Constitution of the Harvard Law School
Student Government

Preamble

We, the students of Harvard Law School, do hereby establish the Harvard Law School Student Government for the primary purpose of representing our interests within the HLS community.

I. Name

The name of the organization is “Harvard Law School Student Government” (hereinafter “SG”).

II. Purpose

1. The primary and most important purpose of SG is to advocate for the interests of the student body, to the faculty, administration, and others whose decisions affect student life at HLS.

2. SG shall have these additional functions:

   • To organize and provide services to the student body, to the extent that those services are not provided by HLS.
   • To organize events that promote campus-wide community-building.
   • To oversee the formation of student groups at HLS.

III. Principles

SG should strive to adhere to the following principles. Though not formal mandates, these principles arise out of the circumstances that led to the establishment of this new Constitution, and have informed its design. Where there is ambiguity in this Constitution, it should be interpreted in accordance with these principles.

The primary role of SG is to advocate for the best interests of the student body. In no case should it make decisions on the basis of the individual interests of its representatives and officers.

Active engagement with the membership. SG should strive to maintain an up-to-date and accurate perspective on the opinions of the student body. This means conducting regular surveys and maintaining open channels of communication.

Independence. The organization is independent from the HLS administration. When the administration changes a policy – either explicitly or through its behavior – that affects the student body, the organization should investigate the student body's opinions and resist the change if appropriate.

Minimal structure and operation by consensus. SG should operate with the minimum amount of structure and procedure required to fulfill its purposes, and should strive to act by consensus. Parliamentary procedure and frequent internal votes risk focusing attention toward internal governance and away from the core mission of SG: advocacy. A lack of consensus within SG on an important issue is an indication that the student body should be asked directly for its opinion.
IV. Specific Powers

1. SG shall have the power to speak to other HLS and Harvard constituencies on behalf of the student body, where it has reasonably determined through a survey, referendum, or similar means that there is widespread agreement among the students.

2. SG shall have the power to communicate with its members, including first-year students from the beginning of orientation, as reasonably necessary to inform the membership of its activities, collect member feedback, and conduct elections and surveys.

V. Membership

1. All currently-enrolled students, including visiting and exchange students in residence, at the law school are deemed members of SG. Membership begins when HLS considers the individual to be a current student, and ends when the individual loses official current student status, even if that loss is temporary. Notwithstanding the above, those students completing programs away from campus, such as a joint degree program or study abroad, with a firm plan to return to campus are members regardless of their physical presence or official student status.

2. All members shall have equal rights to:
   
   • Attend and participate fully in the general body meetings of SG.
   • Vote in elections of SG.
   • Stand for election as a representative in or officer of SG, subject to minimal qualification requirements described herein;

VI. Representatives.

1. SG shall have elected representatives who represent the interests of particular groups of members before SG.

2. SG shall have the following composition of elected representatives:
   
   • One representative of each section in the first-year class.
   • Four representatives of the second-year class.
   • Four representatives of the third-year class.
   • Two representatives of the LL.M. program.
   • One representative of the S.J.D. program
   • One representative of students who have transferred to HLS following their first year in law school.

3. In order to stand for election as a representative, a student must, in the normal course of his or her academic program, expect to be a member of the represented group during his or her term.

4. Only those members who would be eligible to stand for election to a representative position may vote in an election for that position.

5. Representatives are responsible for attending meetings of SG, supporting its activities, and actively soliciting input from constituents.
6. The term of each representative begins on the certification of his or her election, or the end of the term of the previous representatives. The terms of all representatives end on the last day of classes of the academic year.

7. In the event of a failure to elect a member to a representative position normally filled through the spring election, the position shall be filled through the fall election. In the event of any other representative vacancy, the representatives shall appoint a new office-holder following a public solicitation of applications, by plurality vote.

VII. Officers

1. SG shall have officers for the purpose of administering SG and its activities.

2. SG shall have the following officers elected to their specific positions by the entire membership:
   
   • A President, the chief executive of SG, charged with calling its meetings to order and setting the meeting agenda within the constraints provided for in this Constitution, and making or delegating day-to-day decisions that do not necessitate more formal process.
   • A Vice-President, charged with acting as President as necessary to ensure continuous operation of SG in the event of the President’s incapacity.
   • A Director of Student Organizations, charged with representing the interests of student organizations and journals before SG, and administering the formation of student organizations.

3. SG shall have the following officers, generally appointed by the President from the elected representatives. If no elected representative expresses interest in being appointed to one of these positions, the President may appoint the officer from the general membership, following a public announcement of the vacancy and open solicitation of applications.
   
   • A Secretary, charged with organizing the calendar of SG and keeping minutes of its meetings.
   • A Treasurer, charged with keeping the books of SG and administering its budget.
   • A Director of Academic Affairs, charged with acting as a liaison to the faculty and the administration on academic issues.
   • A Director of Events, charged with chairing the Events Committee.
   • A Director of Student Affairs, charged with building a strong relationship between SG and the general membership.

