

Sample Student Club Constitution

Prepared by the University of Manitoba Students' Union

Last Revision: January 18, 2017

Introduction

This sample constitution has been written to help you create your own student club constitution. A constitution sets out the basic rules that your student club will follow, and helps to provide direction for your club, which is why it is important that it is written clearly, and properly.

When using this to write your club's constitution, feel free to change or re-arrange any part of it. The text on the left hand side in italics are there to help explain what that section is for, and should not be included in your constitution, while the text on the right is what should be included in your constitution. Each article will look like this:

Article XX: Sample Article

On the left hand side will have an explanation of what goes in this section

On the right hand side will have the appropriate example for UMKnit

In the following sample constitution, we have used a made-up a student club (the University of Manitoba Knitting Club, UMKnit) as an example, so wherever you see that name you should replace it with your own.

There are a few parts that are either required by UMSU or highly recommended, which we've noted in this file. You are also required to send a copy of your constitution with UMSU and any changes you make in the future. If you have any questions about creating a constitution or any other part of creating or running a student club, please address the UMSU Student Clubs Manual or contact the UMSU's Clubs Manager at StudentClubs@umsu.ca or 204-474-6521.

Sample Constitution

Article 1: Name

This section simply states the name of the club, as well as an acronym or abbreviation.

The name of the student group shall be the University of Manitoba Knitting Club, also known as UMKnit.

Article 2: Purpose of Club

This section outlines why the student club exists. This is where the mandate of the student club is introduced detailing what purpose the club shall serve.

UMKnit exists to bring together students interested in recreational knitting, to organize regular social events for the knitting community, and to provide a forum for discussion for knitting-related issues.

Article 3: Membership

This section describes who can be a member of the student club, how they can join, and how long their membership lasts. †*

Membership is open to any undergraduate or graduate student of the University of Manitoba, so long as no less than two-thirds of the club is undergraduate students.

Memberships for the club last for a full academic year, September to August.

Article 4: Compliance with UMSU and UMSU Clubs Policies and Procedures

This section certifies that the student club recognizes the policies and by-laws of the Students' Union. It's important to include this section, since your club may lose their rights as an UMSU-recognized student club if you fail to comply with UMSU's rules.

UMKnit will follow all bylaws, policies, and procedures of the University of Manitoba Students' Union (UMSU) especially those found in the UMSU Student Clubs Policies and Procedures document.

* UMSU's policies for student clubs require that at minimum the club itself must maintain 10 UMSU members at all times.

† You are allowed to choose from two options for membership: you can either be an 'Open' club which admits any undergraduate or graduate student who wishes to join – this makes up a large majority of groups on campus; or you can choose to be a 'Closed' club which restricts membership based on political beliefs, academic program, or some other similar criteria – these include Fraternities and Sororities. Please contact the Clubs Manager (StudentClubs@umsu.ca) for more information about becoming a 'Closed' membership club as some restrictions apply.

Article 5: Executive Officers and Duties

Each club should have at least a few Executive positions to help coordinate the club. The positions given are only an example; different student clubs will have different needs. You are free to decide what positions you need, what to call those positions, and what each position will be responsible for.

It's important to list the duties (or jobs) each position is responsible for. It helps to keep your club organized by keeping the club's executive accountable. We've included some sample duties below; feel free to assign them as you want.

UMSU requires that at least two members of your executive have 'signing authority', or the right to co-sign cheques, purchase orders on your club's behalf, and sign things out from UMSU for your club. UMSU also requires one of the executive officers be responsible for being a contact person for UMSU and be responsible for submitting any necessary documents (like an Executive Transition Form) to UMSU.

The following are the Executive Officers of UMKnit, along with their duties:

- 1) President
 - a) Attend all meetings of UMKnit
 - b) Act as a signing authority for UMKnit
 - c) Act as spokesperson for UMKnit to the public
 - d) Be the contact person for UMSU
 - e) Act as Chair for meetings if no other Chair has been appointed
- 2) Vice President Finance
 - a) Attend all meetings of UMKnit
 - b) Act as a signing authority for UMKnit
 - c) Maintain adequate financial records of UMKnit
 - d) Prepare and submit an annual budget for UMKnit
- 3) Vice President Events
 - a) Attend all meetings of UMKnit
 - b) Organize and oversee social, academic and cultural events on behalf of UMKnit
 - c) Be responsible for booking equipment from UMSU

Article 6: Executive Elections and Terms of Office

All UMKnit elections for the upcoming year will occur no later than March 31st on an annual basis.

Prior to the election, the Executives shall appoint a Chief Returning Officer (CRO) to oversee the elections; the CRO does not have to be a member of UMKnit, and cannot be a person who is running in the election.

