

Drafting a Constitution & Bylaws

The Constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation and establishes the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function. All, except the most informal groups, should have their basic structure and methods of operation in writing.

Why have a Constitution?

By definition an organization is a "body of persons organized for some specific purpose, as a club, union or society." The process of writing a constitution will clarify your purpose, delineate your basic structure and provide the cornerstone for building an effective group. It will allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is all about and how it functions. It will provide a structure to aid future leaders of your organization to insure that the group continues on a sound course. If you keep in mind the value of having a written document that clearly describes the framework of your organization, the drafting of the constitution will be a much easier and more rewarding experience.

What should be covered by a Constitution?

The following guidelines are provided to assist student groups in establishing a constitution and outline the standard information to be included in a constitution to be consistent with college guidelines. Other articles and sections are included to provide some examples of sound organizational practices. However, remember the constitution is for your organization. It's important to think through what is written so it reflects your organization's purposes and needs as well as include college requirements. The prime objective is to draft a document that covers these topics in a clear and concise manner. If you have any questions you should consult with the ASUCC Student Government or the Student Life Office.

The guidelines suggest the order in which articles usually appear within a constitution. Keep in mind that all club constitutions and objectives must be in accordance with ASUCC policies, procedures, and mission statement.

The constitution of each club/organization contains the fundamental principles that govern its operation.

Example Constitution Outline

- Article I Name of the organization
- Article II Affiliation with other local, state, or national groups (if applicable)
*What does that affiliation mean? What are the obligations and responsibilities?
Your organization will be subject to the regulations and policies of Umpqua Community College, the Constitution & Bylaws of the of the Associated Students of Umpqua Community College, and all local, state, and federal laws. UCC policies and procedures and the ASUCC Constitution & Bylaws shall take precedence over the constitution of a regional/national organization.*
- Article III Purpose, aim, and function of the organization
- Article IV Membership requirements and limitations
- Article V Authority, Powers, Responsibility
- Article VI Non-Discrimination Statement.
It is the policy of the College not to discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or marital status in admission and access to, or treatment or employment in its programs or activities.
The College requires each organization to include a nondiscriminatory statement in their constitution. The College also requires each organization to submit a copy of the charter, constitution, or bylaws of the parent organization where applicable. This is necessary to determine whether discrimination for the aforementioned reasons is encouraged on any level.
- Article VII Officers (titles, qualifications, term of office)
Officer duties, how and when elected, type of vote, and methods for filling vacancies can be specified in the Bylaws.
- Article VIII Advisor (term of service, how selected)
The organization is required to have an advisor, preferably a full time faculty or staff member. Explain who may be selected and term of service. The duties and role of the advisor within the organization and the College by be specified in the Bylaws
- Article IX Removal of Officers and Members.
Process for providing adequate, notice of charges, opportunity for a fair hearing, and the right of appeal can be specified in more detail in the Bylaws.
- Article X Vacancies
The process for filling vacancies can be specified in more detail in the Bylaws

- Article XI Sources of Financial Support. (Provisions for membership fees, dues, and assessments, if there are to be any, should be set in detail: How often dues are expected to be paid, collection and handling procedures, delinquent membership dues, how the amount of dues will be determined, etc. The provision for the organization's account, should the organization become inactive or fold, should be included (e.g. donate to charity, scholarship fund, etc.).
- Article XII Meetings
All meetings of the club shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meetings except as otherwise provided in Oregon open public meetings act 192.610.
Frequency, special meetings, and who calls them may be specified in the Bylaws
- Article XIII Rules of Order (Parliamentary Authority)
The rules of Parliamentary Procedure as contained in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall be a guideline for the clubs in all cases to which they are applicable and not inconsistent with Constitution and Bylaws, or any special rules of order as determined by the ASUCC Student Council or Umpqua Community College.
- Article XIV Bylaws
The Bylaws shall be the lawful means by which the provisions of the Constitution shall be implemented.
- Article XV Amendments (means of proposal, notice required, voting requirements)
Any changes in a group's constitution require the approval of the UCC Student Council.
- Article XVI Interpretation (who will be responsible for interpreting the Constitution and Bylaws and to whom appeals of interpretation may be made)
- Article XVII Adoption & Implementation (how will the Constitution be officially adopted and implemented)

What are Bylaws?

The constitution covers the fundamental principles but does not prescribe specific procedures for operating your organization. Bylaws provide detailed procedures groups must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. They provide further definition on the articles of the constitution, and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change. Bylaws must not contradict provisions of the constitution.

In addition to the sample outline below, bylaws may include other specific policies and procedures unique to clubs/organizations necessary for operation.

Sample Bylaws Outline

Article I	Officers (Purpose, Membership, Authority, Assumption of Duties, Responsibilities & Duties)
Article II	Advisor (Role, Duties)
Article III	Committees (include description of Standing and Special committees, How formed, Chairs, Meetings, Powers, Duties)
Article IV	Elections (Timeline, Qualification, How to file, Write-ins, Ballot, Results)
Article V	Appointments (include Appointments to Committees and Appointments due to Vacancy)
Article VI	Removal from Office (include information on Recall, Probation, Suspension, Dismissal and Resignation)
Article VII	Meetings (include standard agenda for conducting meetings)
Article VIII	Amendment
Article IX	Adoption and Implementation
Article X	Supporting Documents (specify any other documents that you refer to or will use in directing the operation and activities of your club)
Article XI	Definition of Terms (define terms that may be unfamiliar to others)