



**Students' Society of McGill University**

Tel: (514) 398-6800 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | ssmu.ca

3600 McTavish St., Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3

*Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories*

# EQUITY POLICY

Adopted by Legislative Council: 2018/04/05

Expires: 2023/01/01

[Adopted Motion \(Link\)](#)

## Background

The Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) has a longstanding history of advocating for issues of equity and social justice. The development of formal mechanisms for addressing equity concerns has been in a constant process of critical reflection and growth over the past three decades.

The SSMU has a responsibility as a leader, representative, and service provider to a diverse membership to conduct itself by the highest standards of respect, fairness, integrity, safety, and equitable treatment for all persons. Furthermore, the SSMU strives to create a community that addresses the imbalance in social standards to create and uphold a safer space for all of our members, where discourse and diverse ideas can flourish within a respectful atmosphere. This Policy recognizes that the practice of equity requires the dedication of material support to reduce intersectional barriers for marginalized groups who may benefit from targeted resources. The Leadership pillar of the Preamble of the SSMU Constitution describes the following:

“All of the Society’s endeavours shall be undertaken with full respect for human dignity and bodily sovereignty and without discrimination on the basis of irrelevant personal characteristics that include but are not limited to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, language, sexual orientation or social class. The Society commits to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection. The Society shall be mindful of the direct and indirect effects that Society businesses and organizations have on their social, political, economic, and environmental surroundings. The Society commits itself to groups, programs, and activities that are devoted to the well-being of a group disadvantaged because of irrelevant personal characteristics as outlined above.”

## 1. Interpretation

1.1 The SSMU will promote a functional, anti-oppressive environment through:



1.1.1. Recognizing that historical and ongoing processes of oppression disadvantage and harm certain groups of people;

1.1.2. Taking proactive steps to challenge the current and historical processes that affect the safety and well-being of these groups, and the actions, attitudes, and assumptions that result from these processes of oppression.

1.1.3. Acknowledging that certain groups of people knowingly or unconsciously benefit from these processes;

1.1.4. Using gender-neutral language in all documents, electronic and written correspondence from SSMU addresses, and in the workplace. This shift shall be implemented systematically under the supervision of the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs).

1.1.5. The SSMU will actively support projects and policies that aim to end oppression or to promote accessibility and inclusivity in the McGill community.

1.1.6. The SSMU and its affiliated Clubs and Services will not condone organizations that continue to promote or engage in discrimination, harassment or harm to members of the Society within the definition of oppression as per the policy.

1.1.7. SSMU-facilitated equity training(s) must be provided to all elected officers and representatives, members of the Board of Directors, Judicial Board members and student staff on a yearly basis.

1.1.8. Decision-making bodies within the SSMU invoking the Equity Policy must consult the Equity Commissioners as a part of their consultation process.

1.2 The SSMU recognizes that groups that have been historically and culturally disadvantaged are subject to systematic marginalization and oppression, and condemns harassment or discrimination based on but not limited to: gender identity, gender expression, age, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability, language, size, or social class.

1.2.1. The SSMU regards harassment and/or discrimination on these bases as serious offences that undermine its constitutional commitment to respect, as outlined in the preamble of the SSMU Constitution.

1.2.2. Programs or activities whose purpose it is to improve the conditions of, or provide safer spaces for groups that have been historically and culturally disadvantaged are not deemed discriminatory or oppressive by advocating for specific resources, conditions and spaces to address the social and systemic barriers they face.



1.3 This Policy should be applied in such a way as to ensure that the rights of marginalized students are not further compromised as a result of a Complaints process. This includes ensuring that students are respected and not subjected to undue stress or disparagement.

1.4 This Policy is to be applied in such a way that uplift the perspectives and voices of members of the society that have been historically disadvantaged by various systems of oppression, and ensures respect for these members during discussion on campus that implicate their identities.

1.5 The SSMU recognizes that, historically, language has been used both to empower and to silence marginalized and oppressed peoples. To that effect, the SSMU commits to ensuring that its communications practices are inclusive, accessible, and anti-oppressive, respecting diverse language styles and methods of communication.

