



REPORT: ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

2020-03-26

Submitted for: March 26, 2020

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.

A full version of the report was delivered verbally to the Board of Directors (2020-03-19) prior to the submission to Legislative Council.

2. Process and Guiding Principles

The Accountability Committee is composed of four Members-at-Large who may not be Councillors or Directors and three Directors who may not be Councillors.

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.

2.1 Quantitative Assessment

Under these guiding principles, the Accountability Committee referred to the 2018-2019 Accountability Survey and proceeded to develop a set of more descriptive and relevant criteria for assessment of Executives and Councillors.

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 to Questions/Requests (Executives only)
- Fulfilment of Mandate/Platform (Executives)
- Participation During Council (Councillors only)
- Constructiveness During Council (common)
- Conduct in/Respect for Elected Office (Executives)
- Conduct during Meetings (Councillors only)
- Effort to Speak French (Executives only)

Reflecting on changes from the 2018-2019 survey:

- The dimension of Fulfilment of Mandate/Platform was removed as a dimension of a measure of Councillor performance. However, it remained as a dimension when concerning the performance of Executives.
- The dimension of Conduct in/Respect for Elected Office was added as a dimension in regards to measuring the performance of Executives.
- The dimension of Participation During Council was removed as a dimension for measuring the performance of Executives.
- The dimension of Effort to Speak French was changed to become a permanent and graded dimension for Executives.
- The dimension concerning Conduct was split into two options (Conduct in/Respect for Elected Office and Conduct during Meetings), to reflect the nuances between the roles of Executives and Legislative Councillors.

The quantitative assessment was also offered to be completed through print surveys.

These surveys followed the following procedure:

- Distribution of surveys and instructions in both English and French
- 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

In January 2020, the Accountability Committee completed its then-mandate of quantitative assessments of Councillors and Executives. Quantitative surveys were distributed on the 2020-01-30 Legislative Council.

Given misunderstandings on the scale system, responses from certain Councillors were omitted, to prevent any statistical misconceptions, or the presence of statistical outliers.

Furthermore, the feedback of Councillors that have since resigned/been removed has also been removed from consideration as well, and are not included in any average tabulations.



2.2 Qualitative Assessment

A qualitative assessment was not completed.

3. Learnings for Future Improvement and Next Steps

After consultation with various Councillors, as well as review of the raw survey data, it is clear that misunderstandings regarding the scoring rubric were common. As such, the Accountability Committee recommends that the Speaker and Parliamentarian, during the distribution of the Survey in years' following, explain further the process of scoring, reminding Councillors of its 1-10 (worst to best) structure.

Given the large number of Councillors/Executives that must be scored across numerous dimensions, the Accountability Committee recommends that going forward, the completion of the survey is split across two meetings. This will be done in order to mitigate the potentiality of respondents feeling rushed, granting Councillors more time to more accurately and fairly score Councillors.

Though in years' past, the survey has been completed twice per year (once per semester), the Accountability Committee recommends shifting the survey model to a one-per-year model, with the survey being conducted in late October/early November. This is largely due in part to the fact that the presentation of the second survey's results provides little opportunity for improvement, given the late presentation of the results in the second semester.

Given the rise of the practice of submitting late motions in sessions of Legislative Council, the Accountability Committee would look favourably on the addition of a dimension reflecting Councillors' adherence and respect of the adopted Standing Rules, as well as other dictating codes of procedure (ex. Robert's Rules, Internal Regulations - Governance, etc.).

As well, noting the numerous announcements/reminders made by the Speaker concerning behaviour during Legislative Council (especially concerning the livestream), the Accountability Committee recommends revising the dimension regarding conduct during meetings of Legislative Council to enhance Councillors' understanding of the dimension to ensure scores submitted in that regard are better reflective of reality.

Lastly, the Accountability Committee would also recommend including consulting further dimensions of quantitative evidence for certain dimensions, namely, the tracking of both absences from Legislative Council, as well as absent and/or late reports.



Alternatively, in years' past, there has been notable discussion regarding the potential abolition of the survey conduction in its entirety, given its potentially-perceived lack of usefulness. As such, this item will be brought forward to the 2020-2021 Accountability Committee for further discussion.

4. Results

4.1. Executives: General Comments

Availability/ Approachability in Office Hours	Responsiveness to Questions/ Requests	Fulfillment of Mandate/ Platform	Constructiveness During Legislative Council	Conduct in/Respect for Elected Office	Effort to Speak French During Meetings
B+	B	B	C+	B-	C

4.8. Councillors

Participation during meetings of the Legislative Council	Constructiveness of contributions during meetings of the Legislative Council	Conduct during meetings of the Legislative Council
B	B+	A



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5. Conclusion

Councillors wanting to see their individual scores on each of the dimensions are invited to contact the Speaker of Council at speaker@ssmu.ca.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the Fall 2019 Accountability Survey.

SIGNED AND RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED on behalf of the Accountability Committee,

Lauren Hill
Speaker of Council

Wing Wong
Parliamentarian