

Committee improvement plan

Updated as of 2024-08-31



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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. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

In recent years, there has been difficulty in SSMU committees meeting quorum and achieving effective results based on their mandate. SSMU has also received constructive feedback that suggests a lack of participation is due to the over-bureaucratization of committees and their activities. To address these concerns, the SSMU completed a complete review of all committees and their activity to identify areas of improvement. Included in this document will be an overview of each committee's purpose, the necessary context or concerns that must be addressed, and the solution proposed by the SSMU. These will generally be divided into committees to be consolidated, committees to be altered, and other committee updates.

1.2. Effective Committees

Building off of the 2019 Policy on Effective Committees, all SSMU committees have and will continue to have the composition as outlined below:

- a) A SSMU Executive on the committee (except in situations where an Executive present goes against the premise of the committee).
- b) A SSMU student staff in a leadership role on the committee.
- c) At least 1 SSMU councilor (if a committee under Legislative council) or at least 1 SSMU director (if a committee under the Board of Directors).

Additionally, SSMU committees have the following expectations during the academic year:

- a) A SSMU committee will report at least once during the year to its respective body.
- b) A SSMU committee will make recommendations (if any) to its Terms of Reference at the end of each Academic Year.



- c) A SSMU Commissioner will submit an exit report highlighting the year's work for documentation purposes.

1.3. Chair Absence

In the event that the Chair of a committee is not hired by the beginning of the meeting of the Legislative Council or Board of Directors where Committee members are nominated, an Interim Chair shall be appointed from within the members of the Committee. The Interim Chair shall be the Executive Officer who sits on the Committee with the most expertise related to the Committee's

1.4. Recognition of Services

Although Committee roles are volunteer opportunities, the SSMU wishes to recognize the labor of the participating Members and demonstrate its appreciation for their contributions. To do so, all activities related to an official role on a committee shall be eligible to receive credits on the McGill's Co-Curricular Record, which officially recognizes students' participation in learning opportunities outside of the classroom. Additionally, committee members are strongly encouraged to include their participation in SSMU Committees on official applications, resumes, CVs, and cover letters, which will be verified upon request by the Committee Chair at their discretion.

1.5. Training of Chairs

At the beginning of each academic year, all Chairs of the SSMU Committees will be invited to an introductory session where they will receive training and resources on topics related to their duties as Chair of a Committee. This training will be mandatory (and paid) for all Staff and Executives maintaining a Chair role in a committee, and an invitation will be extended to all Executive Officers to attend. The training shall encompass topics such as meeting coordination, document preparation, and reports.

1.6. Subcommittees

Subcommittees may be formed from any committee of the Legislative Council or Board of Directors so long as an express need presents itself and the committee unanimously approves the formation of the subcommittee. The rules and regulations of committees shall equally apply to any sub committees formed under SSMU.

2. Committee Consolidation

2.1. Accessibility Committee

The Accessibility Committee confronts historical and ongoing inaccessibility and ableism on campus through active engagement and public education, in a manner consistent with the Society's relevant policies.

In recent years, the Accessibility Committee has acted as an advisory board for SSMU, but has struggled to complete actionable items that address SSMU and McGill accessibility concerns. The SSMU will continue to receive student feedback directly through increased contact between the Accessibility Commissioner and students with disabilities. In addition, the Vice-President (University Affairs) will organize regular contact with relevant student groups and offices, responding directly to student concerns to achieve concrete goals related to accessibility.

2.1.1. Mandate Allocation

- a) All items related to outreach to and discussion with students with disabilities about their experiences on campus shall be the responsibility of the Accessibility Commissioner via regular meetings with relevant groups and a semesterly town hall meeting on accessibility and disability.
- b) Advising the SSMU on issues of accessibility, including recommendations to address inaccessibility, shall be the responsibility of the Accessibility Commissioner.
- c) All items relating to the collaboration with other relevant groups and offices on campus and in the community shall be the responsibility of the Vice-President (University Affairs).

- d) All items related to monitoring the Society's compliance with Policies and Plans in relation to accessibility shall be a collective responsibility of the Accessibility Commissioners, the Vice-President (University Affairs), and the Accountability Commissioner.

2.2. Affordable Student Housing Committee

The Affordable Student Housing Committee explores avenues for securing and promoting affordable student housing, as well as advising developers regarding students' priorities in housing, as well as advising developers regarding students' priorities in housing arrangements, and design.

The Affordable Student Housing Committee was necessary to the design stage of the upcoming affordable housing created in partnership with UTILE. As the design stage is complete, the Committee is no longer required and its mandate can be dispersed between Executives, staff members, and the Milton-Parc Working Group.

