

How to Write and Format a Constitution

(Courtesy of Longwood SGA website: <http://lancerweb.longwood.edu/org/sga/registration.html>)

Realizing the difficulty one may encounter in attempting to write or revive a constitution, the Constitution Committee has compiled the following guidelines with the hope that they will make the task a little less frightening.

MINIMUM ESSENTIALS:

The purpose of a constitution is to insure continuity within an organization from year to year. Therefore, the following minimum elements must be included.

Article I: Name and purpose. (See below.)

Article II: Membership. (Eligibility and selection.)

Article III: Officers. (Titles, duties, term, election, executive committee, etc.)

Article IV: Meetings.

Article V: Amendments.

The constitution should be short, compact, and general rather than detailed.

EXAMPLE:

Constitution of: (insert name of organization)

Article I. Name and Purpose

- A. The statement of the purpose or objectives of an organization is broad enough to allow freedom in the choice of present and future endeavors.
- B. This article may be divided into two separate articles (Article I: Name, Article II: Purpose) or it may be one article with two sections (A: Name, B: Purpose).

Article II. Membership

- A. **Membership is open to all Longwood students and will not be restricted on the basis of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or political affiliation.**
- B. Qualifications for membership are clearly stated.
- C. Classes of membership - e.g. active, associate, honorary, etc. - are clearly defined.
- D. Method of admitting members is explained.
- E. Provision for dropping a member from the rolls is made (not officers - that is handled in separate forum).

Article III. Officers

- A. Officers, with titles, are listed.
- B. Qualifications for officers are stated.
- C. Duties of officers are listed.

- D. Term of office is stated.
- E. Election procedure is clearly explained (nominating committee, secret ballot, quorum, etc...).
- F. Method of filling vacancies in office is provided.
- G. Method of officer impeachment is provided for.
- H. Structure, powers, responsibilities of Executive Board (if any) is included.
- I. Standing committees and duties are listed.
- J. Power to appoint committees is granted.
- K. Operational procedure between meetings is provided

Article IV. Advisor

- A. Explain role of advisor
- B. How is organization advisor chosen

Article V. Meetings

- A. Types of meetings are explained (called, regular, etc...).
- B. Power to call meetings is given.
- C. Provisions are made for a percentage of the membership to petition for a meeting to be called, if necessary.
- D. Program (activities) is stated.
- E. Realistic quorum rule is established (see 7 in glossary).
- F. Provision is made for notifying members in advance of meeting dates.

Article VI. Finance

- A. Annual dues, if any, are provided for (entrance fee, initiation fee, dues, etc...).
- B. Who will maintain financial records

Article VII. Amendments

A.A built-in method for exists for amending the constitution including a provision for notifying members in advance of proposed amendments

B.A realistic quorum is adopted

Article VIII. Ratification

This constitution shall become effective upon approval by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the membership.

Statements highlighted in bold must be part of every constitution