

Becoming a Student Representative Association

Student Representative Associations (SRA) are groups that provide services and advocacy for a definable and enumerable constituency, to which Students' Council has delegated its representative authority. They are important because they understand and can advocate for the more specialized needs of smaller sections of campus, like Faculties or Residences.

Becoming an official SRA may require some changes on the part of the Association, but it offers many benefits both to the Association and to its constituents.

Benefits

- Ability to collect membership fees through the SU if necessary
- Access to SU voting software
- Potential access to financial reviewers in the future
- Access to additional administrative, governance, and advocacy support where needed
- Greater access to professional development and training offered by the SU and Discover Governance
- Increased accountability for the Association through SU reporting
- Ability to provide a more formalized advisory role to the SU on student issues
- Assistance when your group is struggling through specialized support, and through the SU's probation process if necessary
- Increased autonomy and legitimacy for advocacy efforts - your legitimacy comes from the PSLA through the SU, rather than from the Dean of Students or Residence Services, so you can advocate to them without worrying about the potential consequences for your group's existence
- Some protection from unfair treatment by the University – if your group is suspended or disbanded unfairly, you can retain your representative legitimacy under the SU and continue to function as an SRA while working to regain student group status

Requirements

Most Associations already meet most, if not all, of the requirements to become an SRA, especially if they are already a Student Group. The Association:

- needs to have a democratically elected Council/Board of Directors that meets at least once per month,
- needs to hold at least one General Meeting per Fall and Winter semester,
- must get its finances reviewed annually,
- must annually report on the state of its finances to the SU, and
- must make its meeting minutes and finances publicly available to all members.

For Associations that want to collect a mandatory membership fee through the SU, the reviewing and reporting requirements for the Association's finances will be more strict, the fee has to be passed in a membership-wide referendum, and there has to be an opt-out or reimbursement mechanism for members who are unable to pay, or who are philosophically opposed.

There are more details on what legislation is required to be a SRA below. This list is taken almost directly from Bylaws 8100 and 8200, and is much less daunting than it appears, as most Associations already meet almost all of these requirements. The most important parts of this list have already been highlighted.

You should have legislation specifying, at minimum:

- The official name of your Association
- The mandate of your Association
- The membership, membership categories, and rights of members of your Association
- The procedure for adoption, amendment, and rescission of its legislation
- The procedure for adoption, amendment, and rescission of its policies and/or procedures
- The mechanism for calling a general meeting
- The powers and responsibilities of each of its officers
- The powers and responsibilities of each of its boards, committees, and/or councils
- The rights, privileges, and responsibilities, individually and collectively, of any subgroups or Affiliated Associations
- The manner of selection of its officers and the manner of removal of its officers
- The manner in which elections, if applicable, are to be conducted
- The manner in which finances and property are managed including the budgeting and auditing processes
- The annual transition process for its officers

Legislation should also contain some variation of the following:

- The Associations cannot advocate on issues in contradiction to Students' Union political policy, unless it's received approval from Students' Council
- Members should have the ability to resign or reinstate their membership by notifying the Association
- Members should be afforded the same voting power as any other member at a general meeting, in a referendum or plebiscite, and in an election for its officers
- Members should be afforded the same voting power as any other member of the same membership category of the Association in an election for a representative of that membership category
- Members should be afforded the same access to services and events as any other member in the same membership category
- The Association should have an executive that is democratically elected in a free and fair election
- The Association should be responsible for subgroups/associations that serve a representative function, maintain communication with them, and have a relationship with them similar to the relationship between the SU and SRAs
- The Association must report annually to the Students' Union on its finances, its subgroups/Associations, and its officers/executives
- The Association's legislation must be adopted, amended, or rescinded by either a general meeting which meets at least once per Fall Term and Winter Term, or a Council which meets at least twice per Fall Term and Winter Term where a general meeting may overturn the adoption, amendment, or rescission
- The executive/officers must be held accountable to and removable by a general meeting which meets at least once per Fall Term and Winter Term, a Council which meets at least twice per Fall Term and Winter Term, or another mechanism agreed to by the Students' Union
- Meeting minutes and financial statements must be available to all members

If the Association wants to collect fees through the Students' Union, it will also need to include the following:

- The fee must be passed/renewed by a membership-wide referendum with minimum 15% voter turnout
- The fee shall be collected for a term that does not exceed five years
- Must have an opt out or reimbursement mechanism for people who cannot pay or who are philosophically opposed
- A portion of the fee shall be designated for supporting Subgroups/Associations, if applicable