



NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE SSMU 2024-03-21

Submitted for: 2024-03-21

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2024-03-21-001
Moved by:	Alexandre Ashkir <i>President</i>	Current Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Aishwarya Rajan <i>Arts Representative</i>		

Issue

In an effort to respond to student feedback and continue improving SSMU's operations, this motion seeks to pave the way for increased accountability to the student body and the governing bodies on individual mandates and larger decisions. Accountability is a necessary tenet of Union operations and the Accountability Plan (Appendix A), along with the revitalization of the Accountability Committee (Appendix B) will outline SSMU's desired goals and the steps that must be taken to achieve these goals.

Background and Rationale

SSMU is aware of the criticism it has received over the years and has long grappled with how best to address concerns related to transparency and accountability. Following lengthy discussions among SSMU actors and wide-spread calls for change, SSMU is introducing the 'Accountability Plan' which will inspire a new era of student governance at McGill University and bridge the gaps between students and their Union.

Similar initiatives in the past, such as the McGill Student Union Democratisation Policy and the Five-Year Plan, have addressed related concerns, but not focused on the topic of accountability so directly.



Accountability should always be a core tenet of SSMU operations and should, in an era of widespread dissatisfaction from the student body, be the main initiative spearheaded by SSMU Executives.

Accountability, therefore, requires a complete overhaul of SSMU culture, as well as new strategies to introduce and normalise realistic methods for achieving high standards. The Accountability Plan in Appendix A will provide the necessary information for ushering in a new era of SSMU and, once completed, increase student satisfaction.

Alignment with Mission

This motion is in line with the SSMU's Mission as it will seek to improve SSMU's ability to achieve each facet of its mission, by improving the quality of services, encouraging better representation, and showing more transparent leadership moving forward.

Items within the Accountability Plan also draw their core principles from several key policies at SSMU, including the McGill Student Union Democratisation Policy and the Accessibility Policy.

Consultations Completed

This motion and the added plan were completed by the President and the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator. The Governance Manager, HR Director and Equity & Policy Specialist were consulted to discuss the actionable aspects of the plan, including the creation of the Accountability Commissioner position. The VP Finance was consulted to ensure sufficient funding and verify the financial procedure for creating a new position within SSMU.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

The addition of the Accountability Commissioner, as is outlined in the Accountability Plan, will require funding for an additional employee position. However, the importance of the role and its function cannot be underscored and is an investment into the future of SSMU as an organisation.

The Accountability Committee has had consistent issues in membership and this may continue despite the implementation of new Committee terms of reference. However, the change in membership composition will alleviate this concern and make recruitment an easier process than before.



Sustainability Considerations

Having clear mechanisms for accountability will ensure the longevity of SSMU as an organisation dedicated to student concerns. Additionally, many mandates of SSMU actors intersect with the core tenets of sustainability, and this Plan will ensure these mandates are explicitly followed, increasing the amount of sustainable-focused actions that will occur.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If approved, the new Accountability Plan will immediately go into effect as a plan of SSMU and will expire in May 2029. The office of the President and the Human Resource department will be responsible for the hiring of the Accountability Commissioner, who will assist the President in undertaking the actionable items of the Plan alongside their created mandate.

If this motion fails, accountability will remain a priority for SSMU, but there will exist no improved mechanisms or proposals on how best to implement it, which problematizes SSMU's functional ability to enforce accountability.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the Accountability Plan, as provided in Appendix A.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the Committee Terms of Reference, as provided in Appendix A.

Be it resolved that the SSMU Legislative Council adopts the actionable aspects of this Plan and any grammatical or legal changes necessary do not need the re-approval of the Legislative Council.

Be it further resolved, that the Board of Directors consider this for ratification at their next Board meeting.

Results of the Vote

In favour ()
Opposed ()
Abstain ()



Appendix A : Accountability Plan

Accountability Plan

Appendix B: Accountability Commissioner Job Description

Position Summary

The Accountability Commissioner will be SSMU's key person on matters relating to accountability, transparency, and mandate compliance. They will chair the Accountability Committee, lead initiatives to enhance accountability at SSMU, collaborate with executives on the yearly executive transition, and monitor the implementation of policies and special projects related to accountability.

The role also involves actively monitoring adherence to mandate timelines and working closely with various committees and Executives to promote effective administration and adherence to organisational goals and mandates.

Responsibilities

1. Chair the Accountability Committee (non-voting).
2. Devise resources and projects aimed at improving and creating accountability at SSMU.
3. Work with the outgoing executive team to develop mechanisms to ensure accountability in the annual executive transition and beyond.
4. Utilise the Accountability Plan as a guide for the development and implementation of accountability mechanisms at SSMU.
5. Monitor the Society's governance documents (Policies, Plans, Internal Regulations, and Constitution) to facilitate executive adherence to mandates and timelines;
6. Develop an annual project plan and timeline in consultation with the Executive Committee;
7. Along with the President, develop individual Executive Officer year-long plans based on current mandates and goals;
8. Work closely with the President to ensure the effective administration of the Legislative Council, Board of Directors, and General Assemblies;
9. Manage the development of special projects related to accountability, according to needs.

