

Constitutional Amendments

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PREAMBLE

Residents' Council Constitutions are a compendium of policies and procedures for Council business. They detail who is a member of Council, who has a vote on Council, how those members are elected or selected, and what the mandates of Council and its individual commissions are.

Constitutions should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting the Council's needs. If Council makes changes to its membership or procedures and does not amend the Constitution to reflect them, it can become confusing for future Councils or for interested residents in your building.

POLICY

This is a general step-by-step guide; however, Residents' Council Constitutions may have amendment procedures that lay out timelines for sharing proposed amendments with your Council members and residence community.

PROCEDURE

In cases where this document and the Constitution differ, the Programming Coordinator(s) in the Office of Residence Education and Programs should be consulted.

Step 1: Strike an Internal Review Committee (IRC)

Many Councils have Internal Review Committees written into their Constitutions. Typically struck by the President, IRCs are made up of relevant stakeholders (e.g. Council members, residents, or Sophs) with an interest in reviewing the Constitution for potential changes. Allow interested parties to sign up, and directly ask individuals whose perspectives would add value to the process or individuals whose roles may undergo some changes. If struck annually, the IRC's job is quick and may not result in any changes at all.

Step 2: Review the Current Constitution

Current copies of the Constitution can be found by contacting the Programming Coordinator(s) or checking the Council portal (rezcouncil.uwo.ca). Distribute copies to members of the IRC. Look for outdated language, roles that are no longer filled, grammatical errors, and formatting issues. Even something as small as changing the font size would be within the purview of the IRC.

Step 3: List the Changes to be Made

Add to the list of changes from the review of the IRC by soliciting ideas from the Council regarding what needs to be changed. This could include, but is not limited to, broadening

commissioner mandates, changing meeting schedules, or reviewing position titles and responsibilities.

Step 4: Draft an Amendment for Each Change

It's important that each amendment that is drafted represents one change to the Constitution. Combining review initiatives may create challenges for the Residents' Council when they vote to accept or reject the changes proposed by the IRC.

Step 5: Publicize the Proposed Amendments and Consult with the Community

It's important to allow the residence community time to review the proposed changes to the Constitution. The Residence Manager should be the first to review, looking for any potential problems with policies in Residence. Then, post the proposed amendments online, in your front foyer, outside the council office, and near the Dining Hall. The Constitution may have specific recommendations for how and when to publicize an amendment vote. Ensure that plans for the residence community to engage with the IRC about these changes is included – the residents may have questions or concerns that will be helpful to the process. An IRC email address, a town hall meeting, or visits to floor meetings may be helpful.

Step 6: Schedule and Hold the Vote

Make sure Council members know when the amendments will be voted on. In the first year of regularly amending the Constitution, the meeting could be a little long; however, it will be smooth if the first steps, especially Step 5, are adhered to. Ensure that a specific person is taking minutes of this meeting – attendance, arguments for and against, and the voting numbers. Ensure that this person is capturing the final wording of all amendments to be copied into the Constitution at a later time.

This meeting should be chaired by a person not on the IRC (i.e. the Speaker of Council). This person should be familiar with the proposed amendments and with any potentially contentious issues. They will hold the group to order and maintain a speakers' list to make sure that all viewpoints are heard before the vote, but will also ensure that conversation doesn't run so long as to be overwhelming. They will read the proposed amendment aloud (it is also good to show them via projector) and ask for a speaker from the IRC to explain the amendment's intent. Comments can be taken from the floor, then the vote will be held.

Step 7: Bring Amendments to the Programming Coordinator(s)

As a way to assist in the preparation of a pitch to the membership of Communications Meetings, bring all amendments to a meeting with the Programming Coordinator(s). They will help draft some wording for presentation at Communications, and can help identify issues that the committee could question. This meeting will ensure that the presentation at Communications is as expeditious as possible.

Step 8: Bring Amendments to a Communications Meeting

Send a copy of the Constitution that highlights new changes to Brandi Spitzig, the Administrative Coordinator in the Residence Life Office, and she will distribute copies of the Constitution for review. At the next Communications Meeting, all changes will be presented to the group for review, discussion, and approval.

