



Student Organization Policy

Constitutions

For questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership
(330) 823-2885 | carnelke@mountunion.edu

As a student organization at the University of Mount Union, each group is responsible for creating and keeping current a constitution and/or bylaws. The constitution and/or bylaws guide an organization in its operations and activities. Each is intended primarily for the organization's benefit and use. Every registered and recognized student organization must have a constitution on file with the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership. Every time this document is updated, a new copy should be submitted to the Office to update the organization's files.

If the student organization is a chapter of a nationally-recognized organization, these amendments are expected to appear in your organization's bylaws. Please submit a copy of both the national constitution and the local bylaws to the Office of the Student Involvement & Leadership.

The constitution contains the fundamental principles and structure of the organization. At the University of Mount Union, student organization constitutions are required to contain the following pieces:

- Name and purpose of the organization**
- Statement of non-discrimination**
- Membership information**
- Officers, officer duties,**
- Procedures for officer election and procedures for officer removal**
- Meetings**
- Advisor**
- Amendments**
- Ratification procedure**
- University of Mount Union Rules & Regulations**
- Student Involvement & Leadership Clause**

The bylaws* outline the basic rules of procedure as to how the group's membership governs the organization. Bylaws* should include all the rules not already in the constitution that are of such importance they cannot change in any way, without previous notice.

Each student organization constitution must be carefully formulated, clearly worded, and kept up-to-date so that the needs of the organization are met. It is highly recommended that each member of an organization has a copy of the constitution and bylaws.

The Office of Student Involvement & Leadership requires an electronic copy of the constitution at the time the student organization registers for the semester. If there are any problems or concerns with your constitution, a member of the OSIL staff will contact you. Student organization constitutions should be updated at minimum, every year.

**The following outline is provided to assist in the preparation of a constitution and, if needed, bylaws.
Use this guide to prepare the constitution for your student organization.**

Guide to Writing a Constitution

Adapted, in part, from *Student Organization Writing Guide*, Northwestern University (2017)

This guide assists student organizations at the University of Mount Union in writing or revising an organizational constitution. Articles may vary from this form, except where noted as “verbatim,” but should follow the basic format.

VERBATIM LANGUAGE is indicated in purple.

Instructional language, not for inclusion, is indicated in gray.

Suggested language is indicated in black.

A student organization constitution should be simple, yet comprehensive and difficult to amend, leaving any specific procedural rules to be included in the bylaws. When amending the constitution, as with the bylaws, previous notice of any proposed change is required to be given to the membership and should not be changed in the same meeting in which proposed.

Organizations will have varying restrictions and requirements on membership, officer responsibilities, etc., so the guidelines outlined here are intentionally general and may need to be adjusted to the specific student organization.

Constitution of Name of Organization

University of Mount Union

Date constitution is submitted for review

Article I Introduction

This article is meant to provide an introduction and overview of the organization. It sets the context for which the rest of the Constitution is interpreted and read. This section of the constitution is vital because it provides an understanding of what and who the organization is. The sections generally included in this article are name, mission statement, and objectives.

Section 1. Name

A recognized student organization may use the University's name in its title. If the organization is affiliated with a national or international organization, details of that affiliation should be adequately described here.

The name should be unique from any other currently active student organization and should reflect the nature and activities of the organization. Any organization abbreviation or acronyms must be formally referenced in this article. This includes if the organization is affiliated with a local or national organization, that information is included here.

Example: “The name of this organization is Phi Delta Theta Fraternity. This organization will utilize the acronym Phi Delt throughout this document. Phi Delt is affiliated with the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity, Inc., operating in Oxford, Ohio.

Section 2. Purpose & Objectives

Organizations should take care to include a complete statement of purpose and objectives. Programs sponsored by the organization must comply and be consistent with the organization's stated purpose and objectives.

Consider: What is the overarching purpose or mission of the organization? What is the intended impact of the organization on the University of Mount Union campus? What services will be provided, and for whom?

Example: Phi Delt is a leading fraternity centered on the potential of each brother and the lifelong values of friendship, sound learning, and rectitude.

Objectives should be written as action statements (“to...”), which act as specific things the organization strives to achieve to fulfill its mission. These statements are specific concepts, ideas, or issues that provide tangible examples of what the organization does.

Consider: Do the objectives of the organization focus on its long-range intentions for existing/operating? Are these objectives achievable given your resources? How relevant are the objectives to the organization's purpose? Are these objectives written as action statements ("to...")?

