

WRITING A MEDIA CONSTITUTION

Constitutions lend stability to organizations, providing a common framework within which members agree to work. They also state an organization's purpose and processes.

Constitutions are required of all UCSC Registered Student Organizations and must be in agreement with University policies. The sample below includes the elements required by the University as well as some suggestions. (See the Student Policies and Regulations Handbook, available online at deanofstudents.ucsc.edu/student-conduct/student-handbook.) Student Media organizations are also required to have a Code of Ethics in their constitution, as this language can be very helpful in guiding both personnel and content decisions (there's more information about writing one in this document). Organizations are encouraged to discuss and design their own processes and make additions as necessary.

File a copy of your original constitution with Student Media as part of your application to register. File amendments with Student Media within one week of their adoption.

SAMPLE MEDIA CONSTITUTION

The following sections may be included in your organization's constitution:

(Note: In the sample below, the text in bold must be included in your organization's constitution.) Words not in bold are suggestions. For assistance writing your constitution, ask your Student Media advisor, or request a fill-in-the-blank constitution (also available on the Student Media website).

NAME: The Name of this organization shall be.... The name of the university can only be used as a geographical designation (i.e., the Alphabet Club at UCSC, but not UCSC Alphabet Club).

PURPOSE: The purpose of this organization shall be to.... State the primary purpose of the organization.

STATEMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY:

The Authorized Representatives, officers, and members of this organization:

- **Accept responsibility for compliance with University policies and campus regulations.**
- **Shall abide by the provisions of the anti-hazing statues in the California Education Code or Penal Code (as amended by SB 1454, effective January 1, 2007).**
- **Affirm that the rules, regulations and policies of the University of California and UCSC shall supersede the rules, regulations, policies and/or bylaws of any affiliated international, national, regional or local organization.**
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MEMBERSHIP: State any criteria for membership (e.g., payment of dues, field of study, scholarship, etc.):

- **All UCSC students interested in the purpose of this organization are eligible for membership.**
- **Membership is open to any student regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. with the exception of incorporated sororities and fraternities, which may be limited by gender.**
- **Membership is limited to currently registered UCSC students. Non-students are welcome to participate in activities, but they may not be members, hold office or vote.**
- **Membership may be rescinded by...** (e.g., a 2/3s majority vote of members present at a regular meeting. Reasons for rescinding membership shall be introduced at the previous regular meeting. The member in question shall be notified at least 24 hours in advance at their UCSC email address, and shall be allowed to reply to accusations at the meeting at which the vote is taken.)

You might consider adding other qualifications for membership, for example:

Voting privileges shall be granted only to members who have attended at least two meetings during the current quarter (or, e.g., _____ meetings in the current academic year).

Responsibilities of all members shall include:

1. Participation in at least _____ meetings per quarter.
2. Adherence to the organization's policies and practices.

OFFICERS/AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES: The signers of the Registration Application take responsibility for the organization. Their duties should be listed in the constitution. At a minimum, criteria for and method of selection, removal, and replacement of authorized reps should be stated.

- **Qualifications for Officers/Authorized Representatives:**
 1. **Must be currently registered student at UCSC.**
 2. E.g., must have been a member for at least one quarter, etc.
- **Duties and Responsibilities:** e.g., Officers/Authorized Representatives shall attend all regular meetings, shall know the history and purpose of the organization, etc.
For example:
There shall be ____ officers who comprise the executive committee:
 1. **Editor-in-Chief** — presides at all meetings, represents the organization, and convenes the executive committee at least monthly when school is in session.
 2. **Managing Editor** — assumes the duties of the Editor-in-Chief when s/he is absent, and serves as special projects chair.
 3. **Facilities Use Committee Representative** — represents the organization on the Facilities Use Committee (when needed) to address matters relating to shared use of the Student Media Center.
 4. **Business Manager/Financial Officer** — keeps a record of all income and expenses, makes a report of account balance at each meeting, expends funds at the direction of the membership.

Note: Every organization must designate one Authorized Representative and one alternate to represent the organization on Media Council.

Election and Removal of Officers/Authorized Representatives:

1. Officers shall be elected by... e.g., simple majority vote, consensus, or secret ballot vote of the members present at a regularly scheduled meeting... and shall serve for... e.g., one calendar year or the following academic year, etc.
2. Officers may be removed by... Removal for cause will occur by two-thirds majority vote of the members present at a regularly scheduled meeting of the organization. The issue of removal and the reasons shall be introduced at the previous regularly scheduled meeting. The officer in question will be notified by email at last known address, and will be allowed to reply to accusations at the meeting at which the vote is taken.

DECISION-MAKING: Explain the way decisions are made within the organization.

- The organization shall make decisions by... e.g., consensus, simple majority vote, 2/3s majority vote, etc. (You may also delegate certain decisions to specific subcommittees.)
- Quorum shall be... e.g. half the members, 2/3s of all members, etc.
- Voting privileges shall be granted to... e.g. members who have attended two consecutive meetings.

FINANCIAL RECORDS: Describe any regular fundraising activities (such as dues, T-shirt sales, events), and the purpose for which funds are raised. Describe the budget, record-keeping and reporting processes for your organization. For example:

- All records, including checks and cash received, need to be accounted for in detail for auditing purposes.
- **Note: Deposit all funds raised on campus with the Student Media office. In addition, all checks must be made payable to the “UC Regents.” Be sure to include your organization’s name in the Memo line.**

BYLAWS: Generally, a constitution establishes the broad spectrum and format of an organization. Bylaws spell out the processes and procedures used to attain the goals of the organization. If your organization has more detailed or complex procedures, you can simplify portions of your constitution and create bylaws to specify the details.

AMENDMENTS: Amendments to the Constitution shall be approved by... simple, or 2/3s majority vote, or by consensus of members present at a regularly scheduled meeting or the total membership. File any amendments with Student Media within one week of their adoption. Note: Amendments usually require a high threshold of agreement. Amendments must be submitted to your media advisor for final approval.

WRITING A CODE OF ETHICS

The Media Council requires that registered media organizations include a Code of Ethics in their constitution. A code allows you to express your philosophy, responsibility to others and commitment. It also provides an opportunity to articulate the standards of professionalism to which the organization adheres, and is a helpful document to turn to when the group is dealing with an ethical question and/or situation. Writing one gives each group member a greater sense of membership and direction.

At a minimum, the code should address the following issues: accuracy, fairness, appropriateness of language and/or illustrations, identification of opinion, openness to persons wishing to take issue with an article, presentation, commentary or editorial, and input and participation by interested members of the campus community.

For example:

The publication and its corresponding website shall endeavor to promote intellectual curiosity, act as a forum for the free expression of ideas, and provide in-depth and provocative insights into the state of the campus and the diverse concerns of the UC Santa Cruz community. When opinions not those of the collective are published, they will be identified as such. We seek to encourage an interest in the well-being of, and active participation in, the campus and city among members of the Santa Cruz community. ...

The organization will not knowingly publish any content that fosters the evading of or violates any federal, state or local laws or encourages discrimination against any individual group or business on the basis of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, or disability.

For other examples of professional ethical codes, check out the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics, or the Filmmakers For Conservation (FFC) Guiding Principles for Ethical Filmmaking.