

## *A Model for Writing a Constitution and Bylaws for a Local Bible School*

We have designed this model Constitution and Bylaws to help you develop *your own* Constitution and Bylaws. The model has been adapted from constitutions and bylaws that various schools around the world are using, so it represents considerable accumulated wisdom and experience. But that does not mean you should follow it slavishly.

*Modify and amplify* this model to suit your own situation. This will involve the following elements of consideration:

1. Identify and *adopt* the model elements that fit your school's needs well.
2. Identify and *adapt* the model elements that require some changes if they are to suit your school's needs.
3. Identify and *omit* the model elements that are not applicable to your school's needs.
4. Survey your school's needs that are not adequately addressed in this model and consider whether it will be necessary to incorporate additional material into your Constitution and Bylaws.

This model uses NOTES to identify areas to be rewritten so they fit the distinctive needs of your school. Such notes would not be printed as a part of your Constitution and Bylaws; rather, they serve as a guide to those writing it. Such material is either [enclosed in brackets in a display font] or as display type in a box, as in the following example:

NOTE:—A preamble is an introductory statement in a formal or legal document. It states the reason for and intent of what follows. It is optional for Bible schools, because the Constitution and Bylaws itself generally will state the reasons and intentions for the existence of the school in statements of <i>Purpose, Philosophy, Objectives</i> , etc.
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Often such a note will be followed by samples of some article content, which give you information and guide your writing of the article to which they apply.

## ***I. Clarifying the Constitution, the Bylaws, and the Policy***

The *Constitution* and the *Bylaws* are separate and distinct documents. They serve related but different purposes. Taken together, they describe the mission, philosophy, and direction that the institution plans to follow. The governing body of the institution should examine the Constitution and Bylaws regularly, considering any necessary revisions at least every five years.

### ***A. Constitution***

The Constitution is the basic document *describing* and *governing* the institution's nature and operation. Its articles are more general than those found in the Bylaws; therefore, they tend to remain stable with little modification over time. Whenever modification of the Constitution is deemed advisable, follow these two important guidelines:

- Send the members of the board written notification of the proposed amendment at least thirty (30) days before the board is to consider the change.
- Require a two-thirds majority vote for adoption of the amendment to the Constitution.

### ***B. Bylaws***

The Bylaws are a separate document containing more specific articles. These specifics are more prone to amendment as the board refines the focus and practice of the institution in ways that better fulfill its constitutional mandate.

- Prior notification of amendments to the Bylaws is not necessary.
- A simple majority vote at any meeting of the Board of Directors will pass an amendment to the Bylaws.

### ***C. Policy***

Policy defines procedures and daily administration of the school. Developing this is an ongoing process as the Board of Directors responds to the school's Administration's need for policy to inform their procedural guidelines.

- The school's Administration develops procedural guidelines.
- Either the school's Administration or its Board of Directors *can* propose policy changes.
- The school's Board of Directors defines policy—enacting or rescinding an official school policy requires action of the school's Board of Directors.

## II. *Constitutional Model*

[Name of the School]

### A. *Preamble*

NOTE:—A preamble is an introductory statement in a formal or legal document. It states the reason for and intent of what follows. It is optional for Bible schools, because the Constitution and Bylaws itself generally will state the reasons and intentions for the existence of the school in statements of *Purpose, Philosophy, Objectives*, etc.

Sample:

WHEREAS there is a recognized need to prepare pastors, evangelists, teachers, and church leaders for the ministry in [name of the country], and

WHEREAS the [name of the church organization] has approved the establishment of such a training institution,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the [name of the church organization] of [name of country] establish and maintain a Bible Institute to be located in [name of the city];

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Institute offer a course of instruction appropriately designed to prepare its students for the work of the ministry:

- That it organize the curriculum and programs of study to help the students develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to discharge all the duties of their ministry (2 Timothy 4:5), and;
- That it foster missionary concern, preparation, and commitment, and;
- That it develop the total curriculum to facilitate the appropriate intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual development of the students in preparation for a life of active Christian ministry.

### B. *Article I—Name and Location*

NOTE:—Information to be included in this article is simply the name of location of the Institute.