2.2.1. Mandate Allocation

- a) All items concerning research and consultation on affordable housing shall be the responsibility of the Community Affairs Commissioner.
- b) All items concerning advocacy of and creation of educational resources related to affordable and social housing, tenants' rights, sanitary living conditions, and the decommmodification of the housing market shall be the responsibility of the Community Affairs Commissioner and Vice-President (External Affairs).
- c) The Vice-President (External Affairs) shall be responsible for sitting on the UTILE's governing body to continue consulting on their affordable student housing.
- d) The continued relationship between SSMU and students in regards to housing shall be managed by the Milton-Parc Relations Working Group.
- e) The Vice-President (External Affairs) shall coordinate with SSMU Executives and staff to ensure that the SSMU does not promote or invest in housing options that are inaccessible (such as Campus 1 MTL).
 - i) The Vice-President (External Affairs) shall similarly coordinate with the Vice-President (University Affairs) to advocate similarly for McGill University to divest from such companies.

2.3. Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee is responsible for leveraging SSMU's links with local community organizations to plan event series and connect McGill students when possible.

The Community Engagement Committee has had significant difficulty with fulfilling its mandate adequately due to its broad and unspecific nature as well as a lack of interest from community members in the committee in its current format. Additionally, all responsibilities of the committee can be better undertaken by either the Community Engagement Commissioner or the Milton-Parc Relations Working Group.

2.3.1. Mandate Allocation

- a) The Community Engagement Commissioner shall plan events that promote student involvement in communities in the wider Montreal area.
- b) The Milton-Parc Relations Working Group shall improve relations between McGill students and permanent residents in the Milton-Parc neighbourhood.
- c) The Community Engagement Commissioner shall work with organizations such as Campus Life & Engagement, Student Services, Branches, and student Community Engagement initiatives in order to further connect McGill students to local community organizations.

2.4. Equity Committee

The Equity Committee confronts historical and ongoing inequities at the University through institutional advocacy on governance and policy, and active engagement and public education, in a manner consistent with the Society's relevant policies.

The Equity Committee has significant overlap with several other committees at SSMU, leading to a lack of direction and difficulty maintaining membership. SSMU will continue to advocate for equity by directly supporting equitable groups and maintaining the Committees that address marginalized communities individually.

2.4.1. Mandate Allocation

- a) All items related to encouraging equitable practices and advising SSMU on equity issues shall be the responsibility of the Equity Commissioners.

- b) The collaboration with other equity groups and offices on campus shall be the responsibility of the Vice-President (University Affairs).
- c) All items related to monitoring the Society's compliance with Policies and Plans in relation to equity shall be a collective responsibility of the Equity Commissioners, the Vice-President (University Affairs), and the Accountability Commissioner.

2.5. External Affairs Committee

The External Affairs Committee confronts historical and ongoing inequities, as well as social justice initiatives at the University and beyond through institutional and governmental advocacy on governance and policy, and active engagement and public education, in a manner consistent with the Society's relevant policies. The committee is also responsible for ensuring the interests and needs of the Society's memberships are adequately represented in the External Affairs portfolio.

Much of the External Affairs Committee mandates intersect with the responsibilities of the External Affairs department staff and the Vice-President (External Affairs). Throughout the 2023-2024 year, the External Affairs Committee had consistent difficulties in recruitment and achieving quorum, inhibiting the ability of the Committee to accomplish its mandate. In order to facilitate efficiency and the completion of tasks, the responsibilities can be passed to their respective team members.

2.5.1. Mandate Allocation

- d) All items concerning mandate accountability and the completion of tasks shall be the responsibility of the Accountability Commissioner.
- e) All items concerning the support and mobilization of the student body for campaigns of SSMU relating to external issues will be the responsibility of the Political Campaigns Coordinators.
- f) The regular review of SSMU's affiliations with Provincial, Federal and International student associations will be the responsibility of the Vice-President (External Affairs).
- g) All research related to topics concerning the External Affairs mandates and campaigns will be the responsibility of the Policy and Mobilization Researcher and the Political Campaign Coordinators.
- h) The financial and budgeting for the External Affairs and Campaigns Budgets shall be the responsibility of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and the External Affairs Commissioner.
- i) It will be the responsibility of the entire External Affairs department to advise the

Vice-President (External Affairs) on current issues related to their portfolio, who must deliberate and determine the appropriate recommendations on official positions to bring to the Executive Team.

2.6. Health and Dental Review Committee

The Health and Dental Review Committee is responsible for reviewing the Health and Dental Plan and proposing options for improvements to the plan.

However, these plans are published in the late Fall (October/November) and their review does not require meeting throughout the rest of the academic year. Instead, we propose that the Health and Dental Review Committee become a Working Group, which will form upon the release of the Health and Dental plans and continue to function until the review of these plans is completed at which time the Health and Dental Working Group can create a report providing its suggestions and dissolve until the following year.

