

Protocol on Staff Reporting Structure and Operational Authority

Updated as of 16-03-2026



Association étudiante de l'Université McGill
Students' Society of McGill University

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.
Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

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1. Scope & Purpose

1.1. This Protocol establishes the reporting structure, roles, and operational authority governing staff of the Society. The Society operates through a hybrid governance model consisting of elected officers responsible for leadership and strategic direction, and professional staff responsible for the administration and operations of the Society.

1.2. The purpose of this Protocol is to:

- a. Clarify reporting relationships among staff, the General Manager, and elected officers
- b. Establish the operational authority of the General Manager over staff and Departments
- c. Define the strategic role of Officers in guiding the work of the Society
- d. Provide guidance for collaboration between staff and elected officers while maintaining clear administrative oversight
- e. Ensure the efficient and accountable functioning of the Society's Departments.

1.3. This Protocol applies primarily to staff working within the Society's administrative Departments (the "Departments"), headed by Directors and supervised by the General Manager. Organizational charts illustrating reporting structures are provided in the Appendices.

1.4. This Protocol does not modify the ultimate authority of the Board of Directors as established under the Society's Governing Documents and applicable law.

2. Definitions

2.1. The following terms used in this Protocol shall have the same definitions as those given to the same terms used in the Constitution and the Internal Regulations of Governance.

- a. "Act"
- b. "Board of Directors"
- c. "Executive Committee"
- d. "General Manager"
- e. "Governing Documents"
- f. "Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary"
- g. "Officer"
- h. "Service"

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- i. “The Society” and “SSMU”

2.2. In this Protocol, unless otherwise indicated:

- j. “**Departmental Director**” shall refer to a senior staff member responsible for leading a Department of the Society and supervising staff within that Department.
- k. “**Department**” shall refer to an administrative unit of the Society responsible for a specific operational function.
- l. “**Executive Staff**” shall refer to staff positions that report directly to elected officers and support the Executives in advancing their initiatives, projects, and policy priorities.
- m. “**Departmental Staff**” shall refer to staff who report through the administrative hierarchy of Directors and the General Manager and are responsible for the ongoing operations and administration of the Society. This includes all staff working within the full-time Departments of the SSMU.
- n. “**Services staff**” shall refer to paid staff members of a Service.

3. Governance and Administrative Authority

3.1. Per the Act and the Governing Documents, the Board of Directors exercises ultimate authority over the affairs of the Society and is responsible for oversight of its management and administration.

3.1.1. The Executive Committee has the delegated authority of the Board of Directors between meetings as outlined in the Governing Documents.

3.2 The General Manager reports to the President and the Executive Committee and is accountable to them for the management of the Society’s operations.

3.4. Nothing in this Protocol limits the authority of the Board to review, amend, or override decisions made by the General Manager and Executive Committee where it considers it necessary to do so in the exercise of its governance responsibilities.

4. General Principles

4.1. The Society operates through a distinction between:

- a. Strategic leadership, exercised by the Officers;

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- b. Administrative and operational management is exercised by the General Manager and the Society's Departmental Staff.

4.1.1. Officers establish priorities and strategic initiatives that reflect the vision and mandate of the Society.

4.1.2. Departmental Staff are responsible for implementing these priorities through the Society's administrative systems, programs, and services.

4.1.3. Operational authority over the Departmental Staff rests with the General Manager. This includes responsibility for directing work, allocating resources, managing staff performance, and overseeing internal operations.

4.1.4. Executive Staff operate outside the administrative reporting structure described in this Protocol. Their primary function is to assist Officers in developing and implementing initiatives related to their portfolios.

4.1.5. Although Executive Staff do not report operationally to the General Manager, they remain members of the Society's staff and may consult with the General Manager as needed for coordination, guidance, or the resolution of administrative matters.

4.1.6. Similarly, paid Services Staff, by the nature of their positions, operate outside the reporting structure described in this Protocol, though they may also consult with the General Manager as needed.

4.2. This structure ensures that the Society benefits both from democratic leadership through its elected Officers and from consistent administrative management through its professional staff.

5. Administrative Reporting Structure

5.1. The General Manager is the overall supervisor of the Society's Departmental Staff.

5.2. Directors report directly to the General Manager. Staff within each Department report to their respective Director.

5.3. The Society currently maintains the following Departments, each headed by a Director or equivalent senior staff member:

- a. Human Resources — Human Resources Director

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- b. Accounting — Comptroller
- c. Student Life Operations — Student Life Operations Director
- d. Building — Building Director
- e. Communications — Communications Director
- f. Legal & Governance — Internal Counsel & Corporate Secretary

In addition, the following Departments report directly to the General Manager:

- g. Systems Administration
- h. Food & Hospitality

5.3.1. The General Manager may coordinate work across Departments as necessary to ensure efficient functioning of the Society.

