

RSO Constitution Guide

Introduction and Requirements

The Office of Student Clubs & Organizations at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) requires all Recognized Student Organizations (RSOs) to submit an updated constitution each academic year. A constitution serves as the guiding document for your group and all RSOs must abide by their constitutions to maintain Active RSO status. If you'd like help with your constitution, feel free to contact us at clubs@unco.edu. We're happy to assist!

What is a Constitution?

A constitution is a document that outlines the purpose of an organization and how it will run. The constitution should include specific guidelines for officers, advisors, and members to follow. This document should be passed on each year to help guide incoming officers.

UNC Requirements

UNC requires RSO constitutions to meet specific guidelines. This guide will give a description of each section and some things to consider when writing it. RSOs are required to include the following information in their constitution:

I Article.	Name
II Article.	Purpose
III Article.	Membership
IV Article.	Officers
V Article.	Officer Selection and Removal
VI Article.	Advisor
VII Article.	Meetings
VIII Article.	Amendments

How to use this guide

Each section of this guide will provide information about what should be included in each article. It will also provide guiding questions and example language that you can adapt to fit the needs of your group. When writing your constitution, it is a good idea to work with other members of your group so the document reflects the needs of the whole organization.

Some articles must include specific, verbatim language. If mandatory language is omitted or altered, your group may not become an RSO. Mandatory and example language will be indicated by:

- **Mandatory language** is highlighted in blue. It will look like this. You may not alter this text except to fill in the name of your organization. {Name of organization} indicates you can replace the bracketed text with your group's name. You do not need to keep the blue highlighting in your final document.
- *Example language is in italics. It will look like this. You may adapt the example language to fit your organization, or you may write your own statement.*

Article Descriptions

ARTICLE I. NAME

Purpose: This article will establish the name of your organization.

Guidelines: In this article, you will put the exact title, and acronym if applicable, of your organization. If your group has an acronym, you may use it from here on out in the rest of the articles. If you would like to use “UNC” or “University of Northern Colorado” in your name, consider putting it at the end. This way, when students are looking for your RSO, it will not be grouped in with other organizations that also start with the acronym “UNC.”

Required: There is no required language for this article. .

Example:

Article I. Name

The name of this organization will be the Scuba Diving Club of UNC (SDCUNC).

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

Purpose: This article explains why the organization exists and the types of activities it will engage in.

Guidelines: Anyone who reads this section should be able to understand what your organization does. The purpose should be made crystal clear in this article. In some cases, this will be the guiding principles upon which your organization was founded. For others, it may be as simple as providing entertainment. If you have a multitude of reasons, outlining your purpose using bullet points may help make this section clear.

Required: There is no required language for this article.

Sample:

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of the Scuba Diving Club of UNC shall be to:

- *Encourage student participation on campus.*
- *Provide opportunities for students to learn about scuba diving.*
- *Host events that are open to all UNC students to attend.*
- *Provide social opportunities for student and community members interested in Scuba Diving.*

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Purpose: This section describes the requirements for membership in the organization. It explains the expectations of members as well as any criteria for remaining an active member.

Guidelines: This is an opportunity to outline what the requirements are to become a member and stay in good standing with the group. RSOs may not restrict membership on the basis of race, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual identity, gender expression, military service, or political affiliation. The only exceptions to this policy are single-gender organizations that meet “social fraternity” requirements as outlined in 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(6)(A); 34 C.F.R. § 106.14(a).

If your organization collects dues, this section should also describe the amount, collection schedule, and indicate what the monies will be used for. Consider:

- Are members required to attend a certain number of meetings to remain active?
- Are dues mandatory or optional?
- Who will be eligible to vote? Active members only or all members?
- How much of the organizations budget should come from dues? How much from fundraising?
- Can community members join? Non-student membership may not exceed 49% of total membership, however your organization can set a higher threshold if you wish.

