The writing of your new student organization’s constitution should be a process that is given particular attention to detail. With most student organizations, the constitution is a document that will outlast the membership of the organization’s founding officers.

The constitution both contains the basic principles that govern the organization’s operations and details the structure of the organization’s leadership. Many student organizations choose to include the specific guidelines for meeting structure, event planning, and officer duties in a separate document, or by-laws.

However, your student organization decides to structure its constitution, the document should ultimately give both active and prospective members a clear understanding of the organization’s purpose and how the organization governs itself.

The following sample constitution is a compilation from various student organizations. The sample is provided as a guide only. It is not necessary for your organization to strictly follow this form or to copy any of the wording verbatim.

Preamble
The preamble serves to introduce the constitution and should include a statement confirming the organization will abide by the University’s mission statement and all University policies, procedures, statements, and guidelines.

Article I: Name
In this article, state the official name of the organization. The name must be unique, not duplicating the name of an existing organization.

Article II: Purpose
In this article, briefly summarize the purpose of the organization.

Article III: Membership
In this article, detail membership requirements. The following are the University’s minimum requirements for Student Organization membership:
1. Members must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average throughout their membership.
2. Officers must maintain a minimum 2.3 cumulative grade point average throughout their term.
3. Membership criteria must not discriminate on the basis of religion, creed, physical ability, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. Some gender-specific organizations (sororities, fraternities, athletic groups) may be exempt from this non-discrimination statement. Exemptions are granted, however, only when a comparable organization exists for the gender ineligible for membership in the new organization.
4. Membership criteria for non-University students, if applicable, must include a
method of monitoring such members’ compliance with University policies and procedures. Additionally, a provision limiting non-University student membership to a maximum of one-tenth of the total membership of the organization must be included. All non-University members must be non-voting members of the organization.

### Officers

**Article IV: Officers**

In this article, detail officer requirements. Issues to consider when drafting this article may include the following:

1. List of officer positions, both elected and appointed.
2. Minimum qualifications for officers, such as the following:
   a. Cumulative GPA requirements.
   b. Semester-completion requirements.
   c. Academic major/minor requirements.
3. Length of officers’ terms.
4. Order of succession in the event of resignation or impeachment.

### Elections

**Article V: Elections**

In this article, detail election requirements. Issues to consider when drafting this article may include the following:

1. Method for electing officers, such as the following:
   a. Minimum number of members needed to conduct an election.
   b. Type of majority necessary to win office (simple, or 50% + 1; 75%).
2. Timeline for when elections are to be held.
3. Procedure for election, such as conducting voting orally, by secret ballot, or electronically.
4. Procedure for special elections, such as in the case of resignation or impeachment.

### Due Process

**Article VI: Due Process**

In this article, detail the organization’s procedures for ensuring all individuals are treated fairly in both academic and co-curricular disciplinary matters. Issues to consider when drafting this article may include the following:

1. Method for composing review panel or board, including presiding officer(s).
2. Procedure for managing grievances concerning elections.
5. Procedure for managing grievances concerning failure to meet minimum membership requirements.
   a. Meeting attendance requirements.
   b. Service hour requirements.
   c. Dues, fundraising, or philanthropy requirements.
6. Procedure for addressing members’ and officers’ failure to meet minimum GPA requirements.
7. Procedure for addressing members’ and officers’ failure to meet minimum disciplinary requirements.

### Meetings

**Article VII: Meetings**

In this article, detail the organization’s procedures for calling meetings. Issues to consider when drafting this article may include the following:

1. Minimum number of regular meetings per semester.
2. Procedure for calling special meetings.
3. Procedure for canceling regular and special meetings.
Article VIII: Events and Programs
In this article, detail any events or programs unique to the organization that will occur on a continuous or long-term basis. Such events and programs may include the following:
1. Conferences or seminars the organization will sponsor each semester or academic year.
2. Regular performances, art shows, or literary events.
3. Long-term service commitments or philanthropic efforts.
4. Religious services, spiritual exercises, or retreats.
5. Award ceremonies or banquets.
6. Athletic and recreational events or tournaments.
7. Scholarship or essay contests.

Article IX: Membership Dues
In this article, establish the amount of membership dues, as well as the procedure for collecting them. Include a procedure for disbursing the dues should the organization voluntarily disband. (All funds allocated to RSO's by the Campus Activities Office must be returned to the Student Organization Reserve Fund should the RSO voluntarily disband. Funds generated through fundraising projects and membership dues, however, may be spent or disbursed in an ethical manner.) If your organization chooses not to charge membership dues, do not include this article in your constitution.

Article X: Constitutional Revision
In this article, establish the procedure for amending the constitution. Issues to consider when drafting this article include the following:
1. Method for proposing amendments, such as who may do so (members, officers, advisors) and how they may do so (orally, in writing, or electronically).
2. Timeline for reviewing and discussing amendments.
3. Procedure for voting upon amendments.

Article XI: Constitutional Ratification
In this article, establish the method for ratification of the constitution. At a minimum, the article must include a statement acknowledging the constitution must have the approval of the Vice President and Dean of Student Life.

Date of Approval
For archival purposes, include the date of the constitution’s approval after the final article.

While the organization’s constitution contains the basic principles and structure of the organization, by-laws may be more useful for the organization to detail specific procedures. By-laws should further define the various articles of the organization’s constitution. Generally with provision, by-laws can be revised more easily than amending a constitution.

Issues generally addressed in by-laws include the following:
- List of officer duties.
- Organizational definition of “quorum.”
- Method for conducting meetings, such as Robert’s Rules of Order.
Approval of Constitution and By-laws

As a general rule, constitutions should require a two-thirds vote of the organization’s membership for ratification. The more active the organization’s members and officers are in the drafting and approval of the constitution, the more shared ownership the members and officers will take in the organization.

In order to ensure the organization’s by-laws are more flexible to amend, only a simple majority (50% + 1) vote of the organization’s membership is generally required. As the by-laws should be relatively easy to amend, the organization should review them regularly to ensure they reflect the organization’s current structure and operations.

Implementing Your Constitution

Following ratification of your organization’s constitution and by-laws, distribute copies of the document to all of your members and officers. Encourage them to review any provisions that apply most directly to their function in the organization. This should clarify opportunities for becoming actively involved in the organization’s programs and operations.

Forward a copy of your organization’s constitution and by-laws to your advisor as well. This should aid your advisor in better understanding the purpose of the organization and, ultimately, their involvement within the group.