

Constitutions

Is a Constitution Important?

YES! A good constitution contains the basics of how your organization will function. A constitution is the foundation upon which the organization will grow, mature, and perpetuate itself. It is designed to reduce internal conflict, to establish the organization's mission and goals, and to protect the rights of all members and students of the University.

Why does my student organization need a constitution?

A constitution is a great tool for any organization to have. It is essential to the future growth and development, and is an integral part of the organization. A constitution clearly defines the purpose of your organization and outlines guidelines for officer positions as well as standing committees. It explains how organization business should be handled, how often business meetings are held, and the eligibility requirements for members and officers in the organization. Plus, it is required by the University for maintaining recognition as a student organization.

How Do We Write It?

Constitutions are the framework of any organization. The details and explanations should be concise, easy-to-follow, and flexible enough to allow for change and growth. Every organization has its own unique style, but each must include the University required statements. A sample constitution is available on the OSA website, www.mnstate.edu/osa. For constitution examples and for assistance in writing or making changes to a constitution, please contact the Office of Student Activities, CMU 229.

****Please note:** If the organization is affiliated with another local, state, or national organization, a copy of that organization's constitution must also be provided.

Constitution Writing Tips

Write your constitution in a broad manner, not limiting future leaders to your needs or conveniences.

- Poor Example: The Psychology Club will meet every Tuesday at 9 p.m.
- Good Example: The Psychology Club will meet once a week throughout the semester.

Write your constitution with the future in mind. Do not use proper names or exact dates in defining leadership positions, locations, meeting times, etc.

- Poor Example: The President of the Reggae Music Club will be Bob Marley.
- Good Example: The President of the Reggae Music Club will be elected by majority vote of the organization membership.
- Poor Example: The Reggae Music Club will meet in the Union.
- Good Example: The Reggae Music Club will meet on campus.

Now What?

After completing or revising the constitution, your organization must approve it. Then, you are ready to submit it to the Office of Student Activities. Once the OSA has reviewed your constitution, it will be taken to SOAC (Student Organization Advisory Committee) for review and approval, according to University guidelines. Once SOAC approves your constitution, a liaison will submit it to the Student Senate for approval. The University President will give final approval.

How Long Does This Take?

The Office of Student Activities will review your constitution in a timely manner. If changes need to be made, your constitution will be returned to you. Your organization will then have three weeks to return the revised constitution to the OSA. After a revision is completed, your constitution will continue through the process. The entire process can be completed within a few months.

****Please note:** All organizations will be contacted by the Office of Student Activities to conduct five-year revisions. This process ensures that constitutions are current and accurately reflect the changing needs and issues of the organization.

Final Thought

Remember that your constitution is only helpful if you use it! Get into the habit of referring to it for clarification and use it as your basis for decision making. Distribute a copy to the members of the organization each year so they are familiar with the rules of the organization.

