

# Student Organization Constitution Guide



Director of Student Activities  
Ali N. Smith  
[alismith@cn.edu](mailto:alismith@cn.edu)  
Updated January 2021

## What is a Constitution?

A constitution contains the fundamental principles of an organization. It outlines the purpose, structure, and limits of an organization as well as provides a foundation to ensure the smooth operations of your organization.

All chartered Student Organizations at Carson-Newman University are required to have a constitution. The following **template** is provided as a guide in creating a new constitution. All Student Organizations must comply with Carson-Newman Student Activities policies as listed in the Student Organization Handbook.

## How to Use This Guide

This document is intended to provide a basic structure of a student organization constitution and give examples of things to consider when writing your constitution. It will also identify specific elements that are required for approval to become a registered student organization.

Words written in **red** are for your information only. Words in **blue** are items for reflection or consideration. Words written in black may remain in your document or serve as a guide for what to include. Blank spaces or **highlighted** words are meant for you to fill in with your own information. (NOTE: If you experience color-blindness or difficulty reading different colored words please contact the Office of Student Activities for an accessible copy.)

Please note that this is a very simple sample constitution provided to assist you in creating your own **original** document.

## General Instructions

1. Read the Student Organization Handbook prior to writing your constitution to ensure all policies within your organization are aligned with those of Student Activities. If your constitution includes information not aligned with policy, your chartering request will be declined.
  2. You should include a header labeling the document as your constitution.
  3. While there is not a specific required layout, your constitution should be formatted similarly to an outline to include section headers and labels so you can easily refer to specific points. Bullet points are **not** recommended.
  4. Use consistent and easy-to-read font and formatting.
  5. Proofread your document for spelling, grammar, and content. This should be a professional document.
  6. You are free to edit the order and inclusion of each item to make sense for your organization as long as you include all necessary information.
  7. While your constitution can be edited when necessary, it should be a stable long-term guiding document. Do not include people's names – use their titles to refer to them. (i.e. Use “The Advisor will...” rather than “Hope Adkins will...”)
  8. If you are aligned with another local/national organization, you may wish to use a pre-set constitution; however, be sure to check it for consistency with C-N Student Activities policies and be sure it includes all necessary points listed below.
-

## ARTICLE 1: Foundation

**This article is meant to provide an introduction and overview of the organization. It provides an understanding of what and who the organization is.**

### Section I: Name

The name of this organization shall be \_\_\_\_\_.

- This section should provide the full name of the organizations as it would appear on any formal publications. The name should be unique from all other **currently** recognized registered student organization.
- This section should also include any abbreviations or acronyms.
- Your name should **NOT BEGIN** with “Carson-Newman,” “C-N,” or any other abbreviations that associate it with Carson-Newman. (“organization name” @ Carson-Newman is permitted.)

**Consider:** Does your name clearly identify what your organization will do?

**Example:** *The name of this organization shall be The Biology Club (TBC).*

### Section II: Mission or Purpose

The mission (or purpose) of the “**Organization’s Name**” is to \_\_\_\_\_.

- This section should clearly state the overarching mission/purpose of the organization. The mission/purpose should be unique from all other **currently** recognized registered student organization. Explain how your organization will offer a unique perspective.
- The mission/purpose statement should be broad to allow for flexibility within the organization but specific enough to provide an understanding of the unique purpose of the organization.

**Consider:** What is the intended impact of the organization on the Carson-Newman community?

**Consider:** How does the organization’s mission align with the Student Activities mission and values of Scholarship, Service, Character, Leadership, and Community?

**Example:** *The mission of The Biology Club is to educate students on the various aspects of science and promote awareness of the medical field, by organizing events that involved traditional and scientific activities.*

**This article may also include a section for your organization’s objectives, such as long-term or short-term goals, or your organization’s values.**

### Section III: Logo and Branding

The logo of the “**Organization’s Name**” is \_\_\_\_\_.

- Your organization’s logo should be unique and recognizable.

- No person or group may use the seal or any symbol of the institution or department without prior written approval from the president or director of the department.
- You may also include other branding here.

**Consider:** Does your logo have meaning behind it? Does it accurately represent your organization?

## **ARTICLE II: Organizational Structure**

**This article details the structure of the organization. This section defines the responsibilities of executive/officers.**

### **Section I: Executive Board**

**A. List the Executive Board/ Officer positions and Responsibilities**

**Consider:** What are the responsibilities of each member of the executive board?

*Example: 1. The President (every organization is required to have a president.)*

- a. Shall preside over all organizational meetings*
- b. Shall review all activities and programs*
- c. Shall manage the chartering process of the organization and maintain good standing with the Office of Student Activities*

*2. Vice-President*

*3. Secretary*

*4. Treasurer*

*5. Committee Chair, Other*

**B. Qualifications for Executive Board**

**Consider:** What makes a member of the organization eligible for the executive board or an officer position?

*Example: In order to be eligible for an executive board position, a person must be a full-time C-N student, be a member of the organization for two semesters, and have a GPA of 2.5 or higher.*

**C. Selection Process for Executive Board**

**Consider:** Will you select Executive Board through an election process, by appointment by the Advisor or someone else, etc.

