

Registered Student Organization Constitution Writing Guide

All Registered Student Organizations at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville are required to have a constitution. The following template is provided as a guide in creating a new constitution. All Registered Student Organizations must comply with University of Tennessee, Knoxville guiding policies. If you have any questions, please contact the Center for Student Engagement by emailing Jordan Smith at go@utk.edu.

What is a Constitution?

A constitution contains the fundamental principles of an organization. It outlines the purpose, structure and limits of an organization as well as provides a foundation to ensure the smooth operations of your organization.

How to Use This Guide

This document is intended to provide a basic structure of a student organization constitution and give examples of things to consider when writing your constitution. It will also identify specific elements that are required for approval to become a registered student organization.

ARTICLE 1: Name, Mission or Purpose

This article is meant to provide an introduction and overview of the organization. It provides an understanding of what and who the organization is.

Section I: Name

The name of this organization shall be _____.

- This section should provide the full name of the organizations as it would appear on any University publications. The name should be unique from all other currently recognized registered student organization. This section should also include any abbreviations or acronyms.
- Your name should NOT BEGIN with “The University of Tennessee, Knoxville”, “UTK” or any other words that identify it with The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. (“ISO organization name” @ UTK is permitted.)

Consider: Does your name clearly identify what your organization will do?

Example: The name of this organization shall be The Biology Club.

Section II: Mission or Purpose

The mission (or purpose) of the “Organization’s Name” is to _____.

- This section should clearly state the overarching mission/purpose of the organization. The mission/purpose should be unique from all other currently recognized registered student organization.
- The mission/purpose statement should be broad to allow for flexibility within the organization but specific enough to provide an understanding of the unique purpose of the organization.

Consider: What is the intended impact of the organization on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus and Knoxville community?

Example: The mission of The Biology Club is to educate students on the various aspects of science and promote awareness of the medical field, by organizing events that involved traditional and scientific activities.

This article may also include a section for your organization’s objectives, such as long-term or short-term goals.

ARTICLE II: Organizational Structure

This article details the structure of the organization. This section defines the responsibilities of executive/officers.

Section I: Executive Board

A. List the Executive Board/ Officer positions and Responsibilities

Consider: What are the responsibilities of each member of the executive board?

Example: A. President

- a. Shall reside over all organizational meetings*
- b. Shall review all activities and programs*

B. List of the Executive Board/Officer Eligibility

Consider: What makes a member of the organization eligible for the executive board or an officer position?

Example: In order to be eligible for an executive board position, a person must have been a member of the organization for two semesters and have a GPA of 2.5 or higher.

Section II: Committees (If Applicable)

- The section defines all the committees and sub-committees within the organizations. If an organization does not have any committees or sub-committees, this section is not needed.

A. List and Identify standing committees and subcommittees

Consider: What are the names and purposes of the various committees? What are the responsibilities?

B. List and identify Special Committees

- This sub-section is for committees that are not standing committees, but are formed on special or specific occasions

Section III: Advisor

- This section should include the responsibilities and requirements for an advisor.
- This section should also include advisor expectations
- Advisors should be a faculty or staff member. A Graduate Student is able to serve as an Advisor, if advising the organization is a part of their job duties.

Example: The advisor must be a full-time faculty or staff member at UT. The advisor must attend organizational meetings.

ARTICLE III: Membership

This article includes the requirements and expectations for membership to be granted into the organization. It includes general membership, executive board/officers and if applicable, committee membership.

Section I: Non-Discrimination/ Same-Sex Organizations

(This section is required by the University, must be included *verbatim* for approval)

- A. Membership is be open to all students, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.
- Same Sex Organization, requirements:
 - Registered student organizations, including those affiliated with an extramural organization shall be open to all students - unless the organization, by its nature, exists explicitly for a certain subgroup - in selecting its membership. The U.S Department of Education Office of Civil Rights has established clear criteria for exemption from Title IX for student organizations. The criteria is as follows:
 - The organization must have tax-exempt status under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code
 - Members must be limited to students, staff, or faculty at the University of Tennessee
 - The organization must be a “social fraternity or sorority” as defined by the United States Department of Education

B. A member of "Organization Name" is defined as any student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in good academic standing and _____.

- This section should include any other membership requirements, i.e GPA requirement and/or requirements for recruitment.

Consider: What makes a person eligible to be a member of Registered Student Organization?

Section II: Recruitment Process

- This section will include your committee's recruitment process. It should detail all the pieces of the recruitment process such applications, interviews and any training that is required to be a member of the organization.

ARTICLE IV: Procedures

This article details all procedures, such as the processes and procedures for electing executive board positions, meetings and voting. There are various processes that could find into this section, you should select the process that fits within your organization. There are several steps that should be featured in this section: requirements, how the process operates, how new executive board/officers are elected and when and how long their term is.

Section I: Meetings

- A. "Organization Name" shall take place at a regular time and location, after consultation with the advisors and members.
 - B. All meetings of "Organization Name", except for those that contain confidential information, shall be open to the public.
- This section should also include any other meeting procedures, such as committee meetings

Section II: Voting

- This section should include your organizations procedures for voting. There are several options for voting procedures: including secret ballot, hand vote and majority or 2/3 vote. This section should be decided upon after conversation with your advisor, organization and executive board.

Section III: Elections

- This section should outline the election process for your organization. This should include the eligibility for election, term of office, time and place of each election, speeches (if applicable), and the amount of positions a person can apply for.

ARTICLE V: Financial Statement

- This section defines the financial statement of the organization. *This is a required section of the constitution.*
 - Any membership dues, including the exact amount and frequency of payments must be stated.
 - A statement of how funds will be handled must be stated, including the following: process for receipting, timeframe for depositing money, and procedures to approve expenditures
 - A yearly financial statement must be provided to the student organization advisor for review.
- In the event of a dissolution of the student organization, a provision for the disposition of funds remaining must be stated. Organizations must select a specific group if donating any remaining funds.
 - *Example: Any remaining funds will be donated to the Student Organizations Support Fund at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.*