



REPORT: ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

2021-01-14

Submitted for: January 14, 2021

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.

2. Process and Guiding Principles

The Accountability Committee is composed of five Members-at-Large who may not be Councillors or Directors and up to two Directors who may not be Councillors.

The process adopted by the Accountability Committee in developing the Fall 2020 Accountability Survey was based on the guiding principles of:

- Equity;
- Constructiveness;
- Fair assessment;
- Quantitative assessment;
- Qualitative assessment.

2.1 Quantitative Assessment

Under these guiding principles, the Accountability Committee referred to the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Accountability Surveys 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)

3. Changes from the 2019-2020 Accountability Survey

Reflecting on changes from the 2019-2020 survey:

- The survey was conducted virtually (as opposed to both paper and digital copies).
- Optional opportunities to submit qualitative feedback were provided, in cases in which the dimensions failed to capture relevant perspectives and information.
 - The Committee chose to utilize a practice of the 2018-2019 survey, allowing opportunities to provide qualitative feedback for Executives.
 - The 2020-2021 Committee also chose to include a qualitative feedback opportunity for Legislative Councillors/Council-at-large.
- The scoring system reverted to the 10-point system, as opposed to utilizing the McGill grading system in determining performance. Such was done due to the fact that using an academic, largely irrelevant grading scale seemed ineffective, as well as the fact that keeping scores as numerical values better represented the nuances of an individual's score.
- Executive performance is no longer simply averaged, and each Executive's performance is highlighted individually in public session, as to promote transparency within the SSMU.

4. Methodology

These surveys followed the following procedure:

- Distribution of surveys and instructions in both English and French.
- All surveys dimensions were ranked from a scale of 0 (worst) to 10 (highest), followed by optional qualitative feedback opportunities.
- Survey collection took place over winter break, to ensure Councillors had an adequate amount of time, to ensure that survey results remained accurate and thoughtful.
- All completed surveys were anonymized.
- All qualitative comments were generalized and anonymized.
- All feedback was averaged, to receive the mean score of each Councillor, on each given dimension.



Given misunderstandings on the scale system (such as believing that the scoring was based on a 1-5 scale), responses from certain Councillors were omitted, to prevent any statistical misconceptions, or the presence of statistical outliers.

5. Learnings for Future Improvement and Next Steps

Though instructions for completing the survey were communicated to Councillors, there nevertheless appeared to be a disregard for the instructions, noting that numerous Councillors continued to provide feedback for themselves, regardless of the fact that the instructions stated not to.

Furthermore, though the Committee had distributed the survey at the beginning of the winter break as to allow Councillors an extended amount of time, the trend of 'rushing the survey' nevertheless continued, with some Councillors picking '10' on every single dimension for every single Councillor, seemingly without merit. Going forward, the Accountability Committee should further instill the importance of the survey to Councillors, and the Councillors should be mindful that their disregard for accurate scoring reflects poorly on them, as well as misrepresents the performance of Councillors.

Though in years' past, the survey has been completed twice per year (once per semester), as a result of recent amendments to the committee's Terms of Reference, the Accountability Committee will now be conducting the survey once per Legislative Council year. Ideally, the survey should continue to be completed over winter break, with the survey results being presented at the first Legislative Council of the winter semester. This is due to the fact that the winter break allows Councillors to fill out the survey at a time of their choosing, reducing the likelihood that the survey is completed in a 'rush' fashion. As well, presentation at the first Legislative Council session of the winter semester provides Councillors sufficient time to reflect and improve.

Though there were some issues, the Committee recommends continuing the practice of conducting the survey over winter break. This ensures that Councillors have enough time to sufficiently complete the survey, with enough time to provide meaningful feedback.

The Accountability Survey did remarkably well in acclimating to the COVID-19 pandemic, being instituted in a fully digital form. Going forward, unless otherwise specified, it is recommended that the survey continue to operate completely digitally, as a means of reducing the burden of manually inputting scores, and ensuring that papers are not misplaced.

Though such a dimension was unfeasible this year, given the pandemic, it is recommended that the 2021-2022 Accountability Committee consider revising the dimension regarding conduct during



meetings of Legislative Council, to highlight specific items, such as behaviour during the livestream, guest speakers, etc., to ensure that scores are better reflective of reality.

The inclusion of opportunities for qualitative feedback was included in the survey, to better provide an opportunity to provide feedback on an individual’s performance that otherwise, may not be reflected within the set survey dimensions.

Regarding next steps, the full report (including Councillor score) will be presented to the Board of Directors in a confidential session. As well, following the presentation of the report, all Councillors will receive an email from the Speaker, detailing their scores.

