



**The University of Houston
Student Government Association
Constitution**

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Preamble

We, the students of the University of Houston, have formed an official and representative organization, known as the Student Government Association (SGA). We will receive and address student questions and suggestions, investigate student issues, and take appropriate action. We will promote understanding and involvement among all members of the University community. We will represent, advocate for, and legislate the interests of the student body. We will serve as partners in the University's administrative process. We assume the responsibility of providing a means of expression for students and encouraging individual responsibility.

Responsibility

It is recognized that the University is governed by the University of Houston Board of Regents that may delegate governing powers to the students. The Student Government Association is the official voice of the student body, and shall work with faculty, staff, and administration in efforts of serving the students of the University of Houston. The Student Government Association has the responsibility in appointing student representatives to campus and university-wide committees, maintaining self-governance, and working to resolve institutional student issues and concerns through a collaborative approach.

Shared Governance

All institutions in the UH System will be governed by a principle of shared governance, which is a structured decision-making process in which the Board of Regents exercises ultimate authority and responsibility for institutional oversight, financial stewardship, and policy implementation, while allowing for appropriate consultation with faculty, administrators, students, and other stakeholders on matters related to academic policy and institutional operations. The principle of shared governance is not to be construed to diminish the authority of the Board to make final decisions in the best interest of the institution, students, and taxpayers.

The University of Houston Student Government Association affirms its commitment to meaningful student participation in shared governance. While recognizing the advisory nature of its role, the SGA seeks to ensure that student perspectives are actively solicited, thoughtfully considered, and transparently integrated into institutional decision-making processes.

All administrators at institutions of the UH System must make decisions in a manner that promotes efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness to state priorities, workforce needs, and the institution's mission. Faculty, staff, and students may provide recommendations on academic matters, but that input is only advisory in nature, ensuring that the Board of Regents and institutional leadership retain clear and ultimate decision-making authority. Shared governance structures are not to be used to obstruct, delay, or undermine necessary institutional reforms or serve as a mechanism for advancing ideological or political agendas.

University Sponsored Organization

University Sponsored Organizations (USOs) are approved by the University's Vice President for Student Affairs. These organizations are inherently linked to the University and considered to be a part of the University. USOs may receive student service fees through the Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC). USOs are subject to several different requirements. USOs must maintain a close relationship with their assigned full-time primary advisor. USOs must register their organization annually through the Center for Student Involvement at the University. USOs must sign an annual Tenant Agreement for the use of their space in the University's Student Center, as applicable. USOs must use University-provided systems for all communication, onboarding, and file storage. USOs must conduct all business operations (ordering supplies and materials, making payments for them, etc.) through their primary advisor.

USOs, as an extension of the University, must comply with the same laws, rules, and regulations as the University. The primary advisor to a USO is responsible for providing appropriate supervision to the organization. Primary advisors will provide monitoring, oversight, and advisement of a USO, including but not limited to authorizing and approving all activities and events, maintaining personal knowledge regarding the organization's structure, operations, and activities, and taking necessary actions to ensure that the organization's affairs remain consistent with the mission of the USO and University.

Article 1 – Name and Membership

This Constitution establishes, under the laws of the State of Texas, a representative student government that shall be known as the Student Government Association of the University of Houston, abbreviated hereinafter as SGA.

All currently enrolled students at the University of Houston, hereinafter referred to as the University, shall automatically be members of the SGA, and are subject to this Constitution, its Amendments, Bylaws, and the Student Code of Conduct and Policies (available at <https://www.uh.edu/dos/behavior-conduct/student-code-of-conduct/index.php>).

All members of the SGA who are elected or appointed to positions provided for in this Constitution, its Amendments and Bylaws, shall be considered officers of the SGA. These officers must be in good academic standing with the University and meet any other qualifications specified in this Constitution of the SGA, its Amendments and Bylaws, and the Student Code of Conduct.

Article 2 – Bill of Rights

As a component of the University of Houston, a public educational institution of the University of Houston System, the University of Houston Student Government Association individually and collectively shall take no action abridging the rights, immunities, and privileges granted to

students under the Constitution of the United States of America, the Constitution of the State of Texas, United States federal law, or under the law of the State of Texas.

