



# MOTION REGARDING THE ADOPTION OF THE ACADEMIC WELLNESS PROPOSAL 2021-01-28

Submitted for: 2021-01-28

<b>Submitted to:</b>	SSMU Legislative Council	<b>Document no.:</b>	LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-01-28-005
<b>Moved by:</b>	Maheen Akter <i>VP (Student Life)</i>	<b>Current Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Libby Williamson <i>Arts Representative</i>		

## Issue

The Mental Health Commissioner and the Mental Health Advocacy Coordinator have been working with a group of other students to create an Academic Wellness Proposal in order to address the need for upstream solutions to student mental health. As outlined in the proposal, post-secondary students continue to indicate academics as their top source of mental distress, and so this proposal can be considered a preventative alternative to the “band-aid” approaches that focus solely on crisis intervention and service provision. To reflect and foster a system-wide approach, this proposal includes evidence-based recommendations for administration, teaching staff, and the SSMU.

## Background and Rationale

As per Subsection F of the [SSMU Mental Health Policy and Three-Year Plan](#), the Mental Health Commissioner and the Mental Health Advocacy Coordinator have collaborated with members of the Mental Health Roundtable to create the [Academic Wellness Proposal](#) as well as a set of corresponding [Guiding Principles](#).

Both documents have been developed in alignment with the Mental Health Commission of Canada’s 2020 Standard, *Mental health and well-being for post-secondary students*, as well as relevant documents from McGill, peer institutions, and relevant organizations. Examples of the recommendations within the document include training for teaching staff in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a commitment for the administration to regularly review and update institutional policies and practices in accordance with mental



health, and a restructuring of assessment methods to be more equitable to mental health needs.

In order to ensure that this proposal becomes a reality, it is necessary to have it be a) officially adopted as part of the SSMU Mental Health Policy and Three Year Plan, b) promoted to the SSMU community, and c) endorsed by the SSMU Executives and Legislative Council, so that it can be institutionally enshrined. This is key in facilitating the next step of having it be officially adopted by McGill, which will require a considerable amount of work on the part of the SSMU Mental Health Team, with support from members of the SSMU Legislative Council and various Committees of Senate.

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### Alignment with Mission

This proposal was created as part of the mandate of the Mental Health Policy and Three Year Plan, adopted in Winter 2020, particularly in alignment with the Vision presented in the Mental Health Policy and Subsection F of the Three Year Plan. We believe that this proposal is also aligned with the Equity Policy, as the proposal is meant to support all students, but especially students with mental illnesses and diverse needs, in our high-stress academic environments.

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### Consultations Completed

When first created in September 2020 this proposal was much narrower in scope. After initial consultation with McGill's Teaching and Learning Services and various students who have been working on academic accessibility, the proposal has significantly broadened in scope.

After expanding and further developing the proposal to reflect a holistic, comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to mental health in academia, the proposal has been brought once again to TLS, as well as to the VP University Affairs, the JBSCE Subcommittee on Persons with Disabilities, and the Mental Health Roundtable for further consultation. This is in addition to the document being inherently informed by our ongoing dialogue with individual students as well as student groups.

These consultations have provided feedback that has strengthened the proposal and ensured that it not only adequately addresses the mental health needs in our learning environments but that it may actually be adopted by McGill Senate.

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## Risk Factors and Resource Implications

There are no serious risk factors involved with this proposal, however the ultimate goal in adopting this officially as part of the SSMU Mental Health Policy and Plan is to ensure that it is passed at McGill Senate and implemented on a University-wide scale. Due to the nature and structure of the Senate, it may take a considerable amount of time to get this passed, possibly longer than this academic year allows.

This underscores how it is essential that the proposal becomes an official part of the SSMU Mental Health Policy and Plan. This will ensure that it is enshrined in institutional memory so that the work that is being done can be seamlessly and efficiently continued, in the coming years and by future members of the SSMU, for as long as necessary.

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## Sustainability Considerations

The Academic Wellness Proposal and corresponding Guiding Principles do not present any sustainability complications due to their nature. However, the endorsement and implementation of the proposals do pose a positive opportunity for social sustainability in the forms of equity and accessibility.

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## Impact of Decision and Next Steps

Should this motion pass, the SSMU Mental Health Policy & Plan is to be updated to include *Appendix A: Guiding Principles* and *Appendix B: Academic Wellness Proposal*.

Upon approval of the Academic Wellness Proposal, the SSMU-specific proposals (*Student Feedback, Institutional Accountability, Publicizing Students' Rights, Promotion & Maintenance of WellnessWorld*) will be pursued and implemented under the direction of the Mental Health Commissioner, the Mental Health Advocacy Coordinator, the VP University Affairs, and the VP Student Life.

Furthermore, the SSMU's Student Senators and members of the Committees of Senate shall collaborate with the Mental Health Commissioner and Mental Health Advocacy Coordinator in the advocacy and implementation of the Administration- and Teaching Staff-specific proposals. This includes, but is not limited to, the successful presentation of the Academic Wellness Proposal to the Senate within the Winter 2021 semester.



**Motion or  
Resolution for  
Approval**

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve as an appendix to the SSMU Mental Health Policy and Plan, and endorse its application internally and to bodies of Senate, the documents in Appendix A.

**Results of the  
Vote**

In favour (26)  
Opposed (0)  
Abstain (2)

APPROVED



## Appendix A : Relevant Appendix

[Academic Wellness Proposal](#)

[Guiding Principles](#)

APPROVED