4. The term of each elected officer begins upon the end of the term of his or her predecessor. The term of each appointed officer begins upon his or her appointment. The terms of all officers end on the last day of classes of the academic year.

5. In the event of a vacancy in an elected officer position, the President shall appoint a member to the position following a public solicitation of applications. In the event of a vacancy in an appointed officer position, the President shall appoint a new office-holder under the same procedures used for an initial appointment.

6. An elected representative may not also hold a position as an elected officer. The same individual may act as both an elected representative and an appointed officer, but is only entitled to a single vote. No individual may act in more than one officer role.

VIII. Student Organizations

1. SG shall administer the establishment and dissolution of student organizations at HLS. For the purposes of these provisions, “student organizations” do not include official student journals administered by the Dean
of Students office or student practice organizations administered by the Office of Clinical and Pro Bono Programs.

2. Upon a showing of sufficient organizational structure, student interest, and a unique purpose not addressed by an existing organization, a prospective organization is entitled to recognition as a provisional student organization at HLS. Provisional student organizations are entitled to the services provided to all student organizations.

Provisional student organizations may only apply for funding at a fixed level applicable to all provisional student organizations, under the funding provisions of this Constitution. Applications to become a provisional student organization will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Director of Student Organizations, President, and Vice President. The panel will also consist of a non-voting staff member from the Dean of Students Office.

3. Following at least two semesters of continuous existence, and upon showing of continued student interest, as well as active contributions by the organization to campus life, a provisional student organization may apply for recognition as a full student organization at HLS.

Full student organizations are entitled to the services provided to all student organizations. Full student organizations may apply for budget-based funding applicable to all full student organizations under the funding provisions of this Constitution.

Applications to become a full student organization will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Director of Student Organizations, President, and Vice President. The panel will also consist of a non-voting staff member from the Dean of Students Office.

4. Once each year, SG shall require all student organizations to submit a basic statement of continuing existence, outlining activities undertaken by and student participation in the organization. If a provisional organization fails to demonstrate a meaningful continued existence, it may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of the representatives and officers present at a meeting of SG where quorum has been met. If a full student organization fails to demonstrate a meaningful continued existence, it will become a probationary student organization.

Probationary student organizations may not apply for funding or access any services made available to student organizations until they have demonstrated a sufficient organizational structure and student interest to a panel consisting of the Director of Student Organizations, President, and Vice President. Probationary student organizations do not have to demonstrate a unique purpose not addressed by an existing organization to regain status as a full organization.

If a probationary student organization has failed to regain status as a full organization following two consecutive semesters, it may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of the representatives and officers present at a meeting of SG where quorum has been met.

5. SG shall draft an application for organizations to demonstrate a continued organizational structure. Student organizations must have a President, Treasurer, and any other structural requirement deemed necessary by a panel consisting of the Director of Student Organizations, President, and Vice President. The application should contain sufficient specificity to remove substantially all discretion from this process.

6. All prospective, provisional, or probationary organizations may re-apply for recognition at the beginning of each semester.
7. All student organizations who, as of January 15, 2014, have been approved for funding through the Student Funding Board shall be grandfathered in as full student organizations.

**IX. Student Organization Funding**

1. Funding for full student organizations will be decided by a Student Funding Board.

2. The Student Funding Board will be made up of seven members including the following people:
   A. Director of Student Organizations, who will serve as chair of the committee.
   B. Vice President of the SG.
   C. Three student members by application to the SG, and chosen by a vote of the SG.
   D. Two students member selected by the DOS office. The appointments from DOS should be made in order of the following priorities.
      i. To ensure that at least one member from the previous year’s Student Funding Committee is reappointed
      ii. To ensure diversity among the membership of the committee.

1. No current or former president or treasurer of any full student organization shall serve on the student funding committee.

2. The SFB shall be able to promulgate its own rules and procedures for its own internal operations. However, SFB must pass its final student funding proposal by at least a 5-2 margin.

3. The SFB final funding proposal shall then be put to a majority vote not subject to amendment by the SG.

4. The SFB will be selected by October 15 of any given year or three weeks after the first meeting of the SG, whichever is later. Fifteen days after the selection of the SFB, the SFB will submit to all student organizations a draft application form with guidelines for how funding decisions will be made.

5. By November 1, or fifteen days after the selection of the SFB, whichever is later, all full student organizations will be assigned a member of the SFB from whom they can seek advice and guidance throughout the year.

6. At the adoption of this constitutional language, provisional student organizations may apply for a fixed funding level of five hundred dollars. The SFB may vote, but is not required, to change the dollar amount of this level in any given year. However, the SFB may not increase the funding level for provisional student organizations by a percentage greater than the overall annual increase in funding available for full student organizations in a given year. If there is a decrease in the overall funding available for full student organizations in a given year, the SFB may, but is not required, to decrease the funding level for provisional student organizations by the same percentage.

