

# **AFRICAN STUDENTS UNION**

## **CONSTITUTION**

### **Article One: Name of the Union**

The Union shall be named the Africa Students Union hereafter referred to as the Union, whose acronym shall be AFSU.

### **Article Two: Principles of Operation**

1. Majority rule shall prevail in all fora and deliberations but minority views shall be respected. Hence, coercion into participation, in any activity of the Union against one's will, be it a member of the Union or otherwise will be avoided.
2. We endeavor to encourage unreserved criticism of self and others as well as respect full freedom of speech.

### **Article Three: Aims and Objectives of the Union**

The aims and objectives of the Union are:

1. To help African students adjust to studying in Edmonton and to give them support in pursuing their educational goals.
2. To provide a forum for African students and all who are interested in Africa to exchange ideas and share experiences.
3. To participate in and organize events and activities that help achieve and maintain genuine cultural, economic, and socio-political freedom of people of Africa.
4. To struggle against racism, sexism, ethnic chauvinism, political and economic oppression, and to build unity and solidarity especially with all peoples, cultures and other Unions.
5. To establish and maintain educational, cultural and information resources on Africa for students, faculty and members of the community.
6. To promote peace, understanding and comradeship between Africa and Canada.

### **Article Four: Membership**

1. Membership of the Union is open to all students, alumni and Faculty of the University of Alberta, and to any persons within and outside the University who express a genuine interest in the principles and objectives of AFSU and are ready to adhere to the aims and objectives of the Union.
2. Membership shall fall into the following categories:

- a. Full Members: Persons who pay the annual Union membership fee and therefore qualify to participate in all activities of the Union.
  - b. Honorary Members: Honorary Membership shall be accorded to any person so elected by the General Assembly of AFSU by a simple majority.
  - c. Associate Members: Persons who are neither Financial nor Honorary members but are permitted to participate in some activities of the Society. Associate Membership shall be open to any member of the Edmonton community who has expressed genuine interest in the principles and objectives of AFSU.
3. Full membership is attained when one pays the annual membership fee in full. Only Full members may apply for or benefit from any educational, travel or research grants and other direct benefits available to the Union; and only such members may vote at meetings or be elected to the Executive Council of the Union. A Full member is deemed to be in good standing if he or she pays his or her annual fees and remains loyal to the objectives and activities of the Union.
  4. A member who knowingly violates any provisions of the Constitution or acts in a manner that puts the Union in disrepute may be subject to expulsion after due process of free and fair hearing by a disciplinary committee.
    - a. The erring member shall be duly informed of their offense and be allowed proper self defense through oral or written submissions.
    - b. Expelled members can appeal and such an appeal shall be heard by a disciplinary appeal committee whose decision shall be final.
    - c. All disciplinary committees instituted shall uphold the Constitution of the Union in their judgments and shall investigate and hear all reported aspects of breach of the Constitution or alleged misconduct.
    - d. In cases involving possible criminal offense (such as embezzlement of funds, assault) a disciplinary committee may avail itself of legal opinion.
  5. Selection of Honorary Members  
Prospective Honorary members shall be nominated on the floor of general meetings and shall be approved by a simple majority of the members present and voting.
  6. Size of Membership  
There is no limit on the number of Full or Associate members. The number of Honorary Members shall be set at a general meeting.
  7. Rights, Privileges and Duties of Members
    - a. Every Member shall have the right to vote on all issues of deliberation and to elect officers of the Union.
    - b. Every Full and Associate Member shall pay an annual due of ten dollars (\$10.00) by November 30 each academic year.
  8. Eligibility to Office and Elections
    - a. Offices of the Union shall be held only by Full Members.
    - b. All the elections of the Union shall be by secret ballot, after the nomination and secondment of each candidate.

