

Constitution and Bylaws Guidelines for Student Organizations

The constitution and bylaws guide an organization in its operations and activities and, accordingly, are intended primarily for the organization's benefit and use. The constitution contains the fundamental principles and structure of the organization, and the bylaws outline the basic rules of procedure by which a group's membership govern their organization.

The constitution and bylaws should be carefully formulated, clearly worded, and kept up-to-date so that the needs of the organization can be met. Furthermore, it is important that each member of an organization have a copy of the constitution and bylaws.

The following outline is provided to assist in the preparation of a constitution and, if needed, bylaws. Use this guide to prepare the constitution for your new student organization or to revise and update your constitution. A copy of the constitution is required to be submitted via Bsync (www.uab.edu/bsync) in order to approve your organization. If there are any problems or concerns with your constitutions, a Student Life staff member will contact you.

Constitution

The constitution should be simple yet comprehensive and difficult to amend, leaving any specific procedural rules to be included in the bylaws. When amending the constitution, as with the bylaws, previous notice of any proposed changes are usually required to be given to the membership and should not be changed in the same meeting in which proposed.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION DATE CONSTITUTION

Article I - Name, Purpose, Non-Discrimination Policy, and Non-Hazing Policy of the Organization.

Section 1: Name: If your organization has "University of Alabama at Birmingham" or "UAB" in its title, it must follow the main portion of the name. For instance:

Acceptable: Wrestling Club at University of Alabama at Birmingham (or UAB)

Unacceptable: University of Alabama at Birmingham Wrestling Club or UAB Wrestling Club.
If your organization is affiliated with a national or international organization, details of the affiliation should be adequately described.

Section 2 - Purpose: Organizations should take care to include a complete statement of purpose and objectives. Programs sponsored by the organization must comply and be consistent with the organization's stated purpose and objectives.

Section 3 - Non-Discrimination Policy: All student organizations desiring to benefit from registered student organization status with UAB **must** include in their constitution a non-discrimination policy statement that accords with the University's Non-Discrimination policy statement.

Student organizations must use the following non-discrimination policy statement:

The University of Alabama at Birmingham and (insert organization name) prohibits discrimination in admission, educational programs, and other student matters on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, national origin, disability unrelated to program performance, veteran status or genetic or family medical history.

Article II - Membership: Qualifications and categories of membership.

Define voting membership in this section. Membership should be defined as limited to currently enrolled UAB students.

Article III - Officers: Titles, terms of office, type of selection, and duties of the leaders.

Officers represent the general membership and are elected or appointed from the ranks of the organization's voting membership. The titles of officers, the length of terms, specification as to which officers are elected or appointed, when they are elected, and by whom, and the general duties of each leadership position should be clearly specified. Organizations need to have the necessary leaders to conduct their activities.

Article IV - Dues.

A majority of the voting members should determine reasonable dues for each member.

Article V - Standing Committees (if needed): Names, purposes, and composition.

These committees serve the general membership and are permanent and designed to carry out the basic functions of the organization. Often chairpersons of these committees are appointed by the officers.

Article VI – Advisor(s) Responsibilities and Authority

Advisors of student organizations must be full-time members of the University faculty or staff. Responsibilities and expectations of advisors should be clearly and adequately described. UAB organizations must have an advisor.

Article VII – Meetings of the Organization: Required meetings and their frequency.

Required meetings and their number are specified here. For example, two general meetings of the membership may be required each academic term except for summer.

Article VIII – Method of Amending Constitution: Proposals, notice, and voting requirements.

Proposed amendments should be in writing and should not be acted upon, but read in the general meeting in which they are proposed, should be read again at a specified number of subsequent general meetings and the general meeting in which the votes will be taken, and should either require a two-third or three-quarter majority of voting members (a quorum being present) or a majority or two-thirds of the entire voting membership of the organization, present or not. The constitution should not be amended easily or frequently.

Article IX – Method of Dissolution of Organization

Requirements and procedures for dissolution of the student organization should be stated. Should any organization assets and debt exist, appropriate means for disposing of these assets and debts should be specified clearly and unequivocally.

Bylaws

Bylaws contain the standing (permanent) rules of procedure of an organization. Items in the bylaws may be covered in appropriate detail in the constitution of very small organizations. However, most groups keep the two separate because bylaws usually contain more detail and are subject to change more than that of the constitution and, therefore, may require different procedures for amending.

Provision for amendment of the bylaws should be somewhat easier than that of the constitution as rules of procedure should adapt to changing conditions of the student organization. When amending the bylaws, as with the constitution, previous notice of any changes are usually required to be given to the membership and should not be changed in the same meeting in which proposed.

Bylaws are more permanent, however, than passing a general motion, which may require only a simple majority vote of voters present at a general meeting of the membership (a quorum being present). Bylaws cannot run contrary to the constitution.

NAME OF ORGANIZATION

DATE

BYLAWS

Article 1 – Parliamentary Authority

Most organizations use Robert's Rule of Order to govern their organization's decision making except when these rules are inconsistent with their constitution or bylaws of the organization. These rules are of Western cultural origin, and based on the premise that "though the minority shall be heard and absentees protected, the majority will decide."

A recommended wording is "The rules contained in [specify the source for parliamentary practice] shall govern the organization in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of this organization."

Article II- Membership

Procedures for becoming a member, which may vary by membership category, amount of dues, if any, and how often they should be paid, termination of membership, and so on should be described in detail.

Article III- Election / Appointment of Leadership

Elections rules and procedures, including eligibility for office, the nominating process, design of ballots and balloting procedures, and so on should be specified as well as appointment and ratification procedures. The timing of elections and/or appointments should be specified along with procedures to cover special circumstances (resignations, impeachments, etc.).

Article IV- Dues

Specific details about dues, collection of dues, and provisions for failing to pay dues.

Article V- Standing Committees (if needed)

Specific duties of each committee and their responsibilities to the organization.

Article VI - Advisor Responsibilities

Expectations of the advisor in the organization (e.g., availability, meeting attendance, second signer on checks, etc.)

Article VII - Meeting Requirements

Regular, special, size and determination of quorum (number of voting members required to vote on decisions placed before the general membership, executive, and standing committees).

Article VIII - Method of Amending Bylaws

Amending the bylaws should be similar to amending the constitution. However, bylaws are apt to change more often than the constitution, thus amending should be somewhat easier. Bylaws may be amended by proposing in writing and reading the change at a general meeting of the membership and then bring the proposed change up for a vote at the next general meeting with a 2/3 majority vote of the membership present (a quorum being present).

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