Nothing in this Constitution, its Amendments, or Bylaws shall be construed to deny or abridge these rights, immunities, and privileges.

Recognizing that freedom of the press is an essential element of any free and representative government, no student or member of the press shall be denied access to any meeting of SGA. In addition, no student or member of the press shall be denied access to legislation, minutes, or any other business record of the SGA.

No member of SGA shall be deprived of the right to vote in an election of the SGA, nor shall they be deprived of the right to vote on any measure put before the student body by the SGA.

Article 3 – Organization

The SGA shall consist of three branches of government: the legislative, executive, and judicial.

No student shall simultaneously hold office in more than one branch of SGA, except for the Vice President/Speaker of the Senate, whose position is designed to foster connection and teamwork between the Executive and Legislative branches.

To protect the separation of powers of each branch of government, no person holding office in one branch of government shall be accountable to a person holding office in a separate branch of government, except as provided by this Constitution.

Article 4 – Code of Ethics

All members of the SGA, including but not limited to appointed or elected officials of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, should keep the Code of Ethics at the forefront of their actions and be prepared to account for their actions and words.

Members of the SGA shall represent their constituencies first by expressing their interests and concerns within the SGA, and second by being a good example of conduct in the execution of their duties.

Section 4.1: Purpose

- A. The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to establish a standard of conduct for members of the SGA.
- B. Elected and appointed members of the SGA hold positions of trust and are expected to act in the best interest of the University of Houston and its students.
- C. SGA members shall fulfill that trust by adhering to general principles of ethical conduct

as well as specific standards detailed in this code and the Student Code of Conduct.

- D. The Code of Ethics provides guidance for elected and appointed SGA officials when faced with certain situations or particular circumstances.
- E. The Code will also encourage an ethical future for the members of SGA upon graduation.
- F. The Code will instill trust and confidence as SGA officials demonstrate their commitment by exercising their core values and standing by The Code of Ethics.

Section 4.2: Definitions

- A. *Conflict of Interest* shall be defined as a situation in which an SGA officer participates in an action(s) that has the potential to benefit:
 - a. The officer.
 - b. The officer's immediate family, spouse, partner, parents, children, siblings, or significant other,
 - c. An organization to which the officer belongs (other than the SGA), including political parties, campaign committees, or other structures, etc.
 - d. The officer's employer.
- B. *Recusal* shall be defined as the act of removing oneself from discussion, deliberation, or actions concerning an issue.

Section 4.3: Code of Ethics

SGA elected and appointed officials are tasked with enacting the following:

- I will think in terms of putting students first.
- I will act in a trustful manner, will honor agreements and promises, and act with integrity, honesty, accountability, and confidentiality.
- I will serve as a liaison between the students and the administration.
- I will refer all interview requests or reports from any outside agencies. These must be referred to either the SGA Director of Public Relations or the SGA President.
- I will work to promote a positive image of the SGA, encouraging unity and cooperation.
- I will always conduct myself in a manner that shall reflect positively on the SGA of the University of Houston.
- I will uphold the Oath of Office, Constitution, Bylaws, and all governing documents of the SGA in addition to the University of Houston Code of Conduct.
- I will respect all members of the University of Houston and the Houston communities regardless of race, color, sex, religion, creed, age, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, or veteran status, which is in compliance with the University of Houston's non-discrimination policy.
- I am prohibited from using my office or SGA funds for private gain, other than payments or reimbursements authorized by my SGA branch Advisor.

- I will act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization, public organization, or individual.
- I will strive to avoid actions which would create the appearance of a conflict of interest or preferential treatment.
- I shall not accept gifts from individuals or organizations (except SGA) for performing my official SGA duties.
- If I become aware that a conflict of interest exists or appears to exist, I must immediately disclose the nature of the conflict in writing to the SGA branch Advisor.
- If I become aware that I have a conflict of interest during an SGA meeting, whether formal or informal, I must immediately inform those present and recuse myself from the relevant issue.

