

What should be covered in a Constitution?

This document is an outline of what is to be included in a Constitution. The objective is to draft a document that covers all of these topics in a simple, clear and concise manner. Explanations are in italics. Try to keep your organization's purpose in mind at all times while adapting this sample. This example should help you include all of the necessary information.

CONSTITUTION TEMPLATE for USG STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

To prepare your organization's constitution keep the roman-type sections of this sample exactly as they appear and fill in other information using the italic instructions as a guide.

Article I - Organization Name

The name of the organization shall be _____.

[It is here that the official name of your organization is filled in. Just the statement above and the organization name are all that is needed.]

Article II - Purpose

[The purpose of your organization goes here. Restate the name of your organization, what you stand for, what principles you uphold and who you represent. When filling this section out, keep in mind that we are on a very diverse campus and your organization should reflect that diversity. Do not just target one section of the campus population — both your group and the campus may suffer in the long run.]

Article III - Membership

[In this article you state who may be a member of your organization. The rule of thumb is that membership is open to all activity fee-paying students though you can disallow non-activity fee-paying students. However, all activity fee-paying students must be able to be members. The activity fee is the ONLY fee that a student must pay in order to be a member of an organization. You cannot charge fees, nor can you require that a student be a member of a national/local organization that requires fees.]

Section I - Voting Members

A. *[In this section you set out who is allowed to vote. In most cases you are left to your better judgment on this, but keep in mind that all activity fee-paying students must be able to vote in elections and on issues. A suggested requirement is to take attendance at each meeting (a sign-in sheet will work) and allow those who attend 2 or more meetings a month or for 2 consecutive months to vote (this assuming your organization has 4 or more meetings a month).]*

B. *[Here you lay out how a member retains voting membership. A good rule of thumb is to allow those who attend general interest meetings to be voting members. Defining "active" participation in committee and general meetings is too subjective and is*

discouraged. Again, an organization may not disallow members from voting for not paying a membership fee beyond the student activity fee.]

Section II

[This section must appear as written here:]

All members must share equally in the rights of the organization and no rights shall be abridged. All members may participate in all events and activities sponsored by the organization.

Article IV - Officers and Elections

Section I - Executive Officers

[Lay out what officers your organization is going to have. For most organizations a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Vice-Treasurer, Secretary and Organization Representative are enough. As you form committees (and disband them) the positions can be elected by your members on an ad hoc basis. Use Robert's Rules of Order for their tasks.]

A. The President:

1. Shall be the official representative of the *[organization name here]*.
2. Shall serve as speaker of the Executive Board.
3. Shall have a vote in the Executive Board only in cases of a tie.
4. Work with Secretary in formulating meeting agendas.
5. Shall chair all general membership meetings.
6. Directly responsible for the Organization Representative.
7. Notify the USG AVP for Campus Affairs and Government Relations in writing who the *(Organization Name here)* Organization Representative is by the third week in April for the next academic year.

B. The Vice President:

1. Shall perform the duties of the President in the absence or inability of the President.
2. In cases of resignation or dismissal of the President, the Vice-President shall assume the position.
3. Shall be a voting member of the Executive Board and the general membership.
4. Shall be Executive Chairperson of all existing committees. [Applies only if you have committees]
5. Shall work with the President in understanding and interpreting all phases of work.

C. Treasurer

1. Shall be the only person permitted to receive, hold, disburse, and account for all organization funds, and keep order of the *[organization name here]* financial records. Shall make monthly and annual reports of receipts, disbursements and fund balances of the *[organization name here]*.
2. Shall guide the Executive Board in preparation of the budget.

3. Shall be a voting member of the Executive Board and general membership.
4. Shall present the annual proposed budget to the organization for approval.
[Note: A Vice-Treasurer can help the Treasurer perform these duties however under USG rules, a Vice Treasurer CANNOT sign purchase orders and other documents in place of the Treasurer. In the event of resignation or dismissal of the Treasurer, the Vice-Treasurer can assume the position. If your organization is electing a Vice-Treasurer add an area in this section for their duties.]

D. Secretary

1. Shall take accurate minutes of all meetings of the Executive Board and the general membership meetings.
2. Shall serve as custodian of all records and official papers as may be placed in his / her care.
3. Shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Board.
4. Shall be a voting/non-voting of the general membership. *[When writing constitution Executive Board needs to choose if the Secretary position is a voting or non-voting member of the general membership.]*
5. Shall keep an accurate up to date roll of voting membership.
6. Shall work with committee chairs and other officers in receiving, evaluating and preparing reports.
7. Shall care for correspondence as directed to the organization.
8. Shall be in charge of monitoring the organization's Bengal Connect page

E. Organization Representative

1. It is the job of the Organization Representative to report back to their organization all information given at the Organization Representative Meetings.
2. Shall be in charge of representing the organization at USG's Organization Representative Meetings.
3. Shall be the Organization's parliamentarian *[Executive Board decides on that as it may already be another officer's responsibility.]*
4. Shall partner with the secretary in monitoring and updating the organization's Bengal Connect page.
5. Will frequently check the Organization's mailbox located at the USG office.
6. Shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Board and voting member of the general membership.

