



The Constitution of a Science Club

What is a Constitution?

The Constitution of a club contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation and establishes the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function. All, except the most informal groups, should have their basic structure and methods of operation in writing.

Why have a Constitution?

By definition a club is a "body of persons organised for some specific purpose, as a club, union or society." The process of writing a constitution will clarify your purpose, delineate your basic structure and provide the cornerstone for building an effective group. It will allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the club is all about and how it functions. It will provide a structure to aid future leaders of your club to ensure that the group continues on a sound course. If you keep in mind the value of having a written document that clearly describes the framework of your club, the drafting of the constitution will be a much easier and a more rewarding experience.

What should be covered by a Constitution?

The following pages are an outline of the standard information to be included in a Constitution. Extra articles and sections are included to provide some examples of sound organisational practices. However, remember the constitution is for your club. It is important to think through what is written so it reflects your club's purposes and needs as well as stays within the rules of the school. The prime objective is to draft a document that covers these topics in a clear and concise manner. If you have any questions you should consult your teachers.

Once your club has a constitution - what do you do with it?

Remember the reason for having a constitution is that it articulates the purpose of your club and spells out the procedure to be followed for its orderly function. Once your club develops this constitution, review it at least once every school year. The needs of the club will change and it is important that this constitution reflect the current state of affairs.

Make sure the constitution is readily available to every member of your club. This will help members stay informed about the opportunities for participation and procedures they need to follow to be active contributing members.

Sample Constitution of a Typical Science Club:

(Please note that this is only an example that is meant only to serve as a guide. Your constitution need not look anything like this. This will merely help you see how to plan your club)

CONSTITUTION OF ABC SECONDARY SCHOOL SCIENCE CLUB

NAME

1. The name of this club shall be “The ABC Secondary School Science Club”

PURPOSES

2. The purpose of this club is to promote Science and Technology by supporting learners’ enthusiasm.

AIMS

3. The Club aims:
 - a) to organise meetings and relevant events
 - b) to encourage interest in Science and Technology
 - c) to provide opportunities and facilities to support scientific interest
 - d) to encourage a spirit of comradeship
 - e) to liaise with other organisations who share these aims

MEMBERSHIP

4. Membership in this club shall not be denied to any learner at ABC Secondary School on the basis of race, religion, gender, political affiliation, sexual orientation or physical handicap.
5. There shall be three classes of members:
 - a) **Full Member:** Full membership is limited to learners and teachers of ABC Secondary School. Any eligible learner or teacher of ABC Secondary School who completes and signs a membership application shall be a Full Member upon filing the application with the club secretary.
 - b) **Associate Member:** Any eligible person who is not entitled for full membership shall be an associate member upon submitting a membership form to the club secretary.
 - c) **Honorary Member:** Any person giving outstanding service to the club may be voted in for honorary membership.
6. Any member may use club facilities and equipment on such conditions as determined by the committee.
7. Any member may be suspended or expelled from the club for conduct obviously contrary to the Constitution of the club or for conduct that impairs the rights of the members to enjoy the benefits of the club.

OFFICE BEARERS

8. The committee of the club shall consist of at least 4 members, viz.
 - a) Chair

- b) Vice Chair
 - c) Secretary
 - d) Treasurer
9. Powers and Duties of Committee members:
- a) The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the club. He/She shall be the official spokesperson of the club, representing the policies, views and opinions of the club in its relations with the school and community at large. He/She has further powers and duties as prescribed by the club.
 - b) The Vice Chair presides at the club meetings in the absence of the Chair. He/She performs all legal duties assigned by the Chair. He/She notifies all members of the club meetings.
 - c) The Treasurer handles all financial affairs and budgeting of the club. He/She maintains accounts in the club's name that requires signature of both the Treasurer and Chair. All disbursements for more than R500.00 require a majority vote approval of the club.
 - d) The Secretary takes minutes at all meetings of the club, files minutes and submits required copies to all club members. He/She is responsible for all club correspondence and keeps copies of all correspondence on file. He/She acts as historian and maintains all records of the club.
10. The committee may co-opt other members if deemed necessary.
11. The period of office of the committee shall be from 01 March to 28 February. Should a new committee not be elected before 28 February, the old committee shall continue in office until such time as it is elected as stipulated under “ELECTIONS”

POWERS OF THE COMMITTEE

12. The committee shall have full power to act on behalf of the club, except where limited by this Constitution
13. Any expenditure by way of sponsorship or assistance to any person or persons shall be referred to a special general meeting.

