Constitution & Bylaws Template and Guidelines

A constitution is the foundational document for your organization. It contains the most important rules regarding the name, purpose, and structure. A constitution should be somewhat difficult to amend. Most organizations also have bylaws, which are easier to amend and contain the operating rules for your organization. They should be easier to change and update than the constitution and can therefore be more specific. Some organizations include a third level, called Standing Rules, which require an even lower level of approval for adoption and amendment.

This template is a guide based on model constitutions and bylaws from several sources. Your club may modify this template as needed. Some organizations include much detail in their constitutions; others reserve many of the details for the bylaws. The template includes some suggestions.

All constitutions and bylaws must be consistent with University and College policies. While the University does not currently have a procedure for approving constitutions, any provision that conflicts with a University or College policy will be null and void.

Constitution of [Name of Organization]

Adopted on [Indicate the date of adoption].

Amended on [If applicable, the date of the most recent amendment here. You may wish to include dates for all previous amendments.].

## Article 1. Name of Organization.

Example statement: The name of the organization shall be [insert name here].

The name of your organization must follow OU policies, described below.

**Interest Student Organizations** (ISO) may not include OU trademarks in their name. Trademarks include the interlocking OU, Boomer Sooner, Oklahoma, Sooner(s), and (The) University of Oklahoma.

**Competitive Club Student Organization** (CCSO) names must be styled as “OU [ENTER COMPETITION PURPOSE] Club.” Other trademarks may not be included in the name.

**Departmental Student Organizations** (DSO) may use the following trademarks within the organization name if approval has been granted by the OU Licensing and Trademark Office: the interlocking OU, Boomer Sooner, Oklahoma, Sooner(s), and (The) University of Oklahoma, and campus imagery (such as a departmental logo) specific to the relevant department or academic unit.

Article 2. Type of Organization.

Example statement: This organization shall be registered with the University of Oklahoma as a(n) [Interest Student Organization/Competitive Club Student Organization/Departmental Student Organization].

Article 3. Statement of Purpose**.**

Describe why your organization exists.

## Article 4. Membership.

Section 1. General qualifications. Describe who is eligible to be a member.

Section 2. Types. If your club has different types of members (e.g., active, affiliate, honorary, etc.), list those here. Do not define the types in this section.

Section 3. Active members. Define the requirements for an active member (e. g., attendance, payment of dues, enrollment, student standing, etc.). If your club has only one type of member, this section can be titled “Members” instead of “Active members.” Define the rights of an active member (e.g., voting, eligibility to hold office, etc.).

Section 4–n.Add sections defining requirements and rights for additional membership types if listed in Section 2.

## Article 5. Respect and Welcoming Statement.

Example statement: [Organization name] is committed to creating a sense of belonging where each person feels welcomed, valued, and supported for success. [Organization name] respects each individual's perspectives and abilities.

## Article 6. Executive Board.

Section 1. Voting members. List the officers with voting privileges. These usually include elected and, if applicable, appointed officers. Do not describe duties or specific requirements for individual officers in this section. These will be described in the bylaws.

Section 2. Ex-officio members. Ex-officio means “by virtue of the office.” These members can include the faculty advisor, the past president, a liaison with another organization, or others as designated by your organization. Indicate whether ex-officio members have voting rights on the board.

Section 3. Qualifications for officers. Describe qualifications, such as member in good standing, GPA, attendance, etc. If there are different requirements for specific types of officers (such as elected or appointed), list those here.

## Article 7. Election, Term, and Vacancies.

Section 1. Nomination. Describe the nomination procedure. Your club may choose to use a nomination committee, or members may nominate or self-nominate. Describe when nominations occur. It is good practice to specify a period of time to pass between nominations and elections.

### Section 2. Election and term.

(a) Describe when, where, and how elections will be conducted. Include the balloting procedure (e.g., secret or open, electronic or paper, during a meeting or during a voting period). Describe how the winner is determined (for example, by majority of votes cast).

(b) Describe the term of office. When does the term begin and end? You can use specific dates, or tie the term to the academic calendar. Do officers take office immediately following the election, or after a specified period of time? We recommend a delay between election and the beginning of the new term, to allow time for transition meetings between incoming and outgoing officers.

(c) If your club limits the number of times a person can hold a particular officer, include that here.

Section 3. Vacancies.

Describe how vacancies will be filled (e.g., appointment by the Executive Board, appointment by the president, a special election, etc.).

### Section 4. Removal.

(a) Describe the conditions under which an officer may be removed, such as failure to fulfill the duties of the office, or failure to meet other qualifications for office as listed above.

(b) Describe the procedure for removal.

## Article 8. Committees.

List the committees necessary for your club. If the board or president has the right to create additional committees, say so here. If you prefer to leave this section flexible, include a statement such as “The Executive Board may establish committees as described in the bylaws.”

## Article 9. Dues.

If your club requires members to pay dues, include a statement similar to the one below. Do not specify the amount in the constitution; instead, write the amount in the bylaws.

Example statement: Every active member shall pay annual dues as described in the bylaws.

## Article 10. Duration of membership.

Section 1. Period. Describe the period of membership. We recommend a one-year period, to be renewed at a specified point during the academic year.

### Section 2. Termination.

(a) List the causes for which membership may be terminated.

(b) Describe the procedure for termination of members.

## Article 11. Advisor(s).

Describe the qualifications and number of faculty advisors and, if desired, staff advisors. Organizations must have at least one faculty advisor. Advisors must possess qualifications consistent with University of Oklahoma policies; you may wish to invoke University policies here rather than detailing the qualifications. Describe how advisors are selected and how and whether a vote is required to approve an advisor. Do not list the duties of the advisor here. Instead, describe the advisor’s duties in the bylaws. Do not include the advisor's name in the constitution.

