

A document summarising and explaining the draft Constitution by
THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW COMMITTEE

12 November 2015

Dear fellow student,

1 Thank you for your active interest in the Review thus far. The Committee is heartened to have received several amendments just two days into the public comment period, and to hear from many students who asked questions and gave comments at our meal tables. We understand that the Constitution is a document of substantial length, and hope that this 10-point summary will help you to grasp its key features.

2 The Constitution Review Committee considered, among other things, the challenges, best practices, and lessons learnt from the current Government and Constitution. This document highlights key features in the draft Constitution that, in the opinion of the Committee, if ratified, will significantly improve the Government. This document in no way replaces or holds authority over the actual draft Constitution, and is intended to be read closely together with the draft Constitution.

1. **Organisational hierarchy** (See Articles II, III). There will be a President, Vice President, a Speaker/Deputy Speaker, and Directors/Deputy Directors (overseeing specific areas), who form the Council of the Government. The President will be the main liaison with the Administration, ensure a long-term vision for the Council, and accountability and efficiency. The Speaker will act as an impartial convener to ensure efficient meetings. Directors oversee and advocate for students' interests in specific areas of student life, such as academics, student organisations, community life etc.
2. **Larger size** (See Article II, Section 2). The new government will be much larger than the current, with up to 23 members, and a Judiciary with 9 members. Given that the student body will eventually number more than a thousand students, this would help with the division of labour and reduce burnout from overwork. It also allows the Council more capacity to proactively take on projects, instead of serving a purely reactive role. The larger size also means the opportunity for more diverse voices within the Council.
3. **Judiciary** (See Article V). The new government will include a Judiciary to scrutinise the Council, regulate disputes on interpreting the Constitution, and impeach members if they commit offences. The Judiciary would be made up of volunteers. They will submit a monthly report on the Council's progress to the public, and also review the conduct of members of the Council if instructed to by the President, other members of the Council, or the student body. The idea for a Judiciary was partially inspired by the public representatives which the current Government uses to scrutinise internal affairs. However, the Committee felt this function needed to be formalised in the Constitution.
4. **Code of conduct** (See Article VII). The draft Constitution now outlines specific rules and regulations for Government members which if violated may lead to removal from office. These rules include those protecting the confidentiality of student feedback, and against the misappropriation of funds and other student moneys. They also form some of the grounds on which the Judiciary can make judgements on the conduct of Council members.
5. **Budgetary responsibilities** (See Article III, Section 8, Clauses 3, 5, and Article IV, Section 3, Clause 3c). The new Council would take over allocation of funds to student organisations by establishing a student-run committee. Selection for this committee is controlled to ensure representation. Since the financial year straddles two terms of government, budget directors of the past and future governments will co-manage this committee to ensure consistency. The hope is to make the funding process more transparent, accountable and consistent by allowing more direct student representation. Please note that this will only fully come into effect for the third government, i.e. for

the next semester, allocation will still be under the Student Organisations Review Board set up by the Dean of Student's Office as the financial year has already started (See First Schedule, Clause 1).

6. **Elections** (See Article VI). The draft Article on elections now gives clearer details on eligibility and procedure. All candidates will stand in one group, unlike in the past where there were Residential College and Class constituencies. This allows voters the agency to select candidates based on who they feel can best represent them, rather than impose restrictions on the category and number of candidates they can vote for. This also prevents talent pool dilution. A second election will be held to elect a President from among those elected to the Council. The President thus has a “double” mandate from the student body commensurate with the additional responsibilities the position holds. Section 5 of this Article also accounts for by-elections, in the event of vacancies created in the Council (e.g. members going for study abroad in their second semester of the term).
7. **Transitions** (See Article IX, Section 7, and First Schedule: Bylaws). The draft Constitution now accounts for transitions between governments, both in the particular transition from the current to the immediate next government, and all future transitions. Clauses include those specifying the need for transfer of knowledge between governments, highlighting clear end-dates for the incumbent government, and that account for the possibility that no Council is successfully elected.
8. **Definitions** (See Article X). A new article now defines key terms used in the draft Constitution. This will help with the interpretation of the Constitution both by the Council, and the Judiciary which serves to settle disputes on such interpretation.
9. **Preamble and purposes**. The draft Constitution also contains a Preamble. Each Article also starts by outlining its purpose. This allows for a more accurate interpretation of the Constitution based on the original spirit and intention of the document, which will better inform the decisions and conduct of the Government.
10. **Others**. The new Constitution also has more details on meetings, voting, etc. (See Article IX), a preamble, oaths to be taken by members at swearing-in (see Second Schedule: Oaths of Office), an article highlighting procedures for removal from office clause that also allows members to resign (see Article VIII), a summary of important figures (such as those used for voting; see Third Schedule), and diagrams explaining the structure of the Government (see Fourth Schedule).

3 We hope the above has helped in understanding the Constitution, and look forward to your continued support and participation in the rest of the Review process.

Yours Sincerely,



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