



**Submitted for: November 29th, 2018**

## **FALL 2018 ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **1. Context and Background**

The Accountability Committee is a committee of the Board of Directors and is mandated to hold Officers, Senators, Directors and Councillors accountable to their obligations and responsibilities under the Society's governing documents, including a performance evaluation once per semester.

This report is being delivered verbally to Legislative Council and submitted to the Board of Directors as a written submission only as has been historical precedent (2016-2017).

### **2. Process and Guiding Principles**

The Accountability Committee is comprised of four Members-at-Large who may not be Councillors or Directors and three Directors who may not be Councillors. For the Fall 2018 semester, the Committee was unable to have Directors meeting the stated criteria on the committee as they were unavailable. We anticipate to have this resolved for the Winter 2019 semester.

With the four voting Members-at-Large, the Accountability Committee was able to meet its quorum and continue to hold meetings.

The process adopted by the Accountability Committee in developing the Fall 2018 Accountability Survey was based on the guiding principles of:

- ❖ Equity;
- ❖ Constructiveness;
- ❖ Fair assessment; and
- ❖ Quantitative assessment and qualitative feedback.

#### **2.1. Quantitative Assessment**

Under these guiding principles, the Accountability Committee referred to the 2016-2017 Accountability Survey and proceeded to develop a set of more descriptive and relevant criteria for assessment of Executives and Councillors. The Accountability Committee also



decided to have a more comprehensive set of criteria for Executives to allow for a more holistic evaluation of their performance.

Working under the guiding principles, the Accountability Committee determined that the following dimensions would be fair and appropriate measures of Executive and Councillor performance:

- ❖ Availability/Approachability in Office Hours (Executives only)
- ❖ Responsiveness (email, etc.) (Executives only)
- ❖ Fulfilment of Mandate/Platform (common)
- ❖ Participation During Council (common)
- ❖ Constructiveness During Council (common)
- ❖ Effort to Speak French (experimental/ungraded)

The quantitative assessment was originally formatted in a Google Form but the Accountability Committee found that a multidimensional assessment was not well suited to the enforced width restrictions of Google Forms. The Accountability Committee therefore opted to use print surveys which followed the following procedure:

- ❖ Distribution of surveys and instructions in both English and French
- ❖ Collection of surveys by the Member-at-large of the Accountability Committee
- ❖ Tri-party custody of the surveys at all times once completed
- ❖ Opening and tabulation of survey results with three Members present at all times
- ❖ Secure destruction of the surveys once tabulated
- ❖ Calculation of averages for each dimension, multiplication by ten, and conversion to a letter grade based on McGill's standard grading scale

## **2.2. Qualitative Feedback**

To complement the quantitative assessment, the Accountability Committee also wanted to create an opportunity for Councillors to share constructive feedback concerning the Executives.

To ensure the process was done as equitably as possible, the following process was devised and implemented:

- ❖ Confidential session with Executives mandated to leave the room
- ❖ Brief introduction and presence of a Member-at-Large from the Accountability Committee
- ❖ Opening of the floor for Councillors to share their questions, concerns, comments, and feedback on the Executive as a whole and individual Executives



- ❖ The opportunity for Councillors to submit written comments anonymously
- ❖ Review of qualitative comments by the Accountability Committee to determine whether they were appropriate for discussion in public or confidential session
- ❖ Delivery of comments to the Executives at Executive Committee two weeks before Legislative Council
- ❖ A mandate from Accountability Committee for the Executives to address each of the comments in either public or confidential session, depending on the sensitivity of the comments

### **3. Learnings for Future Improvement and Next Steps**

The Accountability Committee appreciates that the Accountability Survey and qualitative feedback mechanisms are an important tool in ensuring the accountability of Councillors and Executives. However, throughout this process, we have observed the arbitrary nature of an ordinal ranking system and do not believe it to be a helpful or productive process.

