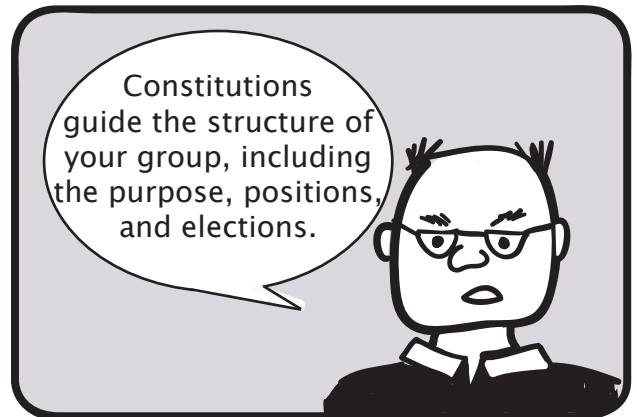


Constitution Essentials

Every Departmental Student Union and Graduate Caucus of the Simon Fraser Student Society has an existing Constitution to guide its members in decision-making, elections, procedures and structural change. The Constitution provides a permanent reference for the membership. When altering a Student Union or Graduate Caucus Constitution, consideration of the long-term effects on the membership should be taken into consideration.

Copies of Constitutions

The Student Union Organizer Office has copies of existing Constitutions on file. Please contact the Student Union Organizer for a copy of your constitution or if you need any help amending it (MBC 2238, organizer@sfss.ca).



Amending The Constitution

Constitutions may be amended according to the wishes of the membership.

Step one: give adequate notice to the membership advertising the meeting where constitutional amendments will take place.

Step two: send proposed amendments to the Organizer at organiser@sfss.ca for initial feedback- it might save time in the long run!

Step three: hold the meeting. A 2/3 majority vote is required to pass constitutional changes. Ensure changes are consistent with the overall language and terms of the SFSS Constitution.

Step four: send the version of the Constitution that is approved by the membership to the Organizer for final ratification.

Ratification of the Constitution

Ideally, the student union or graduate caucus should send the changes to the Organizer before the membership votes. This way, the Organizer can assist with correcting any disallowed amendments before the membership votes.

To ratify the Constitution, send the version that was approved by the membership to organizer@sfss.ca.

Basic Elements of Departmental Union Constitutions

Format

Although the SFSS provides a template for each Departmental Student Union or Caucus constitution, it is within your right and responsibilities to personalize the Constitution as you see fit. Earth Science doesn't have a Treasurer, they have a "Pebble Counter"; Business has the longest constitution on file because of detailed job descriptions, etc. Your constitution is a working document, so make it work for your group.

Name

The name should directly reflect the departmental or academic affiliation of the membership. The name of the organization in which a bank account is registered must be prefaced by "Simon Fraser Student Society."

Objectives

Objectives vary with the focus of the Union, but should always include a clause relating to the role of the Union at department & university levels to represent its members' interests. This clause must be built into the Objectives section: "the aims and objectives of the union/caucus shall be consistent with those of the Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) Constitution and policies."

Membership

Union membership automatically extends to all majors, minors, honours, and graduate students in a department, as well as to any student enrolled in a departmental class in any given semester. Membership in Graduate Caucuses includes all students enrolled at the Masters and Ph.D. levels of study in the Department.

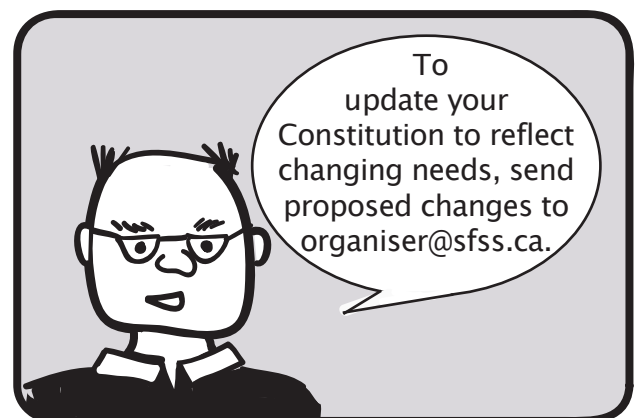
Meeting Frequency and Notice Period

There must be a minimum of three general meetings per semester, but Unions are encouraged to schedule meetings every two weeks during classes. This helps to build an active membership and maintain momentum. The standard period for a notice of meeting is one week, or 5 working days.

Notice should be posted in the PEAK; by posters in the department, in classrooms and in the Union's common room; on the A.V. monitors, and on Union email lists as membership builds. Elections, Constitutional amendments, and funding or planning discussions must always be indicated on the notice of meeting.

Quorum

Quorum is the minimum number of members that must be present in order for a meeting to be considered legitimate. The number cannot be so low as to defeat the democratic decision-making structure of the Union, but shouldn't be so high as to discourage active membership from taking initiatives. Quorum is typically set between 4 to 10 members.



Executive Structure and Responsibilities

This is the section in which all executive and representative positions are listed, and a job description outlined for each one, including requirements for reporting back to the membership. Forum, Graduate Issues Committee Representatives, and departmental committee representatives are typically included here. Sometimes, groups include Social Coordinators, Website Managers, Outreach Coordinators, etc.

Elections

This section indicates when elections are regularly called. The SFSS recommends that, for those Unions electing officers annually, the election should be held towards the end of the spring semester, with the placement of new officers effective May 1st. For Unions whose membership frequently rotates due to Co-op Ed terms or a short program period, semesterly elections may be a better alternative. In all cases, the outgoing Chair or President should report the names and email addresses of the new officers and signing authorities to the Student Union Organizer.

Election is typically by majority vote, either by a show of hands or by secret ballot, on request of members. Positions coming empty before April 30th may be filled by by-election, with a notice given as for annual or semester elections. A Student Union can elect a Forum Rep when the position becomes vacant or is not filled in the SFSS spring general election, but this representative cannot be removed from office except under the relevant terms of the SFSS Constitution. See the “Electing a Forum Rep” section or handout for more information about electing a Forum representative.

Recall of Representatives

The usual requirement for recall of an officer or elected representative is a posting of notice of recall, stating reasons for recall, plus a 2/3 majority vote to remove the person from office at a quorate meeting of the Union.

Constitutional Amendment Formula

Notice of proposed specific changes must be posted for at least the period specified under notice of meetings. A 2/3 majority vote at a meeting convened under the terms of the existing constitution is required to approve Constitutional changes at the Union level. These changes must be forwarded to the Student Union Organizer for ratification before the Union may begin operating under the new terms. An amendment history and brief summary should be appended to the Constitution as appropriate.

Dissolution

Every Union constitution must contain the specific wording of dissolution clauses, which relate to the reversion of all Union assets to the Simon Fraser Student Society after a period of two years of inactivity in the Union.