## **Article Five: Finance**

1. The Union shall operate a bank account
  - a. The signatories of the Union bank account shall be the President, the Vice president and the Treasurer.
  - b. Any two of the three signatories above can sign cheques to withdraw money from the Union's bank account.
  - c. The vice president can only sign the cheques in the event that the president is away, in disposed or physically unable to do so and has delegated the signing authority to the vice president.
  - d. There shall be monthly financial statements and a comprehensive end-of-term report (i.e. end of tenure of office) submitted at the last general meeting of the year.
  - e. The Union's account shall be audited once a year by a duly constituted auditing committee.
2. The Society shall generate its funds through the following means:
  - a. Membership dues.
  - b. Grants and gifts from educational institutions, governmental as well as non- governmental Unions and individuals.
  - c. Sale of traditional cuisine, books, pamphlets, artifacts, stickers, and other materials during seminars and promotional sessions.
  - d. Fundraising activities.

## **Article Six: The office**

1. Officers of the Union
  - a. AFSU shall have a President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, Treasurer, Publicity Secretary, and a Secretary for Cultural and Social Affairs.
  - b. All the officers of AFSU shall hold office for a term of one year provided that their term, including the term of those elected in a by-election between the convening of the General Assembly shall cease on the date of the convening of the subsequent General Assembly.
  - c. All officers of the Union are held subject to the present Article section 4.
2. Duties and Responsibilities of Officers
  - a. The President

The President shall be chief executive of the Union. The President's duties and responsibilities shall include:

    - i. The representation of the Union on all public occasions.
    - ii. Speaking on behalf of the Union in negotiations and in matters affecting the relationship between AFSU and other organisations.

b. The Vice President

The Vice President shall act in the absence of the President and shall carry out other duties of the President as may be from time to time assigned to the Vice-Presidency by the President. The duties of the Vice-President shall include:

- i. Chairing of the meetings of the General Assembly and the Regular Meetings of the Union.
- ii. The administration of membership applications.

c. The Secretary-General

The Secretary-General shall be responsible for coordinating all the internal activities of AFSU. The Secretary-General's duties shall include:

- i. The maintenance of up-to-date records, documents, and minutes of the proceedings and meetings of AFSU.
- ii. The issuance of notice to meetings and circulars and the preparation and circulation of agenda for meetings.
- iii. The management of official correspondence of the Union.
- iv. Acting as the returning-officer in all the elections within the Union.
- v. The maintenance of an up-to-date roll of African students in the University of Alberta.

d. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be the chief financial and budgeting manager of AFSU. The Treasurer's duties shall include:

- i. The maintenance of up-to-date accounts of the Union's financial transactions.
- ii. The establishment and control of the bank accounts and other assets of AFSU.
- iii. The planning of fund-raising activities for the Union.

e. Publicity Secretary

The Publicity Secretary shall be the chief liaison, information and public-relations officer of AFSU and shall also be in charge of all aspects of the gathering and dissemination of information. The Secretary's duties shall include:

- i. The formulation of mass-media releases.
- ii. The editing of the Union's publications.
- iii. The announcement and publicizing of the activities of the Union.

f. Secretary for Cultural and social Affairs

The Secretary for social Affairs shall be responsible for all the social aspects of the activities and events participated in by AFSU. The Secretary's duties shall include:

- i. Organizing cultural and entertainment activities including sports, films, lectures, dinners, and parties designed to enhance and develop the members' and dignity and appreciation of progressive African cultural values.

## **Article Seven: Organization**

The Union shall consist of the following organs: the General Assembly, the Executive Committee, and Special Committees.

1. The General Assembly

The General Assembly shall be the ultimate decision and policy-making body of the Union and shall be convened at least once a year. It shall consist of all the Full, Associate, and Honorary Members of AFSU and shall have the competence to deliberate on any matter and to take binding decisions thereafter.

2. The Executive Committee

- a. The Executive Committee shall be in charge of the day-to-day running of the Union and shall to this end publicize the rules and regulations of the Union. It shall consist of:
  - i. The President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, Treasurer, Publicity Secretary, and the Secretary for Social Affairs.
  - ii. Any other member from time to time nominated by Executive Committee on the basis of possession of Special skills or qualifications including Associate Members.
  - iii. At least one member nominated by the Executive Committee from any other organization partnering with AFSU not otherwise represented in the Committee.

