

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
CERTIFICATION POLICY FOR STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

**Purpose**

The University of Pittsburgh herein establishes a system of certification for student organizations to insure the rights of students to freely form associations, to define the relationship between the University and student organizations, and to insure that the requirements for certification, the privileges received through certification and the policies and procedures that govern student organizations are administered in a nondiscriminatory manner.

**Limitations of Certification**

The organization is a student group and not an official component of the University.

The organization may not represent itself as being officially part of the University.

The organization may not act on behalf of the University.

The organization may not engage in any contractual obligation in the name of the University.

Certification expressly permits the organization to operate only on campus. Off campus activities of the organization are the sole responsibility of the organization, its officers and members, unless expressly approved and/or sponsored in advance by the University.

Participation in the activities of the organization is voluntary and all attendant risks are assumed solely by the organization, its officers, members and non-member participants.

Chapters of national social fraternities and sororities must be recognized to operate on campus and are subject to additional recognition policies and procedures approved by the Vice Provost for Student Affairs administered by Cross Cultural and Leadership Development.

**Requirements for Certification**

1. Submit the certification application.
2. Accurately disclose the purpose of the organization and operate in accordance with its stated purpose.
3. Submit a membership list with the names and University email addresses of 10 students or a petition of 100 currently enrolled students supporting the certification of the group.
4. Agree to and comply with the Limitations and Requirements of Certification.

5. Disclose any external affiliations; provide the constitution and bylaws of any such organization with which it may be affiliated; and certify that all conditions for affiliation meet the certification standards of the University.
6. Sustain an active membership of a minimum of ten (10) students.
7. Maintain a membership comprised of at least seventy-five (75%) students.
8. Refrain from the use of deceptive recruitment practices and the use of coercion, manipulation and proselytization techniques as a means of recruitment.
9. Refrain from any illegal discrimination.
10. Maintain at least three (3) student officers in good academic and social standing.
11. Limit voting, officer positions and formal leadership roles to students of the University of Pittsburgh.
12. Submit all changes in constitution and bylaws, officers and advisor to the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) within one week of the change.
13. Submit a recertification application immediately following election of new officers to the SORC. Recognized national social fraternities and sororities maintain their recognition through the Department of Student Life according to the specific policies.
14. Adhere to University regulations and local, state and federal laws.
15. Conduct all activities in a manner consistent with the educational mission of the University.
16. Conduct all activities in a manner that contributes to the intellectual, ethical, psychological and personal growth of its members.
17. Refrain from advocating, inciting or participating in any material interference or physical disruption of the University.
18. Refrain from using the organization for the financial enrichment of any officer, member or affiliate.
19. Refrain from directly or indirectly using University resources in support of any candidate for public office.
20. Refrain from directly or indirectly using University resources for the express benefit of external affiliates.
21. Use dues and other membership fees for the express benefit of the organization and in fulfillment of its purposes.
22. Comply with the fundraising policies approved by the Office of Student Life.
23. Maintain University accounts as required.
24. Refrain from maintaining outside bank accounts if funded by activity fees, and refrain from using the name of the University on private bank accounts.
25. Refrain from entering or attempting to enter into contractual obligations for the University without prior authorization by designated University staff.
26. Adhere to University policies and procedures, and risk management guidelines including the Transportation Guidelines, the Emergency Medical Plan, the Risk Management Accident Report and the Agreement to Participate.
27. Sport and physical recreation clubs must maintain a full membership roster at the SORC, and each member must complete, sign and date an Agreement to Participate as a condition of participation in club activities.
28. Agree to and comply with the Notice and Acceptance of the Assumption of Risk.

It is understood and agreed that participation in all activities of certified student organizations is voluntary and that all risk of personal injury, property damage or other loss which occur incidental to membership or participation in activities are assumed solely by the student organization and/or individual member(s) or participant(s).

Accordingly, the University, its officers and agents shall not be responsible nor liable for any claims or causes of action for damage or loss of property or personal injury of any kind or nature which may arise out of or are incidental to the conduct of any organization's activities or that of any individual's participation in any group-related activity.