Qualifications Required

1. Experience in accountability roles.



2. Experience in policy development, implementation, and maintenance.
3. Experience in project management.
4. Experience in student governance or professional university settings.
5. Organisational and conflict-resolution skills.
6. Excellent verbal and written communication skills in both English and French.
7. Strong interpersonal skills and interest in positive community and personal development.
8. Self-motivated and able to operate with a high level of responsibility.

Additional Information

1. Paid position: \$17/hr
2. Hours: An average of 10 hours per week;
3. Supervised by the Office of the Governance Manager

Confidentiality:

It is understood and agreed that all matters to the SSMU and those clubs association or groups forming part of the SSMU are to be kept in the strictest of confidence, and nothing regarding the operations, policies and general activities of the SSMU or its constituent groups shall be divulged to any third party without the express consent of the General Manager and/or the Executive Committee of the SSMU.

At the SSMU, we are committed to fostering an inclusive, accessible environment, where everyone feels valued, respected, and supported. We are dedicated to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of our community. If you require accommodation(s) for the recruitment/interview process, please let us know and we will work with you to meet your needs.

Appendix C: Accountability Committee Terms of Reference

1. Accountability Committee

1.1. Oversight

The Accountability Committee shall be a Committee of the Board of Directors.



1.2. General

The Accountability Committee shall hold Officers, Senators, Directors and Councillors accountable to their obligations and responsibilities under the Constitution, Internal Regulations, Policies, and formal mandates. The Accountability Committee shall concern itself with how well the individuals carry out the mandates given to them for the fulfilment of the Society's mission, and not with matters pertaining to Human Resources such as workplace conflict or acts of violence. Such matters will instead be the responsibility of the Human Resources Committee and Human Resources Department.

1.3. Responsibilities

The Accountability Committee shall:

- Facilitate the collection of feedback regarding Officers, **Senators**, Directors and Permanent Staff and Student Staff, and Councillors on an ongoing basis throughout the year and raise these concerns privately with the individual(s) concerned to address issues of accountability as they arise, as they relate to the carrying out of mandated responsibilities.
- Consult representatives from clubs, services, faculty associations and other stakeholders for the purpose of performance evaluations, excluding those representatives under review at the time.
- Conduct annual reviews to monitor the overall adherence of Officers, Directors, **Senators** and Councillors to the Constitution, Internal Regulations, and their relevant mandates, including but not limited to attendance of Legislative Council, attendance at and participation in committee work, and fulfilment of other assigned activities.
- Inform Officers, Directors, **Senators** and Councillors when their actions conflict with or violate the Constitution, Internal Regulations or their relevant mandates, and suggest remedies.
- Collect feedback from Members and bring them to the individual(s) in question, the Executive Committee, or the Board of Directors, as the case may be.
- Preserving the anonymity of complainants unless it is waived by the complainant.
- When necessary, work with the Board of Directors or Legislative Council, as the case may be, to ensure remedies are adopted.
- Present a report to the Legislative Council at the end of each semester that summarizes the number of complaints received and how they were addressed **as it pertains to matters of SSMU actors as elected/representative officials if they are already publicly available, but will not include information that may infringe upon HR employment information.**
- **Manage all complaints pertaining to a failure to abide by mandate, lack of attendance to obligatory meetings, failure to complete important tasks in a timely manner, or failure to act as a sufficient representative.**
- Review and make recommendations to the Accountability Committee's terms of reference at the end of the year.



1.4. Membership

The Accountability Committee shall consist of:

- Accountability Commissioner (Committee Chair, non-voting);
- One (1) member of Dais (non-voting);
- SSMU's Governance Manager (non-voting, optional);
- One (1) member of the Human Resources department (non-voting, optional);
- One (1) Member at Large with experience sitting on a governing body of SSMU;
- Two (2) Directors, who may not be Councillors;
- Two (2) Members at Large, who may not be Councillors or Directors.

1.4.1. The members deemed 'optional' within the membership of the accountability committee shall refer to those individuals who will remain available for consultation and will be mandated to attend if their presence is requested by the Accountability Commissioner.

1.5. Meetings

The Accountability Committee will meet bi-weekly, unless an exception is made by the Accountability Commissioner.

1.6. Quorum

The quorum for the Accountability Committee is a simple majority of the voting members.

1.7. Reporting

The Accountability Committee will report to the last Legislative Council meeting in the Fall and Winter semesters. The Accountability Committee will also report to the first Legislative Council of the Winter semester, to present the report of the Accountability Survey.

1.8. Committee Specific

1.8.1. Recruitment

The Office of the Governance Manager shall be responsible for advertising openings for Members at Large positions not after the second week of September.