Required : In accordance with the University's policy and established laws, {name of organization} will not limit membership and participation in organizational activities based on race, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, military service, or political affiliation.

Non-student membership will not exceed 49% of total membership and non-student members may not hold voting privileges or other formal decision-making authority.

If you believe your organization meets the requirements of a “social fraternity” please contact clubs@unco.edu to request an exemption from above required language. It is your organization’s obligation to demonstrate that you meet the federal guidelines for a single-gender organization. Requesting an exemption does not guarantee that you will be awarded one.

Example:

Article III. Membership

Membership in this organization shall be open to all University of Northern Colorado Students. Non-students may join the organization, but non-student membership may not exceed 33% of total membership. Student members must attend one meeting per month to remain an active member in good standing. Inactive members will not have voting privileges.

Dues shall be \$5.00 per semester and must be paid by the 30th day of the semester to remain in good standing. Dues are mandatory and shall be used to buy tee-shirts an host an end of year banquet. Expenses paid for with member dues must be approved by a simple majority vote.

In accordance with the University's policy and established laws, *the Scuba Diving Club of UNC* will not limit membership and participation in organizational activities based on race, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, military service, or political affiliation.

Non-student membership will not exceed 49% of total membership and non-student members may not hold voting privileges or other formal decision-making authority.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICER TITLES AND DUTIES

Purpose: This section describes the leadership roles of the organization. There should be a specific description of each officer title and their duties. You should not include the names of current officers, just a description of their role.

Guidelines: Use this section to list out specific requirements and duties for each leadership position. Your organization must have at least three officers to become an RSO. There is no maximum limit on how many officers your group may have. Consider:

- How many people are willing to serve in leadership roles? If your club only has ten members, it may be unrealistic to have seven officer positions.
- Is there a line of succession? If your president is absent from a meeting, who will fill in for them?
- Can any student member be an officer?
- Do members need to be in the club for a full semester or year before they can become an officer?
- What duties are essential to your organization?

Required: Non-student members may not serve in officer roles.

Example:

Article IV. Officer Titles and Duties

Non-student members may not serve in officer roles. Officers must maintain a 2.5 GPA. The officer positions and duties of the Scuba Diving Club of UNC shall be as follows:

President: The President shall set the schedule for all regular club meetings. The duties of the President are to:

- Create an agenda for each meeting.
- Update the constitution annually.
- Coordinate an end of year banquet.
- Attend all regularly scheduled meetings and events.

Vice President: The Vice President shall be responsible for marketing and outreach. The duties of the Vice President are to:

- Announce all regular club meetings and events on social media.
- Update the constitution annually.
- Coordinate an end of year banquet.
- Attend all regularly scheduled meetings and events.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be responsible for managing the organization's finances. The duties of the Treasurer are to:

- Collect and account for all dues.
- Establish cash-handling procedures for all fundraisers.
- Maintain accurate accounting of all group funds.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICER SELECTION AND REMOVAL

Purpose: In order to ensure as smooth a transition as possible between officers, it is essential for an organization to have a clear, equitable process for selecting and removing officers.

Guidelines: The main feature of this article will be the officer selection procedures. When putting this together, you will want to focus on the timeline, duration of office, the percentage of votes a candidate must secure in order to be the victor, how nominations are made, how the vote will be held, and qualifications to hold office.

Consider:

- Will elections be online or in person? Will you use a simple majority or other criteria to determine who is selected?
- When will officers be selected?
- Are there limits on how long an officer may serve?
- What happens if an officer steps down?
- Can officers be removed from their positions? If so, what is the process for doing so?

Required: There is no required language for this article.

Example:

Article V. Officer Selection and Removal

Each officer will serve a one-year term. Officers may be reelected for up to three consecutive years. Officer candidates may submit their names to be included on ballots the first two weeks of each semester. Individuals may only hold one Officer position at a time. Elections will be held in person the third week of each semester. A candidate may win with a simple majority (51%) of votes. In the event that no candidate receives a majority of votes for any one position, then the Advisor will facilitate a run-off election between the top two candidates.

