

Purdue University Student Organization Constitution Template

This document serves to guide students in writing or revising the constitution for a new or existing student organization at Purdue University. An official student organization may structure and govern itself in any way it deems appropriate, so long as it does not violate the Regulations and Procedures for Recognized Student Organizations found in the Student Regulations (<https://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/index.html>).

A constitution is comprised of the fundamental laws and principles that prescribe the nature, function and limits of an organization. Constitutions generally provide current and potential members with information about:

- What the organization's mission and purpose are and what the organization does
- Who can become a member and how a person becomes a member
- The essential operation of the organization, including the structure of elections, meetings, general officer/member duties, and more

Essentially, the constitution provides an enduring, basic structure upon which an organization operates. Constitutions generally do not get into specifics of operation, leaving those ideas to an additional bylaws document. As a basic structure of the organization, any amendments or changes to an organization's constitution should be both rare and difficult to make, albeit not impossible. They should also should require a high level of participation/approval from the organization's membership.

Process

- Cut and paste a copy of the Constitution **TEMPLATE** (below) and customize for your organization.
- **Items highlighted in yellow are mandatory statements and MUST be written in your constitution exactly as stated.**
- All other sections are examples of what could be included or guiding questions to help you determine what you want to include.
- Submit your completed constitution DRAFT to the Student Activities and Organizations (SAO) Office by email to sao@purdue.edu or on-line during your annual re-registration using the BoilerLink website. Please allow one week for review.
- Once our office has approved your draft, you will be notified so that a final, hand-signed copy can be sent to SAO for confirmation and posting to your organization's BoilerLink page.
- Please maintain a copy of your constitution and reference it in your group's record keeping and leadership transition processes (once it receives final approval).

For additional assistance, please contact the Student Activities and Organizations Office at 765-494-1231 or sao@purdue.edu

Constitution Requirements

Student organization constitutions should follow the format below and include the articles outlined in this template. You may add articles or bylaws, but additions must adhere to campus regulations as stated in the Student Regulations (www.purdue.edu/policies).

TEMPLATE

Cut and paste the entire section below into a word processing document and customize for your organization

Note that, typically, constitutions are organized in a kind of outline format. This is easier to read and reference in discussion. Top-levels are typically “Articles”. Subordinate parts to articles are “Sections”.

Example:

Article 3: Membership

Section 1: Classes of Membership: Membership in Purdue Boilermaker Club may be granted in the following classes: Active, Honorary, Alumni, and Adjunct.

Section 2: Active Membership: Active membership is limited to Purdue undergraduate or graduate students currently enrolled in a program of study at Purdue University- West Lafayette. Only active members of Purdue Boilermaker club have the ability to vote or hold office in the organization.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION NAME

Date Prepared:

Date(s) Amended: (This is important so that a record is made of how the document changes over time)

PREAMBLE

An introductory statement usually no longer than two or three sentences stating the intent or mission of the constitution.

ARTICLE I – Name

What is the exact title, and any group acronym, that will be used in addressing your organization? Please bear in mind that organization names should not begin with the words “Purdue” or “Purdue University”. (e.g.: “Purdue Alphabet Club” could not be approved. “Alphabet Club at Purdue” could be approved.)

ARTICLE II – Purpose of the Organization

Briefly describe the purpose and objectives of your organization. Be sure this information is clear and specific. This statement will be used to describe what the organization is about to those looking to join. The purpose statement should be broad enough in scope to allow the organization freedom of action but specific enough to show the uniqueness of the organization.

ARTICLE III – Membership

Section A. Membership Eligibility

- Describe who is eligible for membership.
 - Undergraduate students, Graduate students, Faculty, Staff, Alumni, and Community Members are all able to participate with student organizations at Purdue.
 - Only Purdue University – West Lafayette students may vote or hold office in student organizations at Purdue. Advisors may not vote, even to break a tie.
- Are there any restrictions on students (e.g., grade point average, class standing, etc.)?

Section B. Selection of Members

- List the procedures for selecting members, if any. Be certain that this process is transparent and easy to understand.

The following sections should be included in your constitution and would likely be incorporated into this section. They can be separate, as listed, or included as Sections or Clauses in this document:

ANTI-HAZING STATEMENT

This organization complies with all State and Federal laws and Purdue University Hazing Policy (see University Regulations). Further, the members of this organization understand that any individual or group found responsible for hazing will be subject to disciplinary action by the Office of the Dean of Students.

REQUIRED NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Membership and participation are free from discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.

Article IV - Organization Officers and Election Procedure

Section A. List of Officers by title

- The elected officers must include at a minimum a President and Treasurer.
- This section is NOT a list of the names of students who are officers.
- List whether there will be appointed officers and, if available, what their titles are.

Section B. Eligibility

- What are the qualifications for officers? (Previous involvement/ service, belonging to a particular major, etc.)
- Are there different qualifications for some offices than for others?

Section C. Length of Officer Term

- How long do officers serve?
 - Remember that having terms that start in fall and end in spring means that no one is leading your organization during the summer.
- All elected officers shall be elected annually and serve a one-year term starting in _____ and ending the following _____. Appointed positions can start at any time and last a maximum of one year.

