

# Writing a Constitution

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## **Purpose of a Constitution:**

A constitution is a governing document of an organization. Essentially, it is an agreement among members of

Constitutions are meant to be enduring documents. Items or aspects that are subject to frequent revision are more appropriately included in an organization's bylaws. (Bylaws are another type of governing document, secondary to the constitution, which formally outline an organization's operations. Bylaws are typically easier to amend than a constitution and usually focused on procedures and operations of the organization, as opposed to the mission and structure. For most student organizations, a constitution alone serves this purpose.)

## **Helpful Tips:**

Proper format for a constitution is outline or bulleted, not narrative. Concise descriptions associated with bullet/outline headings may be appropriate to provide introduction or context.

The intention of the constitution is to provide long-term sustainability for the organization. Write for the future of the organization: the constitution should provide you with a guide to answer and resolve issues that face the organization.

### Three Elements All Bowdoin Constitutions MUST Contain:

These statements **must be included** in the constitution of every chartered student organization. The statements should be included as-is and not edited.

1) **A Non-Discrimination clause:** [Insert your student organization name] recognizes and will abide by Bowdoin's Non-Discrimination Policy: Respect for the rights of all and for the differences among us is essential for the Bowdoin community. Discrimination or harassment of others on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, age,

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Individual members can be held accountable for their specific behavior as part of a group if it is in violation of College Policy.

Students participating in groups that have been banned or previously removed from campus (e.g., fraternities, organizations that have lost a charter, etc.) will be referred to the Student Disciplinary Process.”

## **Writing Each Section of a Constitution**

The outline below provides questions you should consider as you are writing your organization’s constitution. It also provides sample language that you may choose to adopt if it is appropriate for your organization.

### **Preamble:**

State the name of the organization and the purpose of its establishment.

Example: We the me5 (eanj -0.0050.0034h3.96.s)]TJ 0 Tc 0.e



unanimous consent)? How are interviews granted and in what time frame?

**On timing:**When deciding your selection process, remember that the timing of selection will impact

the Student Activities Office r

December

or March so



Example: Amendments may be proposed in writing by any active member by emailing the Secretary. The Secretary will distribute a copy of the proposed amendments to all active members for discussion at the next regularly scheduled meeting at least one week after the amendment was proposed. After initial discussion, the amendment may be voted on by a simple up/down vote. Amendments must be passed with a 2/3 majority vote.

### **Effective Date**

Include an \_\_\_\_\_ date and a contact person's name on your organization's constitution. This does not need to be a separate article but should appear on the last page of the constitution.

### **References**

College of William & Mary \_\_\_\_\_ of Student Leadership Development. (2015, January). Constitution Guide. Retrieved from \_\_\_\_\_  
ts/sampleconstitutionjan2015.pdf

Dunkel, N., Schuh, J., & Chrystal-Green, N. (2014). Advising Student Groups and Organizations. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.