1.5.1. As such, no sanctions may be imposed by the SSMU or any of its representatives for the use of profanity or informal language with the following conditions:

- a. this protection should be applied in such a way as to ensure that profanity can be used expressively to illustrate severity or evoke emotion;
- b. notwithstanding 1.5.1. does not extend to any conduct that would itself constitute a discrimination, abusive language, or personal attacks;
- c. the use of profanity is, furthermore, discouraged in office settings and must be accompanied by a content warning in published communications.

1.5.2. Lastly, the SSMU commits to use of accessible, plain-spoken language, avoiding jargon and overly technical language in published communications. This shift shall be implemented systematically under the joint supervision of the Vice-President (Internal Affairs) and the Communications Department.

## 2. Scope

2.1 This Policy shall apply to:

2.1.1. Staff, elected representatives, operations, Clubs, and Services, of the Students' Society of McGill University.

2.1.2. All activities and events hosted, funded, and promoted by the Society and SSMU-affiliated Clubs and Services.

2.1.3. Written or graphic material, which is published, distributed, endorsed, or funded by the Society.



2.1.4. Activities, events, campaigns, and promotions held in the William Shatner University Centre.

2.2 An Equity Complaint may be deemed outside the jurisdiction of the SSMU if the subject matter of an Equity Complaint involves:

2.2.1. Physical or sexual assault;

2.2.2. Persons or bodies outside the jurisdiction of the SSMU, including, but not limited to, McGill Administrative units, faculty members, Libraries, and Student Services.

2.3 In the event that a Complaint falls outside the jurisdiction of this Policy, the Equity Commissioners may serve as a resource in referring the Claimant to the appropriate channels.

## 3. Definitions

For the purposes of the Equity Policy, the following definitions apply:

3.1 **Bad faith:** An intentional dishonest act demonstrated as failing to fulfill the obligations outlined in this Policy.

3.2 **Equity:** the recognition and respect of equality of opportunity. Equitable treatment involves acknowledging and respecting diversity and actively addressing the barriers that prevent equal inclusion, opportunity and recognition due to ongoing and historical oppressions and power dynamics.

3.3 **Diversity:** the existence of differences in needs and relations, among individuals and groups based on, but not limited to gender identity, gender expression, age, race, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability, language, size, or social class.

3.4 **Oppression:** relations of domination and exploitation resulting from historically and culturally constructed ideologies of superiority and inferiority. These relations of power result in individuals or groups being systematically subjected to political, economic, cultural, or social injustices.

3.5 **Privilege:** an unearned advantage or immunity knowingly or unknowingly held by a group of persons in a position of power. This is typically used to the disadvantage of others and maintained by systems of oppression.

3.6 **Marginalization:** the exclusion and relegation of certain individuals and groups to positions of lesser value, power, and access to opportunity within society.



**3.7 Disadvantage:** a circumstance or situation that puts an individual or group in an inferior or less favourable position compared to others, resulting in compromised access to resources or opportunities.

**3.8 Discrimination:** the differential treatment of an individual or group, typically to their disadvantage, on the basis of their perceived status or characteristics.

**3.9 Good faith:** An intentionally honest or sincere fulfillment of an obligation outlined in this Policy.

**3.10 Harassment:** any behaviour, act, comment, or display that demeans, and/or causes personal, psychological, or social harm to an individual or group, including acts of intimidation or threat.

**3.11 Intersectionality:** the recognition that individuals may experience interconnected systems of oppression differently, in varying configurations and degrees of intensity. This recognizes the larger structures of oppression that form and work in conjunction with each other to produce “certain identities.”<sup>1</sup>

**3.12 Equity Officer:** a member of the Equity Complaints Committee responsible for responding to Complaints, including Informal and Formal Resolutions Processes.

**3.13 Complaint:** a formal written allegation of a violation of the Equity Policy to the Equity Officers.

**3.14 Incident:** an instance of alleged violation of the Equity Policy.

**3.15 Claimant:** the person or group who has experienced (an) alleged incident(s) and has filed a Complaint against the Respondent.