Article 5 – Legislative Branch

The authority of the legislative branch of the SGA shall be vested in the SGA Senate, hereinafter referred to as the Senate.

Section 5.1 Legislation

The Senate shall serve as a legislative body within the SGA. The Senate shall represent the student body in the creation of legislation regarding policies, regulations, or services pertinent to student life at the University of Houston. The procedures for the introduction and passage of legislation are outlined in Article 7, Section 1 of the Bylaws.

Article 6 – Executive Branch

Section 1: General Information

- A. The authority of the executive branch of the SGA shall be vested in the Executive Committees.
- B. The President serves as the official voice of the Student Government Association.
- C. The President nominates all members to the SGA Cabinet
- D. The President nominates vacant seats on the SGA Judiciary
- E. The President nominates vacant seats in the Student Senate
- F. The President nominates student representatives on the Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC)

Article 7 – Judicial Branch

The authority of the judicial branch of the SGA shall be vested in the SGA Judiciary, hereinafter referred to as the Judiciary. All procedures, rules, and regulations pertaining to the operation of the Judiciary that are not contained directly herein shall be incorporated in the SGA Bylaws, Student Handbook, the Student Code of Conduct (the Code), and other University policies.

Section 7.1 General

- A. The SGA Judiciary shall consist of no more than 7 Justices, including one Chief Justice.
- B. Student Justices confirmed by the Student Senate may serve on the SGA Judiciary for the entire duration of their enrollment, as defined by the Student Code of Conduct, at the University of Houston.

Article 8 – Elections

Section 8.1 General

- A. General Election voting will be open on the fourth Monday in February or the first Monday in March, depending on Spring Break dates. Voting will be open from Monday at 12:00 A.M. through Thursday of the same week at 11:59 P.M.
- B. The winners of the races for executive positions (President and Vice President/Speaker) shall be determined by plurality vote of the votes cast for each position.
- C. In Senate elections, the candidate(s) receiving the highest number of valid votes cast within that college shall be declared elected. Seats shall be awarded in descending order of vote totals until all allocated positions for that college are filled. In the event of a tie, a runoff election between the candidates with the same number of votes shall be held for that college.
- D. In the event of a tie for executive tickets, the ticket with the most votes are elected. If there is a tie, a runoff election will be held consisting of the ticket(s) with the highest number of votes in the general election.

Section 8.2 Election Commission

- A. There will be a Chief Election Commissioner and a Deputy Election Commissioner, selected by the Election Advisor.
- B. The Election Commission will develop the process, manage, and regulate elections in accordance with the SGA Bylaws.
- C. The Election Commission is responsible for creating and updating the Election Code.

Section 8.3 Election Code

- A. Every person who files for an office elected under the authority of the Student Government Constitution, its Amendments, and Bylaws shall have access to a copy of the Election Code at the time of filing.
- B. All candidates and their staff, along with all volunteers, shall be responsible for knowing and abiding by the contents of the Election Code. Any questions concerning this document shall be addressed directly to the Chief Election Commissioner.

Article 9 – Constitutional Review

Section 9.1 Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be initiated in one of the following ways:

- A. Any amendment must be reviewed by the SGA Advisors prior to initiating these steps. The review will include, but not be limited to, alignment with University policy and maintaining organizational checks and balances. Without SGA Advisors' approval/review, no amendment may be considered.
- B. After the preceding step has been completed, the following process must occur in the specified order:
 - a. Amendments to the Constitution require a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the SGA Student Senate, of members seated.
 - b. After passage by the SGA Student Senate, the changes must be presented to the SGA President for review/approval.
 - c. After passage by the SGA Student Senate and the President, the text of the proposed changes and the original text shall be published on a ballot during the next campus election.
 - d. Approved amendments shall become part of the Constitution when ratified by a majority of the students voting in the campus election process. The amendments are effective immediately upon ratification.

Section 9.2 Editorial Changes

Editorial changes, such as grammar, formatting, and non-substantive rewording, may be proposed by any member of the Senate at an official Senate meeting and are then approved and ratified by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the Senate members seated.