2.6.1. Mandate Allocation

All mandate items of the Health and Dental Review Committee shall be transferred to the Health and Dental Working Group which will continue its work to review Health and Dental Plans upon their release each Fall.

2.7. Library Improvement Fund Committee

The Library Improvement Fund Committee is responsible for the allocation of the Library Improvement Fund. It shall operate and be governed by the Internal Regulations of Representation and Advocacy.

Due to the heavy intersection between the Library Improvement Fund Committee and the responsibilities of the Library Improvement Fund Commissioner, the Committee shall be dissolved in favour of regular student consultation facilitated by the Commissioner, evaluation of proposals by the Commissioner, and approval of fund allocation by the Legislative Council.

2.7.1. Mandate Allocation

- a) The determination of the yearly allocation of the Library Improvement Fund shall be primarily headed by the Library Improvement Fund Commissioner in collaboration with the

Vice-President Finance, who will submit their proposal to the Legislative Council for approval.

- b) The Library Fund Commissioner shall be responsible for developing and maintaining a system for consultation and receiving proposals, either a town hall or survey format, to guarantee student and student group's involvement in the allocation of the Library Improvement Fund.
- c) The Library Fund Commissioner shall be responsible for determining the feasibility of proposals for uses of the Library Improvement Fund and developing those proposals most in line with the determined priorities of the Members of the Society.
- d) The Library Improvement Fund Commissioner shall be responsible for screening all proposals to ensure the fund is used to enrich library resources, and not to provide for regular operational costs.
- e) The Library Improvement Fund Commissioner, with support from the Vice-President (University Affairs) shall be responsible for running a fee-renewal campaign when the current Library Improvement fee is expiring.

3. Other Committee Remarks

3.1. Accountability Committee

The Accountability Committee holds Officers, Senators, Directors and Councillors accountable to their obligations and responsibilities under the Constitution, Internal Regulations, Policies, and formal mandates.

At the end of the 2023 year, the Terms of Reference and the mandates of the Accountability Committee were updated. Given the recency of these changes, the committee shall meet for the 2024-2025 academic year and provide a report to the Legislative Council on the effectiveness of the new committee structure and whether the committee's output is improving as intended.

3.2. Black Affairs Committee

The Black Affairs Committee confronts historical and ongoing inequities at the University through institutional advocacy on governance and policy, and active engagement and public education, in a manner consistent with the Society's relevant policies.

The mandate of the Black Affairs Committee has been updated to better reflect the goals of the committee. Additionally, the membership has been updated to include the new role of the Black Affairs Coordinator and to designate the Vice-Presidents (University Affairs & External Affairs) as voting members.

3.3. Building and Operations Management Committee

The primary responsibilities of the Building and Operations Management Committee shall be to provide strategic oversight and direction for the SSMU's physical operations, facilitate the disbursement of eighty-five (85) percent of the Space Fee on building improvements, and provide long-term objectives and goals for the management of the University Centre.

At the beginning of the 2024 year, the Terms of Reference and the mandates of the Building and Operations Management Committee were created. The Chair role has been designated to the Vice-President (Sustainability & Operations) to streamline the committee. Given the recency of these changes, the committee shall meet for the 2024-2025 academic year and provide a report to the Legislative Council on the effectiveness of the new committee structure and whether the committee's output is functioning as intended.

3.4. Clubs Committee

The responsibility of the Clubs Committee is the review and approval of Interim Club Status applications, Full Club Status applications, and Club constitutional amendments in accordance with the Internal Regulations of Student Groups. It shall also serve as a consultative body for the improvement of Policies related to the Society's Clubs.

In addition to the existing responsibilities, the Clubs Committee shall now conduct reviews of SSMU Full Status clubs to ensure their adherence to the Internal Regulations and their individual mandates.

This will also require a review of their current club constitution. To ensure unbiased assessment of clubs, only a subsection of the membership, specifically those without a conflict of interest as per the Conflict of Interest Policy, will be invited to such meetings.

3.5. Environment Committee

The Environment Committee shall serve as the representative body for all environment groups at the University.

The Environment Committee Terms of Reference has been updated to include member's voluntary ability to take on additional responsibilities and the voluntary additional responsibilities available to members.

3.6. Francophone Affairs Committee

The Francophone Affairs Committee serves as a forum to unite representatives from every francophone student group and association catering to undergraduate students. It fosters better communication and collaboration between these groups, in order to streamline their work and avoid redundancy. The committee serves as a space for advocacy for the academic rights of francophone students and helps create a sense of community for French speaking students.

The responsibilities of the Francophone Affairs Committee have been updated to include the management of the Francophone Affairs fee (if passed) and the maintenance of a list of all francophone groups on campus. Additionally, the recruitment process has been clarified.

