

The Official Constitution of the Debating Union of the Student Society of McGill University

Amended March 1990, April 1991, March 1997, January 2001, 2003-2004, April 2013, April 2015, November 2016

1. Name

This document hereby establishes the Debating Union of the Student's Society of McGill University (l'Association des Débats de l'Association Étudiante de l'Université McGill), hereafter referred to as the McGill Debating Union (l'Association des Débats de McGill), and shall serve as the Constitution for that Debating Union.

2. Mandates

- A. To engage in the activities of a debating society, including, but not limited to:
 - i. the organization of a debating training program;
 - ii. the organization of a high school debating tournament and a university debating tournament open to participants from outside McGill University, subject to the parameters of eligibility as set by the Executive Committee in advance of the competition;
 - iii. the participation in debating and public speaking competitions to which the Debating Union is invited.
- B. To organize and conduct exhibition debates for the McGill community at large.
- C. To carry out all such other activities as are incidental to or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

3. Code of Conduct

- A. The McGill Debating Union shall carry forth its mandate from an anti-oppressive and equitable standpoint AND equal respect shall be given to all members, including those of disadvantaged backgrounds, regardless of, but not limited to gender, age, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexuality or sexual orientation, mental or physical abilities, language or social class.
- B. No member shall make personal profit from the McGill Debating Union.
- C. Any executive member who fails to fulfill their responsibilities shall be subject to the expulsion procedure outlined in this Constitution.

4. Student Group Civility

- A. The McGill Debating Union will maintain cordial and respectful relations with all other clubs, services, and independent student groups.
- B. The McGill Debating Union will not use SSMU resources and/or its club status to prevent other clubs, services, or independent student groups from fulfilling their mandate, including but not limited to their acquisition of resources and pursuit of activities.
- C. If problems arise between groups, a member of the Executive Committee and/or collective of the club shall be responsible for contacting the SSMU Vice President of Student Life and attempt to remedy the problem in a collegial fashion.

5. Environment

- A. The McGill Debating Union shall make attempts to regularly monitor the environmental impact of all its events and operations.
- B. The McGill Debating Union must attempt to utilize the services and resources available at SSMU in order to maximize capacities for equitable decision-making and environmental stewardship. These include but are not limited to the use of the Plate Club, green event guides, applications for the SSMU Green Fund, assistance of the SSMU environmental commissioners, environment committee and green event coordinators.
- C. The McGill Debating Union must attempt to find sustainable alternatives to the non-recyclable #6 plastic, effective waste management, providing vegan and vegetarian options, purchasing clothing which is ethically sources and environmentally friendly, purchasing local and sustainable alcohol, fair trade coffee and tea, and local and/or organic foods.

6. Liability

- A. The views expressed at any activity organized by the Debating Union or the views expressed by any member of the Debating Union at any competition do not necessarily reflect the views of the McGill Debating Union, the Students' Society of McGill University, or McGill University.
- B. The views expressed by members of the Debating Union during the course of debate-related activities (practice rounds, competitive rounds, exhibition debates, etc.) do not necessarily reflect the actual views of that individual debater.

7. Membership

- A. Membership for the McGill Debating Union is open to all SSMU and PGSS members, including those of disadvantaged backgrounds, regardless of but not limited to gender, age, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, mental or physical abilities, language, or social class.

B. Only Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) and Post Graduate Students' Society (PGSS), members are eligible to be elected as officers and to hold voting privileges.

C. Associated non-voting membership is open to all others.

D. Membership is granted upon attendance at one general meeting. No membership fee shall be levied.

E. Voting members of the Debating Union are those who have attended a minimum of 25% of the general meetings held during the current academic year. Voting members have full voting privileges.

8. The Executive Committee

A. The voting membership of the McGill Debating Union is the final authority regarding the affairs of the Debating Union. At an annual general meeting, an Executive Committee will be elected to serve as the principal administrative body of the Debating Union.

B. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the following officers:

- i. President
- ii. Vice-President
- iii. Chair of Debates
- iv. Treasurer
- v. External Tournaments Coordinator
- vi. Chair of Sponsorship
- vii. Chair of French Debates
- viii. Chair of Exhibition Debates
- ix. Chair of Publicity

C. The powers of the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

- i. to implement the policies and oversee the activities of the Debating Union in accordance with this Constitution;
- ii. to ensure the proper functioning of the individual offices of the Executive Committee as outlined in this Constitution.