**3.16 Respondent:** the person against whom a Complaint is brought.

**3.17 Support person:** an individual who a Claimant and/or Respondent may request to accompany them throughout the Complaints process.

**3.18 Private space:** a mutually agreed upon location where Mediation can take place that allows for the respect of confidentiality.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Kimberle Crenshaw Intersectionality NOT identity”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPtz8TiATJY>, August 17th 2017. Patricia Hill Collins essay, “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas” the term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructing phenomena.



**3.19 Conflict of interest:** a situation in which a person's interests may affect or be perceived to affect their ability to make a fair decision, such as the presence of pre-existing social relationships or the possibility of personal, financial, or professional advancement. See Article 7 for instances of conflict(s) of interest.

## 4. The Equity Triage

4.1. All internal operations of the Students' Society of McGill University will strive to prioritize service to Student Groups that serve or represent disadvantaged communities as defined by this Policy.

4.1.1. These internal operations comprise, but are not limited to the Operations, Communications, Information Technology, Human Resources, and Accounting Departments.

4.2. This prioritization will take the form of a Triage system, whereby equity-seeking Student Groups will be given expedited access to operational services offered to student groups by the SSMU.

4.2.1. Examples of such services include, but are not limited to:

- a) graphic and web design services;
- b) the processing of accounting and honorarium request forms;
- c) room booking and event support;
- d) use of communication channels;
- e) IT support;
- f) support for hiring and other HR processes;
- g) the ratification or approval of governing documents and legal contracts; and
- h) the resolution of concerns or problems relating to the aforementioned services.

4.2.2. While the Human Resources Department is encouraged to equitably prioritize the voices and lived experiences of disadvantaged groups, this Equity Triage will not require the expedition of processes relating to Human Resources complaints or resolutions thereof.

4.3. Equity Triage systems will be implemented gradually across the implicated Departments of the SSMU, under the supervision of the relevant Executives and Department Heads.

4.4. The Vice-President (Student Life) in collaboration with the Communications Department, will be responsible for ensuring that all Student Groups are made aware of the services and resources available to equity-seeking groups.



## 5. Equity Complaints Committee

5.1 The Equity Complaints Committee shall be responsible for responding to Complaints, including Informal and Formal Resolution.

5.2 The Equity Complaints Committee will be comprised of the following Equity Officers:

5.2.1. The two (2) Equity Commissioners;

5.2.2. The Vice-President (University Affairs);

5.2.3. One (1) member of the Executive Committee as selected by the Equity Commissioners following the election of the incoming SSMU Executive Committee.

5.3 The Equity Officers must have received adequate equity training.

5.4 If a Complaint is against one or more Equity Officer(s), the Equity Officer(s) shall recuse themselves from the Complaints process.

5.4.1. If a Complaint is against the Vice-President (University Affairs), it shall be referred to the President.

5.4.2. In the case only one or no Equity Officers are available to conduct the Complaints Process due to recusals or Complaints being brought against them, the SSMU Judicial Board shall conduct the investigation as per Article 5.7.

5.5 Upon receiving a Complaint, one or both Equity Commissioners will respond, in consultation with the VP University Affairs.

5.5.1. A different Equity Officer shall facilitate the Formal process than was designated to respond in the Informal Resolutions Process.

5.6 If a Complaint involves a Club or Service of the Society, the Vice-President (Student Life) will be notified.

5.7 The Equity Complaints Committee may consult other members of the Executive Committee as required in seeking the Resolution of a Complaint.

5.7.1. Complaints will be investigated by the Equity Officer(s). Members of the Executive Committee may be consulted on procedural matters as required.



## 6. Equity Complaint Process

### 6.1 Submission of an Equity Complaint

6.1.1. All Complaints shall be submitted in writing, or addressed in writing, in either French or English, to the Equity Complaints Committee through an online form.

6.1.2. All Complaints submitted will be investigated, provided the Claimant is willing to assist the Equity Officers in a capacity that will not put their personal safety or the safety of any other individual or group at risk.