Section 3. **Statement of Non-Discrimination.**

All student organizations desiring to benefit from registered student organization status with the University must include in their constitution a non-discrimination policy statement that accords with the **University's Statement of Diversity**, as well as the **University non-discrimination policies**. Where applicable, a student organization may adopt a statement that reflects its eligibility criteria for members and officers.

The University of Mount Union prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, marital or parental status, pregnancy, disability, or genetic information, in student admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or employment as now, or may hereafter be, required by university policy and federal or state law.

**Please note that any national or international organization that is exempt under Title IX, must note as such in this section of their organizational bylaws.*

Section 4. **Method of Dissolution of Organization.**

This section should outline the requirements and procedures for the dissolution of the student organization. Should any organization assets and debt exist, appropriate means for disposing of these assets and debts should be specified here.

Questions to Consider:

- What is the procedure for dissolution?
- When would dissolution of the organization be considered?

Article II **Membership**

This article outlines the requirements and expectations for membership to be granted into the organization. It typically includes three levels of eligibility: general membership, committee membership, and executive board/officer membership. These sections detail the initial requirements to be eligible for participation.

Section 1. **Membership Eligibility**

- A. Membership should be defined as limited to currently enrolled University of Mount Union students.
- B. Others such as faculty, alumni, professionals, etc. are encouraged to become members but as non-voting associate or honorary members. For educational and leadership development reasons, student organizations are to be student initiated, student led, and student run.

Questions to Consider:

- Who is eligible for membership?
- How and when can membership be revoked?

Article III **Organization Leadership**

This article outlines who leads the organization, their responsibilities, and the role of an executive committee. Every student organization is required to have a full-time member of the faculty, staff, or administration serve as a campus advisor. Additional advisors are permitted, but one advisor must be an employee of Mount Union. Special permission from the appropriate dean or department chair can be granted for adjunct faculty or part-time staff.

Section 1. **Titles, terms of office, type of selection, and duties of the leaders.**

- A. Organization leaders represent the Executive Committee and general membership and are elected or appointed from the ranks of the organization's voting membership. The titles of organization leaders, the length of terms, specification as to which leaders are elected or appointed and by whom, and the general duties of each leadership position should be clearly specified here.
- B. Qualifications for becoming an officer should be outlined here.
- C. Term of office should be outlined here (e.g., is it for a semester, calendar year, or academic year?)

Section 2. **Campus Advisor**

The University of Mount Union prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, marital or parental status, pregnancy, disability, or genetic information, in student admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or employment as now, or may hereafter be, required by university policy and federal or state law.

this section is REQUIRED in a student organization, specifically section 1, and must be included verbatim]

- A. The advisor of [fill in name of organization here] must be a full-time member of the faculty, administration, or support staff of University of Mount Union and shall be recommended annually by the members of this organization in a manner agreeable to the total membership.
- B. The advisor shall be (*list additional advisor requirements, i.e. member of a particular national organization, academic department, specific role on campus*)

Section 3. Executive Board / Council / Committee

- A. This part of the organization (like a board of trustees or directors) represents the general membership and conducts business of the organization between general meetings of the membership and reports its actions at the general meetings of the membership.
- B. In many organizations, this part of the or is comprised of the organization leaders, chairpersons of the standing committees, and sometimes ex-officio members from related student organizations.

Section 4. Vacancies

- A. If an officer needs to step down, does not return to Mount Union, or is removed from their position, what is the procedure for filling that vacated role? Outline that here.

Questions to Consider:

- Are special elections held?
- Is ascending order used (moving up the rank order of officers to fill a position)?
- What is the order of succession (the rank order of officers to be used in ascending order)?
- Is the order of succession used for each position down the ladder, or can it stop along the way?
- Are appointments made, or are interviews coordinated?

Article IV Standing Committees (if needed)

Section 1. Names, purposes, and composition.

- A. membership and are permanent and designed to carry out the basic functions of the organization.
- B. Chairpersons of these committees are often appointed by the organization leadership.

Article V Selecting and/or Removing Officers and Members

This article outlines and details the process and procedures for electing/selecting executive board positions. There are various methods to selecting officers or executive board positions, which can include: selection committee and interview, nomination and vote, or appointment. The elements contained within this section depend upon the method the organization decides to utilize. What should be stated in this section is who oversees the process; requirements to enter the selection process; how the process operates; how a new officer/executive board member is affirmed or selected; and when their term begins and ends.

