



Accountability Committee Report – April 2015

Present: Zach, Rochelin, Anikke, Grace, Kareem, Tania, Rachel, Joshua, David, Chloe, Sarah

The committee convened for what was supposed to be its last meeting for the 2014-2015 year on Friday, March 27th. Attendance was open to any wishing to address the committee, and the following topics were discussed: problems encountered, proposed solutions, a proposed timeline for the 2015-2016 year, and other recommendations.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED. We discussed at length the issues that are prohibiting council/councillors/committees from their ideal efficiency, and narrowed it down to the three following categories:

1. **Councillor Apathy/Ignorance.** Councillors don't care or know to show up or participate at either council or committee meetings. Committee chairs are sometimes disregarded.
2. **Dereliction of Duty.** Because of the abovementioned apathy/ignorance, councillors fail to complete their duty in a satisfactory manner (or at all).
3. **Elusiveness of the Accountability Committee.** Nobody really knows how to reach the committee, or that they can reach the committee to address a complaint in the first place.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS.

1. **Educating Councillors.** More effective measures should be taken to ensure councillors are fully aware of what they're signing up for.
 - Chairs/previous members of committees giving a short presentation on the content and expectations of the committee → if allocations can be conducted during retreat, maybe short videos?
 - Stronger focus on councillor duties at the retreat → should test on council-related material such as councillor expectations, internal regulations, constitution etc. to impose a healthy fear of the law instead of SSMU trivia
 - i. Should ensure that councillor information is all correct earlier on so that all councillors will be notified earlier to ensure better attendance.
2. **Improving Accountability.** More effective measures should be taken to ensure that councillors are upholding their duties and responsibilities.
 - Chairs will fill out a spreadsheet after each meeting to denote attendance/participation of councillors. After three or more absences (excused or not), the committee may chose to meet with the councillor to ensure that everything is in order, and if not, why and how to fix the situation. See example below.



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- i. https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Kp2I3Fea23wjMVVr7ms5r_KIZISHtxiYVvTLIR-EW6Q/edit?usp=sharing
 - There should be some sort of mechanism that better assists councillors in conveying council actions/decisions to their constituents, especially on how their representative voted, why they voted this way, and what this means for their constituents.
 - Year-end individual councillor reviews will be made extremely public and clear on the SSMU website, or sent through the campus media.
3. **Increasing the Accessibility of the Accountability Committee.**
Effective measures should be taken to ensure that people are aware that they do have a place to bring their concerns to.
 - Generic form should be created and shared with all constituents and campus media (as possible) to ensure that people know where they can bring their concerns to
 - The committee chair's email should be made publically available for any concerns; additionally, people should be informed that they can elect to deal with the members-at-large if they believe there may be a conflict-of-interest in contacting the councillors sitting on the committee
 - The committee will report to council with recommendations as necessary throughout the year, such as recommended resignations

PROPOSED TIMELINE.

- **August.** Committee allocations (ideally, at retreat)
- **September.** Ensure everyone is aware of all their duties (especially less-supported seats such as FYC and IRC)
- **October.** All spreadsheets must be prepared and sent out, contact must be established with faculty associations/relevant homebodies, surveys
- **November.** Collect all the information from October and compile it
- **December.** Midterm Executive and Councillor Reviews with recommendations/requirements and a summary of the cases brought to the committee's attention must be sent out and reported to council.
- **February.** Spreadsheets and surveys are sent out again to gauge the councillor/executive's improvement (or lack thereof) since October)
- **March.** Last round of Executive and Councillor Reviews.
- **April.** Tie up any loose ends with particular cases/issues. Reviewing the year's progress and planning improvements and recommendations for next year's Accountability Committee, and passing on the knowledge to reduce loss of institutional memory.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS. A few other ideas were suggested and include:



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- **Intolerance for Late Motions.** Unless extremely urgent, should be deferred after the deadline to ensure constituent consultation.
- **Controversial Motion Panels.** It should be in our mandate to give the opportunity for education; we should get relevant professors to discuss contentious motions before the General Assemblies to ensure discussion and awareness of the various positions and arguments
- **General Culture Shift.** People should not refrain from asking questions or bringing up concerns because they are intimidated. 'Safe Space' should not be utilized as a means to shut down discussions/debates.

In addition to these new changes, we will be continuing with the faculty surveys (to be sent to the relevant homebodies for councillors without faculties (i.e. Clubs Rep to Clubs, VP Clubs & Services). For 2015-2016, we will be developing strategies to ensure wider cooperation from the faculty level.

The results from the 2014-2015 faculty surveys used for the councillor review/feedback can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tha2GFxfWrx4wHXrBh576_lw9l_oO7uZquPHA0a3n2A/edit?usp=sharing

The executive reviews can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M9aNx9oGYgYXI6V2gxtxnYAGi0CVdgnklKNdoeObx80/edit?usp=sharing>

This is by no means a comprehensive fix-all for the outlined concerns, but it is a start. After years of inactivity, the Accountability Committee has finally made concrete plans to improve the status quo. Further suggestions are always welcome; you need only email parliamentarian@ssmu.mcgill.ca.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,

Eileen Siow
Parliamentarian