

Accountability Committee

Yearlong Plan Template

Ongoing activities:

1. Accountability Complaints:

The accountability committee (hereinafter referred to as the AC), shall act as a complaint center, where any SSMU member can come forward with a complaint or inquiry regarding an issue of accountability touching any part of the SSMU. The accountability committee will keep all complainants and informants in a given file confidential unless otherwise requested by the complainants and informants, or mandated by JBoard decision.

The complaints process will be as follows:

Step 1. The accountability committee will receive the complaint, and decide if it is within the scope of the accountability committee to investigate (i.e that it pertains to SSMU business, and that those named as having contravened SSMU accountability policies are alleged to have done so while acting in an official SSMU capacity. Complaints may also be accepted if they are general or specific suggestions about how to improve accountability processes.)

If there is significant disagreement about whether or not the AC may take a complaint, the question may be referred to the JBoard for decision.

The proceedings in step 1 will be kept strictly confidential. The time from the reception of a complaint to the acceptance or rejection of that complaint should not last for a period of greater than two weeks, unless the question of acceptability is referred to the JBoard. In this last case, the decision regarding acceptance or rejection of the case will be communicated to the complainants as soon as it is available from the JBoard

Step 2. The AC will meet with the complainant and take a detailed history of the alleged accountability infraction or suggestion regarding the improvement of accountability practices. The AC will then review all available evidence (committee minutes, attendance sheets, media reports, etc...) and will compile this into a preliminary report of facts.

This step should take no more than three weeks.

Step 3. The AC will conduct interviews of the persons identified as having potentially breached accountability rules (the respondent), informing them of the nature of the complaint but not of its source (unless otherwise specified in writing by the complainant.) Respondents may only be employees of SSMU, SSMU Executives, and SSMU Councillors, or other students having some official position in SSMU or a SSMU club.

Any respondent not responding to the summons of the AC for an interview without a reason judged to be adequate by the members of the AC will be publically censured for this failure at the Council meeting at which the AC report discussing the complaint in question is discussed. However, failure to appear before the AC may not, in and of itself, lead to a decision that the respondent in question has breached accountability rules.

This Step should take no more than 2 weeks. This step is skipped if there are no respondents in a complaint.

Step 4. The AC will compile a full report detailing the facts of the case, whether or not the respondents breached accountability rules, as well as recommendations. Recommendations should address the specific case (i.e removing a respondent from a committee) and, if applicable, should provide recommendations for policy change aimed at improving accountability policies and procedures, in order to avoid repetition of the same or similar accountability breaches in the future. This report must be passed by majority vote of the AC. Should there be a significant minority (two or more members of the AC), then these members may write a dissenting opinion which will be attached to the report.

When a complainant is simply commenting on or suggesting changes to accountability rules and procedures, the report will not include recommendations regarding a respondent. It include recommendations of the AC regarding the issues raised by the complainant, and any other recommendations the AC believes are pertinent to bring forward in the report.

This step should take no longer that 2 weeks.

Step 5. The chair of the AC will present the report at the first possible Council after it is completed. The report should be posted on vibe and made publicly available as far in advance of the meeting as possible.

The respondent must be provided a copy of the final report in advance of its being posted publicly or brought to council. The respondent may then request that the report be read in confidential session; this request is granted automatically. If this request is granted, then the report will not be made publicly available unless it is adopted by Council.

Council, upon hearing the report, will be asked to debate it and answer two questions *separately*:

1. Does Council agree or disagree with the AC's assessment of the culpability of the respondent?

- If this is so, by a majority vote of council, then the entire report must be made public and council transitions out of confidential session if it was in confidential session.

- If this is not so, then an edited version of the report- from which the names and titles of the respondents have been expunged- will be made public. If council is in confidential session, the session will continue as long as council discusses any details which may identify the respondents.

- If a majority of Councillors abstain, then the report is automatically sent back for two weeks of review by the AC, and must be placed on the agenda of the next council meeting.

2. Does council agree with:

a) the respondent-specific recommendations:

(The options for council here are: Yes by majority vote, Yes with amendments, No, Abstain (back to AC for review))

b) the general recommendations

(The options here are: Yes by majority vote, Yes with amendments, No, Abstain (back to AC for review; should Yes or Yes with amendments be selected by council, it must undertake to make the appropriate constitutional and/or bylaw changes as soon as possible after the decision is made.)

A respondent or complainant unsatisfied with the outcome of the case may appeal to the JBoard

2. Investigations

These are essentially complaints put forward by the AC itself and will follow the same steps as outlined above (as applicable.)

3. Committee Surveillance

The AC will monitor the meeting frequency, attendance, minutes, and productivity of each SSMU committee.

Committee chairs will be contacted if their committee is not meeting. If this does not resolve the problem, the accountability committee will bring the matter to Council.

Yearlong timeline:

September:

- Recruit all members of AC
- Send attendance forms on google drive to all committee chairs
- Retreat and council training, test

October:

- Send faculties warning re: faculty survey for councillors. Inform them of role of councillors.

- Begin collecting data for mid term reports, mid-term exec reviews

November:

- Surveys sent to Faculty associations for midterm reviews. Interviews with exec, select councillors

- Committee review with 'problem' committees
- Begin completion of reviews

December:

- Send out all reviews publicly

January:

- Submit at least one accountability recommendation to council
- Begin final reviews

Feb-March:

- Second faculty survey sent
- Finish and present final reviews, interviews

Reviews: Structure

1. Sources: surveys, media, constitution, Council/GA minutes, SSMU records, interviews (interviews done for all execs twice a year; interviews done for councillors whose performance or attendance is especially concerning or commendable)
2. General introduction to role (specific for execs; generalized for councillors)
3. Performance review (for execs this MUST include a full discussion of each point of their portfolio, as laid out in the constitution. For councillors this must include a discussion of their faculty survey results, if available)
4. Summary statement
5. Recommendations and directions.

Recommendations are strong suggestions which the AC feels will improve the performance of the official in question in a matter that will be beneficial to students but may not necessarily be laid out in the constitution or relevant bylaws.

Directions are notices that a councillor or exec MUST alter their practices or behaviour in order to comply with SSMU policy, bylaws, or the constitution. Failure to heed a direction will result in the official being placed on probation for one month. If they fail to amend their behaviour, the matter shall become an accountability complaint and will ultimately be referred to council once the AC has compiled a report and recommendations.

Scores: there will be no report scores in order to avoid sensationalization and to promote the actual reading of the reports by the public. In addition, we recognize how difficult it would be to assign an objective numeric value to the score.

All reports are public once they are presented to council, and must be communicated to the campus media. All officials about whom reports are written must be

given the opportunity to read the report at least three days prior to publication, so that they may request the correction of factual inaccuracies in the report. A record of all such interactions will be kept and must be produced by the AC if council requests it; council must initially review this information in a confidential session, and may make it public only after weighing the importance of doing so against the unwarranted harm it may do to the official about whom the report is written.

Officials may also ask the AC to explain the reasoning behind their recommendations; this may be done before and after publication. The AC may change its report prior to publication if data used in the writing of the report is updated or shown to be inaccurate.