It is important to ensure that elections for your Executive positions are run fairly and transparently. You have a lot of flexibility on how to run your elections, depending on your needs.

For a smaller club you may want to simply have the Executive positions elected at a meeting of the club. For larger clubs with more members you may want to run your elections over a few days or even a few weeks to give all your members a chance to vote.

In our example, UMKnit will be holding an election for all members of the club to come and vote anytime during the week of elections.

The duties of the CRO are to:

- 1) Oversee and administer the elections for UMKnit
- 2) Publicize the elections to the membership of UMKnit
- 3) Hear and decide on any appeals or complaints related to the elections
- 4) Oversee and administer the counting of votes or ballots for the elections
- 5) Announce the results of the elections and inform UMSU of who next year's Executive will be

Voting for the upcoming year's Executive will be conducted as follows:

- 1) Nominations for the elected positions will last for three days. Candidates who wish to be nominated should inform the CRO during that period, and must be a member in good standing of UMKnit at the time of their nomination.
- 2) Each nominated candidate is allowed to campaign on behalf of themselves and any slate (or team) they are a part of during the campaigning period, which will last for at least a week.
- 3) The CRO will collect a brief biography and campaign platform from each candidate and distribute them in an e-mail to all members of UMKnit prior to voting.
- 4) Voting will be open for at least two days, and will be held in a safe and secure location accessible to all members of the club. At least one poll clerk will be present at all times with the ballot box.
- 5) The ballots will be collected by the CRO and counted; results will be sent to candidates and UMKnit members.

Article 7: Transition of the Executive

This section explains how the incoming student club Executive will be informed of their duties – both to student club members and to UMSU – by the outgoing Executive. Most successful student clubs implement some form of Executive transition program. In order to be most effective, student club Executive terms should provide at least one month of overlap so that the new Executive has the opportunity to work closely with the outgoing Executive in order to understand the roles and responsibilities of their respective leadership positions.

While it does not need to be mentioned in your club's constitution, it should be noted that every year following your club's elections an Executive Transition Form must be submitted to UMSU to maintain recognized club status.

- A. During the period from the end of the second week of April until the first day of May, when the new Executive team will assume office, it is the responsibility of the departing Executives to orient the newly elected Executive Officers to their jobs. This includes teaching the incoming Executives about student club and UMSU policies and procedures, transitioning club records and materials (including office, locker combinations, all passwords to all student club social media accounts, and the club's bank account), and preparing the new Executives to be effective in their roles for the next year's work.
- B. It is the responsibility of the departing President to ensure that all student requirements to UMSU, including submission of a complete Executive Transition Form and the removal of all student club records and materials from the club office and locker, have been fulfilled before the incoming Executives assume office.
- C. It is the responsibility of the departing President and Vice-President Finance to bring all accounts up to date to the end of the fiscal year, and to prepare any required financial statements of the club. In addition, the outgoing President and Vice-President Finance must arrange with the respective incoming Executives for the transition of the student club's bank account(s) into the incoming President's and Vice-President Finance's names. These tasks are to be completed and their credentials delivered to the new Executives no later than the last day of April.
- D. It is the responsibility of the incoming Executives to assume custody of all student club records and materials and accountability for all financial activities of UMKnit (as outlined in Article 5) and for all club requirements to UMSU commencing with the first day of May.

Article 8: Meetings

This section outlines how often the student club and Executive must meet. UMSU Student Clubs Policies and Procedures require your club to meet at least four times a year. Larger clubs may need to have just their Executive meet regularly; smaller clubs may have regular meetings for their entire membership.

The President may call an Executive meeting at any time, but must give all other members at least 48 hours notice. There shall be at least one Executive meeting per month during the academic year (September to April).[‡]

The Executives will schedule at least two meetings a year for the entire UMKnit membership.

Article 9: Amendments to the Constitution

This section details how changes to the constitution are made. It's a good idea to not make changing the constitution too easy; your constitution is the basis that your club operates on, and should be relatively stable.

Any changes (amendments) to this constitution must be approved by a formal vote of the entire student club membership at a publicized meeting of the club.

The proposed changes must be made available to all members of the club at least two weeks before the meeting, and require the support of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members present and voting at the meeting.

A copy of the amended constitution must be submitted to UMSU within two weeks of the meeting via the UMSU UMKnit portal.

And just like that, you're done! While crafting your own constitution can be tedious and complicating, we hope this guide has helped you create a model on which to base your organization. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to UMSU's Clubs Manager (contact information can be found in the introduction of this document) who will be happy to assist you in any way possible.

[‡] Remember, this is just UMKnit's constitution, if you feel your student club does not need to meet this often, don't put this in.