It is further understood and agreed that it is the responsibility of the signatory officers of the organization to assure that all the organization's members and non-member participants in all activities sponsored by the organization or group are fully informed and advised of this Assumption of Risk, and in the event any individual member or participant should express or indicate non-acceptance, the organization's officers shall forbid participation and/or membership of such individual.

In regard to organization/participant assumption of risk, the University recommends that organization and/or participants make every effort to arrange for the acquisition of liability insurance sufficient to protect all participants against those risks being assumed. Similarly, for sport-related organizations the University recommends that each individual have insurance sufficient to allow for any risks by participation, accident or by deficiencies in physical health.

29. Agree to and comply with the Publications Code for Student Organizations.

The organization must:

Comply with current copyright laws,

distribute publications according to policies and procedures,

refrain from expressions that are considered obscene or libelous according to current statute, advocate or incite the material interference or physical disruption of the educational process or the peace, order and decorum of the campus, or that advocate or incite imminent lawless action or the violent overthrow of the government,

identify the organization as publisher and specify that the group is a certified student organization at the University of Pittsburgh.

30. Refrain from participation in hazing activities.

Hazing at the University of Pittsburgh is considered a violation of the University's Anti-Hazing Policy and Student Code of Conduct & Judicial Procedures, and is absolutely prohibited. Hazing may also be considered a criminal act in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Therefore, any student who causes or participates in hazing may be subject to appropriate University discipline and/or may be subject to criminal prosecution.

Hazing is defined at the University as follows: Hazing: Any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization operating under the sanction of or recognized as an organization by the University. The term shall include, but not be limited to, any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug or other substance, or any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual, and shall include any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual, or any willful destruction or removal of public or private property. For purposes of this definition, any activity as described in this definition upon which the initiation or admission into or affiliation with or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned shall be presumed to be "forced" activity, the willingness of an individual to participate in such activity notwithstanding.

31. Submit a constitution and bylaws according to standards.

**Guidelines for Student Organization Constitutions**

The constitution of a student organization must be specific and detailed enough to guide the operation of the organization in a

consistent manner from year to year. The constitution, therefore, should be the primary operational guide for the organization and not simply a document that is filed away and forgotten. Also, the constitution must be specific enough to demonstrate to the University that the conditions of certification are met by the group. To achieve this end, your constitution should include each of the following sections:

**Name of the Organization:** Specify the official name and any abbreviated name. The name of registered organizations may not include the name of the University in any way.

**Purpose:** State the philosophy, mission, goals and specific purposes for which the organization has been created. Be clear, precise and definitive. The statement will be used to describe your organization in published materials and on the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) Web site.

**Activities:** Describe the full range of activities, programs and services the organization will sponsor to fulfill its purpose. Be complete; this statement will be used in published materials and the SORC homepage.

**Membership Requirements:** No illegal discriminatory criteria such as race, creed, age, sex and nationality may be used as criteria for membership. All groups, except those exempt by law, must have male and female membership. Sport clubs involving contact or competitive selection may limit participation in competition to one sex, but must permit membership in the club to both sexes.

Membership can be limited by selective criteria that are not illegal. For example, the Italian Club cannot limit membership to Italians, but it can limit membership to students enrolled as language majors. Similarly, membership can be limited by school, college, department, major and grades, etc.

Your specific requirements should be followed by this Statement: "No hazing or illegal discrimination will be used as a condition of membership in the organization."

**Financial Obligations of Members:** Your organization's constitution should define exactly what the financial requirements are for the members. If there are none, state that there are no financial requirements for membership.

Associate Membership: Faculty, staff, alumni and non-University persons may participate in the meetings and activities of the organization. If your organization desires to do so, state, "Faculty, staff and alumni of the University and non-University persons may participate in the meetings and activities of the organization but may not vote, hold office, or serve in formal leadership positions." Please also define requirements for maintenance of associate membership status.

**Membership Procedures:** Define when recruitment takes place, the application procedure, method of selection or approval, the privileges of membership, how members are removed or made inactive, how they can be reinstated and the conditions for maintaining membership.

