

# Constitutional Review Tip Sheet

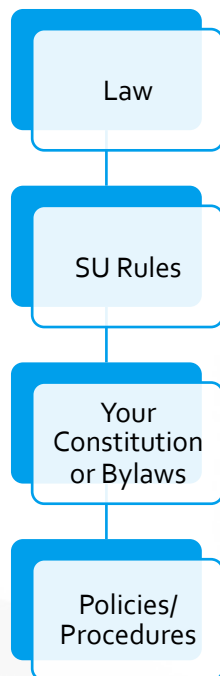
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Constitutions and bylaws (often used interchangeably in UASU student groups) should not change quickly or often. They should contain fundamental principles that govern your organization, and your whole membership should have some input into what they say, typically through a general meeting. As such, when you do make an amendment it can seem scary or complicated. This guide can help you understand your constitution and how to make effective changes to it.

If you are left with questions after reviewing this document, you can contact Discover Governance for help in reviewing or changing your constitution.

## Hierarchy of Rules

Generally speaking, all rules for student groups follow this hierarchy:



If something lower down contradicts something higher up, then the rule that is higher up will be taken as correct.

## Your Constitution/Bylaws Should Include:

### *Your mandate*

This is the basic function your group performs, or the primary reason your group exists.

### *Qualifications for becoming a member*

Some groups have membership based on something academic, such as Faculty Associations whose membership is made up of everyone in their faculty. Other groups have opt-in membership, where you must sign up, pay a membership fee, or regularly attend meetings/events in order to be considered a member.

### *The titles and key responsibilities of elected and appointed officer*

Who is your executive team? Do you have other important positions like directors, or team leads? What are the main responsibilities of each role that never change from one year to the next?

### *Election rules*

The process for holding an election, including who oversees the election, the time and place, who can run, who can vote, what to do in case no one runs, and what to do in case of a tie in the vote.

### *General Meetings*

These are meetings where all your members can get together to make high-level decisions about your group, such as electing new officers, approving constitution changes, or approving a new budget. You should outline, at minimum, who is allowed to vote at a general meeting, how much notice members must have before a meeting takes place, who is allowed to vote, and what kind of business will take place there.

### *Quorum*

This means the minimum attendance allowed at a meeting in order for you to be able to make decisions at that meeting. What percentage of your team or members must be there to meet quorum? Most groups use 50% +1 or 2/3 as an Executive Committee quorum, and 10 or 15 members as a general meeting quorum (may vary depending on the size of your group).

### *Budget and finances*

How your budget is made and how money is handled.

### *Recall/impeachment mechanism*

Can your membership impeach your executive and, if so, how would they go about doing it?

### *Process for amending the constitution*

How do you make changes to your constitution or bylaws? Who can make changes, and how do they get approved?



## Your Constitution/Bylaws Should NOT Include:

- Things that change from year to year.
- Quotes from other documents.
- Redundancies, or having the same rule in multiple places.
- Inconsistencies, or rules that contradict each other.

## How to do a review

1. Look through to see if you have all the things you should have, as listed earlier in this tip sheet.
2. Look through to make sure you don't have any of the things you should avoid, as listed earlier in this tip sheet.
3. Ask everyone in the organization what is working well, and what needs improvement – you might be able to make some of those improvements in your constitution.
4. Have each of your executive make changes to their own descriptions in the constitution to make sure that what's written down reflects the actual duties of the job.
5. Check any rules from places higher up in the hierarchy on this tip sheet, and make sure nothing in your constitution/bylaws contradicts rules that are above yours.

## Final Tip

Constitutional reviews can be lengthy and boring. Make it easier by assigning small sections of it to different people. The more people who work on it, the faster it will go!