7. After a student organization’s annual funding allotment has been determined, any invoices, reimbursements, or other requests to spend the funding allotted to the student organization pursuant to this chapter must be accompanied by the signature of a student organization’s president or treasurer.

**X. Bylaws**

1. SG may promulgate bylaws relating to its own operation or where this constitution otherwise provides. Bylaws may be introduced for consideration by any member of SG. A proposed bylaw becomes effective after passing by a two-thirds vote of the representatives and officers present at a meeting of SG where quorum has been met, followed by the appropriate procedure below.
2. Unless otherwise provided for in this Constitution, bylaws of the organization shall be promulgated under a notice-and-comment regime. For each bylaw or set of bylaws that successfully passes at a meeting of SG, SG shall provide the bylaw by email to the student body for consideration at least ten days prior to its intended effectiveness date. SG shall provide for member comment by return email or survey, and a dedicated time at a meeting of SG. Once at least ten days have been provided for comment, SG may hold a second vote, and if the bylaw again passes with two-thirds support, it shall become effective immediately or as of the original intended effectiveness date, whichever is later.

3. Where this Constitution provides for bylaws to be approved by vote of the membership, those bylaws shall become effective upon approval by a majority of those members voting for the bylaw where at least 10% of the entire membership has voted on the bylaw. This approval vote follows the normal notice and comment procedure described above, and takes the place of the second vote by SG. This approval vote may be held as part of a representative or officer election, a survey, or a special vote organized for the particular purpose of voting on the bylaw(s).

XI. Mandatory Activities

1. General Body Meetings

   A. SG shall hold general body meetings at least once every three weeks during the academic year, while classes are in session. The purpose of these meetings is to provide updates on the activities of SG, to receive feedback and hear concerns from the student body and the representatives, and to plan major initiatives in a public venue.

   B. SG shall keep minutes of these meetings and timely make these minutes available to the membership.

   C. Attendance by representatives and officer of SG at general body meetings is mandatory, unless the representative or officer has a reasonable excuse for non-attendance. A quorum of representatives and officers is present when greater than one half of the representatives and officers in office are present.

2. Elections

   A. During the fall semester of each academic year, as early as practical constraints permit, SG shall hold an election for the first-year section representatives, L.L.M. program representatives, and any representative positions unfilled in the spring election.

   B. Near the end of the spring semester of each academic year, but at least two weeks before the beginning of exams, SG shall hold an election for all of its other elected positions. The spring election shall provide candidates with at least eight days of time to campaign, and voters shall be given at least 48 hours during which to cast their ballots.

   C. All candidates for election must be members of SG and be reasonably likely to remain members for the entire duration of their office.

   D. Prior to each election, the President shall appoint an elections committee comprising three representatives or officers of SG and two members who are nor representatives or officers of SG. The two members appointed from the general membership shall be appointed following an open call for applications and an application process. The committee shall designate a chair, who shall organize the committee’s activities and meetings, and who shall report to SG on the committee’s activities. No member of the committee may stand for office in the election being supervised by the committee. The
elections committee shall arrange for the election to be held, tabulate and announce election results, 
and, by majority vote, determine any disputes that arise under the elections rules.

E. Rules for elections
   i. The positions of President and Vice President shall be elected together as a slate.

   ii. Except for the election to the position of President and Vice President, election shall be by a 
       plurality vote. In the election for President and Vice President, voting shall be by a majority 
       vote. SG shall promulgate bylaws establishing an instant or after-the-fact run-off procedure to 
       be used in the event that no slate for President and Vice President receives a majority of the 
       vote.

   iii. In the event that the election for a position is uncontested (i.e., there are fewer candidates than 
        open vacancies in the position), a candidate must receive at least 5% of the vote of those eligible 
        to vote for that position

   iv. Subject to the limitations in this Constitution, SG shall promulgate bylaws setting out elections 
       rules, including nomination procedures, any advertising limitations, campaigning guidelines, and 
       dispute resolution procedures. These bylaws shall lay out standards for determining the punitive 
       measures to be taken against a party that violates elections rules. Removal from the ballot may 
       only be used when there has been a willful and injurious disregard of an important elections 
       rule.

   v. In no case shall the HLS faculty or administration be involved in setting rules for elections or 
      resolving elections disputes.

3. Semesterly survey

   A. Once each semester, SG shall conduct a survey of its entire membership, for the purpose of 
      determining student opinion on issues affecting the student body.

   B. The survey shall be conducted by the President or a designee officer or representative. The officer or 
      representative conducting the survey shall determine the format of the survey, subject to the limitations 
      below.