5.4. The staff working within these Departments are responsible for the administrative and operational functioning of the Society. Staff within the Departmental structure of the SSMU receive operational direction through the administrative hierarchy rather than directly from elected Officers.

6. Relationship Between Officers and Operational Staff

6.1. The Officers, as the elected or appointed leadership of the Society, are responsible for crafting the vision, priorities, and strategic direction of the organization. Departmental Staff support the implementation of these priorities through the Society's programs, services, and administrative work.

6.2. While staff should ensure that their work aligns with the strategic direction established by the Officers, the Officers do not exercise direct supervisory authority over Departmental Staff within the Society's Departments.

6.3. Operational authority over Departmental Staff rests with the General Manager. This includes authority over matters such as, but not limited to, work assignments, project coordination, operational decision-making, disciplinary action, performance management, and internal administrative processes.

6.4. Officers may communicate priorities, objectives, and project goals to the General Manager, who is responsible for coordinating their implementation through the appropriate administrative channels.



7. Coordination of Work, Collaboration, and Strategic Alignment

7.1. To maintain clear accountability and effective management of staff, operational instructions to Departmental Staff are issued through the reporting structure outlined in this Protocol.

7.2. Officers should not ordinarily assign tasks or direct the work of staff within the Society's Departments outside of this structure. Requests, priorities, or initiatives from Officers should be communicated to the General Manager, who is responsible for coordinating their implementation through the relevant Departments.

7.3. The General Manager is responsible for translating the strategic priorities of the Officers into operational plans and coordinating their implementation through the Society's Departments. In doing so, the General Manager may assess operational requirements, determine appropriate staffing and timelines, and adjust Departmental work plans or allocate staff resources as necessary, while ensuring the continued functioning of the Society's core services and obligations.

7.4. Nothing in this section prevents informal consultation or collaboration between Officers and Departmental Staff. However, where a request would require staff time, operational resources, or a change in Departmental priorities, the General Manager should be informed so that the work can be properly coordinated.

7.5. The effective functioning of the Society depends on constructive collaboration between Officers and staff. Officers provide democratic leadership and policy direction, while staff contribute professional expertise, operational continuity, and institutional knowledge. Each plays a distinct and complementary role in advancing the Society's mission.

7.6. Departmental Staff must perform their duties in a professional and non-partisan capacity. Staff are expected to provide objective advice and to carry out their responsibilities impartially, regardless of changes in elected leadership. This professional neutrality supports the continuity, integrity, and effective administration of the Society.

7.7. Certain Departments require closer strategic collaboration with specific Officers due to the nature of their responsibilities. In these cases, the relevant Officer may be more closely involved in the strategic direction and priority-setting of the Department's work, while operational supervision remains with the General Manager.

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- a. **The Student Life Operations Department** is responsible for managing events and programming logistics within the Society. Internal events organized by the Society involve close collaboration with the Vice-President Internal. For events organized by external groups or non-Society partners, the Department may manage logistics without direct involvement from the Officers unless strategic considerations require their participation
- b. **Communications, Bar, and Café operations:** strategic collaboration with the Vice-President Internal e.g. regarding messaging, programming priorities, and student engagement.
- c. **Sponsorship activities:** strategic collaboration with the Vice-President Internal and Vice-President Finance.
- d. **Building Department:** strategic collaboration with the President e.g. regarding facilities priorities and major operational planning.
- e. **Legal & Governance Department:** strategic collaboration with the President e.g. on governance matters and institutional priorities.
- f. **Human Resources Department:** regular coordination with the President and Vice-President Finance e.g. for organizational matters affecting staffing and institutional operations.

7.7.1. The Vice-President Finance, by nature of their position and non-elected status, has more involvement in the day-to-day operations of the Accounting Department.

7.8. These relationships are intended to ensure alignment between the Society's political leadership and administrative functions without altering the operational reporting structure under the General Manager.

8. Amendments and Interpretation

8.1. The Board of Directors retains the authority to interpret and amend this Protocol.

8.2. Where questions arise regarding the interpretation of this Protocol, the General Manager may provide administrative guidance, subject to review by the Board of Directors where appropriate.

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Appendix A: Organizational Charts

 [Appendix A-Organizational chart.pdf](#)