Constitution Guidelines for Student Organizations

Introduction

A constitution guides an organization in its operations and activities and, accordingly, is intended primarily for the organization’s benefit and use. The constitution should contain the fundamental principles and structure of the organization.

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

The following outline is provided to assist in the preparation of your constitution. If you have any problems, questions, or concerns regarding your constitution, please contact the UOSA General Counsel’s Office in OMU 181, at 325-5474, or e-mail uosagc@ou.edu. Information about student organization constitutions is also available at www.ou.edu/uosagc.

Submission and Approval

An electronic copy of your constitution must be provided to the Student Life Office in the fall of every third year, according to the schedule determined by the UOSA General Counsel, and every time the constitution is amended. The constitution must be approved by the UOSA General Counsel’s Office in order for your organization to achieve Registered Student Organization Status and the accompanying benefits.

Specifically, every constitution must contain the following:

1. Proper name (“OU” and “University of Oklahoma” are trademarks of the University of Oklahoma and generally may not be used by student organizations. “Sooner” and “Sooners” are also trademarks of the University of Oklahoma, but may be used by student organizations upon completion of a non-commercial license form, available at the Office of Student Life)
2. Statement of purpose clause
3. Membership clause limiting full membership to OU students
4. Non-discrimination clause
5. Full-time OU faculty or staff advisor
6. A preemption clause if the organization is part of a parent organization
7. Statement that the organization is subject to Local, State, and Federal Laws

If your organization’s constitution is not approved, your organization will receive an email from the UOSA General Counsel’s Office advising you of the necessary changes and providing you with a new due date.
Model Constitution

Article I Name
The name of this organization shall be ____________, hereinafter “the Organization.”

Article II Purpose
The purpose of the Organization is to _____________.

Article III Membership
Section 1: All students currently enrolled in the University of Oklahoma are eligible for membership.

Section 2: Membership in, association with, and benefits emanating from the Organization and its related activities shall be based upon such considerations as performance, educational achievement, and other criteria related to the goals of the organization and purposes of the activities. Judgments in this regard based solely on an individual’s race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, marital status, or political belief are not judgments based on such considerations. Further, the purpose of the organization must be consistent with public policy as established by prevailing University Community standards.

Article IV Officers & Advisor
Section 1: The Officers of the Organization shall be President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

The Student Activities Policy recognizes two types of membership: members and associate members. There are no other types of membership. Only OU students may be full members. Associate members may be other members of the OU community (faculty, staff, spouses, but NOT alumni). If your organization has associate members, your constitution must specify that they cannot hold office.

The Student Activities Policy requires that all constitutions include a non-discrimination policy. Your organization must include all the categories listed in this section and abide by this clause in practice. Exceptions to this policy shall be recognized where enforcement would violate the United States Constitution or federal law. An organization that wishes to claim this exception will bear the burden of proving that the policy, as applied to it, violates the U.S. Constitution or federal law.

Officers must be students at the University of Oklahoma. Therefore, if a student ceases to be an OU student, that person can no longer serve as an officer.

Your organization may have different or additional officer positions. List the officer positions in Section 1, and add a new section below to define the position.

Your organization’s name must clearly identify the organization. Also, as provided in the Student Activities Policy, neither the name nor the acronym of your organization may contain a trademark of the University. University trademarks include “OU” and “University of Oklahoma.” “Sooner,” “Sooners,” and “Oklahoma” are also trademarks of the University, but student organizations are allowed to use them so long as they complete and submit a non-commercial license. The license form is available from the Office of Student Life.
Section 2: The Officers of the Organization shall be elected by a simple majority of the qualified voting membership present at a general meeting.

Section 3: Any Officer or Advisor may be removed for cause by a three-fourths vote of the qualified voting membership.

Section 4: The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Organization. The President shall preside at all meetings and direct the affairs of the Organization with the advice and consent of the other officers. In the event that there is no current President, the remainder of the President’s term shall be filled in the following order of succession: Vice-President, Treasurer, then Secretary.

Section 5: The Vice-President shall perform such duties that are delegated by the President. The Vice-President shall preside at meetings in the absence of the President.

Section 6: The Treasurer shall collect all dues and monies keeping records thereof and be responsible for all financial reports for the organization and the officers.

Section 7: The Secretary shall maintain minutes of each meeting and shall document every election. The Secretary is responsible for maintaining a list of qualified members of the Organization.

Section 8: The Organization shall have as an Advisor a full-time member of the University faculty or staff.

Section 9: The Advisor’s role in the Organization shall be limited to offering advice or feedback to the Organization, in addition to other duties delegated by the President.

Section 10: The Advisor shall be appointed by a majority vote of the Officers, and shall serve a term of one year from appointment, unless a majority of the Officers vote to remove the Advisor and appoint someone else.

Article V Election Procedure

Section 1: Elections shall not be valid absent substantial compliance with this Article.

Section 2: Elections shall be held at the end of the Spring Semester before the commencement of final examinations. In the event that there are no candidates for an office, the office may remain open.

Create new Sections if your organization requires additional officer positions.

The Student Activities Policy requires each organization to have an advisor who is a full-time member of the University faculty or staff.

It is important for your organization to determine a fair election procedure and to document the election itself.
Section 3: Elections may only take place if at least one week’s notice of the date, time, and location of the election is given to members of the Organization.

Section 4: Voting shall be by secret paper ballot, with each qualified present member having one vote for each position.

Section 5: The Secretary shall document the names of the qualified members present at the election and the number of votes that each candidate for an office receives.

Section 6: When an election is for more than one office, the order of voting shall be in the following order: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, then Secretary.

Section 7: Any qualified member of the Organization may run for any office.

Section 8: A qualified member may be a candidate for more than one office, but shall immediately remove himself or herself for consideration of any other Officer position after being elected. In no instance may one person fulfill more than one Officer position.

Article VI Additional Governing Principles

Section 1: The Organization is subject to Local, State, and Federal Laws.

Section 2: If there is a conflict between our national or parent organization’s rulings, constitution, or direction and the University of Oklahoma Student Handbook, the Student Handbook preempts the national or parent ruling.

Article VII Amendment Procedure

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Organization’s qualified voting membership present at a general meeting.