



RSO Sample Governing Document

Required Elements of a Governing Document

The items below will be required in all organization governing documents, however you may put them in any order you would like. Student organizations have the discretion to determine their own rules and procedures, and the following pages are simply a guideline to help you think about what needs to be addressed in your governing document and what issues may arise well into the future. However, all of the items in **bold** must be included. The text in the governing document outline is a *suggestion*, but at a minimum, the following must be included:

- **Organization Official Name**
- **Organization Purpose/Mission**
- **Membership Requirements:**
 - **Membership Statement: Registered student organizations shall be limited to currently enrolled Johns Hopkins University students.**
 - **Non-hazing Statement: No hazing or discrimination will be used as a condition of membership in this organization.**
 - **Revocation of Membership Process**
 - **Appeal Process**
- **Officers Requirements, including:**
 - **Eligibility to Hold Office**
 - **Titles and Duties**
 - Note: President and Treasurer are required positions for all student organizations and must be included in the governing document.
- **Selection of Officers, including:**
 - **Eligibility to Vote**
 - **Selection Process**
 - **Term of Office**
- **Officer Vacancies Process, including:**
 - **Removal of Officers**
 - **Resignation**
 - **Filling Vacant Officer Positions**
- **Advisor Information**
 - **Advisors do not have any voting rights.**
- **Amendments Process**

Constitution Outline

Items in **bold** are required, items in *italics* are guidelines from Student Leadership and Involvement to help draft each section of your governing document.

Organization Name

*This section should be used to state your organization name and any acronyms or nicknames that your organization will use throughout the year. Please note that organizations **may NOT use the University's name** in the front of their name, due to University Regulations. More information regarding this policy can be found here: <https://brand.jhu.edu/use-of-name/#student-and-alumni-uses>*

Example: Your organization should be Involvement Group at JHU instead of JHU Involvement Group or Involvement Group at Johns Hopkins University instead of Johns Hopkins University Involvement Group.

Organization Purpose

This section should be utilized to outline the mission and/or vision of your organization. What is the purpose of the organization? What type of student interest do you attract?

Membership

I. Requirements

II. Membership Statement: Recognized student organizations shall be limited to currently enrolled JHU students.

a. Some organizations have different levels of members, or have privileges given to active membership or members that must remain in "good standing". You should consider explaining on what "active membership" or "good standing" entails for your organization so that it is clearly defined if you are using such terms.

III. Active Membership Status

a. Some organizations have active membership or regulations for a member in "good standing". Use this section to explain what having active membership or being in good standing means for the organization (Ex: GPA, service hours, meeting attendance, etc.)

IV. Revocation of Membership

a. This section describes the process your organization should take in order to revoke the membership of someone in your organization who is not fulfilling the membership requirements or upholding the organization's mission.

b. Example: Membership may be revoked without mutual agreement for non-participation, misconduct, or violations of any provisions of the Constitution. The member will be notified in writing of the possible revocation at least 72 hours prior to the vote and will be allowed to address the organization in order to relate to members any relevant defense prior to the voting for removal. Membership can only be revoked upon a 2/3 majority vote of eligible members. Revocation of membership will be valid for three (3) semesters.

V. Appeal Process

- a. *This section describes the process your organization should take if a member wishes to appeal the decision of your organization to revoke their membership. We suggest that this process be completed by members of the organization who did not issue the original revocation.*
- b. *Example: Any student whose membership is revoked will have seven (7) calendar days to appeal the revocation. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the President and Secretary, and must include any relevant information that has not already been presented. The President will then submit the appeal to the Appeals Committee. This committee consists of 3 executive board members and 4 general members. This committee will then render a decision at the next general body meeting or in seven (7) calendar days, whichever occurs first.*

Officers

VI. Section 1: Eligibility

- a. *This section should outline what requirements your organization has set for members of your organization to hold officer positions. (GPA, held a previous position, completed certain requirements, etc.)*

VII. Titles and Duties

- a. *List a separate section for each officer. These sections should outline the titles of each officer and the responsibilities of each officer. Example below:*
 - i. The President shall:
 - ii. The Vice President shall:

Selection of Officers, including:

VIII. Eligibility to Vote

- a. *This section should discuss who within the organizations have the ability to vote. Is voting open to anyone in attendance in the meeting?*
- b. *May only active members in "good standing" vote?*

