Every society must have a constitution which needs to be submitted to Societies’ Council Executive when you hand in forms to start your society.

The writing of your constitution should not be regarded as a ‘filling in the blanks’ exercise. Careful thought should go into its composition. The clauses will fall under three areas:

1. The name and aims of the society
2. The compulsory clauses that must appear in your constitution, as given below,
3. The individual clauses, which will differ according to the size and nature of your society

1. Name and Aims

Start your constitution with the following:

- The name of the society shall be “the Edinburgh University…” (state the name of the society and any abbreviations)
- The aims of the society shall be … (state the intended aims of the society)
- The society shall abide by any applicable laws, bye-laws and guidelines of the Edinburgh University Students’ Association in relation to recognised societies
- The Society shall be affiliated to… (list the outside organisations, if any, that the society will be affiliated to, and state the nature of such affiliations)

It is especially important to be as descriptive as you can about the scope of what you hope to achieve as a society. This is to enable the process of recognition by the Students’ Association to go ahead as smoothly as possible. Avoid using vague terms such as ‘to promote an interest in…’ or ‘to make students aware of…’ without also telling us just how you intend to do this. This is to ensure that your society does not clash with an already existing society; so try to make your aims as clear and precise as possible.

2. Compulsory Clauses

The following points must appear in your constitution in some form; it is easier to simply copy them verbatim:

- Membership shall be open to all matriculated students of Edinburgh University
- Membership shall be at least 75% matriculated students of Edinburgh University
- All members who are not matriculated students of Edinburgh University shall pay at least twice the annual subscription
- The President, Secretary and Treasurer of the society shall be matriculated students of Edinburgh University:
  - The President shall be ultimately responsible for the conduct of the society
  - The Secretary shall be responsible to the President for the administration of the society
  - The Treasurer shall be responsible to the President for the finances of the society
- All office-bearers shall be subject to election annually
  - All members who are matriculated students of Edinburgh University shall be entitled to stand and to vote in elections
  - All members must receive at least 14 days written notification of the annual general meeting and of elections not held at the AGM
  - The society shall also inform Societies’ Admin of the date, time and place of the society’s AGM
- Constitutional amendments shall require a two-thirds majority at a general meeting open to all members; 14 days notice of which shall be given
- The AGM of the society must take place between week 7 and week 11 of semester 2
• The quorum of a general meeting shall be … (insert number of your choice)..

• The society’s cheques must require two signatories; one must be the Treasurer and the other President or Secretary

• The society has taken and will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure that our meetings, events and socials are accessible to all, irrespective of any disability*

• The society has ensured and will continue to ensure that it complies with any relevant data protection legislation*

• The society believes that discrimination or harassment, direct or indirect, based on a person’s gender, age (except where it relates to licensing laws), race, skin colour, nationality, religious belief, socio-economic background, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, family situation, domestic responsibilities or any other irrelevant distinction, is detrimental to the society, the university and wider society, and will not be tolerated.

3. Individual Clauses

These can be as long or as short as they need to be, depending on the nature of your society, and the activities which it intends to pursue. Clearly, it is impossible and pointlessly verbose to cover every possibility here. However, here are a few points to think about:

• You may wish to specify the tasks of the office-bearers, and create extra positions for specific tasks. Also, it may suit your purposes to have an executive or committee of office-bearers and a few ordinary members. You may want to specify the powers which it has and the frequency of its meetings in your constitution.

• If your society is popular and membership grows, you may soon find internal procedural problems arising. While not all will be foreseeable, you should make some provision for voting procedure in your constitution.

• Some societies may attract non-matriculated students, which can only be accepted as members according to the rules spelt out above. In addition, you may wish to consider the constitutional position of these people. Should they have full voting power and be able to stand for office, for instance?

Don’t be put off by what may seem an unnecessarily mind-bending process; a clear and comprehensive constitution will ensure that your society can operate with the minimum of fuss. If you are having problems, you may wish to speak to the Societies’ Secretary (societies.secretary@eusa.ed.ac.uk) or Societies’ Admin staff who can be contacted in the EUSA offices (societies@eusa.ed.ac.uk)

Note

*If you feel unsure or concerned about the implications of these statements, please contact the VPSA (vpsa@eusa.d.ac.uk) who will put you in touch with a relevant member of staff.