6.1.3. Equity Officers shall be empowered to seek any information that is not explicitly confidential.

6.1.3.1. Parties involved in the Complaints Process who have been asked for information may reject the Officer's request if they are not at liberty to disclose such facts that would involve the party breaching a legally binding code of compliance.

6.1.4. After the submission of an Equity Complaint, the Equity Officers must outline, either in writing or in person, the limits of the Policy to any implicated parties.

6.1.5. Any individual who does not wish to participate in the resolution process is not obligated to do so; however, this does not prevent remedies from being recommended to the Board of Directors.

### 6.2 Review and Limitations of the Policy

6.2.1. Upon reception of an Equity Complaint, Equity Officers will assess whether the Complaint falls within the scope of the Equity Policy as per Article 2.

6.2.2. Should the Complaint fall outside of the scope of this Policy, the Claimant will be notified of the finding by writing.

6.2.2.1. In such situations, the Equity Officers may act as a resource in referring the Claimant to the appropriate channels, including other governance or representative channels of the Society, as appropriate.

6.2.2.2. Equity Commissioners shall be empowered to be proactive in reaching out to student groups to provide recommendations when appropriate.





6.2.3. If there is not enough evidence to support a Complaint and the Equity Officers are unable to issue a recommendation, they must provide the Claimant with an explanation to this regard.

6.2.4. Claimants should be aware that there is a six-month time limit for filing a Complaint at the SSMU, unless it is determined that the delay was incurred in good faith and no substantial prejudice will result to any person as a result of the delay.

6.2.5. In the event that the Complaint or ensuing process was made in bad faith, the Claimant will be subject to the same possible remedies as the Respondent. The person unjustly accused of an Equity Policy violation will be given the benefit of any necessary remedies.

### 6.3 Unsubstantiated Complaints

6.3.1. If there is not enough evidence to support the complaint, or if the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Equity Policy, the Investigators will be unable to issue a recommendation. At which time they must provide the Claimant with an explanation of why the Complaint cannot be pursued as per the terms of reference of this policy.

6.3.2. In the event that the Complaint or ensuing process was made in bad faith, the Claimant will be subject to the same possible remedies as the Respondent.

### 6.4 Informal Resolution Process (Mediation)

6.4.1. An Equity Officer will be identified as a mediator, to initiate and facilitate an ameliorative dialogue between all parties concerned in a Complaint.

6.4.1.1. The Claimant, Respondent, or supervising Equity Officer(s) may request for an external qualified person to act as a third party mediator in order to facilitate the mediation upon consensus approval by the Equity Complaints Committee.

6.4.2. The mediator will begin to help the parties settle the Complaint within 10 working days of the Complaint's submission and complete the Mediation within 20 working days, unless an extension is needed.

6.4.2.1. The timeline to respond to an Complaint is outlined in articles 6.6.1 to 6.6.3 which mandates the following:

6.6.1. The Equity Complaints Committee must forward the complaint filed by the Claimant to the Respondent within three (3) business days after the complaint is filed;



6.6.2. The Respondent must file a response to the Complaint within five (5) days of the filing of the Complaint by the Claimant;

6.6.3. If the Respondent fails to file a response within five (5) days of the filing of the Complaint, they may file a response within an additional three (3) business days, but must provide reasons for the delay which will be reviewed and evaluated by the Investigators. The Investigators may reject the response on the basis of the provided reasons.

6.4.3. The mediator should not be involved in investigating the Complaint, and should not be asked to represent the SSMU at any stage of any proceedings related to the Complaint.

6.4.4. The mediation will take place in a private space.

6.4.4.1. Either party has the right to request separate private spaces for mediation without reprisal.

6.4.5. Either party has the right to refuse mediation, without reprisal.

6.4.6. If implicated parties are unable to reach a resolution upon the conclusion of the mediation process, the Complainant and/or Respondent may engage the Formal Resolution Process.

## 6.5 Formal Resolution Process (Investigation)

6.5.1. The Claimant shall make a written record of the incident, including dates, times, locations and a detailed account of the incident. The Claimant will forward the written record of the incident as follows:

6.5.1.1. To the Equity Officers, unless it is a Complaint against one or more of the Equity Officers.

6.5.1.2. To the Speaker of Council, if it is a Complaint against one or more of the Equity Officers. The Respondent will be made aware of the allegations against them and has the right to respond as to whether they will be participating in the Formal Investigation.