IX. Nomination Process

- a. *This section should outline your nomination process.*
- b. *Example: The nomination of officers shall occur at the first meeting held in November. Any eligible member (as defined in Article III Section 1) present may nominate someone or themselves for office by verbally nominating the individual during this procedure. However, the nominee must be considered an eligible member (as defined in Article III Section 1). Absentee ballots and proxy ballots are not permitted in the nomination or election process.*

X. Election Process

- a. *This section should outline your election process. We highly encourage that RSOs function very democratically. The nomination and election process needs to be fair to all members of the organization and allow an opportunity for the membership of the organization to have a voice in the election of the officers.*
- b. *Example: The election of officers shall occur at the second meeting held in November. The nominated candidates will be given a chance to address the organization to discuss his/her qualifications and reasons why they should be*

selected. Once each candidate has had the opportunity to speak, all eligible members (as defined in Article III Section 1) present will have the opportunity to vote by secret ballot. The faculty/staff advisor and current highest-ranking officer not running for office will tabulate all votes. The highest-ranking officer not running for office shall announce the officer with a simple majority of votes cast by eligible members. After announcing the new officer the highest-ranking officer not running for office shall ask if any eligible members contest the count. If no eligible member contests the count the new officer shall take office immediately.

- c. If an eligible member contests the count the faculty/staff advisor and the highest-ranking officer not running for office will recount all votes. In the event of a tie, the President shall cast the deciding vote for office unless he/she is running for the said office. In that case, the next highest-ranking officer shall make the deciding vote.

XI. Term of Office

- a. *In this section, describe how long officers will serve in their positions. Will the term be one calendar year?*
- b. *Can officers be re-elected for a second term?*

Officer Vacancies, including:

XII. Removal of Officers

- a. *This section should explain how your organization will remove an officer from their position. How and when will you notify the officer that they are up for a potential removal? Who will vote on this decision? What percentage of votes is needed to remove an officer? Will the officer in question have the opportunity to address the organization or the executive board regarding the situation?*

XIII. Resignation

- a. *This section should describe the process for an officer to resign from his/her position. Do you want them to submit something in writing? Who will they submit that documentation to? How early?*
- b. *This section should also outline what an officer should do before they resign. Should they provide all of their information/documents to someone? Who will they explain their ongoing projects to, etc.?*

XIV. Filling Vacant Officer Positions

- a. *This section should describe what your organization will do in the event of a vacant officer position. Some organizations will have another nomination/election process for the open position and refer to the sections listed in the constitution that outline the process of nominations and elections, however some have an election immediately or appoint someone to fill the position until an election.*

Advisor

XV. Advisor Responsibilities

- a. *This section should outline the responsibilities of the advisor. **The advisor does not have any voting rights within the organization.***

XVI. Nomination and Role

- a. *How will your advisor be selected? Who will vote on the advisor? What will be the advisor's term limit?*

XVII. Removal and Replacement

- a. *How will you notify the advisor of possible removal? Who will vote on the removal? How long will you have after you remove an advisor to select a new one?*

Finances

XVIII. Description

- a. *This section should outline whether or not your organization will have dues. If so, you should outline how much those dues are and how often they will be collected (yearly or per semester). Don't forget to include the mandatory inability to pay dues statement below.*

- b. **Inability to pay dues statement: No university student may be denied membership due to inability to pay dues. If a member is not able to pay dues, other arrangements will be made.**

XIX. Spending Organization's Money

- a. *Who will be the authorized signers for the organization's monetary transactions?*

XX. Dissolution of the Organization

- a. *What will happen if the organization ceases to exist? Where will all the remaining funds go (local school, charity, similar organization, etc.)?*

Publications

XXI. Compliance

- a. **University Posting Policy Compliance: All advertisements of the organization must comply with the University Posting Policy (<http://www.posting.fsu.edu/>).**

XXII. Approval

- a. *This section should discuss who will approve all flyers, publications, t-shirts etc. before they are publicly distributed or printed.*

Amendments

- XXIII. *This section should discuss how amendments to the constitution can be made. Who must the amendments be proposed to? Will they be made at meetings? What percentage of your organization must be in attendance in order to pass an amendment? Just like elections, all members should have the opportunity to vote on changes to the constitution, since it does pertain to all members.*