

Basic Guidelines for a Club or Organizational Constitution

Every club or organization that the Brandon University Students' Union would recognize will need to have at a minimum a valid constitution which outlines the basic aims of the organization, executive officers, meeting requirements, etc. The following is a set of guidelines that may be useful in preparing a constitution for your organization or club:

1. Purpose of the Organization

State the general reason for this organization being in existence. Promote events, address local issues, or other reasons.

2. Membership of the Organization

Who is eligible to be a member of this organization for the purposes of voting on its affairs and participating in its activities? If the club is social in nature it should allow participation by any interested student, if it is a faculty club or constituency group, its membership will be those who fall into this group. Generally clubs should be open to any student who wishes to join.

3. Meetings

A provision should be made for regular meetings annual general meetings of the organization. Meetings shall be chaired by the President (or equivalent) of the organization or by another member of the executive in his/her absence. This section should indicate who could call a meeting. There is usually more than one way to call a meeting. The president may call a meeting, so may any other two members of the executive, so may any five regular members, and so on.

The constitution may also outline a regular interval for meetings, once a month for example, but this is not necessary. In all cases meetings should be open to the general membership.

Proper notice should be given for all meetings and set out in the constitution. Two or three days notice would be common. When notice is given for a meeting it must be made to anyone who is eligible to attend.

Procedures at meetings should follow Robert Rules of Order or some equivalent procedural manual for the purpose of conducting official business. The chair of the meeting shall be responsible for ensuring that procedure is followed.

Annual General Meetings are the highest decision making body of the organization. The original constitution of the organization and any subsequent changes require approval by the general membership at an annual general meeting. All members of the organization have equal voting rights at a general meeting.

At least one annual general meeting must be held each year but additional general meetings can be called by the executive or by some number of the general membership. For example if 25% of the general membership signed a petition to call a general meeting one would have to be held. In all cases a notice period for a general meeting is required usually at least three days.

4. Elections

For the most part clubs and organizations elect executive officers during an annual general meeting where nominations would be made and votes cast. Any member of an organization in good standing could seek election to any position and would be eligible to vote. Voting should be conducted by someone who is not standing for office, if this is possible.

5. Executive Officers

Most organizations shall have at least four executive officers but some organizations may have more as needed. These officers shall manage the day-to-day business of the organization. A typical set of executive officers is as follows:

President – Shall chair meetings, prepare meeting agendas, is the head of the organization and shall have overall responsibility for the affairs of the organization.

Vice President – Shall chair meetings and/or head the organization in the absence of the President.

Treasurer – Shall be responsible for the financial affairs of the organizations including the keeping of financial records.

Secretary – Shall be responsible for keeping minutes of meetings and other correspondence of the organization.

It is a good idea to make provision in the constitution for the removal of executive member who do not attend meetings. Usually the provision for this would be that following two consecutive unexcused absences the executive member would receive a formal warning that a further unexcused absence may result in a vote to remove a person from the board. In order to remove an executive member from the board a vote with a 2/3 majority

would be required at a board meeting. An executive member who is removed could still be a member of the organization.

An executive member can be removed from their position for gross misconduct or failure to perform duties. A provision should be made for this in the constitution where, for example, a petition of 25% of members could call for general meeting to discuss removal of an executive officer with cause.

6. Signing Authority

It is a good idea to outline in the constitution who has authority to spend the organizations' funds. In most cases a dual signing authority is required where the treasurer and some other member of the executive would have to approve all expenses.