



1606 New Hampshire
Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 265-3808
FAX: (202) 986-1601
E-mail: info@pbk.org

How to Apply for a Chapter



[Home](#) > [Campus & Community](#) > [Chapters](#) > [Form a Chapter](#)

[Chapters](#) / [Associations](#) / [District Directory](#) / [Fellows](#) / [1776 Society](#)

The Founding of New Chapters Steps Toward A Charter

1. The Phi Beta Kappa members of the faculty at a college or university seeking a chapter organize informally and choose a representative to conduct correspondence with the Society. Since charters are granted to the Phi Beta Kappa members on the faculty rather than to an institution, it is important that there be an adequate and stable nucleus for organizing a new chapter and efficiently conducting its activities. For that reason, the Phi Beta Kappa group should be constituted of 10 percent of the full-time arts and sciences teaching faculty, but in no instance fewer than 10 full-time faculty members.
2. The group's designated representative procures from the Society's national offices in Washington, D.C., the requisite application form. Those seeking to gain Council approval at its 2006 meeting will need to have completed and submitted the document to the national office no later than November 1, 2003. The Society requires that a \$2,000 application fee accompany the completed application.
3. The Committee on Qualifications will begin early in 2004 to consider those applications received at Phi Beta Kappa by its November 1, 2003, deadline. The committee will be seeking evidence that an applicant institution may be able to meet the Phi Beta Kappa selection criteria outlined in the section below. Its review will be a stringent effort to establish the institution's fitness and commitment to uphold Phi Beta Kappa's ideals and its role in nourishing liberal learning. Institutions judged to demonstrate such promise will be visited by members of the Committee on Qualifications at some mutually convenient time during the 2004-2005 academic session. Further documentation will be required of those designated for a site visit, as well as a \$10,000 examination fee payable to the Society. Applicant institutions that are not to be visited will promptly be informed of the committee's decision. Because Phi Beta Kappa considers each triennial review to be discrete, applications are not carried over from one three-year cycle to the next. There is no limit on the number of triennia during which an institution may seek to gain a chapter, although recent applicants might wish to permit some time to elapse between applications to allow positive developments on campus to unfold.
4. The Phi Beta Kappa faculty cohort at those institutions selected for a visit will be asked to prepare a detailed general report on their college or university according to guidelines provided by the Society. That report and its supporting materials will be due at the Phi Beta Kappa offices no later than October 1, 2004, and will serve as a resource for the committee's representatives when they visit the applicant institution a few months later. The \$10,000 examination fee, mentioned earlier, is levied by the Society in order to cover a portion of the expenses it incurs in conducting its intensive study, particularly the cost of transporting three members of the Committee on Qualifications to spend several days at the applicant college or university.
5. Later the committee's members will reconvene, discuss the site visits, and decide whether they are able to recommend to the Phi Beta Kappa Senate that charters be granted to any of the institutions visited. For the 2003-2006 review cycle, the Committee on Qualifications will present its recommendations to the Senate at its December 2005 meeting. Should the Senate concur, it is that body which makes recommendations to the Council on the findings of the review process. Neither it nor the Council is bound to act favorably upon the recommendations of the Committee on Qualifications. The triennial Council, the assembled representatives of the existing chapters and associations of Phi Beta Kappa, makes the final decision. If two-thirds of the combined number of chapter and chartered association delegations present and voting at the 2006 Council agree with an affirmative recommendation from the Senate, the charter for a new chapter will be granted and arrangements for its formal presentation by the Society will be initiated.

Selection Criteria

The committee will consider the elements of strength and of weakness of institutions from the perspective of the objectives of Phi Beta Kappa. Because the Society is above all interested in the development of liberally educated men and women, it seeks evidence that the educational program and academic environment of an applicant institution effectively quicken the mind and spirit of its students and faculty by encouraging the full development of their human capacities. Phi Beta Kappa requires that its member institutions give primary emphasis to curricula liberal in character and purpose and that courses distinguished by these qualities shall constitute the principal requirements for the bachelor's degree.

In examining the qualifications of colleges and universities seeking a chapter, the Committee on Qualifications will give close attention to the procedures by which an applicant institution: (1) recruits and retains good students and prepares some for graduate study; (2) makes appropriate academic demands on those enrolled in its classes, including opportunities for honors studies for those who are especially capable; (3) develops and maintains a faculty whose preparation and scholarly activity give evidence that they are able to establish and assess those demands; (4) maintains financial resources sufficient to support the institution's academic programs; and (5) takes due precautions to prevent issues of governance, athletics, religion, or politics from subverting the integrity of the institution's dedication to liberal education.

The great differences among colleges and universities-size of faculty and student body, governmental organization, library holdings, careers of graduates-preclude the formulation by Phi Beta Kappa of uniform, abstract standards for institutional membership. The Committee on Qualifications attempts to assess each applicant college or university with regard to its distinctiveness. Those seeking a chapter will be expected to produce both qualitative and quantitative evidence that their institution's educational program in the arts and sciences conforms to the objectives of Phi Beta Kappa. They must demonstrate that they have standards that encourage excellence, a system of governance that promotes academic freedom and vigor, a scholarly faculty, a promising student body, a library and other educational facilities serving and complementing the course offerings, and an adequate and dependable income sufficient to maintain academic excellence.

The committee will also closely examine the curriculum for the baccalaureate degree to assess whether students are engaged in study that illuminates the human condition by exploring aspects of taste and feeling, of the reasoning process, of the physical and moral worlds, of individual and group responsibility, and of the meaning of life as a whole. The study of literature, languages, philosophy, religion, the fine arts, history, the social sciences, mathematics, and the natural sciences is held to be central to the objectives of Phi

Beta Kappa. In 1991 the chapters adopted the specific "[Stipulations Concerning Eligibility for Membership in Course](#)." The stipulations are provided here so that applicant faculty groups will know which of their academic programs enroll students who would be eligible for election should a charter be approved by the 2006 triennial Council.

Concluding Note

Throughout this review process, applicants are encouraged to remain in contact with the Society through the staff at its national offices. The members of the Committee on Qualifications should not be approached individually; instead, all inquiries, reports, and correspondence concerning an institution seeking a charter should be addressed to chapters@pbk.org.

[General Information](#) • [Advocacy Programs](#) • [Campus & Community](#) • [Publications](#) • [Scholarships & Awards](#) • [News & Reviews](#) • [Members Only](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [Search](#) • [Home](#)

**Copyright © Phi Beta Kappa Society. All Rights Reserved.
Please see [Trademark Notice](#)**