6.5.2. The investigators will investigate the Complaint thoroughly. An investigation will involve:

6.5.2.1. An interview of the Claimant, the Respondent, and any witnesses.



6.5.2.2. A detailed record shall be kept of interview minutes and sent to both the interview subject and the investigators for confirmation of accuracy. The Claimant, Respondent and witnesses interviewed have a responsibility to cooperate in the investigation, and act in good faith.

6.5.2.3. Obtaining all pertinent information from the Claimant, informing the Respondent of the details of the Complaint and obtaining their response, interviewing any witnesses, providing the Claimant and the Respondent with all of the allegations and responses of the other party or of witnesses to allow them to respond, determining whether the Equity Policy violation has occurred, recommending appropriate remedies.

6.5.3. To preserve the integrity of the Complaint process, everyone involved is required to cooperate with the investigation and maintain the confidential nature of the Complaint as per Article 6. Failure to cooperate will constitute bad faith.

6.5.4. Depending on the nature and severity of the complaint, the remedies for Policy violation include, but are not limited to:

- a. Letter(s) of apology;
- b. Suspension of the Respondent from their position within the SSMU and its affiliated Clubs, Services, or Independent Student Group;
- c. Suspension of financial support by the SSMU for Clubs, Services, or Independent Student Groups that violate this Policy;
- d. Dismissal of the Respondent from their position within the SSMU;
- e. Any other remedy deemed to be appropriate and equitable by the Equity Complaints Committee.

6.5.5. Recommendations for Resolution made by the Equity Officers shall be ratified by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

6.5.5.1. If the Board of Directors does not approve the Recommendations for Resolutions made by the Equity Officers, the Recommendations shall be referred back to the Equity Officers for revision and presentation at the next session of the Board of Directors.

6.5.5.2. If the Board of Directors rejects the Recommendations following revision, it shall submit a reference to the SSMU Judicial Board explaining its reasons for withholding ratification.

6.5.6. Within a week of being ratified, the Equity Officers will submit the final report to the General Manager. The Claimant and Respondent will also be provided with a copy of the final



report. The report shall consist of but is not limited to facts, full explanations detailing the ways in which the violations outlined in the Complaint contribute to the system of oppression and and recommendations with the reasoning behind them.

6.5.7. In the case of more serious or complex violations, the Claimant may be recommended to seek resolution via the administrative processes of the University, or an external legal source. The Claimant may do so regardless of the Claimant's recourse to the SSMU Equity Complaints Investigation Committee.

## 6.6 Formal Complaints Timeline

6.6.1. The Equity Complaints Committee must forward the complaint filed by the Claimant to the Respondent within three (3) business days after the complaint is filed.

6.6.2. The Respondent must file a response to the Complaint within five (5) days of the filing of the Complaint by the Claimant

6.6.3. If the Respondent fails to file a response within five (5) days of the filing of the Complaint they may file a response within an additional three (3) business days, but must provide reasons for the delay which will be reviewed and evaluated by the Investigators. The Investigators may reject the response on the basis of the provided reasons.

6.6.4. Five (5) days following the filing of the complaint by the Claimant the Investigators may interview the Claimant and the Claimant's witnesses. The Investigators have ten (10) days from this point to do so.

6.6.5. Ten (10) days following the filing of the complaint by the Claimant the Investigators may interview the Respondent and the Respondent's witnesses, if a response has been provided. The Investigators have ten (10) days from this point to do so.

6.6.6. Fifteen (15) days following the filing of the complaint by the Claimant, the Investigators must provide all material gathered during the interview process to both the Claimant and the Respondent. Additionally, the Investigators must provide the Claimant with the response filed by the Respondent.

6.6.6.1. The Respondent and the Claimant shall have three (3) days to respond to this material and file their responses with the Investigators.

