

Writing a Student Organization Constitution (Includes a Sample Constitution)

The following outline and questions are designed to help you write a constitution for your organization. The constitution should contain statements concerning enduring aspects of the organization. Items that are subject to frequent revision should be included in the by-laws. University policies that apply to recognition of your organization are included in the outline.

PREAMBLE

This section should be a statement of the group's establishment and purpose of the Constitution. The preamble should contain the name of the organization.

ARTICLE I. NAME

Section 1. What is the exact title to be used in addressing this organization? Please **note**, you may not use "University of Maryland" in the title.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

Section 1. What is the purpose? Is it fostering a broad educational goal? Is it a social, cultural, or political organization? Why was the group founded? Section 2. This section should include a statement of the group's willingness to abide by established University policies.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Who is eligible for membership? Are there any restrictions? How does one become a member? How are members identified?

Section 2. Voluntary withdrawal of membership may be provided for. Can a member remain in the organization if she/he fails to pay dues?

Section 3. Nondiscrimination clause should be provided for and include the following: race, color, creed, sex, disability, or sexual orientation.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS

Section 1. How many officers are there? What are their titles and duties? Will the officers constitute an executive committee? Description of any standing committees should be included, probably in the by-laws. What are the duties of the faculty advisor? (*If your organization plans to apply for Graduate Student Government funding, all executive officers should be graduate students.*)

ARTICLE V. OPERATIONS

Section 1. How are officers elected? What type of ballot? When are they elected (month), and for what period? Who is eligible for office? When do officers assume their positions? How will officers be removed? You may wish to clarify the role of your advisor.

ARTICLE VI. FINANCES

Section 1. How will the organization finance its activities? Will the organization use membership dues or perhaps receive funding from GSG or their department?

ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. How are amendments to be proposed and by whom? Do you want to provide for a delay before voting on amendments? How are your amendments to be voted upon?

ARTICLE VIII. REGISTRATION RENEWAL

Section 1. In accordance with established registration procedures, this section should contain a statement that specifies a date for annual registration renewal. This date should be one month after your organization's elections.

BY-LAWS

Constitutions may also include a "Provision for By-Laws"; Article or a clause pertaining to the establishment of by-laws. The By-Laws might include some of the following items:

- Standing committees of the organization.
- Ad Hoc Committees of the organization which are established for a single purpose, or 1-year commitment. Such committees will be eliminated from the By-Laws once abolished or defunct.
- Policies pertaining to the time, location of organizational meetings.
- Election procedures, dates, terms of offices.
- Structures/purposes of committees.

SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

A constitution reflects the policies and procedures of organizations. Since every organization is different, constitutions will vary in their content. The following sample constitution contains areas typically addressed in constitutions and possible wording. When writing a constitution, however, student organizations should be sure that their constitution reflects the policies and procedures of their organization.

Constitution of "Name of Organization"

Preamble

We, the members of "Name of Organization" do hereby establish this Constitution in order that our purpose be realized to its fullest extent.

Article I - Name

The name of the organization will be "Name of Organization" henceforth referred to as "Name of Organization"

Article II - Purpose

"Name of Organization" is established for the expressed purpose of developing leadership skills as well as an awareness of social responsibilities to encourage students to participate in public affairs.

"Name of Organization" understands and is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of abiding by University of Maryland, College Park policies.

Article III - Membership

Active membership shall be limited to persons officially connected with the University of Maryland, College Park as faculty, staff or registered students. Students enrolled in the spring semester as well as students enrolled in summer school are eligible for summer membership. *(For groups wishing to receive Graduate Student Government funding, this section may stipulate that active voting membership is limited to currently registered graduate students.)* In addition, the following requirements are necessary to constitute active membership:

Payment in full of financial obligations as determined by organization. *(For groups wishing to receive GSG funding, the language of this section would suggest that dues are not required for voting, active membership.)*

Attendance of at least 75% of all meetings during a given semester.

Active participation in all activities sponsored by "Name of Organization" unless the activity interferes with either scholastic or financial constraints.

"Name of Organization" openly admits students to its membership and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, personal appearance, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, or on the basis of rights secured by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Article IV - Officers

"Name of Organization" will be governed by the following means:

An elected President (or other designated officer) will preside at all meetings of "Name of Organization" the President will maintain the power to appoint all committee chairpersons, shall present all motions to the body present and shall be present at 90% of the meetings of "Name of Organization"

"Name of Organization" shall also maintain a Vice President. The Vice President's duties shall be to preside at all meetings and functions that the President cannot attend.

Club members shall also elect a Secretary-Treasurer who will handle all dues, accounts, new members, rule observances at stated meetings, protocol, etc.

The role and duties of the faculty/staff advisor shall include attending meetings, providing counsel to the organization's officers, etc.

(Student organizations wishing to secure Graduate Student Government funding should be certain to note in this section of their constitution that the executive officers of the organization must be currently registered graduate students.)

Article V - Operations

1. Voting Eligibility

Those members meeting all requirements of active membership as set forth in Article III will be granted voting privileges.

2. Election Process

All officers shall be elected by a majority vote of eligible voting members of "Name of Organization." All elections will be held on an annual basis during the month of_____.

The President will take nominations from the floor, the nomination process must be closed and the movement seconded. The nominated parties will be allowed to vote.

All voting shall be done by secret ballot to be collected and tabulated by the Secretary-Treasurer and one voting member of "Name of Organization" appointed by the outgoing President.

3. Removal

Any officer of "Name of Organization" in violation of the Organization's purpose or constitution may be removed from office by the following process:

- a. A written request by at least three members of the Organization.
- b. Written notification to the officer of the request, asking the officer to be present at the next meeting and prepared to speak.
- c. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is necessary to remove the officer.

4. Meetings

All meetings will occur on a weekly basis or other regular basis at a time selected by Name of Organization and will follow the procedure set forth below:

- Attendance
- Report by the President
- Committee reports
- Vote on all committee motions and decisions
- Any other business put forward by the members of the club
- Dismissal by the President

Article VI - Finances

"Name of Organization" will finance the activities it engages in by the following means:

Membership dues (appropriate amount set by "Name of Organization")

"Name of Organization" will submit a budget to the Student Government Association Finance Committee or Graduate Student Government Finance Committee on an annual basis and request funding appropriate to the effective operation of the organization for each year.

Article VII - Amendments

The constitution is binding to all members of the "Name of Organization". But the constitution is not binding unto itself.

Amendments to the constitution may be proposed in writing by any voting member of "Name of Organization" at any meeting at which 2/3 of the voting members is present.

These amendments will be placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting of the executive council or other officer grouping.

Proposed amendments will become effective following approval of two-thirds (2/3)-majority vote of active members.

Article VIII - Registration Renewal

"Name of Organization" will apply to the Office of Campus Programs for registration on an annual basis one month after "Name of Organization."