6. Results

6.1. 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
8.8	8.5	8.6	8.1	8.8	7.0

6.2. Executives: President Jemark Earle

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
8.7	8.3	8.8	8.2	9.2	8.0

Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

- Should participate more in discussion and debate, given that he is the spokesperson of the Society, and offers a unique perspective.
- Very eloquent speaker.
- Excellent in his position of President.
- Keeps meeting proceedings moving efficiently.



- A natural leader.
- Utilizes concise language allowing all to understand.
- Encouragement to speak more French in Council.
- Considerate towards all Councillors, including those who have differing opinions.
- It is apparent that President Earle cares deeply about doing his job well, reflected in his fulfillment of his mandate.
- President Earle would benefit Councillors and Executives by playing a more active and assertive role in describing, substantiating, and, when needed, defending the actions taken by the Executive Council.

6.3. Executives: Vice-President (Student Life) Maheen Akter

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
8.9	8.6	8.8	8.3	8.9	6.7

Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

- Respectful during meetings.
- Great in her role as VP Student Life.
- Very eloquent in her answers.
- Very kind and respectful to all Councillors.

6.4. Executives: Vice-President (Finance) Gifford Marpole

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
8.9	9.0	8.8	8.6	9.0	6.3

Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

- Very approachable and knowledgeable in his position.
- Takes the position of VP Finance seriously.



- Exceptional in his role as VP Finance.
- Respected by all.
- Should contribute more in Council, as the position of VP Finance can give a lot of insight into determining the best course of action for SSMU on many issues, and Legislative Council could benefit from VP Marpole's eloquence and knowledgeability.

6.5. Executives: Vice-President (External) Ayo Ogunremi

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
8.2	7.7	8.0	7.5	8.9	7.0

Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

- Very professional conduct.
- Lack of urgency and conciseness in delivering information hinders constructiveness and responsiveness grades.
- VP Ogunremi may benefit from working on speaking more concisely during Legislative Council.
- Participated consistently in discussion during the Legislative Council, providing thoughtful and thorough answers to questions. He has consistently done so not only regarding his own portfolio, but also in discussions pertaining to other executives and their portfolios, displaying dedication to his teammates.

6.6. Executives: Vice-President (University Affairs) Brooklyn Frizzle

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
9.1	9.2	8.4	8.0	8.1	7.0



Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

- A pleasure to work with.
- Eloquent in their responses.
- Has shown a perceived willingness to progress a personal/highly contentious agenda, which can hinder constructive dialogue at times.
- Has a strong constitutional understanding.
- Very skilled in the position.
- Looks out for various student groups that may otherwise be underrepresented in council.
- Could consider making their interventions in Council more concise, as to limit the amount of times their statements are repeated, and to ensure that statements are easily understood.
- Should consider ensuring that their responses to those with opposing opinions do not come off as aggressive.
- VP Frizzle is by far the most engaged member of the SSMU Executive in the Legislative Council.
- Takes concern with the way VP University Affairs Frizzle responded to the motion considering the clarification of an international position. It appeared that they seemed to reduce the experience of some Chinese students, which was even more concerning considering that at past Legislative Councils, Chinese gallery members had described experiencing racism and targeted harassment in the controversy stemming from the statement, and could assume the VP University Affairs had been made aware of the use of anti-Asian racial epithets in the comments of the Facebook post featuring the statement. Though sure it was not VP Frizzle's intention to reduce the lived experiences of these students, they nevertheless hope to see more care in their discussion of such topics in the future.
- Defends their own views with patience and assertiveness, while ultimately displaying a clear dedication to working towards compromise and effective solutions.

6.7. Councillors

Participation during meetings of the Legislative Council	Constructiveness of contributions during meetings of the Legislative Council	Conduct during meetings of the Legislative Council
6.6	6.9	8.3

Qualitative Comments/Concerns:

Given the sensitive nature of numerous comments, as well as the fact that individual Councillor feedback will remain private, no comments will be revealed.



That being said, it should be noted that all Councillors should remain respectful to other Councillors as well as the Dais, both during meetings, as well as on private chats during meetings.

The Speaker encourages all Councillors to be mindful of the amount of time they speak during Council meetings, as to better allow a more fruitful discussion, containing multiple, diverse perspectives.

Councillors should refrain from personal attacks/acts of perceived aggression towards their peers and the Dais, and to conduct themselves respectfully and calmly during interventions.

Please note that the Speaker, General Manager, and Governance Manager are available to speak to if you have any concerns (including interpersonal) related to the Legislative Council. Further note that the Accountability Committee is available for any Councillor to launch an Accountability complaint.

7. Conclusion

We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the Fall 2020 Accountability Survey.

Signed on behalf of the Accountability Committee,

Lauren Hill
Speaker of Council

Wing Wong
Parliamentarian