## Article 12. Meetings.

Indicate the types of meetings your club conducts. For example, some clubs conduct business during certain types of meetings (such as regular, general, or special) and hold other types of meetings where business is not conducted (such as social).

Section 1. Regular meetings. This organization shall hold regular meetings as provided in the bylaws. (If you wish to set a minimum number of meetings in the constitution, include that number here. Do not specify dates, times, or locations in the constitution.)

Section 2. Special meetings. Indicate who has the authority to call a special meeting and for what purpose(s).

Sections 3-n. Describe other types of meetings, if applicable.

## Article 13. Bylaws.

Example statement: This organization shall adopt bylaws to give additional provisions for the government of this organization. Bylaws must be consistent with this constitution and with University of Oklahoma policies. Bylaws may be amended as they provide.

## Article 14. Amendments.

Describe the process for amending the constitution. Indicate who may propose an amendment, how the proposal should be made, how the proposed amendment will be advertised to club membership, the period of time between publication and voting, the voting procedure, and the amount of votes required for passage.

Example statement: Amendments to this constitution and by-laws may be proposed by any active member. Proposed amendments must be presented to the Executive Board. The Board will publish the proposed amendment [at a regular meeting/at a special meeting/by email to club membership] [time period] prior to the vote. Adoption of amendments requires a [two-thirds majority, X%] vote of Active Members present at [the next regular/general] meeting, or at a special meeting called for the purpose of the vote.

*Additional articles or sections may be added as needed.*

Bylaws of [Name of Organization]

Adopted on [Indicate the date of adoption].

Amended on [If applicable, the date of the most recent amendment here. You may wish to include dates for all previous amendments.].

## Bylaw 1. Membership.

Unless covered in the constitution, include the eligibility and requirements for membership here.

## Bylaw 2. Dues.

If your organization collects dues, indicate the amount, frequency, and other details here.

## Bylaw 3. Attendance.

Describe any rules related to attendance here, including how attendance is recorded. This is especially important if attendance is tracked for purposes such as voting rights, eligibility for office, or other privileges.

## Bylaw 4. Duties of Officers.

Section 1. President. Describe the duties of the president. Your organization may choose to use a different title for this position.

Section 2–n. Describe the duties of additional officers, one officer per section.

Bylaw 5. Duties of Advisor(s).

Describe the duties of the advisor. If you have both a faculty and a staff advisor, describe the duties of each in its own section.

## Bylaw 6. Committees.

Section 1. Standing committees and duties. List the committees. Describe the duties of each. Indicate how the chair is selected. For example, certain officers may, by virtue of their position, also serve as committee chairs. Other committee chairs may be appointed by the president or the executive board. Describe how committee members are selected. You may wish to indicate a minimum number of committee members.

Section 2. Special committees. These are committees established for a particular purpose and dissolved once their work is completed. Instead of listing special committees, including a statement describing how a special committee is established.

Bylaw 7. Elections.

Unless covered in the Constitution, include election procedures, such as the time of elections, qualifications of voters, balloting methods, and votes necessary to be elected. If desired, include other details not contained in the constitution.

Bylaw 8. Quorum.

A quorum is the minimum number of members that must be present in order to conduct business. A quorum is usually a percentage of members eligible to vote.

### Section 1. Quorum for regular and special meetings.

### Section 2. Quorum for executive board meetings.

Bylaw 9. Order of Business.

Describe the standard agenda for conducting meetings, including opening procedures, closing procedures, and the order of presentation for items such as reports from committees, unfinished business, and new business.

Bylaw 10. Parliamentary Authority.

Parliamentary procedure describes how an organization conducts its business during a meeting. Following an established parliamentary procedure will help your organization run smoothly, promote a democratic process, and clarify decisions made by the organization. Name the source your organization will use here. Common sources of parliamentary authority include [*Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*](file:///C:\Users\kim\Documents\Professional\Engineering%20Student%20Life\leadership%20resources%20web%20page\Robert’s%20Rules%20of%20Order%20Newly%20Revised,%20https:\robertsrules.com\books\newly-revised-3rd-in-brief-edition) and the [*Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/american-institute-of-parliamentarians-standard-code-of-parliamentary-procedure-american-institute-of-parliamentarians/1108021780?ean=9780071778640).

Bylaw 11. Amendments to Bylaws.

Describe the procedure for amending bylaws. Indicate who may propose an amendment, how the proposal should be made, how the proposed amendment will be advertised to club membership, the period of time between publication and voting, the voting procedure, and the amount of votes required for passage. This procedure should be simpler than that required for a constitutional amendment and should require fewer votes for passage. In many organizations, bylaws can be amended by a simple majority of votes cast.

*Additional bylaws or sections may be added as needed.*

## Sources

This guide is based on material from the following sources. No endorsement by these organizations is implied.

Delta Gamma Fraternity, Inc., https://www.deltagamma.org/library/constitution/fraternity-constitution.

Engineers’ Club at the University of Oklahoma.

P.E.O. International, http://www.peointernational.org/sites/www.peointernational.org/files/constitution-2009.pdf.

Rotary International, https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/governance-documents.

Texas A&M–Texarkana, https://www.tamut.edu/Campus-Life/Clubs-and-Organizations/Writing%20Constitution%20or%20Bylaws%2010-20-09.pdf.

University of Southern Indiana, https://www.usi.edu/media/959699/how\_to\_create\_your\_constitution\_and\_by-laws.pdf.