D. The responsibilities of the officers of the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

- i. President
 - a. to oversee the efficient functioning of the Executive Committee;
 - b. to call, schedule, set the agenda for, and chair Executive Committee meetings;
 - c. to cast a vote on the Executive Committee;

- d. to make decisions on behalf of the Executive Committee in such cases where it is impossible for the Executive Committee to convene before the appropriate deadline, subject to section 8 .A of this Constitution;
 - e. to act as the official spokesperson of the McGill Debating Union;
 - f. to chair the Tournament Selection Committee and World Selection Committee, as outlined in Section 10.

- ii. Vice-President
 - a. to keep and provide the records of all Executive Committee meetings;
 - b. to keep and provide accurate records of attendance at all general meetings;
 - c. to respond to email/correspondence directed to the MDU email account;
 - d. to complete general administrative duties for the club (e.g. SSMU paperwork).
 - e. to assume the role of the President at Executive Committee Meetings at which the President is absent: in such cases the Vice-President may cast only one vote.

- iii. Chair of Debates
 - a. to oversee all meetings of the general membership;
 - b. to direct a training program for novice debaters;
 - c. to schedule and organize regular public debates;
 - d. to provide for the development and the maintenance of the debating skills of the members of the Debating Union.

- iv. Treasurer
 - a. to be responsible for the administration of any funds held by the Debating Union;
 - b. to be the official signing officer for all matters relating to funds;
 - c. to keep accurate records of all Debating Union financial transactions;
 - d. to consult with the Executive Committee on financial affairs.

- v. External Tournaments Coordinators
 - a. to provide for the arrangements necessary for the Debating Union to attend competitive debating events. These duties include:
 - i. team and judge registration;
 - ii. transportation arrangements;
 - iii. accommodations;
 - iv. coordination of tournament participants;
 - v. communicating results of Tournament Selection Committee.

- vi. Chair of Sponsorship
 - a. to raise funds in order to achieve the goals and policies of the Debating Union;
 - b. to maintain contact with the alumni of the Debating Union, including but not limited to the publication of the Heckler newsletter.

vii. Chair of French Debates

- a. to promote French language debating at McGill University by hosting French language show debates and practice rounds;
- b. to maintain communications with other debating societies in SUCDI;
- c. to collaborate with Tournament Selection Committee (TSC)
- d. to determine participants for French tournaments;
- e. to have a working knowledge of the French language.

viii. Chair of Exhibition Debates:

- a. to organize and conduct exhibition debates of interest to the McGill community at large.

ix. Chair of Publicity

- a. to coordinate and assist in publicizing and promoting the activities of the Debating Union using print or digital media both within and outside the University, including, but not limited to:
 - i. publishing weekly club updates through the McGill Debating Union website and listserv;
 - ii. administration of the Facebook, Twitter, and other social media pages;
 - iii. managing the McGill Debating Union website;
 - iv. providing photography and multimedia for the club.

E. The procedures for election to the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

- i. The Executive Committee shall set a date for all elections. The positions of President, Vice-President, Chair of Debates, Treasurer, External Tournament Coordinator, Chair of Exhibition Debates, Chair of Publicity and Chair of French Debates shall be elected, in the order listed, prior to the end of Winter-semester classes;
- ii. Notification of elections shall be made no sooner than three weeks before such elections are held;
- iii. A majority of 50% plus one is necessary for election to an Executive position. In the absence of a majority, only the name with the lowest number of votes shall be dropped from each ballot;
- iv. All Debating Union elections are to be secret ballot elections;
- v. To be nominated as a candidate in Executive Committee elections, a person must obtain the signatures of five voting members of the Debating Union;
- vi. No one may hold two Executive positions at once except in cases of interim appointment;
- vii. The President and Vice-President shall act in the role of chief returning officer and deputy returning officer for elections. Should one of these individuals be running for election, the Executive Committee shall be responsible for appointing a different returning officer.