Section 1. Selection/Election of Officers.

- A. The constitution should describe the process by which officers and members are selected.

Questions to Consider:

- How often and what time of year is officer selection held?
- Are there any special elections?
- Are applications necessary?
- Is there a minimum/maximum amount of time to be able to apply to run for a position? If so, define that here.

Section 2. Election and Voting Procedures.

- A. Outline the specific procedure for how officers are elected.

Questions to Consider:

- What is the voting method (e.g., paper ballot, electronic, etc.)
- What number or percentage of the membership (quorum) is required to hold elections or complete the selection process? What if the vote cannot take place because not enough members are present? Can elections occur electronically? Can people vote by proxy (including email)?

- Who is eligible to vote?
- Do candidates give speeches?
- Can someone serve consecutive terms?
- Can someone hold more than one office at a time?

Section 3. Removal of Officers.

- A. If a member or leader does not meet outlined expectations, the organization should have procedures in place for objectively considering the member's or leader's probationary membership status or removal from the organization. The process described in the constitution should specify which body conducts this review and ultimately makes the decision. It should be noted that the organization's non-discrimination policy should protect members from removal based on those listed statuses.

Questions to Consider:

- What are the grounds for removal of an executive board member?
- Who can initiate the removal of an executive board member?
- What is the process for removal of a member of the organization? This should be framed in the following way: 1. Charge or complaint brought against an individual 2. Evidence to support complaint presented 3. Individual given opportunity to argue a defense and offer counter evidence 4. Vote is taken (vote count must be specified in the Constitution)
- What type (e.g., secret ballot, voice vote, roll call vote, etc.) of vote is required for removal?
- Is voting determined by eligible voters present or by individuals present?

Section 4. Appeal of Impeachment.

Questions to Consider:

- Is there a set amount of time to carry out an appeal?
- What steps are involved with the appeal?
- Who oversees the appeal process?

Article VI Meetings of the Organization

This article should detail any meeting the organization holds, which can vary from executive board meetings, committee meetings, general body meetings, and special meetings. The process of how and who can call a particular meeting, who runs the meeting, and the purpose of the meeting should be outlined. Each different type of meeting needs to have its own section so full understanding of the process and procedures can be conveyed.

Section 1. Types and occurrence of meetings

- A. Required meetings and their number are specified here. For instance, two general meetings of the membership may be required each academic term except for summer.

Consider: Are there different types of meetings (e.g., business, regular, special, executive, etc.)? Who is required to attend each type of meeting? What happens if a meeting is missed? How often meetings are held (e.g., weekly, monthly, etc.)? Is there a set date for meetings?

Example: General member meetings will be held on the first Sunday of every month during the academic year and open to the entire organization.

Section 2. Special Meetings

Consider: What are the circumstances under which special meetings may be called? Who can call the meetings?

Example: Special meetings may be called during the quarter upon the approval of most of the Executive Board.

Section 3. Quorum

Consider: What's the purpose of the quorum? What is the percentage or number of members needed for quorum? What happens if quorum does not exist at a meeting? What if quorum is not reached for a few meetings?

Example: A quorum shall consist of at least one half of the total membership. No votes may be taken in absence of a quorum.

Section 4. Parliamentary Procedure

Consider: What rules shall govern the conduct of business for the organization? Roberts Rules?

Section 5. Meeting Minutes and Records

Consider: Who is responsible for taking notes and/or meeting minutes? How are these records stored and who is responsible for them? How does the organization share the meeting minutes with the membership to solicit corrections to the minutes?

Example: The secretary shall distribute meeting minutes 48 hours before the next general meeting, or by Fridays at noon, whichever comes first. During executive meetings, the secretary shall ask for a motion to approve the previous week's minutes and make corrections as needed.

Articles REQUIRED for each student organization constitution. The articles may have additions, but the text in purple is required to be in this order in a student organization constitution.

Article VII Amendments

This article outlines the process and procedure to amend the organization's constitution.

[this article is REQUIRED in a student organization must be included verbatim]

Section 1. To amend this constitution, a written copy of the proposed amendment must be provided to the membership a minimum of **two weeks** prior to the meeting where a vote will take place on the proposed amendment.

Section 2. The proposed amendment to this constitution must be adopted by a quorum vote of the members present at the meeting where voting occurs.

Section 3. Amendments become effective upon submission to the Committee on Student Organizations.