Step 9: Include all Accepted Amendments in the Constitution

As soon after the vote as possible, complete the process by incorporating all changes into the Constitution and redistributing it to the membership of Council. Be sure to send a copy to the Programming Coordinator(s) and the Residence Manager.

While the changes will be incorporated into the Constitution with no notes of when they occurred, it is important to maintain records of the IRC's work, the minutes of the amendment vote, and the exact changes that were made for future years.

All questions regarding **Constitutional Amendments** can be forwarded to the Programming Coordinator in the Office of Residence Education and Programs.

Example of a List of Proposed Amendments:

All additions will be italicized. All deletions will be struck through.

Amendment 1: To change all references to "Residence Life Coordinators" to read "Residence Manager"

Amendment 2: To include the following selection process for executive members in Article 4: Elections and Selections

"4. 12 *Executive:*

a) *President*

i. *The President will be selected through an application and interview process facilitated by the Residence Council President Selection Committee to coincide with Soph and Residence Staff applications*

ii. *The Residence Council President Selection Committee will consist of:*

The Outgoing President

Residence Manager or his/her designate

Incoming Head Soph

Two students at large

iii. *The application form for the role of Residence Council President will require the candidate's resume, a set of short-answer questions, and 50 signatures of current students, only 25 of whom may be from the candidate's residence floor, to demonstrate student support of his/her candidacy*

b) *Vice Presidents*

i. *The Vice-Presidents Programming, Finance and Social will be selected through an application and interview process facilitated by the Incoming President*

ii. *The Incoming President will invite the following individuals to consult on the selection of the relevant Vice-Presidents:*

The Outgoing Vice-President (current position holder)

The Outgoing President

Residence Manager or his/her designate

iii. *The application form for the roles of Residence Council Vice-Presidents will require the candidate's resume, a set of short-answer questions, and 30 signatures of current students, only 15 of whom may be from the candidate's residence floor, to demonstrate student support of his/her candidacy*

c) *Head Soph*

i. *The Head Soph shall be selected by a Committee consisting of the outgoing Head Soph, the outgoing Council President, a Residence Manager, the ROC and/or a member of O-Staff.*

ii. *The Head Soph will be selected according to the timelines set by the ROC and OCO. "*

Amendment 3: To remove the position "Good Times Commissioner" from Article 5.

“Article 5.1: Commissioners

- i) Yearbook Commissioner
- ii) Formal Commissioner
- iii) ~~Good Times Commissioner~~
- iv. Environment Commissioner

Amendment 4: To include the following changes in Article 8:

“8.5 Meetings of the Executive

- a) The Executive shall meet bi-weekly from the beginning of classes in September until the beginning of the final exam period in April, excluding holidays, December Break, Reading Week, exam periods, and extraneous circumstances. *The meetings will occur on opposite weeks to that of the DHRC meetings.*
- b) Meetings of the Executive are closed meetings, and deemed confidential to all except the Executive, and those requested to attend by a vote of the Executive.
- c) *Executive meeting minutes may be requested from the Executive Assistant by a resident of Delaware Hall. The Executive Assistant will have one week to send the minutes to the requesting resident.”*

Amendment 5: To edit Article 9 to read:

“9.2 Elections:

- a) ~~All votes require a majority for a candidate to be elected.~~ Elections will be held for the following positions: USC Representative, First Year Caucus Representative, *Housing Operations Committee Representative*, Faculty Representatives (*if requested by Faculty Councils*), and Wing Representatives
- b) *Voting will be conducted by means of a secret ballot. The voter must provide their WesternONE Card as identification.”*

Quick Tips on Amending Your Constitution

1. Strike an Internal Review Committee (IRC) that will capture different perspectives and roles in order to review the current Constitution
2. Review the current Constitution individually, then compile your notes. Make decisions as a group about which to include.
3. List all of the changes you would like to make and organize them in a logical way, likely by Article, or by the significance of the change (wording vs. position addition or removal vs. procedural change).
4. Draft your amendments into clear, concise wording that shows exactly which parts of the Constitution you are looking to change, and what you are looking to change them to.
5. Consult the Residence community by going public with your proposed changes.
6. Schedule and hold your amendment vote, ensuring that the Chair of this meeting is prepared with the information and is impartial to the outcome.
7. Include all changes in your Constitution and distribute the new information.