6.6.7. Twenty (20) days following the filing of the Complaint by the Claimant, the Investigators shall begin the review of all the material (complaint, interview and responses etc.) and draft a report containing but not limited to facts, reasons and recommendations regarding the complaint. The Investigators shall do so within 10 days of the start of this process.



## 6.7 Judicial Board Review

6.7.1. Appeals to the Equity Complaints process are submitted and handled by the Judicial Board.

6.7.2. The Claimant and/or the Response can submit appeals:

6.7.2.1. Up to ten (10) days from the day the Formal Resolution Recommendations have been communicated to all parties if the Claimant and or Respondent feel that a fair outcome was not reached.

6.7.3. In the case that Claimant or Respondent wishes to appeal the decision ratified at Board of Directors, the Claimant and/or respondent may appeal to the Judicial Board following the submission procedure outlined on the Judicial board website or by contacting the Chief Justice of the Judicial Board.

## 7. Confidentiality Rules

7.1 Confidentiality of the Equity Complaint must be respected at all times during the resolution processes, in consideration of the following restrictions:

7.1.1. The Equity Officer facilitating a complaint will provide those implicated in a Complaint (witness, complainant, respondent) have enough information to fully participate and respond to the stage(s) of the equity complaint they are involved in.

7.1.2. A Claimant who seeks informal or formal resolution must be prepared to be identified to the Respondent in name.

7.2 Everyone involved in a Complaint will be made aware upon initial communication of their responsibility to ensure confidentiality in all their verbal, written and taped communication, formal and informal, to respect the right to fair process for the Claimant and Respondent.

7.3 Any electronic documents shared between the Equity Officers, Claimant and Respondent will be confidential.

7.4 Personal information regarding a Complaint will only be shared in connection with those responsible for administering this Policy, investigating and processing the Complaint, determining appropriate remedies or sanctions, or for a consistent and related purpose.



7.5 When the resolution is discussed by the Board of Directors, a confidential session will be declared, and all names and identifying features of the Claimant and Respondent will be omitted.

## 8. Conflicts of Interest

8.1 Upon receiving an Equity Complaint, Equity Officers must declare any conflicts of interest as individuals and/or as a whole.

8.2 Any Equity Officer who declares a conflict of interest regarding an Equity Complaint must abstain from all stages of conflict resolution, including informal and formal resolution.

8.3 Failure of an Equity Officer to declare a known conflict of interest regarding an Equity Complaint will result in review or suspension from the Equity Complaints Investigation Committee, at the discretion of the other members of the committee based on the seriousness of the violation.

## 9. Right to a Support Person

9.1 Throughout all Equity Complaint resolution processes, the Claimant and the Respondent have the right to be accompanied at any and all times by a Support Person.

9.1.2. The Claimant or Respondent may request that the SSMU provide a Support Person. Such individuals can be chosen amongst the membership of the SSMU Equity Committee and should be trained in anti-oppression principles and active listening.

9.2 Any interviewing or questioning may be paused to allow the Support person and their party to discuss an issue or question privately. The Support Person may take notes and give advice to the party they are supporting.

9.3 The Support Person may not be a supervisor of either the Claimant or the Respondent.

9.4 If the Support Person is not able to fulfill their role (ie. Using their position to intimidate another party in the complaints process instead of providing emotional support to the person who requested them), Equity Officers make seek appropriate remedies such as imposing boundaries in writing or request that the Claimant/Respondent be accompanied by a different Support Person.

9.5 The Support Person's role is not to present or respond on behalf of either a Respondent or Claimant.



## 10. Consultation with Student Groups

10.1 Throughout the resolution process Equity Officers are encouraged to consult relevant student groups for advice during the process of resolving a complaint while not disclosing any personally identifiable details of either party implicated in the Complaint.

10.2 While confidentiality must be respected, student groups should be consulted in instances where Equity Officers:

10.2.1. Feel a particular perspective is not being adequately represented throughout the process.

10.2.2. Believe the Resolution would significantly affect a particular student group.

## 11. Accountability and Reporting

11.1 Recommendations arising from the informal or formal resolution processes shall be provided to both the Claimant and the Respondent in writing.

