

How to Write a Constitution

This guide outlines and describes the articles, sections and paragraphs that should be included in an organization's constitution.

All statements should be complete sentences. If a list is to be included, it should be included within a sentence. Constitutions should be organized in the following manner:

Article #: General Heading of article

Description

Section #: Next Specific Heading

Description

Paragraph #: Specific item or further delineated subheading pertaining to section

Description

See the following for an example:

Article 1: Name

State the name of the organization.

Article 2: Purpose

Include a general statement regarding the goals and objectives of the organization. Organizational purposes may be educationally, service, entertainment, or socially-oriented. Oftentimes, local chapters of national organizations may have stated purposes in their constitutions and/or by-laws from headquarters.

Article 3: Membership

Section 1: Eligibility

State who is eligible for membership in the organization. Organizational membership is not limited to students. Alumni, faculty, and staff may be members if their membership is germane to the purposes of the organization. Eligibility requirements may include such requirements as having a specific declared major, residing in a certain residence area, etc.

Section 2: Selection

If specific selection criteria exist, state them here. For example, members may be required to complete applications, attend meetings, pay dues, reside in specific residence halls, choose certain major fields of study, etc.

Section 3: Classes/types of membership

If there are different classes of membership, describe them here. Each class should be described in a separate paragraph. Organizations are not required to have different classes of membership. Some elect to include active and inactive, or student and faculty/staff. ENMU requires that only student members be permitted to hold office or vote.

Section 4: Revoking membership

If members can lose their status as members, describe such circumstances here. Organizations may revoke students' membership for failure to attend meetings, meet responsibilities, or adhere to a code of ethics. Typically, a vote during a general or regularly scheduled meeting must be taken, with a 2/3 majority voting in favor of revocation of member's membership status in order to revoke membership.

Article 4: Offices

Section 1: Officer Responsibilities

List the offices included in the governance of the organization and give description of their duties and responsibilities.

Section 2: Term of office

State the length of term of the offices. If offices are filled for different term lengths, be sure to differentiate. In addition, be specific as to the beginning and end of the term.

Section 3: Nominations and elections

If officers are elected, include a sentence stating that they are elected.

Paragraph 1: Eligibility

Describe specific officer eligibility here. Criteria for eligibility can include number of years as members, service in previous officer positions, etc.

Paragraph 2: Nomination procedures

Describe how candidates for offices are nominated. For example, candidates may be nominated by the executive council, a nominating committee, "from the floor" by the general membership, or by some combination of these.

Paragraph 3: Election procedures

Describe how elections will be conducted and the margin of ballots cast in order to be elected. Elections may be conducted at a general meeting of the membership or by casting ballots during a pre-established time. Votes may be cast by a show of hands or by secret ballot. Margins required for election range from a majority of members present to 2/3 of the votes cast during a regularly scheduled meeting. If the vote required is a simple majority, make sure to define as 50% + 1 vote.

Section 6: Vacancies

Include a general statement regarding office vacancies.

Paragraph 1: Resignations

Describe what is required of an officer in order to resign from an office.

Paragraph 2: Removal

Describe what circumstances may result in the removal of an officer from office as well as the procedure for such removal.

Paragraph 3: Filling vacancies

Describe the procedure for filling vacancies in offices. When vacancies occur, the president or the officers may appoint replacements or they may be elected by the officers or the general membership.

Article 5: Committees

If standing or ad hoc committees are to be included in the governance and operation of the organization, describe them here. If both standing and ad hoc committees are part of the organizational structure, describe each in a separate section. Describe how committee members and chairs will be chosen. If ad hoc committees are used, describe how these committees will be established. For example, ad hoc committees may be established at the will of the president or as projects arise from organization business.

Article 6: Finance

If an organization requires funds to operate, their source, oversight, maintenance, and disbursement should be described here.

Section 1: Oversight

Typically, the treasurer is charged with the oversight of organizational funds. If so, be sure that such responsibilities are described in Article 4: Offices Section 1: Officer Responsibilities

Section 2: Source of funding

Indicate how funds will be accumulated. For example, some organizations elect to charge dues. Others rely upon fundraising efforts. Some rely on both. If dues are to be collected, state the amount and frequency here. Organizations may also wish to make provisions for members who join at different time during the year. The following must be included in this section: "All funds raised by this organization must be deposited in the Student Organizations account within 24 hours."

Section 3: Maintenance of funds

The following must be included in this section: "All monies belonging to this organization shall be deposited and disbursed through an account established for this organization by the Office of Business Affairs."

Section 4: Disbursement of funds

All requests for funding, whether through check or purchase order, must be approved by one of the two authorized club officers and the organizations' advisor. All requests must include a receipt or invoice.

Article 7: Rules of procedure

Rules and regulations particular to the conduction of organization business should be stated here.

Section 1: Meetings

Indicate frequency, and, if appropriate, occurrences of meeting here. Organizations may meet monthly, semi-monthly [bi-monthly is once every 2 months], weekly, etc. Some organizations state that meetings will occur on specific days of the month, week, etc.

Section 2: Attendance

State specific attendance requirements/expectations here. If specific attendance requirements exist, be sure that record maintenance associated with attendance has been assigned in Article 4: Offices; Section 1: Officer Responsibilities.

Section 3 Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of members required to be present at a meeting in order to conduct the business of the organization. It may be stated as a specific number [NOT RECOMMENDED] or a fraction or percentage of the active membership.

Section 4: Minutes

State any requirements for maintaining meeting minutes. It is recommended that all organizations make provisions for maintaining meeting minutes. If so stated, be sure that an associated responsibility/duty has been assigned in Article 4: Offices; Section 1: Officer Responsibilities.

Article 9: Amendments

Describe how this constitution may be amended. Indicate who may propose amendments, how such proposed amendments are reviewed, and how they are decided. Be sure to state the minimum voting requirements for passing a constitutional amendment. \

Article 10: Review

“This constitution must be reviewed and resubmitted to the Office of Campus Life every time there are changes to the constitution. All changes are subject to the approval of the Office of Campus Life.”

Signature of President

Date

Signature of Advisor

Date