Section 4. The student organization will receive written notification from the Director of Student Involvement and Leadership when the amended constitution is submitted and filed.

Article VIII Ratification

[this article is REQUIRED in a student organization must be included verbatim]

Section 1. This constitution shall be in effect upon ratification by a quorum vote of the **NAME OF ORGANIZATION**.

Article X University of Mount Union Rules and Regulations

[this article is REQUIRED in a student organization, and must be included verbatim]

Section 1. This organization shall comply with the University of Mount Union Student Handbook and all laws, rules and regulations governing University of Mount Union, its organizations, and its students. This includes any applicable local, state, and federal law.

Section 2. This organization will not engage in or permit hazing. The University of Mount Union prohibits hazing by campus groups and/or individuals. Hazing is defined under Ohio Revised Code as "doing any act or coercing another, including the victim, to do any act of initiation into any student or other organization that causes, or creates a substantial risk of causing, mental or physical harm to a person." Furthermore, the University defines hazing as any action taken or situation created intentionally, whether on or off campus, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. All acts of hazing by any organization or any of its members are strictly forbidden. Acts of hazing are adjudicated through the Office of Student Conduct.

Article XI. Student Involvement and Leadership Clause

[This article is REQUIRED in a student organization constitution and must be included verbatim. Please change NAME OF ORGANIZATION to the name of the student organization constitution.]

Section 1. **NAME OF ORGANIZATION** shall maintain a current registration form on file with the Office of Student Involvement and Leadership every semester. This registration form includes a list of officers, name of the advisor, and a current roster of members.

Section 2. **NAME OF ORGANIZATION** will also submit the most recently amended constitution within one month of any change made.

Section 3. Failure to submit the student organization registration in the timeframe provided will result in the withdrawal of formal recognition by the University.

Section 4. As a recognized student organization, **NAME OF ORGANIZATION** will participate in a constitutional review process every three (3) years. It will be updated according to the newest version of the model constitution (if necessary), and the **NAME OF ORGANIZATION** leadership will meet with the Director of Student Involvement & Leadership to review it.

Bylaws

Bylaws contain the standing rules of procedure of an organization. Articles in the bylaws may be covered in appropriate detail in the constitution of very small organizations. However, most groups keep separate bylaws because bylaws usually contain more detail and are subject to change more than that of the constitution and, therefore, may require different procedures for amending.

Provision for amendment of the bylaws should be somewhat easier than that of the constitution, as rules of procedure should adapt to the changing conditions of the student organization. When amending the bylaws, as with the constitution, previous notice of any changes is usually required to be given to the membership and should not be changed in the same meeting in which proposed. Bylaws are more permanent, however, than passing a general motion, which may require only a simple majority vote of voters present at a general meeting of the membership (a quorum being present).

Bylaws cannot run contrary to the constitution. Please note that some organizations desire a structure that is fundamentally different from the guidelines presented here. Under these circumstances, the organization should contact the Office of Student Involvement & Leadership to assist in the design of an alternate structure. The goal would be to incorporate basic principles important to the University while promoting those of the organization.

Bylaws of Name of Organization

University of Mount Union

Date constitution is submitted for review

Article I Parliamentary Authority

Most organizations use Robert's Rule of Order to govern organizational decision-making except when these rules are inconsistent with their constitution or bylaws of the organization. These rules are based on the premise that "though the minority shall be heard, and absentees protected, the majority will decide."

A recommended wording is "The rules contained in [specify the source for parliamentary practice] shall govern the organization in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws of this organization."

Article II Membership Procedures

Articulate for becoming a member, which may vary by membership category, amount for dues, if any, and how often they should be paid, termination of membership, and so on should be described in detail.

Article III Funds

Articulate the procedures for handling organizational funding.

Consider:

- Does this organization charge dues?
- What is the cost of those dues?
- Does the organization have an outside bank account and how is it used?
- Does the organization have a Student Senate account, and how is it used?

Article VII Meeting Requirements

Regular, special, size and determination of quorum (number of voting members required to vote on decisions placed before the general membership, executive, and standing committees).

Article VIII Dues (if needed)

should be outlined, including amount, when to pay, and what happens when member fails to pay the dues

Article IX Attendance

Outline what is attendance at each type of meeting – special, general, executive, etc. Describe what an excused absence is (versus unexcused), and how far in advance excuses are accepted. Who to submit excuses to should be outlined here (by title, not person's name), and what happens when the total number of unexcused absences by a member occurs (expulsion, suspension, etc.)

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