- viii. The returning officers shall be responsible for:
 - a. collection of nominations;
 - b. counting of ballots;
 - c. announcement of results of elections;
 - d. ruling on election irregularities: candidates may appeal this decision to the Students' Society of McGill University.

F. The rules of procedure for meetings of the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

- i. the President shall be responsible for calling and chairing all Executive Committee meetings;
- ii. a quorum of six members of the Executive Committee, one of whom must be either the President or Vice President, is necessary to pass motions;
- iii. the vote of an executive officer shall count only when that person is actually present at the meeting;
- iv. Robert's Rules of Order, Revised Edition, shall serve as the official procedural guide for meetings of the Executive Committee, except where such rules directly contradict procedures stipulated in this Constitution;
- v. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be open to all members of the Debating Union. A meeting may be declared closed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee. Only Executive Committee members may be present at a meeting that has been declared closed and the minutes of such meetings shall only be available to members of the Executive Committee.
- vi. Notwithstanding sections 8. D. i. b. and 8. F. i., a meeting of the Executive Committee may be convened following a petition of 25% of the voting members.

G. The procedure for impeaching an Executive Officer shall be as follows:

- i. The impeachment process can be initiated in either one of two ways:
 - a. a two thirds majority (five members) vote of the Executive Committee, excluding the officer in question, including the President, or the Vice-President if it is the President who is under consideration for impeachment;
 - b. a petition with the signatures of one third of the voting members.
- ii. a general meeting shall be set for at least two, but no more than three weeks after the impeachment process has been initiated. At that meeting, the reasons for the proposed impeachment shall be publicly stated by one person appointed by the Executive Committee. The officer under consideration shall have the opportunity to defend him or herself, or to appoint another individual to carry out this defense in his or her place. Both of these speeches shall be of the same length;
- iii. a two-thirds majority vote of the voting membership is required to impeach an Executive officer;

- iv. an impeached officer retains his or her membership in the Debating Union and may run for Executive positions;
- v. if more than one Executive officer is being considered for impeachment, the matter shall be referred to the Students' Council of the Students' Society of McGill University.

H. The procedures for filling vacancies on the Executive Committee shall be as follows:

- i. if, for any reason, the office of President becomes vacant, the Vice-President shall assume the duties of the President in addition to the Vice-President until an election is held, or until the President can resume his or her duties;
- ii. if the Vice-President cannot assume the duties of an absent President, then the Chair of Debates shall assume those duties, in addition to the duties of Chair of Debates;
- iii. any officer who temporarily assumes the office of the President temporarily forfeits the right to vote on the Executive Committee except in case of a tie;
- iv. if any other Executive Committee office becomes vacant the Executive Committee may appoint one of its members to fill the vacancy until an election can be called or until the officer in question can return to his or her duties. The person taking on new responsibilities shall not shirk those responsibilities already assigned to them;
- v. all elections to fill vacancies shall be conducted with the election procedures outlined in the Constitution. The election for a vacant position must take place within eight weeks of the position becoming vacant;

I. There shall be no fewer than two Executive Committee meetings per month during the regular academic year, excluding April and December;

J. In the event that a decision of the Executive Committee in any way contradicts a decision undertaken by one individual member of the Executive Committee, the decision of the Committee shall take precedence;

K. Joint-Executive Committees and Tournament Directors from the previous school year shall be responsible for appointing, or, if necessary, dismissing the Tournament Directors for the McGill High School Debating Tournament and the McGill Winter Carnival Tournament. The same process will be used in situations where McGill is hosting other tournaments. Tab room procedures for the latter shall be determined by the Tournament Directors only after advice and consent of the Executive Committee has been given.

9. The Members at Large

A. There shall be a Novice Member-at-Large and a Member-at-Large who shall be elected, in that order, according to the procedures outlined in Article 8.E, with the following modifications;

- i. The date set for elections shall be in the fall, preferably in the month of October;
- ii. Notification of elections shall be made, at least fourteen (14) days before such elections are held, at a General Meeting of the Debating Union;
- iii. To be nominated as a candidate in a Member-at-Large election, a person must:
 - a. be a voting member of the Debating Union;
 - b. obtain the signatures of five (5) voting members of the Debating Union, excluding themselves, and submit them to the Chief Returning Officer;
- iv. Further to be nominated as a candidate for the Novice Member-at-Large election, a person, in addition to meeting the requirements of Article 6.A.iii, must:
 - a. qualify as a "novice" as defined by the Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate (CUSID). If no such definition exists, the Executive Committee shall be empowered to create a reasonable one.