Sample:

The name of the institution shall be [name of the school]. It is to be located at:

[Address line 1]

[Address line 2]

[Address line 3]

### C. *Article II—Purpose*

NOTE:—This article is a statement of the institution's reason for being. It defines the basic goals that this Institute exists to pursue.

Sample:

The [name of the school] shall serve as an instrument of the [name of the church organization] of [name of the country] in the following ways:

1. Instructing and equipping Christians with the knowledge of the Word of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, and practical methods of effective ministry.
2. Establishing and maintaining an atmosphere that nourishes the spiritual life of the student.

3. Contributing to the establishment and nurture of the Church as the body of Christ at home and abroad.
4. Fostering the development of Christian character that reflects the highest standards of Christian motivation, conduct, and service.
5. Developing a commitment to the Lord, his Church Universal, the local Church Body, and the expansion of his Kingdom.

*D. Article III—Board of Directors*

NOTE:—This article states the membership of the board, its prerogatives, terms of office, necessary meetings, and the officers of the Board of Directors.

Membership of the Board of Directors: This defines the composition of the Board of Directors. Some members may serve by various means: (1) By virtue of another office (e.g., Director/President of the institution, President of [name of the church organization], executive committee member, etc.); (2) by appointment; (3) by election to the Board by the sponsoring [name of the church organization], district, region, local church, etc. This section should also include a statement that specifies any ex-officio membership on the Board of Directors (e.g., Field Director, Area Director, etc.).

Sample:

*1. Membership of the Board of Directors*

The Board of Directors shall be composed of [number] members as follows:

- a) The President and executive officers of [name of the church organization].
- b) The Director/President of [name of the school]
- c) The Area Director for [name of the area] of the Division of Foreign Missions of the Assemblies of God, USA, or a representative appointed by him.

*2. Prerogatives of the Board of Directors*

NOTE:—This states the responsibilities and rights that can be exercised only by the Board of Directors.

- a) To act as the controlling Board and the legal trusteeship of the Institute.
- b) To guide and advance the college in harmony with its stated purpose.
- c) To establish the governing policies of the Institute.
- d) To elect the officers of the Board of Directors.
- e) To establish executive committees as needed.
- f) To nominate a President for approval.
- g) To delegate the administration of the Institute to the President.
- h) To establish and review administrative job descriptions.
- i) To review and adopt the annual budget of the Institute.
- j) To be responsible for the procurement, management, and allocation of all funds.
- k) To establish scales, tuition, and other fees.
- l) To approve and establish the broad curricular structure of the Institute.
- m) To establish requirements for admission.
- n) To approve plans for buildings and the purchase of major pieces of equipment.

3. *Terms of Office on Board of Directors*

NOTE:—This statement establishes when individual membership on the Board of Directors begins and ends. It is recommended that terms of office be arranged so terms overlap or alternate, giving continuity to the Board of Directors and maintaining the stability of the institution.

4. *Meetings*

NOTE:—This statement sets out times for regular scheduled meetings, indicating how meetings may be called and by whom.

Sample

The Board of Directors shall meet no less than twice a year, once at the beginning of the school year and once at the end of the school year. Other meetings may be held if needed and shall be called by the Chairman or by the Secretary of the Board of Directors.

5. *Officers of the Board of Directors*

NOTE:—This statement indicates what titles shall be given to those who serve in the leadership of the Board of Directors (e.g., Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, etc.)

Sample

a) Chairman of the Board

- (1) The President of [name of the church organization] shall serve as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of [name of the school].
- (2) The duties and responsibilities of the Chairman of the Board are as follows:
  - (a) To preside over all meetings of the Board of Directors.
  - (b) To prepare the agenda for the Board meeting in consultation with the Director of the Institute.
  - (c) To send reminders to all Board members of meetings and agendas prior to each meeting.
  - (d) To notify Board members in advance of any special Board meetings.
  - (e) To correspond on behalf of the Board of Directors, when necessary.
  - (f) To maintain a chairman's file of all decisions, correspondence, and minutes related to the institution.
  - (g) To transfer the permanent file of the Board chairman to the incoming or new Chairman of the Board.

b) Vice-Chairman of the Board

c) Secretary of the Board

E. *Article IV—Structure*

NOTE:—This statement defines the various entities to be represented on the Board of Directors. This will differ from school to school, reflecting its affiliation (e.g., national, regional, church, district, etc.).