3. Standing and Special Committees

- a. The Executive Committee can appoint Special Committees from time to time to carry out specific work of the Union. The Executive Committee shall dissolve any Special Committee once it has discharged its duty. There shall be standing and ad-hoc committees for the Union which shall be accountable to the Council and the general membership.

- b. The following Standing Committees shall be constituted by the president in consultation with the executive Council and approved at a general meeting:
  - i. Programs Committee
  - ii. Public Relations Committee
  - iii. Education and projects Committee.
- c. There shall be ad hoc committees for specific assignments, e.g.:
  - i. Disciplinary Committee
  - ii. Disciplinary Appeal Committee
  - iii. Audit Committee
  - iv. Special Events Committee
  - v. Electoral Committee
- d. The term of office of Standing Committees shall be the same as for the executive committee. However, ad hoc committees shall cease to exist after completing the specific duty assigned.
- e. Every committee shall keep minutes of its meetings.
- f. Each committee shall have a minimum of three members but not exceeding five members.

#### **Article Eight. Discipline**

1. Members of AFSU, in pursuit of the objectives and in accordance with the principles of the Union solemnly affirm and declare that they shall perform their duties and participate in the activities of the Union in such a manner as will positively contribute towards the realization of its objectives.
2. Subject to the provisions of Article 2 there shall be unreserved condemnation and sanctions taken against members who fail to abide by the constitution of the Union by the General Assembly or by a Special Meeting.
3. The officials of AFSU who deviate from the principles of AFSU or fail to abide by the constitution of the Union and to implement the decisions of the Union shall face disciplinary action including dismissal or suspension from membership of AFSU, removal from office, and return of misappropriated funds and/or stolen assets.
4. Condemnation or any disciplinary action against a member or official of AFSU shall be made or taken by at least a two-third (2/3) majority of the General Assembly or a Special Meeting.

#### **Article nine: Elections**

1. There shall be an independent Electoral Committee to be constituted at a general meeting.
2. The Electoral Committee shall appoint its own chairperson.
3. The Committee shall draw rules for the election in accordance with the provision of this Constitution, and make such rules known to members.
4. The Electoral Committee shall conduct election into offices in February of every year.

5. The Electoral Committee shall conduct by-elections when a position becomes vacant.
6. The Electoral Committee shall organize the handing over from the outgoing Council to the incoming one.
7. A vote by proxy shall be allowed provided a letter of intent is submitted to the Electoral Committee giving valid reasons for the member's absence prior to the voting.
8. Notwithstanding sub-section (7) above, if in the opinion of the chairperson of the Electoral Committee the member's absence could be excused due to a compassionate reason, e.g. sickness of a family member, death in the family, maternity reasons, etc. a formal letter of intent may not be necessary.

### **Article Ten: Amendment of the Constitution**

1. The Constitution is subject to amendment if such a move is supported by two thirds majority of Full Members present at a general meeting. Or two thirds of the entire membership of the Society, whenever a mailing method is utilized, i.e. e-mail or letters sent by post.
2. A proposal for amendment to the Constitution shall be submitted in writing and presented to members by the Vice president.
3. Notice of the proposal to amend the Constitution shall be given at least seven (7) days prior to the general meeting where such a proposal shall be part of the agenda.
4. The voting for an amendment shall be by secret ballot.
5. Any clause or section of the Constitution can be suspended only at a general meeting with a special motion made by a Full Member. Such a motion shall specifically address an emergency; it shall be duly discussed and carried by a two-thirds majority of Full Members present at the meeting provided they shall not be less than seven.
6. The duration of suspension of a clause or section shall not proceed beyond the next general meeting unless it is duly proposed as an amendment and duly carried as per Article 10 sections 1, 2, 3 and 4.