ADVISORS

14. A staff member(s) of ABC Secondary School may be assigned to work with this club as an advisor(s).
15. The advisor(s) will serve a term of one academic year and is selected at the same time as the committee members of the club.
16. The advisor(s) may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the membership at a regularly scheduled club meeting.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

17. This club can choose to charge membership fees. Assessments are determined each school year by a quorum of the membership at its regularly scheduled club meeting. This quorum must consist of the full committee as well as at least two-thirds of the membership.

18. The income and expenditure of the club shall be applied solely towards the objectives of the club as laid out in this Constitution, and no portion shall be paid by way of profit to any members of the club. However, any member may be reimbursed for any expense incurred on behalf of the club.
19. In the event that the club should disband, all assets will be turned over to ABC Secondary School, to be used to promote Science and Technology among learners.
20. True accounts of all income and expenditure of the club must be kept. A financial statement must be published within 30 days of the end of the club's fiscal year. The books shall be available for inspection by any member.
21. The committee shall decide the club's fiscal year.

CLUB DISCIPLINE

22. The club shall abide by the rules and regulations of ABC Secondary School.
23. The committee will deal with infringement of these rules and regulations. The maximum penalty imposed by the committee shall be expulsion from the club.
24. Appeals against the decision of the committee shall be in the form of a special general meeting requested in accordance with this Constitution by the persons appealing.

GENERAL MEETINGS

25. General meetings are held to:
 - a) Obtain club approval on matters beyond the jurisdiction of the committee.
 - b) To keep members informed of the club activities.
 - c) To report on minutes of committee meetings.
 - d) To provide a social meeting place for its members.
26. General meetings shall be held at least bimonthly as determined by the committee.
27. The committee shall determine the venue.
28. No notification of a general meeting is necessary provided it is taking place at its usual venue and at its usual time. Otherwise at least seven days notice shall be given in writing advising of any changes.
29. General meetings shall be chaired by the Chair of the committee or failing him/her, in sequence, one of the following: Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, any other co-opted member chosen by those present.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

30. The AGM is held in order to elect office bearers.
31. It is held at the usual general meeting venue, date and time in February, or as soon as is practical thereafter.
32. Nominees for the committee may only be proposed and seconded by paid-up members.

33. Venue and notification are subject to the same rules as those of the general meeting.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS

34. Special general meetings are held to draw attention to serious matters for which maximum attendance by members is required.

35. The committee may, whenever they deem fit, or shall on request made in writing by not less than 10% of the clubs voting members, convene a special meeting. Any such requisition must state the object of the meeting to be called and must be signed by all the requesting members and handed to any member of the committee.

36. At least seven days notice of any special general meeting shall be given in writing and sent to all members by the Secretary. Non-receipt of such a notice by any member shall not invalidate any resolution passed at the meeting.

37. The members present shall constitute a quorum.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

38. Committee meetings shall be held to conduct the affairs of the club.

39. Committee meetings shall be held regularly as deemed necessary by the committee.

40. Fifty percent of the committee shall constitute a quorum provided that the quorum does not consist of fewer than three members.

41. The Secretary shall record the minutes of all committee meetings. The chairman shall approve any such minutes by signing in the minute book.

ELECTIONS

42. Committee members are elected once every school year. Elections are held at the beginning of each school year.

43. All committee members shall be available for re-election.

44. Any member is entitled to be elected as a committee member of the club.

45. At least one week's notice will be provided for any meeting at which an election is held.

46. Only paid-up members shall be allowed to vote. Voting shall be by a show of hands, unless otherwise requested and seconded by voting members.

47. The Secretary shall record both the motion and the number of votes.

48. Any member may appoint a proxy. This must be done in writing and presented to the electoral officer before the meeting.

49. Petition by one-third of the total number of members is cause for a recall election. The offence must be stated in writing and submitted by a member. After the offence is submitted

to the club, the offending committee member has the right to a 48-hour notice of a hearing. A recall election will be conducted as a "Special Election". Recall requires an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the total voting membership.

50. In the event an elected committee member is unable to fulfil his/her term of office, there will be a "Special Election". Any eligible member, including those already holding office, can be nominated for a vacated committee member position.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

51. Proposed constitutional amendment or changes will be presented, in writing, to the club one meeting before this amendment is voted on.
52. Approval by two-thirds of the voting members present at a regular club meeting will pass this proposed amendment. The amendment is immediately effective unless otherwise stipulated in the proposal.

APPROVAL

53. This constitution was approved on 28/01/03 at ABC Secondary School by two-thirds of the voting members present.