

## Writing a Constitution

A constitution is the basic framework of an organization. It should state the purpose, the number of officers, the method of their selection requirements for membership and other general operating procedures which might be subject to frequent change. Detailed methods of doing business and specific rules belong in a document called By-laws. For example, the constitution would establish the fact that dues are a requirement for membership and would outline the method of determining the amount of the dues. The by-laws would then state the specific dues structure. To aid your planning group, a sample constitution and explanation of each section of a constitution has been prepared for your use. The sample constitution is only an example and should not be used as a “fill-in” form. Should you require further assistance in the preparation of your constitution; contact the Dean of Student’s Office.

The constitution MUST include the following statements:

- Activities that result in undue physical stress or any subtle or covert technique that will impair, make captive, or destroy an individual’s freedom or thought will not be tolerated.
- This organization will adhere to all policies and regulations of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the University of Louisiana System.
- All fund raising activities shall be carried out in accordance with the rules and policies of the Office of Student Affairs and the UL Lafayette Student Union.
- Membership shall not be denied on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual identity or disability.
- The advisor must countersign all checks.
- NOTE: this statement must be included wherever finances are mentioned and wherever the advisor’s role is outlined.
- Any major amendments shall be submitted to the UL Lafayette Organizations Committee for final approval.

**Keep constitution general so that it can last over time and does not have to be amended often. Do NOT include specific names of students, advisors or officers in the constitution. Do not list specific dates of events or dues amounts. See sample constitution below.**

### Sample Constitution

#### Article I. Name

The name of the organization should reflect the nature of the organization. Include any acronyms that may be used to refer to the group on and off campus.

#### Article II. Purpose

Section 1. This section should state the purpose, aims and functions of the organizations.

Section 2. This section should state that the organization is willing to abide by all policies and procedures established by the University.

#### Article III. Membership and Dues

- Section 1. This section should state who membership is open to, the requirements and size limitations of the membership.
- Section 2. This section should outline the method of determining the amount of dues, if any.
- Section 3. This section should illustrate that organization does not discriminate on the basis of race, color religion, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability or disability.

#### Article IV. Officers

- Section 1. This section should be a list of the officer positions and the duration of terms. Also provisions should be made for vacancies of office. Names should not appear in the constitution, only the positions.
- Section 2. List the duties and powers of each officer.

#### Article V. Function and Operation

- Section 1. This section should state how officers shall be elected and if nominations shall be held. Also include any qualifications necessary to hold officer (i.e. GPA requirement) and what members are eligible to make nominations.
- Section 2. Determine how candidates shall be nominated (i.e. secret ballot, nominations from the floor, nomination committee).
- Section 3. Illustrate how voting will be take place (i.e. ballot, standing vote, show of hands). Also, determine what constitutes a majority vote.
- Section 4. Specify when elections will be held, but keep it general.
- Section 5. Determine the impeachment process of officers.

#### Article VI. Advisor

- Section 1. This section should state role of the advisor.

#### Article VII. Finances

- Section 1. This section should state the organization's plans to finance its activities.

#### Article VIII. Meetings

- Section 1. This section should state the provisions for setting up a regular meeting time, as well as any provisions to be made for calling special meetings.

#### Article IX. Quorum

- Section 1. This section should state the rules pertaining to the number of members, or the percentage of membership, required to be present at a meeting to transact business.

#### Article X. Amendments

- Section 1. Amending the constitution should not be too simple a process for the sake of the stability of the organization. All amendments are subject for final approval by the appropriate governing body.
- Section 2. This section should state the process of how proposed amendments shall be submitted and voted upon.

## **Writing Bylaws**

By-laws may also be submitted. The by-laws are rules governing the internal workings of the organization can include:

- Standing committees of the organization;
- Ad-hoc committees and how they are determined;
- Policies related to the time and location of the organization meetings;
- Election procedures, dates, terms of offices;
- Structure and purposes of committees;
- Statement that Robert's Rules of Order will be followed;
- Provisions for membership fee, dues and assessments;
- Detailed material concerning members, rights, duties, expulsion and resignation procedure; and,
- A method to amend the by-laws.