Section D. Election Procedure

- Describe the process and required majority or plurality of votes from your active, voting membership by which officers will be elected and selected.
- If members pay dues to belong to your organization, dues should be paid in advance of elections. How far in advance should this be for your organization to prevent the impression of rigging an election?
- How will ties, run-offs, and/or situations where no-one receives a majority vote be handled?
- Nominations for all elected officers will be collected starting _____.
A list of nominees will be distributed to all current students at least one-week prior to elections. Officers must be elected by a majority of members voting in the election and ballots may be cast via email or written vote. Only nominees stated prior to the elections

shall be listed on the ballot; however, write-in candidates are accepted. Candidates receiving the majority vote must accept the position, orally or written, before he/she assumes office.

Section E. Appointment Procedures

- Nominations for all appointed officers will be collected starting 2 weeks before any appointment begins. After all names are collected, the Board will review the candidates and select a nominee by majority vote. The nominee must accept the position, orally or written, before he/she assumes office.

Section F. Officer Removal

- Any member may call for the removal of an officer by submitting a written request to the President (if the President is the officer in question, the request is to be submitted to the advisor). The President (or advisor) will send a warning letter discussing the matter to the officer in question.
- If a second request for removal is made, the officer in question will be given the opportunity to verbally argue their case at a meeting with the officers and advisor. If deemed necessary, an improvement plan addressing the responsibilities and behavior of the officer may be established.
- If a third request for removal is made, a vote of the organization will be taken regarding removal of that officer. Members will be given one week notice of the removal vote. 60% of current active members attending the meeting (minus the officer in question) must vote in favor of removal in order to remove the officer.

Section G. Officer Vacancy

- What happens in case of a vacancy?
- How will officers be removed or replaced?
- For example, “In the event of an elected position vacancy, members will nominate a new officer by majority vote to fulfill the duties of the previous officer.”

ARTICLE V - Advisor

- Will you have one advisor or more than one advisor?
- How will the advisor be selected?
- What time of year will selection occur?
- How long do advisors serve?
- What happens in case of a vacancy?
- The following clause should be included in your constitution:

ADVISOR CLAUSE

This organization will select and secure an advisor from the active faculty or staff of Purdue University and will register their name with the Student Activities and Organizations annually. The advisor will be informed of all meetings and activities of the organization and may call a

special meeting of the organization to discuss concerns for the ongoing nature of the organization. Advisors may not vote or hold office in the organization.

ARTICLE VI - Officers and Duties

- What are the specific officer positions and, generally, what are their responsibilities?
- What is the line of responsibility if the president is not able to fulfill their role?
- Common oversights:
 - If your organization has a Vice-President, what are their responsibilities aside from taking over for the president if that person cannot serve?
 - Who is in charge of fund-raising for the organization?
 - Fund-raising Chairperson should ideally be different from Treasurer. Perhaps a Fund-raising/Alumni Relations Chairperson or a Marketing/Fund-raising Chairperson?
- The following section examples represent the two officer positions required by SAO. This does not represent a required order of presentation in your organization's document.
- Additional officer positions and duties can be added as deemed necessary by the organization, using constitutional amendments.

Section A. President

- The President, as an elected officer, (1) will preside over all meetings, including elections; (2) will be responsible for creating the agendas for these meetings as well as maintaining order during the meetings; (3) act as a communication liaison

Section B. Treasurer

- The Treasurer, as an elected officer, (1) is responsible for managing the finances including approving activity budgets and submitting reimbursement paperwork; (2) **keep accounts, deposit the organization's funds, and make expenditures in a manner approved by the Business Office for Student Organizations;** (3) maintain accurate financial records and create a budget; (4) maintain and distribute meeting minutes and any official records, such as committee applications.

Article VII - Meetings

- How often will the group meet?
- Who will call the meetings?
- What constitutes quorum for a meeting?
 - Quorum refers to the number or percentage of the membership that must attend a meeting in order for the meeting to be official and for votes to be binding.
 - Examples might be "Quorum for Purdue Boilermaker Club shall be 8 active members." or "Quorum for Purdue Boilermaker Club shall be 50% of the active membership of the organization as listed on its official roster."

- Is there an allowance for special emergency meetings?
- How will you notify people of emergency meetings?
 - How much advance notice will members receive of these meetings?

ARTICLE VIII - Constitutional Amendments

- Who can propose an amendment?
- How are they proposed?
- What is the required period of time between the proposed amendment and a final vote?
There should be enough time to allow members to read, process, and discuss the amendment. A final vote should NOT happen in the same meeting.
- How will you notify active members that an amendment is going to be voted upon?
- Incorporate into your constitution that an amendment will need approval from 2/3 of the organization's active membership in order to pass.
 - Amendments change the structure of the organization, so it is important to have at least 2/3 of the active membership approve those changes.
- The following clause must be included in your constitution:

REQUIRED AMENDMENT CLAUSE

All amendments to the constitution and bylaws are subject to the approval of the Office of Student Activities and Organizations. They MAY NOT take effect until they have been approved.

ARTICLE IX – Dissolution

- How will dissolution of the organization be decided?
 - What is the process for dissolving the organization? Typically, it is at least similar to that of amending the constitution. Sometimes, it is more stringent.
- What is the required threshold of votes needed to dissolve the group?
 - This should usually be at least as many as it takes to amend the constitution. Therefore, your threshold for dissolving the group should be at least 2/3 of the active membership, but could be more.
- What will happen with any unspent funds of the organization?

Date of Adoption

Date of Recognition

President's signature

Student Activities and Organizations Office

Advisor's signature

Optional Additions:

Many organizations cite Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition. This often helps guide groups in times of conflict. You may add articles or bylaws, but additions must adhere to campus regulations as stated in University Regulations. By-Laws often include: Duties of Officers, Duties of Advisor, Installations, Committees, Activities, and Finances/Dues/Fees.