Section II - Committee Chairs [this section only applies if you plan to have committees in your organization]

[Committee chairs may also be voting members of your organization's Executive Board. However, your organization must state this in Section IV of Article IV of your organization's constitution. List each Committee Chairs you plan to have here with their duties.]

Section III - Election of Officers

- A. *[State when elections will be held, mid-April is recommended. Results have to be handed in to the USG business office or AVP for CAGR by the last day of the spring*

semester. Make certain that you allow enough time for the new officers to be trained by the old.]

- B. *[Specify officially who is allowed to run for office in your group. Do not forget that ANY undergraduate activity fee-paying Buffalo State student can run for office. The only limits you can set are that the person must be a member in good standing of the local organization to run.]*
- C. The Organization Representative shall be elected by the organization's membership every spring for the next academic year. They must be a member of (Organization name here). They can be an executive board member of the organization.

Section IV - Executive Board Powers and Duties

[This is where the responsibilities of the executive board as a group are listed.]

- A. The executive power and administrative functions of the *[organization name here]* shall be vested in the Executive Board.
- B. The Executive Board is made up of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, *Vice Treasurer (if applicable), and Committee Chairs (if applicable)*. The Secretary and Organization Representative are non-voting members of the Executive Board.
- C. The Executive Board shall hold weekly meetings and have the responsibility of calling general membership meetings.
- D. Shall prepare the budget of the *[organization name here]* for the following year.
- E. Special meetings of the Executive Board shall be called by the President or by a majority of the Executive Board.
- F. A quorum shall consist of a simple majority of members of the Executive Board.
- G. Any vacancy in any position of the Executive Board shall be filled by appointment of the President, in case there's no President, appointment will be made by the Executive Board and be confirmed by the general membership. *[This means that any confirmation by the general membership must be made in a timely manner. It is suggested that it be held within two weeks. A 2/3 vote will confirm the appointment.]*

Article V - Meetings and Quorum

[Frequency of organization meetings (minimum once a month) should be listed here. Should also explain special meetings who is allowed to call them and under what circumstances. This area should also explicitly define your quorum and your provisions for recording the minutes for your meetings.]

Article VI - Committees

[For the purpose of developing active well informed members, encouraging members to participate in decision making of the organization committees is necessary.

Separate sections under this article should explain how each committee is established, how committee business is transacted (voting, reports, procedures) and of course the charge of the committee and responsibilities of committee members.

Again, committees are most important when they allow the members to make decisions and learn valuable leadership skills.]

Article VII - The Advisor:

- A. Shall give support to the members of *[organization name here]* on a case-by-case basis and as deemed necessary.
- B. Shall not be required to participate in meetings or activities.
- C. Shall be held accountable only in so far as intellectual support is concerned.
- D. Shall be appointed by the President of *[organization name here]* and verified by a majority vote of the general body.
- E. The advisor is responsible for providing long-term continuity within the group and should be familiar with its history.
- F. Advisor has to be a faculty or staff member of SUNY Buffalo State.

[An Advisor can only advise no more than two USG Organizations. Remember- your advisor is there to help you. If you feel that your advisor is not doing his or her job or is taking too much control of your organization in that respect you may choose to no longer use them as an advisor and select a new one.]

Article VIII - Removal

Removal of members, if deemed necessary, will depend on both a decision of the Executive Board and a super majority vote (2/3 + 1) of the general membership. All members of *[organization name here]* retain the rights of due process.

Article IX - Amendments

Amendments to the constitution of *[organization name here]* are not binding until approved by the USG Senate.

Article X - Parliamentary Authority

The special rules of order to be followed, if chosen, shall be Robert's Rules of Order.

Article XI - Ratification

Section I - Ratification Vote

An affirmative vote of a simple majority of the organization's members will ratify the constitution.

Section II - Ratification Date

[The date and voting record of ratification by your organization shall be listed here.]

Section III - USG Senate Recognition

[Here leave a space for the USG Rules Chair to record the date and voting record of the USG Senate's ratification of your organization's constitution. A simple majority affirmative vote of the USG Senate will ratify the constitution.]