Article 10 – Constitutional Authority

Upon ratification, this Constitution and its associated codes shall supersede all previous governing documents, which shall be deemed null and void.

Article 11 – Recall and Referendum

Section 11.1 Recall

- A. A recall election for any office may be called by a petition signed by at least ten percent of the electing body.
- B. For Senators, it would be 10 percent (10%) of the college enrollment.
- C. For the President and Vice President/Speaker, it is the University enrollment.
- D. Only one recall election per Senator or Officer per term of office shall be held.

Section 11.2 Referendum

- A. A referendum on any question to a specific campus may be called by a petition by at least ten percent (10%) of the university enrollment or by two-thirds (2/3) of the SGA Senate.
- B. A referendum on any University question may be called by a petition by at least ten percent of the entire student body or by two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate.
- C. The President shall set the date of the referendum.
- D. Referendums will be completed via the Student Organization platform.

Article 12 – Oath of Office

All elected and appointed officials of the SGA shall be installed by the Chief Justice of the Student Judicial Board or their designee, who shall administer the following oath:

I (name) do solemnly affirm that I will serve the student body faithfully, execute the duties and responsibilities entrusted to me by virtue of my office and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and enforce the Constitution of the student body of the University of Houston.

Article 13 – Advisors

Section 13.1: General Information

- A. Shall be appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs for each branch and the Election Commission.
- B. Shall serve as advocates for the SGA within the Administration of the University.
- C. Shall assist in providing continuity and transition from one SGA administration to the next.
- D. The faculty/staff advisor(s) must be full-time, benefits-eligible employees of the University of Houston.

Article 14 – Bylaws

Section 14.1: General Information

- A. The SGA Bylaws are subsidiary rules used to supplement this Constitution and any Amendments. Bylaws cannot alter or contradict the Constitution.
- B. Such actions would require an amendment to the Constitution as outlined in Article 9.

Section 2: Procedures to Create or Amend Bylaws

- A. Any addition or amendment must be reviewed by the SGA Advisors prior to initiating these steps. The review will include, but not be limited to, alignment with University policy and maintaining organizational checks and balances. Without SGA Advisors' approval/review, no amendment may be considered.
- B. Proposed Bylaws or amendments to the Bylaws must be submitted no later than five days prior to a regularly scheduled SGA Senate meeting to the President and the Vice

President/Speaker, who will then make the proposed Bylaws or Amendments available to the SGA Senate members at least two (2) business days prior to the scheduled Senate meeting.

C. A Bylaw addition or amendment proposed requires a title, the text of the proposal, which Bylaw is to be amended, or an explanation of where the new Bylaw should be added, and the rationale for the proposal. New or amended Bylaws are approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of members seated and take effect immediately upon review/approval by the President.

Article 15 – Anti-Hazing Clause

Anti-Hazing Clause: Students and Student Organizations are prohibited from initiating, participating in, or being witnessed to hazing activity. Hazing is antithetical to the University's commitment to a positive educational environment. Participation in hazing activities is against the law. Violation of the University's hazing policy, whether on or off campus, may subject participants, including students and organizations, to arrest, prosecution and/or disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, suspension or expulsion of students and the revocation of an organization's registration and/or recognition at the University. Consent to or acquiescence in hazing activity is not a defense. The University strictly prohibits participation in hazing activities by any party, regardless of the existence of consent. Hazing activities do not contribute to the positive development or welfare of students. The University of Houston recognizes the act of hazing as illegal, irresponsible, intolerable, and inconsistent with the principles of higher education and basic human development. For more information on the University's Hazing Policy please visit the Student Life Policies section of the University of Houston Student Handbook. Non-

Article 16 – Discrimination Clause

Discrimination Clause: The University of Houston provides equal treatment and opportunity to all persons without regard to race, color, sex (including gender and pregnancy), genetic information, religion, age (over 40), national origin, ethnicity, disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity or status, gender expression, or any other legally protected status except where such distinction is required by law. This statement reflects compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and all other federal and state regulations.