



Students' Society of McGill University
Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Office of the Speakers
Bureau de Présidents du Conseil

Motion Regarding the Creation of the Student Advocacy Resource Committee

Whereas, during the 2011-2012 year, the Independent Student Advocacy Service (ISAS) was approved for interim club status which was confirmed by Council;

Whereas, this group was created in order to help guide, empower, and advocate for the needs of McGill students;

Whereas, members of both the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 SSMU Executive have shown interest in such a group and their ability to provide neutral and free information and guidance to students, working with elected officials to improve access to the correct channels;

Whereas, it is a goal of the SSMU to promote service, leadership and representation and to engage and empower all students;

Whereas, the SSMU can provide valuable support to this organization for the betterment of its activities, so that it may reach and serve more students and be held adequately accountable;

Resolved, that ISAS shall become a Committee of Council,

Resolved, that the ISAS be renamed “the Student Advocacy Resource Committee (SARC)”,

Resolved, that the Committee be subject and accountable to its terms of reference (see Appendix A below),

Resolved, that the SARC be supervised by the Vice-President University Affairs,

Resolved, that this committee be given a trial period ending March 15, 2012.

Moved by:

Haley Dinell, Vice-President (University Affairs)

David Chaim, Science Representative

APPENDIX A: COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Student Advocacy Resource Committee (SARC):

The SARC will be responsible for ensuring that all members of the Society have access to information, guidance and support, in order to empower members of the Society with questions, concerns, or ideas for systemic change on campus to pursue their goals via effective advocacy campaigns, research, and coordination with elected representatives. The SARC will provide members of the Society with Stewards, individuals who will aid these students further their causes and who will act as their primary resource persons throughout the length of their case.



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Definitions:

Steward: members of the SARC Working Group who are responsible for handling cases and for writing reports on those cases. Stewards will help students plan and organize events and campaigns; provide them with information and research; assist them in drafting proposals or public statements; help them network with other members of the McGill community, especially elected representatives; guide them through SSMU and University processes; help them work through existing SSMU or University pathways or advocate for the creation of new pathways.

Volunteer: a member of the SARC Working Group that has agreed to support a Steward in their handling of a case or cases

Requester: a student or group of students that has/have requested the services of the SARC Working Group

Structure of the Committee:

The SARC shall consist of:

3 Councilors

1 SSMU Executive

The Head Steward

1 Triage Steward (elected by the Triage Stewards in the Working Group)

1 Services Steward (elected by the Services Stewards in the Working Group)

1 Campus Issues Steward (elected by the Campus Issues Stewards in the Working Group)

1 Student Government Steward (elected by the Student Government Stewards in the Working Group)

The committee shall meet as needed, but not less than twice a month

The Committee shall:

Report to Legislative Council on all its activities and those of the Working Group

Serve as the body responsible for the accountability of the Working Group and all Stewards and Volunteers

Advise the Working Group in all matters relating to its activities

Create and maintain training programs, an oath and reference materials for Stewards and Volunteers, with the intent of ensuring the highest possible quality of advocacy

Work to advertise the services of the Working Group to all members of the Society



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Be responsible for the recruitment of Stewards; all Stewards must be accepted by the Nominating Committee prior to commencing their service

Structure and Function of the SARC Working Group:

The Working Group shall be the body that directly provides stewardship to students

The SARC Working Group shall be composed of all Stewards and Volunteers. Only Stewards shall have voting rights during meetings of the working group

The Working Group shall assign the cases of requesters to Stewards, who will be responsible for the case

The Working Group shall meet once a week in order to discuss cases, strategy, and best practices. Quorum will be 50 + 1 percent of the Working Group. Such meetings will be open, unless the confidential details of a requester must be discussed. In such a case, a 2/3 majority vote of the Working Group is required to initiate an in camera session

The Working Group shall consist of:

The Head Steward, who will be responsible for the long term vision of the Working Group, ensure that all Stewards and Volunteers abide by these Terms of Reference and their Oath, and act as the spokesperson and signing officer for the group. The Head Steward may also hand cases.

The Triage Stewards, who will act as the frontline personnel for the working group. They will meet with requesters first and assess whether their case is appropriate for the Working Group to handle or if it would be better served by a referral to another group or service. If a referral is appropriate, they shall provide it; otherwise they shall assign an appropriate Steward to the case. They shall also act as the Working Group's treasurers and secretaries.

The Services Stewards, who will be responsible for handling all cases relating to services provided to students on campus

The Student Government Stewards, who will be responsible for handling all cases relating to student government on campus, and who will also serve as primary liaisons between the Working Group and members of student government

The Campus Issues Stewards, who will be responsible for cases relating to systemic change affecting the campus, in whole or in part, when the case does not fall under the mandate of the Services or Student Government Stewards.

Volunteers, who will support the efforts of the Stewards, especially with regards to the conduction of research and the management of campaigns.