11.2 All documents pertaining to Equity Complaints will be archived for a minimum period of three (3) years. They must be kept confidential.

11.3 The Board of Directors and the Executive Committee are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Policy as well as integrating principles of anti-oppression, inclusivity and diversity into all activities of the SSMU.

11.3.1 Failure to fully and adequately address or manage Equity concerns within these bodies' respective procedures is sufficient grounds for members-at-large, staff, and representatives to file an Equity Complaint and/or bring the issue to the SSMU Accountability Committee.

11.4 The Report of the Equity Committee to the Legislative Council will include a general summary of the number of Complaints received and the status of resolutions.



## APPENDIX A

The SSMU's history has seen extensive student organization against sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination on the local, university, provincial, federal, and international levels. Numerous SSMU services and student groups have a strong commitment to equity, safety, and the creation of safe(r) spaces for its membership, including but not limited to Queer McGill, the Union for Gender Empowerment, the Black Students Network, the Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society, Walksafe, and Drivesafe. Dozens of SSMU Clubs and affiliated student groups also share a commitment to equity and anti-discrimination in their mandates.

Civil rights movements over the last 450 years have shown the impact of universities and students on progress in equity issues. From the struggles for women's rights to francophone rights to queer rights; the SSMU and its members have played an active part in the struggle for fair treatment and personal sovereignty. Much of the SSMU's commitment to equity comes from the responsibility of university organizations to create safe havens from the rest of society, where marginalized persons can come together and create communities where they are supported in combating systemic oppression.

In 1989, the SSMU defined itself as an “anti-oppressive” organization. This was an important step in defining ourselves as leaders in the field of equity. By incorporating anti-oppression practice into the SSMU, the understanding of equity was extended beyond the simple relationship of person-to-person isolated events of harassment and discrimination into an in depth evaluation of the situation of certain groups that leads to a lack of access and respect in society for those groups. This method for evaluating and addressing injustice, discrimination, and inclusion is utilized by many non-profits across North America and is a staple in academic discourse surrounding social movements.

“The SSMU—an organization working with individuals, in groups, within organizations, and across a wide social and political context—shall promote a functional anti-oppressive environment that fosters a culture of respect and facilitates our mission of Service representation and leadership.” [Approved by the Legislative Council on March 14, 1989]

Since this 1989 decision, the 1990s saw a great deal of development in the SSMU's work on equity. The creation of a VP Equity (by splitting the VP University Affairs position) was proposed and rejected by the Legislative Council in 1992-1993, and again in 1996-1997, for reasons most likely related to a lack of confidence that this was the best allocation of resources. The Legislative Council soon after created the position of Equity Commissioner, who was given the responsibility of managing the Equity Committee and taking a proactive position in addressing equity issues at McGill.

McGill University created the Joint Senate Board Committee on Equity in 1994. Today, this Committee has grown into an umbrella group with six subcommittees on Women, Racialized and Ethnic Persons,





**Students' Society of McGill University**

Tel: (514) 398-6800 | Fax: (514) 398-7490 | ssmu.ca

3600 McTavish St., Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3

*Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories*

Indigenous Peoples, Queer People, Persons with Disabilities, and Family Care. The effectiveness of this structure is still in question, and undergraduate students have taken an active role in pushing for equitable practices at McGill. In 2004, McGill created its first interim Policy on Harassment. In 2005, it established the Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) Office as an outreach unit for the McGill community. In years to come, the recommendations of the Principal's 2009 Taskforce on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement will likely see some changes to the way McGill addresses diversity and inclusion on its campuses.

Since 2005, the SSMU Equity Policy has gone through its most intensive processes of review and implementation as Equity has grown in importance to our membership. The most important developments in the Policy over this time period have focused on the protocol for addressing violations of the Policy, the delegation of responsibility, and settling of disputes over equity matters. The current Equity Policy is the culmination of these ongoing conversations and the work of the SSMU Equity Commissioners during the 2017-2018 year.

Amended by Legislative Council: 2020/10/08

Amended by Legislative Council: 2020/11/05