## F. *Article V—President*

NOTE:—This statement sets forth the constitutional qualifications needed and the terms of office for the chief administrator (i.e., President/Director) of the Institute.

It is recommended that the President's *Job Description* be included in the Constitution to ensure that any necessary adjustments occur only with advance notice and full approval of the Board of Directors.

Sample:

### 1. *Qualifications*

- a) The President/Director shall hold ministerial credentials with [name of the church organization].
- b) The President/Director shall manifest spiritual maturity, administrative ability, and an interest in the preparation of ministers.
- c) The President shall be available for and committed to full-time responsibilities with the college.

### 2. *Responsibilities*

- a) To serve as a member of the Board of Directors.
- b) To assist the Chairman of the Board in preparing the agenda for each Board meeting.
- c) To be responsible to the Board of Directors for the general management of the school.
- d) To implement new policies established by the Board.
- e) To oversee the preparation of the school's annual budget.
- f) To oversee the preparation of the school's annual report.
- g) To serve as Chairman of the Administrative Committee.
- h) To employ staff in consultation with the Administrative Committee.
- i) To determine all internal procedures in consultation with the Administrative Committee.
- j) To sign and confer all certificates, diplomas, and degrees issued by the school.

### 3. *Term of Office*

- a) The President/Director shall be appointed to a [number] year term of office.
- b) The President may be discharged upon recommended of the Board of Directors, approval of various constituent bodies, and/or (where applicable) according to the terms of the contract.
- c) In the event of the President's resignation or the vacating of the office, the responsibilities of the Office of the President shall be fulfilled by [a qualified person named by the Board of Directors] until a new President is named and approved.

## G. *Article VI—Finances*

NOTE:—This statement indicates how the institution will be financed. This may include contribution from sponsoring [name of church organization], regions, districts, local churches, etc. This should also include a statement on auditing the financial records.

Sample:

1. *The [name of the church organization] shall assume an active part in financing the school. Each church affiliated with the [name of the church organization] of [name of the country] shall be expected to contribute monthly toward the operating expenses of the school.*
2. *The financial records of the school shall be audited annually as directed by the Board of Directors.*

#### H. Article VII—Amendments

NOTE:—This statement explains the procedure for amending the Constitution. It should prescribe how many days advance written notice of the proposed change is to be given to the Board members, who is authorized to communicate this notice, and the vote required to adopt the proposed amendment.

Sample:

This Constitution may be amended in any duly constituted meeting of the Board of Directors. In any case, a written notice of the proposed amendment must be given [number] days prior to the sessions of the meeting in which the amendment is to be considered. The Constitution can only be amended by a [proportion, e.g., two-thirds] majority vote of the members of the Board of Directors.

NOTE:—The Constitution should conclude with a footnote indicating when and by whom the Constitution was approved and when it was implemented by the Board of Directors. The document should also contain information as to the date of its last revision.

Sample:

NOTE: This Constitution was approved by [name of church organization] of [name of country] on [date] and implemented by the Board of Directors on [date].

*[If applicable]*

This document was revised on [date].

### **III. Bylaws Model**

[Name of School]

#### **A. Article I—Rules of Order**

The Board of Directors shall follow the parliamentary procedure outlined in [the local standard for conducting official business meetings] applied in a spirit of Christian love and brotherhood.

#### **B. Article II—Statement of Philosophy**

[Name of school] shall equip its students spiritually, academically, and practical to discharge all the duties of their ministry (2 Timothy 4:5).

The academic preparation should produce the following results:

1. *A general knowledge of the Word of God.*
2. *An understanding of “what is in accord with sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1).*
3. *Practical skills for effective and productive ministry.*

#### **C. Article III—Governance**

Final responsibility, authority, and control of [name of the school] shall be exercised by its governing authorities as follows.

1. *The [name of church organization].*
2. *The Board of Directors of [name of the school] shall be vested with the authority to exercise financial and directional oversight of the school.*
3. *The Board of Directors shall consist of those ex-officio members designated by office in Article III of the Constitution of [name of school].*