

Report of the Accountability Committee to Legislative Council

April 10 Committee Report:

Mandate

Accountability Committee

The SSMU shall create an Accountability Committee, subject to the following Terms of Reference:

The Accountability Committee shall hold Executives accountable to their contractual obligations, to their responsibilities under the SSMU Bylaw Books and Constitution, and to their constituents.

The Chairs of the Committee shall be responsible for advertising the position of non-Councillor members-at-large from the second week of September.

The Committee shall:

Compile and review performance evaluations for Executives, including their adherence to the Society's Constitution, bylaws, and relevant mandates.

Assess the creation, advancement and adherence of Executives to their workplans. Investigate and subsequently inform Executives when their actions contravene the aforementioned rules and regulations.

Collect and anonymously bring to Executives, to Executive Committee, or to Council complaints from members of the Society.

Report publicly to Legislative Council at least once every month.

The membership shall consist of:

Speaker and Parliamentarian of the Society (Chairs; non-voting)

Councillors (3)

Members-at-large (2)

Student Staff Representative, chosen by the student staff at their volition (1)

Permanent Staff Representative, chosen by the permanent staff at their volition (1)

Advisor(s), chosen by the committee as needed (non-voting)

The governance of the Accountability Committee will move to the Board of Directors during the period when the Speaker and Parliamentarian positions are not filled; those declaring a conflict of interest may be excused for the duration of the Accountability Committee meetings.

Overview

The main task that the Accountability Committee has been working on is to more clearly define the mandate of the Accountability Committee, specifically, to determine what parts of the mandate passed last year can accomplish, and what how should the mandate change. The first couple of months were spent defining the role of the accountability committee and working out the logistics involved in creating a new committee. Unfortunately, there are many cases where the mandate as outlined above in the Accountability Committee Policy is difficult or impossible to follow. For example, many meetings were spent discussing how and under what criteria we could review the execs and in the course of that discussion were made aware that as councillors and students most of the information regarding the executives performance is confidential due to HR. The criteria for which the executives were to be evaluated had to be completely restructured, and a large element of transparency and accountability was lost. This brought up the question of what the role of the accountability committee should be, and how can the governance structure be changed so that there is a means that the executives can be reviewed. When the committee first met, it was planned to move the disciplinary measures under the presidential portfolio under the jurisdiction of the committee. With no way to access much of the information regarding the performance of the executives, it is believed that disciplinary measures and performance reviews should remain under the portfolio of the President. In the recommendations at the end of the report, is it outlined how the accountability committee should move forward and what steps they should take in order to continue to strive to make SSMU as accountable as possible.

Complaints

IGC Coordinator Tariq Khan

The format for a complaints form was created and sent to the SSMU communications staff for implementation, unfortunately it has not been implemented as of yet.

Executive Reviews

Councillor Southey, Councillor Ibrahim, Councillor Jeong, IGC Coordinator Tariq Khan

Under SSMU HR policy we are not allowed to have access to their HR reviews undertaken by Pauline, or to ask the people who work under positions in the portfolio for their feedback. As a result, we could not undertake full executive reviews. The only information we do have access to is the information that is already public to councillors, so we were attempting to review the executives under the following criteria: time of their reports were uploaded, how often their committees met, minutes of their committee meetings, and office attendance. We thought these reviews could act as a synthesis or compilation of the data that might be difficult to access for the public. Only four of the accountability members were able to complete these reviews, as it was a conflict of interest for the staff members of SSMU to review the execs (so completing full performance reviews, even if we were able to, would have been a large amount of work for the four members). By the time we had worked out the criteria and what we did have access to it was past reading week, and as a result many of the executives did not respond to our requests of meeting dates and minutes, while other executives were not emailed due to a lack of time from some accountability members. As a result we have no executive committee reviews, which is a large failing on the part of the committee and also to some extent (not with all executives) reflects the lack of willingness on the part of executives to participate in the process.

Things to Improve

Set-up committee earlier

Advertisement for the member at large was only sent out in November, first meeting occurred at the end of November

Begin executive reviews earlier

It is difficult to gather all the necessary information in only two weeks, puts pressure on members of the committee and executives themselves

Advertisement

It was difficult to advertise this year as the mandate was still very unclear. Hopefully that is something that the committee can begin in earnest, from the beginning, next year.

More anonymous executive reviews by councillor

only occurred once this year, depending on length of council should attempt to do this every other council meeting, or at least twice a semester
although these minutes are on vibe so executives can take a look, accountability committee should synthesize and incorporate these anonymous reviews in their report

Recommendations

Positive Outreach and Resource for complaints/information

The accountability committee should advertise their presence and different ways for students to hold the executives and councillors accountable. Should promote involvement of students in process (beyond just councillors) coming to ask questions during Council or at GAs.
Although ability to review executives is limited, should synthesize and publish information $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through each semester to be available for students and so the press can use it for their executive reviews

Act as bridge from students to society for accountability

complaint form, needs to be put online, follow-up with John
Public Relations, reduction of the hostility between students and the SSMU
Conversation starter, bring up issues and public opinions garnered through complaints
At as a resource and can look into complaints--not an investigation, just bringing it to the attention of people, putting it into the appropriate avenues, can direct people to equity, HR, councillors etc

More members at large

It is the role of the councillors to hold the executives responsible, but members at large should have a much larger say on the committee as often have a much different perspective than staff or councillors who work with SSMU every day

Change governance structure of the society

main reason the committee was created--to undertake executive reviews--not able to be fulfilled
there still needs to be a way to hold the executives accountable, a way to provide information to the council to censure/impeach execs if not doing their job in the office
recommend that next years committee immediately begins reviewing the Executives roles and responsibilities, which can be found on Constitution pg15 and in the Policy Regarding Executive Officers' Contracts and Job Descriptions on pg20

look at changing the policies to include disciplinary measures and performance reviews under the presidential portfolio. Changes should happen with the help and advice of Pauline and next years president the President and the General Manager should do performance reviews of the executives at least every month, and the President will be reviewed by the Vice-President University Affairs and the General Manager. If an executive is not doing their job, President/VP UA and the General Manager can bring recommendations to council for censure or impeachment.

Conclusion

Accountability is a goal that the SSMU should constantly be striving for. Despite the failings, difficulties in implementation and even now the somewhat unclear role of the accountability committee, it is necessary as SSMU continues to struggle with being accountable and transparent to their constituents. This year was a good learning experience as many of the issues that came up (apology, sustainability coordinator) helped shape ideas of what the role of the accountability should be and how it is needed.

Councillors Review

Emails were sent out in the middle of the second semester information those who have not been completing their councillor duties. Aim to have this done after the first half of the first semester as well. Additionally, feedback for next year's councillor retreat and/or training will be considered - include things like basic Robert's Rules Review, motion writing workshops, and council procedures.