B. The responsibilities of the Members at Large shall be as follows:

- i. to act as liaisons between the Executive Committee and the general membership;
- ii. to alternate from one tournament to the next as voting members of the Tournament Selection Committee;

10. Tournament Selection Committee

A. The Tournament Selection Committee (TSC) shall have the sole mandate of selecting delegates to attend debating and public speaking competitions excluding the World Championships;

B. The TSC shall be composed of the President, Vice-President, Chair of Debates, Secretary, External Tournaments Coordinator, and one of the Members at Large;

C. The TSC shall be chaired by the President, and all members must be present at a meeting to have their votes counted;

D. The TSC shall be empowered, by majority vote, to declare its meeting closed to the general voting membership. At such meetings, no minutes will be taken;

E. Quorum for TSC meetings shall be three members, one of whom must be the President or the Vice-President.

F. In case of tie, the President shall cast two votes.

11. World, North American, and National Championships Selection Committees

A. The Executive Committee will be empowered to choose a Special Tournament Committee to select the debaters and judges McGill sends to the World Championships.

B. The President shall chair Special Tournament Selection Committee. In cases where the President is unable to chair Special Tournament Selection Committee, per se, because they are bidding for Worlds, the Executive Committee shall be empowered to select a suitable replacement.

12. Finances

A. The Treasurer shall examine the financial records, and prepare an audit, complete with records of all transactions and receipts, to be submitted to the SSMU at the end of each semester before May 31st of each year.

B. The McGill Debating Union bank account must be kept at Scotiabank as a subsection of the SSMU account.

C. The President and the Treasurer will be the signing officers of the McGill Debating Union bank account.

D. In order to receive funding of any kind from SSMU, the McGill Debating Union must have a Scotiabank account.

13. Constitutional Amendments

The procedure for amending the Constitution of the McGill Debating Union shall be as follows:

A. Any member of the McGill Debating Union may propose an amendment to the Constitution.

B. The amendment process can be initiated in one of two ways:

- i. a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee (five members) including the President;
- ii. a petition with the signatures of one-third of the voting members of the Debating Union;

C. A general meeting of the membership shall be held no sooner than two weeks, but no later than three weeks after the amendment process has been initiated;

D. Proposed amendments shall be considered passed when endorsed by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting membership;

E. The Executive Committee shall decide the procedures of debate and voting for said meeting prior to the day of the vote.

F. All amendments shall be submitted to the Club Commissioner, will be reviewed by the Club Committee and ratified by the SSMU council before they take effect.

14. Quorum

Quorum for votes on Constitutional amendments and impeachments shall be 50% of the voting membership.

15. General Meetings

There shall be no fewer than five general meetings of the Debating Union per month during the academic year, except for December and April.

16. Judicial Review

Any judicial decision not previously specified that concerns the Debating Union shall be referred to the Judicial Board of the Students' Society of McGill University.

17. Official Symbol

Ralph, the moose, shall be the official symbol and mascot of the Debating Union, and is the exclusive property of the McGill Debating Union.

18. Citation

All members of the Executive Committee are responsible for knowing and abiding by the rules and procedures described in this Constitution. Any decision or actions taken that contravene the Constitution are invalid.

19. Bylaws and Policies

A. The McGill Debating Union shall create and maintain bylaws that cover the operations of the club, which are not specified in the Constitution.

B. The McGill Debating Union's bylaws shall not contravene the Constitution.

C. The McGill Debating Union's bylaws must be made available to any member of SSMU when and if requested.

20. SSMU Constitution, Bylaws and Policies

A. In case of any inconsistencies between the McGill Debating Union's Constitution and the SSMU Constitution and Bylaws, the SSMU Constitution and Bylaws shall take effect.

B. If there are any areas not covered in this Constitution, the SSMU Constitution, Bylaws and Policies shall take effect.