**Voting Privileges:** Only students of the University of Pittsburgh may vote in the decisions of the organization. Your organization's constitution should state this as follows: "Voting privileges are limited to active student members in good standing with the organization." Then you should define any requirements to maintain voting privileges or how they are lost.

**Officers:** Three student officers currently enrolled and in good academic and social standing at the University of Pittsburgh are required for certification. Each organization should designate a president, vice president and business manager. You can call the officers whatever you choose and may have as many officers as you need. You must specify the responsibilities and duties for each officer in no uncertain terms to distribute the work of the organization and to delegate the authority necessary to perform the role. Faculty, staff, alumni and external affiliates may NOT serve as officers.

**Election of Officers:** The election of officers should take place once a year at a specified time and through a defined process. WE SUGGEST THAT ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE AT THE CLOSE OF THE FALL TERM. The section on election of officers should specify: (1) the nomination procedure, (2) the eligibility requirements for each office, (3) the election process including when, where and how the votes are to be cast, counted and announced, (4) the eligibility requirements for voting, (5) the vote required to elect an officer, e.g. a simple majority of votes cast versus a simple majority of eligible members, (6) whether or not an officer can hold more than one position, and (7) whether or not absentee or proxy ballots can be cast.

**Terms of Office:** The exact dates for the term of office should be specified.

**Removal of Officers:** It is essential to define the process by which officers are removed and the vote required to approve removal.

**Voting Powers of Officers:** Generally officers retain voting rights, however, the chairperson often votes only in the event of a tie. This should be addressed.

**Vacancies:** When an officer resigns or is removed, the vacancy should be filled. The process by which vacancies are filled and how the decision is made to fill the vacancy or not should be defined. Also, the term of the replacement officer, generally the remainder of the current term of office, should be specified.

**Committees:** The name, function, composition and specific duties should be identified. Who chairs the committee or how the chairperson is selected should also be specified along with the powers and duties of the chair. How standing and ad hoc committees are established and terminated should also be addressed.

**Meetings:** The organization should determine how regular meetings are scheduled and specify who may attend the meeting. Quorum requirements must be determined to officially conduct and approve the business of the organization. In addition, you should state how and by whom special meetings can be called and what kind of notice is required. Lastly, the chairperson should be specified, the powers of the chair should be defined, and Rules of Order adopted.

**Finances:** The budget policies and procedures and the authority to spend the money of the organization must be defined along with any limitations on how the funds can be spent.

**Advisor:** All organizations must have a faculty or staff advisor. The role, responsibilities, duties and authority of the advisor should be defined.

**External Affiliations:** Any external affiliations must be disclosed and should be identified in the constitution. This section should specify how the organization relates to external affiliates and the requirements of the relationship.

**By-Laws:** The organization may add by-laws that are intended to provide guidance for the operation of the group in a consistent manner.

**Amendments:** The constitution must provide the means to approve amendments. The procedures and the required vote for amending the constitution must be outlined in detail.

### **Privileges of Certification**

Eligible to use University facilities, equipment and services according to policies and procedures approved by the authorized responsibility center.

Eligible to receive professional advising and other services from the Office of Cross Cultural and Leadership.

Eligible to collect dues, sponsor fund-raising events and solicit funds according to University policy.

Eligible to receive awards or honors presented to student organizations and members.

Eligible to be listed in University/student publications.

Eligible to participate in University/student activities.

Eligible to sponsor program activities consistent with the purpose of the organization.

Eligible to distribute literature and organizational materials according to University policies and procedures.

Eligible to use the University mail services and to maintain a mailbox in the William Pitt Union.

Eligible to apply for a University account and to use the services of the University business departments.

Eligible to request assistance form University News and Magazine to promote organizational activities.

Eligible to post material on controlled University bulletin boards.

Eligible to apply for recognition by the Vice Provost for Student Affairs or the chief administrator of an academic or administrative unit of the University.

**Adjudication of Violations of Certification Policy**

Except for recognized national social fraternities and sororities, the Student Organization Resource Center adjudicates all certification violations. The decision of the SORC may be appealed to the Director of the Office of Student Life.