

Constitution Guide

COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY
Office of Student Leadership Development

Please follow this format.

The following outline and questions are designed to help you write a constitution for your proposed organization. This guide does not need to be followed verbatim but provides basic language and format for you to work within. Your constitution should address all the suggested areas identified but may do so in the manner that best serves your organization needs. If you have questions, contact the Office of Student Leadership Development at leadership@wm.edu.

Helpful Tips:

- Proper format 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.
- The constitution you submit to the Office of Student Leadership Development should be as close to final form as possible. We suggest that prior to submission you ask a 3rd party NOT associated with your group to proof read, review, and provide you with feedback about your proposed organization. (We find those writing the constitution are sometimes “too close” to the subject matter to be able to pull back to discern if it makes the most sense.)
- There are some mandatory statements that are clearly stated in this guide and should be included as indicated.
- Helpful Definitions:
 - Quorum: the minimum amount of members that must be present in order to conduct organization business, i.e., if you don’t meet this number, things like votes, discussions, and group decisions can’t take place
 - Majority: more than half of the vote, i.e., if you are voting among three options, at least one option must have more than half of the votes to constitute a majority
 - Plurality: the number of votes cast for a candidate or option who receives more than another other but does not receive a majority, i.e., if you are voting among three candidates and no candidate receives more than half of the votes
 - Ratification: the first time the constitution is approved by the new organization
 - Amendment: specific changes to the constitution adopted by an organization (NOT an entirely new document)

[ORGANIZATION NAME] AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY
Ratified OR Amended on: (Insert Date)

PREAMBLE:

This section should be a statement of the group’s establishment. The preamble should identify that this document serves as the constitution and governing document for the organization. *Example: We the members of (name of organization), subscribing to the regulations and policies of The College of William & Mary, establish this Constitution to govern the matters within our organization.*

Article I: NAME

State the full official name of the organization as well as any acronyms or other names used if applicable. *Example: The name of this organization will be known as the Student Leadership Development Club OR SLD Club.*

- If the organization is affiliated with a national organization, indicate that in this section as well.

Mandatory:

When naming your organization, “William & Mary” or “W&M” **may not precede** the name of the organization. (You may use XYZ Organization at W&M.)

Article II: PURPOSE/MISSION

What is the purpose of the organization? This is the place to describe the mission and long term goals for the organization. These goals should be broad in scope and a reflection of what your organization (or national affiliation) values.

Article III: MEMBERSHIP

This section allows you to define the composition of membership as well as the privileges and responsibilities of membership in the organization.

- State that the membership of the organization must be comprised of currently enrolled W&M students and faculty/staff of the College; individuals without official affiliation with the College are not eligible for membership.
- Define what a student must do to become a member and maintain membership. How is a member differentiated from a non-member or supporter of your organization?
- Outline what rights and privileges go along with membership. For example: Only active members may vote on matters (official or not) including amendments, elections, and other motions brought forth in meetings.
- Describe why and how membership privileges may be revoked or how an individual member pursues resignation.
- If different membership categories are appropriate for your organization, then share the types of membership that exist, such as active, associate, honorary, etc.

*The constitution MUST include one of the following non-discrimination clauses:

- *Option 1:* In accordance with W&M’s Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation, membership in this organization shall be open to all on a non-discriminatory basis with regard to race, religion, creed, national origin, gender, or political belief.
- *Option 2 (if applicable to your membership):* In accordance with W&M’s Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation, membership in this organization shall be open to all on a non-discriminatory basis with regard to race, religion, creed, national origin, gender, provided however that, to the extent permitted by law, membership in social organizations may be restricted to members of the same gender, and membership in organizations whose primary purpose is political or religious may be restricted to those members of the College community who have similar beliefs.

Example:

Section 1. The membership of the SLD Club will be comprised of currently enrolled W&M students and faculty/staff of the College.

- a. **Active members** will be currently enrolled students who participate in trainings monthly and attend 75% of meetings. Active members may participate in trainings and vote on organization business.*
- b. **Associate members** will be faculty or staff members who attend 50% of meetings. Associate members may participate in trainings but are not eligible to vote on organization business.*

Section 2. Removal of Membership:

- a. Members may pursue resignation by contacting the secretary via email.*
- b. Member privileges may be revoked by a unanimous decision of the Executive Board, based on but not limited to the perception of the member's participation, dedication, teamwork, and attitude. Members may be nominated for privilege revocation by any member of the organization through an email to the Secretary.*

Section 3. In accordance with W&M's Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation, membership in this organization shall be open to all on a non-discriminatory basis with regard to race, religion, creed, national origin, gender, or political belief.

Article V: OFFICERS

This section describes the titles and duties of the officers.

- How many officers are there? What are their titles and duties? Which officers constitute the executive body? You may consider traditional officer roles (President, Vice President, Treasurer, etc.) OR you may structure differently to serve the needs of your organization. Co-Presidents (typically based on co-founders) are not recommended.
- Describe any minimum qualifications officer candidates must have, such as class standing, experience in the organization, minimum GPA, etc.
- Define the length of the officer's term and term limits, if any
- Describe why and how an officer may be removed from their duties. Since removing an officer is likely to be an emotionally charged process for your organization, make sure this process is non-capricious.
- If the organization has an advisor/sponsor, it may be included here

Example:

Section 1. The Executive Board of the SLD Club will be comprised of a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

- a. The **President** will be responsible for presiding over general body and Executive Board meetings. He/She will be the primary contact for the organization and serve as a representative for the organization. The President will have served as a member for at least one academic year prior to taking office.*
- b. The **Vice President** will be responsible for coordinating trainings and serving in the absence of the President. The Vice President will have served as a member for at least one academic year prior to taking office.*
- c. The **Secretary** will be responsible for taking attendance, maintaining membership eligibility records, recording and distributing meeting minutes, and handling membership resignation.*
- d. The **Treasurer** will be responsible for collecting dues (if any), managing accounts, and providing monthly reports on the financial status.*

Section 2. Officers will serve for a full academic year. There are no term limits.

