

How to Create a Constitution and By-laws

Useful Definitions

Constitution: A constitution is a written document that sets forth the fundamental governing laws or principles under which the council is organized and operates.

By-laws: By-laws are rules adopted by a group for its own meetings or affairs. They may not contradict or negate any part of the constitution.

Ratification: Acceptance of a new constitution by the student body (**Note:** New schools will have to write their own constitutions)

Amendments: A change to the constitution. In order to amend a student body constitution, the following steps must be taken:

- a. A student, faculty-member, or a school administrator must propose the amendment.
- b. The proposed amendment must be approved by the general assembly.
- c. The majority of the student body must approve the proposed amendment.
- d. The school principal must approve the proposed amendment. (**Note:** The school administration and / or the School Board of Broward County, Florida may amend Student Body Constitutions.)

Format of a Constitution

(**Note:** The following topics are the articles of a constitution)

1. **Name:**Name of the organization
2. **Objectives/purpose:** The objectives / purpose of the group
3. **Authority:** States the source and limitations of the organization
4. **Organization Membership:** Definition of membership for the group. Qualifications and duties of the members
5. **Officers and representatives:** Names the titles of the officers.
6. **Duties and responsibilities of officers and representatives:** General responsibilities of all officers.
7. **Elections:**
 - a. Standards set by the county should be included along with individual school's options.
 - b. Term of office should be included and should state the beginning and end time of term.
 - c. All candidate applications, used ballots, and tally sheets should be retained and secured for a period of one year.
8. **Meetings:** General provisions for SGA meetings including but not limited to:
 - a. What constitutes a quorum?
 - b. Who has the right to vote?
 - c. Who may call a special meeting?
9. **Executive Board:**
 - a. Who makes up the executive board?
 - b. The responsibilities of the executive board

10. **Standing Committees:** Description of standing committees and provisions for formations of special committees.
11. **Removal from office:**
 - a. Policies and procedures must be included regarding removal from office.
 - b. Disciplinary actions should be included in your by-laws.
12. **Parliamentary Authority:** The procedure that will be used to conduct all meetings.
13. **Amendments:** The entire school population should be given the right to vote on any amendments to the school Student Government Association constitution.

By-laws may include such items as:

1. Specific dates and times for general assembly meetings.
2. Officer tasks unique to your school.
3. Procedures for electing Homecoming Court.
4. Etc.