

# Constitution Template for Faculty-Level and Levied Societies

## **Purpose and Use**

This document summarizes the requirements for society constitutions laid out in the DSU's Society Policy. It is intended to guide society executives in the creation and remodeling of society constitutions to support efficient ratification processes. It is not meant to be a complete template for submission and not all components are required for full ratification.

## **Types of Society Constitutions**

The template below includes elements particular to Faculty-Level and Levied Societies. General Interest and Constituent Societies are not required to develop a society-specific constitution and can instead use Section 11 of the DSU Society Policy as their constitution. Any society receiving disbursements from an umbrella society is also bound to abide by the umbrella society's constitution.

## **Tips for Developing a Constitution**

Consider reaching out to other societies that have received feedback on their constitution or had their constitution approved for advice and comparison of constitution structure and content. Sometimes, examples of a document can be the most useful guides.

Please read the Society Policy to understand all privileges, requirements, and bylaws being ratified with the DSU entails.

For articles concerning "Elections" & "Meetings", review Robert's Rules of Order. Summary sheets available online are the most useful for beginners. This will help you decide quorum and teach you how to conduct these meetings/elections.

If you need help with wording or policy creation, our Policy and Governance Coordinator ([dsu.policy@dal.ca](mailto:dsu.policy@dal.ca)) is available for assistance. You are also welcome to reach out directly to the Vice President, Internal ([dsuvpi@dal.ca](mailto:dsuvpi@dal.ca)) with questions regarding ratification or other society matters.

# Sample Society Constitution Format

## Constitution Information

### **Required Information:**

- Full name of society
- Date of adoption
- Date of last revision

### **Optional Formatting:**

- Cover page with logo and constitution information
- Table of Contents organized by article number and topic

## Articles:

### **Formatting:**

- Sections of the constitution dealing with different topics must be broken apart into separate articles.
- All articles must be numbered.
- The order of articles below is not mandatory.

### **Required Articles:**

#### 1. Purpose or Objectives

- Statement of purpose or direction for the society

#### 2. Membership

- Who is considered a member of the society
- Any society with constituent societies must clearly outline the process by which societies can become constituent societies. This may be defined here or in a separate article.
- Any society mandated by referendum to include an option to opt-out of membership must clearly outline the process by which members will opt out.
- Constitution states: The society does not place any limits on members based on age, race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, language, disability, marital status, parental status, or social class.

#### 3. Executive Roles

- Minimum requirements for Executive roles:
  - o At least three (3) executive members must be students
  - o At least one (1) executive member must be a Dalhousie student and a signing authority
- Duties of each Executive Officer must be described in detail

- If the society will be offering honoraria to executives, the amount of the honoraria and requirements for its disbursement must be outlined
- Societies with constituent societies must outline if and how their constituent societies can offer and disburse honoraria to executive members. This may be defined here or in a separate article.

#### 4. Meetings

- Types of meetings (e.g. Executive meetings, Council meetings, and Annual General Meetings) and their frequency
- Rules and procedures governing each type of meeting, including notice requirements, standard agenda items, quorum, and voting procedures
- Provisions for emergency meetings
- The constitution must mandate that financial statements, budgets, and yearly goals be presented and ratified at an Annual General Meeting each year

#### 5. Finances

- Procedure for drafting and approving the yearly budget
- Identify the three executive positions who will have signing authority
- The constitution must state that at least two officers must sign each cheque, and that no officer may sign a cheque made out to themselves.
- Provisions regarding the use of debit or credit cards, including the requirement that documentation be retained from all debit and credit transactions for society auditing purposes
- Any society with constituent societies must clearly outline the process by which it approves funding for constituent societies. This may be defined here or in a separate article.

#### 6. Elections

- Provisions for how elections will be conducted in the manner of the society's choosing
- Minimum requirements for elections:
  - o All societies must conduct elections in a fair and equitable manner.
  - o Notice of elections, including how to be nominated for an executive position, must be provided to members at least two (2) weeks prior to first day of voting in the society elections.
  - o The elections must be overseen by a person who is not running for any of the positions being elected
  - o Any member must be able to submit their name for nomination
  - o Elections must be held on an annual basis
  - o Each member may hold at most one executive position
  - o All members of the society, including (if applicable) all members who pay a levy, shall be given a vote
- This section should also include provision regarding voting, including how voting will be administered, the percentage of the vote required to win an election, and quorum for elections.

- Optionally, the constitution may state that all candidates must act in good faith.
- This section may include other relevant provisions such as election timelines, provisions regarding by-elections, election rules, and a process for appeals to election-related rulings.
- This section may include any separate election processes for non-executive committee members if needed.

## 7. Impeachment of Executives

- Provisions for how Executive Officers may be removed from office or impeached
- The constitution must include:
  - o A list of reasons why an Executive Officer could be impeached
  - o The process to initiate an impeachment process
- Minimum requirements for impeachment processes:
  - o The reason(s) for the motion to impeach must be communicated to the Executive facing impeachment at least one (1) week before the motion to impeach is discussed
  - o The member up for impeachment must have an opportunity to speak for themselves.
  - o Impeachment votes must be held at a general meeting open to all society members.
- Grounds for impeachment could include (at each society's discretion): failure to attend X number of meetings without sending regrets within X period of time; failure to fulfil duties as set out in the Constitution within reasonable limits and without reasonable excuse; conduct likely to result in de-ratification of the Society by the Union or likely to bring the reputation of the Society into disrepute; conduct that is considered by society's Council, Executive, or other body to be gross misconduct or not acting in good faith; or other reasons not listed here.

## 8. Constitutional Amendments

- Minimum requirement for constitutional amendments:
  - o All amendments must be approved or ratified at a general meeting
- Procedures for members to propose amendments to the constitution
- Procedure to approve such provisional changes as may be required from time to time
- Percentage of the vote required to pass constitutional amendments at a general meeting (i.e. simple majority or 2/3 majority)

## 9. Adherence to External Laws, Regulations and Policies

- Must include the clauses: "The society's activities must not infringe upon federal, provincial, and municipal laws or University regulations" and "The society's activities must not infringe upon the Bylaws and Policies of the Dalhousie Student Union."

## Optional or Recommended Articles

### 1. Definitions

- Definitions of any specific terms, acronyms, or abbreviations used in the Constitution

- May wish to include the following basic terms:
  - o Union: The Dalhousie Student Union
  - o The Society: The full name of the society in question

## 2. Structure

- Outlines the various decision-making bodies of the society, their membership, and any rules governing them
- Decision-making bodies could include committees, a Council or Board, and the Executive Officers
- Should indicate hierarchy, reporting structure, and any other relevant information.

## 3. Council

- This section should be included in the constitution of any society with a Council that meets regularly
- Membership of Council, including a clear indication of voting and non-voting members
- Provisions regarding the Chair and Secretary for Council meetings
- Provisions regarding rules of order and Council procedures. Optionally, this could include a clause stating that the Council will operate under the procedures laid out in the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

## 4. Committees

- This section should list all standing committees of the society, their memberships, and their mandates
  - The section can also include provisions regarding the establishment of new committees or dissolution of existing committees.
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