



To: Student Societies

From: Melinda Scott, Executive Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students

Date: May 16, 2023

Re: Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations; and Resources for the Development and Review of Student Society Constitutions

The University recognizes the integral role that student societies play in the organization of student activities, the development of campus life, and the overall quality of student experience at the University. This memo to student societies includes:

- a) a reminder of an important deadline for student society appointments under the [Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations](#); and
- b) resources and suggestions for student societies that may be contemplating constitutional revisions.

Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations

As part of the [Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations](#), student societies annually appoint a representative to the pool of students who may be called to serve on the University's Complaint and Resolution Council for Student Societies (CRCSS) panel.

Student appointees must:

- act independently and possess skills to assess merits of a complaint in an unbiased fashion;
- be registered in a program leading to a University of Toronto degree;
- **not** be an executive of a student society; and
- **not** be a staff member of a student society.

We ask that your society provide the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students (vp.students@utoronto.ca) with the name of, and contact information for, a student appointee by Thursday, June 1.

Student Society Constitutions

The [Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees](#) outlines the requirements for student societies to function in an “open, accessible and democratic” manner in order to receive the fees collected by the University on their behalf. The [Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Students Organizations](#) provides greater clarity on the terms “open, accessible and democratic”. The Office of the Vice-Provost, Students developed the [Handbook for Student Societies](#) to assist student societies while compiling applicable policies and guidelines relevant to their operation.

One of the key elements required by the University to demonstrate open, accessible, and democratic functioning of a student society is a constitution. Recognizing the unique pressures of student societies facing annual turnover, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students has compiled the information below as a reference for organizations seeking assistance on developing or reviewing a constitution.

Constitutional changes generally require approval at a society’s annual general meeting. We suggest that student societies take the time to review their constitutions in the summer months so that if any edits to their constitutions are needed, they may be brought forward in the fall.

As outlined in the [Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees](#), copies of your society’s constitution must be submitted annually to the Office of the Governing Council and the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students.

For further resources on the functioning of student societies, please refer to the [Handbook for Student Societies](#). Additionally, if you would like to speak to someone about your society’s constitution, or other matters pertaining to your society, you are welcome and encouraged to connect with your campus coordinator:

- St. George student societies – **Alyssa Ahmed** (alyssa.ahmed@utoronto.ca)
Student Life Coordinator, Recognized Campus Organizations
- UTM student societies – **Aaron Tsang** (aa.tsang@utoronto.ca)
Student Engagement Coordinator, Student Groups & Interfaith
- UTSC student societies – **Norman Javier** (norman.javier@utoronto.ca)
Campus Groups Coordinator
- University-wide student societies – **Josh Hass** (josh.hass@utoronto.ca)
Coordinator, Student Policy Initiatives, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students

Please note: Due to pending updates to the University’s governance schedule, the 2023-24 edition of the *Handbook for Student Societies* has been delayed until later in the summer. However, [the 2022-23 edition](#), which is hyperlinked throughout this document, contains valuable information regarding constitutional development and review, and other student society functions.

Elements of a Constitution

Your society's constitution should include provisions that address the following items:

Financial Management

1. **Accounting and Financial Procedures**

Accounting and financial procedures should be consistent with the direction provided in the [Handbook for Student Societies](#) (pages 15 to 23).

2. **Regular Financial Reports**

Usually in the form of a monthly report to the executive council/board of directors that includes a comparison of year-to-date income and expense to budget, and a statement of expected income and expense for the remainder of the fiscal year.

3. **Annual Audit and Audit Exemptions**

An auditor must be appointed to annually audit your society's financial statements. Those audited financial statements must be approved by the executive and presented to the general membership (e.g., through an annual general meeting, email announcement, campus media). The audit must also be submitted to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students. Some societies may be eligible for an exemption from the audit requirement. Please refer to pages 10 to 13 in the [Handbook for Student Societies](#) for more information.

4. **Change in Fee Procedures**

A description of the procedure to request a change in the society's fee(s) must be outlined.

Constituent Requests

5. **Availability of Records**

All financial records, budgets, auditor's reports, council minutes, and minutes of any subsidiary bodies of the society (e.g., commissions/committees) should be available for examination by any member of the constituency. The request should be met by a specific timeline (e.g., two weeks).

6. **Members' Complaints**

Your society's constitution should include a description of the procedure of addressing members' complaints. The procedure should pay specific attention to addressing complaints quickly, especially in instances where members express their concern that the society is not following its constitution or failing to manage its affairs properly in some other way. The procedure should also articulate a timeframe in which a student society will respond to a member's complaint.

Elections and Referenda

7. **Voting Procedures**

A description of voter eligibility, the voting process, the interpretation of results, campaigning regulations, and a process and timeline by which election complaints are addressed.