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The Stewards of the SARC Working Group, under the guidance of the SARC, shall:

Serve as a first-contact point for students with questions, both general and specific, about the workings and governance structures of McGill university, about how to get involved on campus and about their duties, rights, opportunities and responsibilities as McGill students

Act as intermediaries or points of contact between requesters and student government, the administration, or other groups on campus, in matters relating to their cases. Stewards will not duplicate efforts being made by elected student representatives unless those efforts are not satisfactory to requesters

Seek out members of the Society who may be in need of advocacy services and offer them these services

Maintain a personalized and context-based approach to each advocacy case

Refer students with questions outside of the scope of the Working Group to appropriate external groups or sources of information

Set, with the approval of the SARC and Council, its bylaws and best practices, and shall be responsible for formulating amendments or updates to those policies

Collect information, contacts, and other information resources and use them in the creation and continual updating of a Steward's Handbook

Not be beholden to any political or personal agendas, or to the interests of other groups, and shall remain officially neutral on all matters relating to their cases, to potential and past cases, and to campus affairs for the duration of their terms

Write reports detailing their activities and present these to the SARC working group every month and at the end of every semester

Prioritize cases, in consultation with the SARC, when time or resources prevent every case from being addressed concurrently

Maintain the confidentiality of their requesters if the requesters desire it, except in cases where the requester is a danger to themselves or others

Not act in conflict of interest, according to SSMU Conflict of Interest policy

Not perform the same role as members of the McGill Legal Information Clinic Student Advocacy service unless requested to by a requester who has elected, after being informed of its existence, not to use that service



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Refer cases that do or may conflict with SSMU Equity policies to the VP University Affairs

Take a verbal and written oath, crafted by SARC, in order to begin their service, and shall be bound by it. The Oath, in its current form, is attached as an appendix to these Terms of Reference.

Appendix A: The Steward's Oath

The Steward's Oath:

I, (name of Steward), by this oath accept the position of (position), for the term to which I have agreed, as a Steward of the SARC Working Group. I solemnly swear that I will truly and with all due diligence commit myself to the vocation of advocate, and to the following statements:

I will treat all requesters, my fellow advocates, and all members of my community with respect, and will endeavor to uphold my dignity and that of others.

I will never discriminate against any member of the community based on race, creed, gender, sexual orientation or identity, age, political views, and all other differences protected by law and by the bylaws of the University and of the Student's Society.

I take the terms of reference and its Bylaws as written in the Steward's Handbook as binding documents, and agree to read them and adhere to their principles in good faith

I vow that, as a Steward, my sole aim will be to ensure that the rights of my requesters are respected and exercised, that I provide them with complete and truthful information, and that everything that can be done to further their cases and causes is done, within the bounds set by the terms of reference and Bylaws. I will also think of the good of the greater community, and actively seek ways to systemically improve dialogue, student rights and representation, and devote myself to finding creative and positive ways to further cases and set precedents for future case

I will maintain absolute neutrality as a Steward, and will serve only as a guide, advisor, representative and organizer for my requesters, but never will directly or indirectly- through public statements or actions- support or hinder their causes

I will discharge my duties in a timely, professional manner, and to exercise all due diligence in the pursuit of a case. After my studies, the needs of my requesters will be my primary concern

I will act in a professional manner as a Steward during all interactions with requesters, with other Stewards, and with the public. I understand that as a Steward I am a public figure and must act, with this in mind, as a professional in the public domain for the duration of my term

I will be accountable to SARC, to the SSMU Legislative Council, and to the public at large, and I will submit on time and in a complete and proper manner those reports required of me. I will



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also fully, and in good faith, cooperate with the disciplinary process should charges be laid against me for a violation of my oath, of the constitution, or of the bylaws

I will not be corrupt; I will not take financial or other rewards from requesters or members of the public; I will not take bribes, or offer preferential treatment to any requester or member of the public, or in any way use this position for personal gain or to further my own agenda. I will also alert the group or the SARC if I am aware of corruption or other breaches of the terms of reference and bylaws perpetrated by a fellow Steward or a volunteer

I will treat any volunteers assigned to me with respect and will fulfill my responsibilities towards them as outlined in the terms of reference and bylaws

I will utilize my best judgment when handling a case, and will always keep the unique needs of requesters in mind

I will be proactive and seek out students who may be in need of advocacy

I will actively participate in the Working Group meetings and in the continual revision of bylaws, best practices, and the Steward's Handbook

I, above all else, accept and understand the inherent responsibility of my position: to guide students and to responsibly empower them to have their voices heard, their rights respected, and their ideas acted upon

Done, this the (date).

Name of Steward: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Steward: _____

Signature of Head Steward (if the Head Steward is taking the Oath, it need only be signed by the VP University Affairs): _____

Signature of SSMU VP University Affairs: _____

This Signed Document is Public Record and will be deposited in the ISAR and SSMU archives.