

Speak OUT

together for a safer circus

Crafting a Collaborative Charter for Circus Schools - Guidelines

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A charter is more than a set of guidelines; it is a declaration of shared values and principles that defines the spirit and mission of a community. Its power lies not only in its creation but also in its ongoing relevance and integration into daily life. A charter must be developed collaboratively, understood by all, and embraced by everyone it concerns—including newcomers and visitors.

This document was written by Rosa Matthis within the framework of the EU project SPEAK OUT led by FEDEC in partnership with JUMP!, and aimed at preventing all forms of sexism, gender-based discrimination, and violence in the circus arts sector.



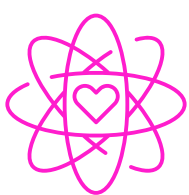
The Importance of a Collaborative Process

The creation of a charter should involve the active participation of all stakeholders—teachers, students, administrators, and staff. A collective process ensures the charter reflects the unique vision of the community and builds trust and ownership. By working together, participants establish a foundation of shared purpose and mutual respect, fostering commitment to the charter’s principles.



A Living and Breathing Document

A charter is not a static artefact. It must be revisited, updated, and reinforced regularly to remain relevant and meaningful. Periodic reviews allow the charter to evolve alongside the community’s growth and changing needs. Without active engagement, even the most thoughtfully crafted document risks becoming obsolete or overlooked. Establishing a clear process for review—whether annual or at key milestones—ensures the charter remains alive and influential.



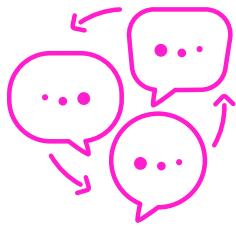
Integrating the Charter into Everyday Life

To truly have an impact, the charter must become a visible and integral part of the school’s culture. New members, whether students, staff, or visitors, should be introduced to the charter and encouraged to engage with its values. A formal process for signing or acknowledging the charter symbolises commitment and reinforces its importance. Workshops, meetings, or orientation sessions can provide opportunities to explain the charter and integrate its principles into everyday practices.



Learning from Others

There is nothing wrong with starting by copying a charter from another organisation. In fact, it can be a practical and efficient way to jumpstart the process, providing a solid foundation to build upon. However, it is crucial to move beyond imitation and adapt the charter to reflect the unique identity and goals of the circus school. Through thoughtful revision and collaborative input, the charter can evolve into a document that truly resonates with the community and aligns with its specific aspirations and needs.



Facilitating Collaborative Discussions

Creating a meaningful charter requires structured dialogue. Stakeholders must have the chance to share their perspectives and work towards consensus. Facilitating these discussions can be challenging, but the process is critical to creating a document that everyone feels invested in.

An external facilitator can provide an unbiased perspective, mediate conflicts, and bring expertise to the process. Their involvement can add structure and depth to discussions, ensuring all voices are heard and that the charter is both aspirational and practical. Additionally, external support can help address specific challenges, such as legal considerations or operational structures.



A Commitment Beyond Words

The charter should be more than an agreement on paper; it must inspire action. Its principles should guide decision-making, shape the culture, and serve as a touchstone for resolving conflicts or setting priorities. Introducing rituals, such as signing the charter during key events, reinforces its role as a living document.

Conclusion

A charter for circus schools is a collaborative and evolving statement of shared purpose. **Its creation is only the beginning; its success depends on ongoing commitment, regular review, and active integration into the community.** By fostering understanding among newcomers, engaging with the wisdom of others, and maintaining its relevance through structured follow-up, the charter can become a lasting and vital part of the school's identity.

Suggested Structure

A well-crafted charter should be clear, structured, and actionable. Below is a suggested format for drafting a collaborative charter, to use and reform at your convenience!

1. Introduction

- Briefly explain the purpose of the charter.
- Define who it applies to (e.g., students, staff, visitors).
- Establish its significance in shaping the community's values and practices.

2. Core values and principles

- List key values that guide the organization (e.g., inclusivity, respect, safety, creativity).
- Provide a short explanation for each value.

3. Community Commitments

- Outline the responsibilities of different members (students, teachers, administrators).
- Specify expectations for behavior, collaboration, and engagement.

4. Governance & Decision-Making

- Describe how decisions are made within the community.
- Clarify who is responsible for updating and maintaining the charter.

5. Implementation & Integration

- Detail how the charter will be introduced and reinforced.
- Suggest methods such as onboarding sessions, workshops, or periodic reviews.

6. Review & Adaptation

- Define how often the charter will be reviewed and by whom.
- Establish a process for suggesting and implementing updates.

7. Acknowledgment & Commitment

- Provide a section for signatures or an official acknowledgment to reinforce commitment.
- Consider adding a symbolic action (e.g., signing ceremony, annual reaffirmation).



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