The Accountability Committee has already undertaken proposed revisions to its Committee Terms of Reference to be presented to Legislative Council at the first meeting of the Winter 2019 semester. The Committee envisions removing the survey from its mandate and instead serving as a body to receive complaints and help facilitate improvements to the Council environment on an ongoing basis throughout the year as is already stipulated in the Terms of Reference.

The Accountability Committee also welcomes additional suggestions from Executives and Councillors on how to improve the Accountability Survey process.

Beginning in mid-February 2019, the Accountability Committee will also undertake a performance review of the elected Senators with results being reported back to Legislative Council and the Board of Directors.

In early-March 2019, the Accountability Committee will undertake the second performance review of Councillors and Executives.



#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Executives: General Comments From Individuals

Executives as a whole are working much better this year than in prior years and Councillors appreciate the time and effort being put into the SSMU by the Executive (x5).

Work still needs to be done on more clearly communicating this work to Council and to the Membership.

Executives as a whole need to ensure that when reporting, they do not skip over potential issues of concern that would stimulate discussion. They should address these issues without needing Councillors to ask specific questions during reports.

Executives need to take more ownership for submitting reports on time and ensuring that committees under their portfolio submit a report by the deadline so Councillors can review the reports before Council.

Important concerns raised on certain male executives not completing their GSVP training before the start of their terms and still have yet to complete it.

Councillors would appreciate if Executives could be more accessible outside their office hours for meetings given different schedules.

Moving of late motions by Executives is wholly unacceptable but the practice appears to have been remediated after the Speaker's intervention.

The Executive response to the former VP External's Facebook post regarding the CAQ was not ideal and the delay before any action was taken was deemed unacceptable.

Availability & Approachability in Office Hours	Responsiveness (email, etc.)	Fulfilment of Mandate/Platform	Participation During Council	Constructiveness During Council
A	A	A-	A-	A



#### **4.2. Executives: President Tre Mansdoerfer**

Responds to emails and answers questions from Councillors and constituents promptly and in a way that inspires confidence in the work of the Society (x2).

A concern that the President does not fully address or answer questions but instead refers to them as “good points” without further clarification.

#### **4.3. Executives: Vice-President (Finance) Jun Wang**

The financial ethics committee has not met yet this year despite that it is almost December and the presentation from Lester Asset Management occurred several weeks ago.

Concerns that the VP Finance assumes that those that interact with him have limited or no understanding of finance to the point that it comes across as condescending.

The club banking transition could have been managed better (e.g., long delays in receiving replies to emails, lack of clear communication, dismissiveness).

#### **4.4. Executives: Vice-President (Student Life) Sophia Esterle**

Appears to lack engagement during meetings of Legislative Council and it is difficult to assess her involvement due her nonchalant attitude.

#### **4.5. Executives: Vice-President (Internal) Matthew McLaughlin**

Councillors would specifically like to have the VP Internal respond to why the SSPN report (re: Children of the Corn) was postponed on November 1st to November 15th when the VP Internal had knowledge that he would be in Nepal on non-SSMU business (x2).

The delayed hiring of Francophone Affairs Commissioner for more than two and a half months with no explanation or communication with members of the Francophone affairs committee meant that the committee could not meet or do any work.

#### **4.6. Executives: Vice-President (University Affairs) Jacob Shapiro**

No specific comments provided.



#### 4.7. Councillors

Specific comments not solicited.

Fulfilment of Mandate/Platform	Participation During Council	Constructiveness During Council
A	C+	B-

#### 5. Concluding Remarks

Councillors wanting to see their individual scores on each of the dimensions are invited to contact the Speaker of Council at [speaker@ssmu.ca](mailto:speaker@ssmu.ca).

We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the Fall 2018 Accountability Survey and wish you success on your final exams and a wonderful winter break!

SIGNED AND RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED on behalf of Accountability Committee,

**Husayn Jamal**  
Speaker of Council

**Samuel Haward**  
Parliamentarian