Mohamed the Don, around a Ramadan event, where residents bring meals. She highlighted that this is not just for people who are fasting; anyone can join and learn about faith and practice. Tao said they have done this in the past, and many residents enjoy it and like learning about different religions.

Nathan said that every year the Council hosts a chess tournament, as well as a movie night.

Tao highlighted a recent viewing party, where they discussed the theme of what Toronto means to people. At this event they pitched the idea of whether people would like to go to a Raptors game subsidized by the GHC. There is a lot of interest, and a waitlist with 20 people. Nathan commented that they have received emails from the Raptors group coordinator, who we can easily contact if we want to move forward. Tao said they offer tours for groups throughout the day, not necessarily aligning with the game.

Victoria asked about the graduate population at Oak House. Nathan said that the grad population is small compared to Grad House. The residence council at Oak House will be comprised of mixed demographics (undergrad/graduate). We are not sure if the council will have separate arms that would just include graduate students. Steve Masse mentioned that he loves the opportunity presented by a collaboration with Oak House and the Graduate House Council. The student committee at Oak House will be seeking recognition and funding from students in the coming months. In the meantime, Masse voiced support for providing funds to ensure graduate students at Oak House could participate in events hosted by the Graduate House Council.

Lucy Chandler asked how residents hear about upcoming Graduate House Council events. Yara said that they primarily rely on communicating through a newsletter every two weeks. Other forms of communication include posters, as well as word of mouth. Nathan added that if registration numbers are low, they will send a message to the unofficial WhatsApp group chat.

Anjali asked whether there is a relationship with the Graduate Student Union. Nathan replied that the GHC are separate and that they get their fees from residents. The council does not receive funding from the GSU. Nathan highlighted that GSU events are internal to them. Tao pointed out that not everyone at Grad House is part of GSU, if they are a second entry student (i.e. nursing, dentistry, law) they are undergraduates, so some would be covered by the UTSU.



Chandler asked what residents should do if they want to get involved with GHC events. Yara responded that they could get in touch by email, or through direct messaging.

Masse inquired about the state of the GHC's finances, as it is sometimes a challenge for residence councils. Nathan replied that in the past there were bookkeeping issues, but they've been working closely with the Office of the Vice-Provost Students Office and Glasgow-Osment. The council has a good financial officer now, and they are in a good position.

FACILITIES PROJECT UPDATES

Ryan Hopkin highlighted the current facilities project updates ([see slide 11](#)). This includes suite renovations, elevator modernization, and security camera upgrades. There are plans to add more cameras to the interior and exterior of the building. Hopkin noted that at the previous RAC meeting, we had just launched the weekly suite-cleaning, and now we are two months into this.

Hopkin explained that projects on the go include annual suite renovations. He explained that we planned on this in 2025, but it took a lot of time to pull together, and it was shelved. This is the top priority right now. Along with the common areas, there is discussion around renovating the kitchens. Students may have to relocate, if the room is earmarked for renovation.

Hopkin highlighted the elevator modernization, which is almost at the end of its life. We have faced many challenges; however, we are planning to schedule work on this in May. Renovations must be done in the summer consecutively, over a 2–3-month period. Cranes need to be involved.

Hopkin asked residents if they provided feedback on the recent survey regarding suite-cleaning. The residents in attendance nodded in agreement and indicated that it is going well so far. Hopkin commented that the cleaning service is long-overdue and well needed.

Victoria commented that the inner door to the elevators is now unlocked, from 9am-5pm. She noticed this during the week that the [report about fires](#) went out (January 15). Hopkin said this entrance is secured and should not be unlocked. There were adjustments during the winter break, and the Lockshop may have inadvertently done this. Anjali mentioned that she has noticed people trying to tailgate into the building, and she asked, “do most doors have automatic closers?” Hopkin responded that they do.

Anjali commented that the doors are difficult to close behind you. Hopkin explained that the timing cannot be adjusted, because it is based on accessibility standards. It is set at a certain speed, to allow for wheelchairs. He added that it is hard to adjust the settings; you cannot really pull it, to close more quickly. Hopkin said, if you suspect a non-community member has entered the building, report this to [Campus Safety](#), so they do not go past the elevator door.

Victoria inquired about the reasons for the recent building alarms. Hopkin responded that the main cause is student cooking. In the kitchen, it can become very smoky, and to clear the air, they open the door to the hallway which allows the smoke into the hall which sets off the building alarm.

Hopkin added that a contractor will come and check the smoke alarms next week. They changed contractors and there were scheduling issues. A contractor will enter the room and test; there will be no audible noise.



With respect to fire safety, Masse asked how we help inform and educate students about fire safety in residence. Hopkin responded that some communication has gone out, and we will work with the Residence Education team on ways to improve communication. Hopkin explained that fire drills are mandated every 90 days. In September we send out general communication about fire safety, then again in early April.

Tao mentioned that people gather at the muster points, then they run inside the building to grab jackets if they think it will be a while. Hopkin responded that we should more clearly communicate to residents that they need to dress appropriately for the weather. People should leave the building dressed for the weather, otherwise it can be dangerous.

Tao asked if there is a contingency plan if an alarm overnight when the weather is very cold. Masse responded that if residents must evacuate for a prolonged period, Campus Safety can open the Athletic Centre (AC) lobby so that residents can take shelter.

Anjali asked if our muster point is located at the Athletic Centre. Hopkin said, no; the signs are for occupants in the building (the AC). These are likely signs intended for the community to congregate. Anjali commented that there could be more communication for the Grad House muster points. Masse added that we can explore what would be allowed in terms of exterior signage.

Masse also conveyed that our Assistant Dean, Residence Life, Amika Shah, is reviewing our evacuation protocols across all our residences and will ensure that staff assist in directing residents to the muster point, so they do not congregate at emergency exits.

Gabrielle highlighted that there is a high volume of information shared with residents at the start of the year and suggested we pair the handbook and contract and consider including more accessible information. Masse indicated that what was formerly referred to as our Residence Handbook is now our Community Standards and the team will work to develop a new Handbook resource in the coming year that focuses on living in residence and includes information about fire safety and evacuation protocols. Victoria commented that as an undergraduate student, learning about these topics was mandated and is something we should consider too.

Gabrielle commented that they remember an email about the outdoor space between Robarts Library and Grad House. Hopkin responded that this project is on hold due to the weather. He explained that the furniture is stored but cannot be installed just yet. The furniture needs to be anchored to a concrete pad that will need to be poured when the weather is warmer.



Digital Suggestion Box Review

Lucy Chandler provided an overview of the Digital Suggestion Box ([see slide 13](#)). She explained that the purpose of the suggestion box is to collect ideas and suggestions that will improve student experience. Over the life of the suggestion box across our residences, 50 suggestions were added. There is a pie chart which illustrates the biggest areas covered including Food Services, building facilities, and operations. Chandler reviewed the changes that have been implemented, thus far, along with projects that are either in progress or discussion ([see slide 14](#)).

At Grad House, one student suggested that we tune the piano again. Other topics covered include elevators. Students highlighted the importance of education being provided and not just letting things slide. Students want more programming. Suggestions included a year-round donation bin, resources like umbrellas available. Chandler follows up with each student individually.

Nathan asked further about the suggestion related to programming. Chandler responded that they wanted more, in general. She explained that residents are hoping for floor specific programming to build smaller communities. Glasgow-Osment has identified areas to improve the experience. Tao highlighted that we have a survey to provide suggestions and feedback, so we can compare.

NEXT MEETING

We aim to have another meeting in March.