**Consider:** Give a detailed account of the selection process, including nominations, applications, interviews, elections, trainings, timelines, etc.

**Consider:** If using an election process, what limitations will you include. How many members must be present? Will you use a simple majority vote, 2/3 vote, etc?

**Consider:** If an officer is removed/resigns mid-term will you use a different selection process?

*\*See Article III Section II for more info.*

**D. Terms for Executive Board**

**Consider:** Will the executive board remain in office for one semester? One year? Until they graduate/leave C-N?

### **E. Removal of Executive Board**

**Consider:** What process will you follow if a member of the Executive Board needs to be removed from office?

**Consider:** Typically the Advisor should be included in any meetings/ decisions to remove an officer.

**Consider:** Be very specific in how an officer facing removal may plead their case. Should they provide a written or verbal explanation? Via documentation or in person? Should they appear before a specific group to discuss – if so, who and when? Timeline?

### **Section II: Advisor Information**

- Qualifications for an Advisor (**NOTE: You are required to have a full-time Carson-Newman employee as your primary advisor.**)

**Consider:** Does your Advisor need to have specific qualifications, like expertise in a specific field?

- Responsibilities of the Advisor

**Consider:** Do you expect the Advisor to hold periodic meetings, manage documentation, etc? List all your expectations of an Advisor here.

**Consider:** Do you have more than one Advisor (one C-N employee and someone from another organization)? Do their responsibilities differ? Include expectations and differences.

### **Section III: Committees (If Applicable)**

- The section defines all the committees and subcommittees within the organizations. If an organization does not have any committees or subcommittees, this section is not needed.

A. List and Identify committees, subcommittees, and committee chairs.

**Consider:** What are the names and purposes of the various committees? What are the responsibilities?

**Consider:** What is the process for establishing a new committee?

### **Section IV: Membership**

**This article includes the requirements and expectations for membership to be granted into the organization. It includes general membership, executive board/officers and if applicable, committee membership.**

#### **A. Non-Discrimination**

**1. Membership is open to all full-time Carson-Newman students, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age, physical or mental disability.**

- This section should include any other membership requirements, i.e GPA requirement and/or requirements for recruitment.

**Consider:** What makes a person eligible to be a member of the Student Organization?

## **B. Recruitment Process**

- This section will include your committee's recruitment process. It should detail all the pieces of the recruitment process such applications, interviews and any training that is required to be a member of the organization.

## **C. Expectations and Benefits of Membership**

- Do you have member requirements?
- Do members have any specific rights or benefits?

**Consider:** Some organizations have events/meetings open to the full student body. Are all those who attend considered "members"? How do you define a "member" versus an attendee?

## **ARTICLE III: Procedures**

**This article details all procedures, such as the processes and procedures for electing executive board positions, meetings and voting. There are various processes that could find into this section, you should select the process that fits within your organization. There are several steps that should be featured in this section: requirements, how the process operates, how new executive board/officers are elected and when and how long their term is.**

### **Section I: Meetings**

- A. "Organization Name" shall take place at a regular time and location, after consultation with the advisors and members.
- This section should also include any other meeting procedures, such as committee meetings or leadership meetings.

**Consider:** Are meetings open to the public, only to members, or only to the Executive Board?

**Consider:** What will you consider quorum (minimum attendance) to conduct business? i.e. if 50% of your membership are absent, will you still conduct business? What is the cutoff number?

**Consider:** Will you use Parliamentary Procedure for your meetings, or in special circumstances? Robert's Rules of Order is a common example of a meeting format. (If you are not familiar, the Office Student Activities has copies of the instructional book that may be checked out.)

### **Section II: Voting**

- This section should include your organizations procedures for voting. There are several options for voting procedures: including secret ballot, hand vote and majority or 2/3 vote. This section should be decided upon after conversation with your advisor, organization and executive board.

### **Section III: Elections**

- This section should outline the election process for your organization. This should include the eligibility for election, term of office, time and place of each election, speeches (if applicable), and the amount of positions a person can apply for.

#### **ARTICLE IV: Financial Statement**

- This section defines the financial statement of the organization. ***This is a required section of the constitution.*** Note from the Student Organization Handbook that **no** outside accounts may be held by an organization. Chartered Student Organizations are given a C-N Agency Account for their use at no charge.
  - Any membership dues, including the exact amount and frequency of payments must be stated.
  - A statement of how funds will be handled must be stated, including the following: process for receipting, timeframe for depositing money, and procedures to approve expenditures
  - A yearly financial statement must be provided to the student organization advisor for review.
- ***In the event of a dissolution of the student organization, a provision for the disposition of funds remaining must be stated. Organizations must select a specific group if donating any remaining funds.***
  - ***Example: Any remaining funds will be donated to the Student Organizations Support Fund at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.***
  - ***NOTE: In the event of a dissolution of the student organization in the absence of this provision, all funds will be absorbed into the Office of Student Activities account after a period of one (1) year.***

#### **ARTICLE V: Amendments**

This Article should detail the process for making amendments to this constitution.

**Consider:** Who is eligible to propose an amendment? How will you vote on the amendment (see Article III Section II)? Who will place the amendment in the constitution? How may an amendment be repealed?