   C. The survey shall contain, at least:

      i. One or more open-ended questions, without word limits, intended to provide a venue for 
         raising new issues or providing detailed feedback.

      ii. Any specific questions determined by a majority vote of the officers and representatives voting 
          at a meeting of the SG, where a quorum is present. SG shall make a public call for questions 
          prior to the meeting and consider including those questions and any others raised by members at 
          the meeting.

      iii. Any referendum questions submitted by a member and supported by a petition signed by at least 
           150 additional members. Other than minor formatting changes, referendum questions shall be 
           included in the survey in the form originally proposed.

   D. Each survey respondent shall have the option of submitting her or his survey responses 
      anonymously.
E. Subject to the limitations in this Constitution, SG may promulgate bylaws regarding the procedure for soliciting questions for and conducting the survey.

4. Update Emails

A. At least as often as SG holds general body meetings, it shall provide the study body an email update regarding its activities.
B. This update shall include, at least, a link to the minutes of the most recent general body meeting, and any new information released by SG under the disclosure provisions in this Constitution.

**XII. Internal Meetings**

SG may hold meetings of its officers to internally discuss and develop its activities. A summary of any such meeting and the decisions made therein shall be provided to the membership in an update email or at the following meeting of SG.

**XIII. Committees**

1. SG has the power to organize committees for particular purposes, but these committees shall not have any special power to act on behalf of SG unless otherwise provided herein. Committee positions may be filled by election or by appointment.

2. Mandatory Committees. SG shall maintain the following committees:

   • An Events Committee, for the purpose of planning events aimed at building campus-wide community. The Committee shall be chaired by the Director of Events and between two and four members appointed by the Director of Events following a call for applications. At least one of these additional members shall be an officer or representative of SG.

   • A Student Organizations and Journals Committee, for the purpose of engaging with student organizations and journals and proactively representing their interests. The Committee shall be chaired by the Director of Student Organizations and four members appointed by the Director of Student Organizations following a call for applications. At least one of these appointed committee members shall be a member of the executive board (or similar executive group) of a student organization, and at least one shall be a member of the upper masthead (or similar executive group) of a student journal.

3. Other Committees. SG may maintain any additional committees, the charge, make-up, and duties of which must be determined in a duly-promulgated bylaw of SG.

**XIV. Budget**

1. The Treasurer shall work with the President, the representatives, and the officers of SG to ensure that planned SG activities remain within the budget provided for SG’s activities by the Dean of Students Office.

2. At the beginning of each semester, SG shall release to the membership a report of its expenditures, itemized by activity. In the event that SG draws up an itemized budget prior to making expenditures, a report detailing this budget shall be released to the membership at the time that is finalized.
XV. Miscellaneous

1. SG shall generally try to operate by consensus. Where consensus cannot be achieved, SG may act by majority vote of a quorum-satisfying group of its representatives and officers at a duly held general body meeting of SG.

2. Attendance at a meeting of SG may be by telephonic or electronic means, so long as contemporaneous two-way communication is provided. Such attendance by telephonic or electronic means is treated as actual attendance, and is valid for purposes of voting and quorum.

3. Representatives and Officers may not vote through a proxy at a meeting of SG.

4. For the purposes of this Constitution, any signature, including an electronic signature, is valid so long as it reflects an intent to sign.

5. All operating documents, including without limitation this Constitution and any bylaws promulgated hereunder, meeting minutes, and any other disclosure required by this Constitution, shall be made perpetually available in a publicly accessible location on the internet.

6. Unless otherwise provided, a majority vote under this Constitution means a vote by greater than one-half of those voting, and a two-thirds vote means a vote by at least two-thirds of those voting.

7. Any act requiring authorization by vote of some proportion of the representatives and officers at a meeting of SG may instead be authorized by unanimous written consent of the representatives and officers.

8. Representatives and officers may resign from office, and such resignation may be made effective immediately or at such time as is specified in the resignation document. Representatives and officers may be removed by affirmative votes constituting at least three-fourths of the representatives and officers in office at the time of the vote, and such removal may be made effective immediately or at such time as is otherwise specified.

9. SG shall promulgate bylaws establishing a procedure for responding to particular student concerns and inquiries in a reasonable period of time.

XVI. Amendments

1. Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by a petition signed by 200 members of SG, or by affirmative votes of two-thirds of its officers and representatives. Once proposed by one of these means, the amendment must be put before the membership for ratification no later than the next election or survey held by SG.

2. No amendment to this Constitution will be valid until ratified by two-thirds of the votes cast by at least 15% of the student body, over a period no longer than 240 hours.

XVII. Ratification

1. This Constitution shall be effective only upon ratification by two-thirds of the votes cast by at least 15% of the student body, over a period no longer than 240 hours.

2. Once ratified, this document constitutes the sole Constitution of SG, which replaces all prior HLS student governments or similar organizations.