The Treasurer shall be selected during Fall semester and shall serve until the following Fall semester. The President and Vice President shall oversee Fall semester elections. The President and Vice President shall be selected during Spring semester and shall serve until the following Spring semester begins. The Treasurer shall oversee Spring semester elections.

Officers may be removed from their positions if they do not meet GPA requirements or by 2/3 vote of all active members. Officers may, at any time, voluntarily vacate their position. In such instances, a special election will be held within one month of vacancy. The Advisor shall oversee special elections.

ARTICLE VI. ADVISOR

Purpose: **This section outlines the duties and selection process for the advisor.**

Guidelines: Be specific about what duties you expect your advisor to perform. Keep in mind that student organizations should be directed by student members and that the Advisor does not have voting or financial authority. Advisors must be employed by UNC at least part time as staff, faculty, or graduate assistants. Undergraduate student employees may not serve as advisors. Consider:

- How often do you want to meet with your Advisor?
- Should the Advisor come to every event and meeting? If not, which meetings and/or events should they attend?
- Does your advisor have to have any special skills?
- Can the student members remove an advisor? If so, how?

Required: There is no required language for this article.

Example:

Article VI. Advisor

The Advisor of the Scuba Diving Club of UNC will be selected by mutual agreement between current officers and the Advisor. The Advisor must be a full time UNC faculty or staff member who is interested in Scuba Diving. The Advisor may voluntarily step down at any time or may be removed by a 2/3 vote of all active members.

In the event the Advisor position is vacated, the President and Vice President shall find another person willing to serve as the Advisor. The duties of the Advisor are to:

- *Attend at least one club meeting each month.*
- *Perform grade checks for all student members at the end of each semester.*
- *Provide feedback and support for event planning.*
- *Inventory and store club equipment.*
- *Keep electronic copies of current club documents and pass documents on to new officers.*

ARTICLE VII. MEETINGS

Purpose: The section should state the frequency of meetings and, if there are different type of meetings, describe those types.

Guidelines: In general terms, state when regular meetings of the organization shall be scheduled. Some groups have both general member and executive officer meetings. Consider:

- How often does the organization need to meet?
- Do officers need to meet outside of regular meetings? How often?
- Who arranges the meetings?
- Can special meetings be called? Who has the authority to call a special meeting? How much notice is required?
- If official organizational business occurs during meetings, what portion of members must be present?

Required: There is no required language for this article.

Example:

Article VI. Meetings

The regular meetings of the Scuba Diving Club of UNC shall be held twice monthly. The Vice President shall be responsible for scheduling and announcing regular meetings two weeks in advance of meeting dates. A quorum (2/3) of the total members of the organization must be present for the transaction of official business.

An Officer meeting shall be held twice a semester. The President shall schedule and announce Officer meetings two weeks in advance of meeting dates.

The President and Treasurer may call special meetings as needed to conduct club business. The officer calling the meeting is responsible for scheduling and announcing the special meeting one week in advance of the meeting date.

ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS

Purpose: This section outlines the process for changing the organization's constitution. By having a clear procedure to make amendments, future groups will have the ability to adapt the organization to the needs of the members.

Guidelines: When writing this article think about how you want future iterations of your organization to go about making changes. While you do not want the amendment process to be impossible, you also do not want it to be something that is done easily, or without considerable thought being put into it.
Consider:

- Who can propose amendments?
- Is there a waiting period between a proposed change and when it is voted on?
- What proportion of members must approve changes to the constitution?

Required: There is no required language for this article.

Example:

Article VIII. Amendment Procedure

Any student member of the Scuba Diving Club of UNC may propose an amendment at a regular meeting. Proposed amendments will be voted on during the next regular meeting following when the proposal was presented. Amendments must be approved by 2/3 of voting members to be enacted.