Section 3. Officers may be removed from their duties by a 2/3 majority of the active membership. Officers may be nominated for removal by a petition to the President or an officer not in question signed by 1/3 of active members.

Article VI: ELECTIONS OR SELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

This section describes the process by which officers are elected/selected/appointed.

- How are officers identified: by election, interview/selection, appointment, something else?
- Identify approximately when the elections/selection/appointment process will take place and when new officers take office following their selection.
- Explicitly describe the details of the nomination and selection process. Describe the method that will be used for voting and who will be responsible for counting votes. Identify what amount of votes is needed to elect a member (e.g., simple majority, 2/3 majority, plurality). Describe the procedure for runoff elections in the event of a tie or if a majority is not reached.
- Describe procedures for filling vacancies in current officer terms.

Example:

Section 1. Elections will be held during a regularly scheduled meeting in April. The particular meeting will be determined by the President.

Section 2. Nominations will open two weeks prior to elections. Any active member will be eligible to be nominated. Nominations may be made by active and associate members. Voting will take place at the election meeting. A simple majority vote is necessary to elect an officer. If a majority is not reached, a run-off election will be held with the two nominees receiving the most votes. In the event of a tie, the President will cast the deciding vote. Voting will be conducted via secret ballot, with an officer not seeking reelection and an active member counting the votes.

Section 3. Should an officer resign or be removed from office, a vacancy will be filled by appointment from the Executive Board with approval from the membership of the appointment for the remainder of the term.

Article VII: MEETINGS

This article describes how your organization will meet and conduct the business of your organization.

- Share the intended format and frequency of meetings. What is the minimum expectation for the number of times your organization will meet over the course of the year? This can be regularly, weekly, monthly, once a semester, etc. This is not WHEN your organization meets. Be sure to include “while classes are in session,” as organizations may not meet while the College is not in session.
- Include who presides at the meeting
- Outline the attendance policy, if any (only if not defined in other sections of the constitution)
- Define what the quorum is (usually a simple majority of the active membership including one officer)
- Describe whether the executive board has separate meetings and if so, how often

Example:

Section 1. The SLD Club will meet regularly while classes are in session. The President will preside at the meeting. Quorum will be defined as a two-thirds majority of the active membership, including one officer.

Section 2. The Executive Board will meet regularly separate from the general body to discuss forwarding long-term goals and any issues that require privacy.

Article VIII: FINANCES

This article describes the financial procedures of the organization. How will your organization finance its operations and activities?

- If collecting dues, describe procedure for determining the amount of dues and when they should be collected. Many new groups are reluctant to mandate dues but the following example provides you with the flexibility AND a process to institute dues should they become necessary.
- If collecting dues, donations, or fundraising, detail the manner in which your treasury shall be managed. Who has signature authority for your accounts?
- Are there any other fees, like tickets for events or membership to a national organization? If so, what is the method of collection?

Example:

Section 1. The amount of dues and the method of collection will be decided by a majority vote of the Executive Board at the beginning of each school year.

Section 2. The funds of the SLD Club will be stored in an off-campus organization account. The President and the Treasurer will have signature authority, and all checks must be signed by both officers.

Section 3. Training fees will be set by majority vote of the Executive Board on a case-by-case basis and at minimum will cover the cost of the training.

Article IV: POLICY COMPLIANCE

This section should be a statement of the group's willingness to abide by established college policies, including, but not limited to the following: Campus Alcohol Policy, Student Code of Conduct and Hazing policy.

*The constitution MUST include both of the following policy compliance statements

Section 1. [Insert name of Organization] will abide by all college policies including the Student Code of Conduct and the Campus Alcohol Policy.

Section 2. [Insert name of Organization] agrees that it will not initiate, support, or encourage any events or situations that endanger the mental or physical health or safety of a student for any purpose including but not limited to initiation or admission into or affiliation with this group or organization.

Article IX: RATIFICATION

This article outlines how the constitution will be ratified. It should include the date that the constitution was ratified.

Example: This constitution will take effect immediately upon its passage by a 2/3 majority of the members of the SLD Club.

Article X: AMENDMENTS

All organizations must have provisions for amending their constitutions or bylaws. In this article, describe the procedure for proposing and approving amendments to the constitution.

- How are amendments to be proposed and by whom? When and how will amendments be voted on following proposal? How many votes in favor of the proposal must be reached to approve amendments?
- Following the approval of any amendments, you should include at the end of the document "Amended (insert date)", with the most recent date of amendment on top of a running list of amendment dates. This will help you know that you are using the most recent version of your constitution.
- Please file all updated constitutions with the Office of Student Leadership Development once they are amended by your organization. Send electronic copies to leadership@wm.edu.

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. After initial discussion, the amendment may be voted on by a simple up-or-down vote. Amendments must be passed with a 2/3 majority vote.

Amended on: [Insert Date]