3.7. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee assists the Vice-President (Finance) in the review of investments and fee proposals brought forward for consultation. The committee also makes recommendations regarding the long-term financial sustainability of the Society, as needed.

The responsibilities of the Finance Committee have been updated to align with the needs of SSMU. Particularly, the Committee shall be focused on the review of fee proposals and investments, still making recommendations to the Vice-President (Finance) at their request on certain budgetary matters. The membership of the Committee has also been simplified to reduce scheduling conflicts, ensure quorum is regularly met, and encourage participation. Finally, the reporting mandate has been adjusted to mirror the changes in responsibility laid out in the Terms of Reference to ensure the Board Directors receive both formal and informal updates about the Committee's actions.

3.8. Funding Committee

The Funding Committee is responsible for the disbursement of several fees under SSMU. Terms of Reference on page 29.

The membership of the Funding Committee has been updated to ensure that all positions will be adequately filled. Additionally, the Terms of Reference has been simplified to promote readability.

3.9. Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Committee

The Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Committee serves as a forum to unite representatives from every Queer student group and association, creating a safe environment for Queer students to voice their ideas and concerns about both the Society and the University. The Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Committee fosters better communication and collaboration between these groups, in order to streamline their work and avoid redundancy. The Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Committee is primarily responsible for increasing institutional visibility and advocating for increased representation and services for Queer students.

The responsibilities of the Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Committee have been updated to include the responsibilities previously held by the QUIPS subcommittee. The wording of the membership and the recruitment process has been clarified to ensure proper recruitment of relevant members.

Quorum has been adjusted to ensure the timely evaluation and distribution of QUIPS funding. Finally, quorum stipulations have been updated to ensure the Gender and Sexuality Commissioner is the only mandated member necessary to initiate a meeting to prevent circumstances where the committee may meet without their Chair.

3.10. Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy Committee

The primary responsibility of the GSVP Committee is to review investigations of the Anti-Violence Coordinators (AVCs) or third-party investigators as per the Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy, and to determine appropriate sanctions when complaints are found to be substantiated. Terms of Reference on page 54.

The GSVP Committee's Terms of Reference have been updated to include the HR Manager rather than the HR Director following the annulment of this position. The membership has also been updated to include trained staff members. As well, the responsibilities of the Committee have been updated to mandate the review and implementation of changes to the Terms of Reference at the end of each academic year.

3.11. Governance Reform Committee

The Governance Reform Committee reviews the Society's governance bodies, systems and structures with a view to making them reflective of our Mission.

The Committee's Terms of Reference have been updated to ensure the efficacy of the Committee and maximize the collaborative nature of the review process.

3.12. Indigenous Affairs Committee

The Indigenous Affairs Committee is primarily responsible for increasing visibility and advocating for increased representation and services for Indigenous Students. This Committee creates a safe environment for Indigenous students to voice their ideas and concerns about both the Society and the University.

The responsibilities of the Indigenous Affairs Committee have been narrowed to ensure the committee is able to complete its mandates effectively, with the annulled items instead becoming under the purview of the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner. Additionally, the voting rights of the membership of the committee have been adjusted to center the perspectives of members-at-large.

3.13. Mental Health Committee

The Mental Health Committee serves as a representative body for all mental health advocacy, events, and policy that are affiliated with the Society.

The subcommittees of the Mental Health Committee have been dissolved due to the redistribution of tasks among the Mental Health Commissioners, with the responsibilities of the Committee being updated to reflect more clear and actionable goals. Included in these actionable goals is the creation and maintenance of a Mental Health Plan, which will guide the Commissioner and Committee, as well

as SSMUmental health initiatives. Additionally, the membership has been expanded to include other mental health-related groups and services, but reduced in terms of SSMUinvolvement to refocus the committee on community support and encourage success in achieving the responsibilities outlined in the Terms of Reference.

3.14. Services Committee

The Services Committee serves as a consultative body for the improvement of Policies related to the Society's Services. In addition, the Services Committee serves as a forum for the Society's Services to discuss ongoing projects and collaborate with each other.

The Services Committee's membership has been updated to reflect the current distribution of responsibilities among SSMUstaff.

3.15. Services Review Committee

The Services Review Committee reviews every Service once every school year to ensure that they meet the definition and mandatory characteristics of a Service as set out in the Internal Regulations of Student Groups and to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of students.

The membership of the Services Review Committee has been simplified and the existing roles have been clarified to ensure proper interpretation of the Terms of Reference.

3.16. SSPN Committee

The Students' Society Programming Network (SSPN) Committee is responsible for the organization and execution of all Society events.

The responsibilities of the committee have been refocused towards actionable items and existing items have been clarified to ensure proper interpretation of the Terms of Reference. Additionally, a section has been added which outlines the mandated training all members of the Committee shall participate in to ensure better understanding and implementation of their responsibilities.

3.17. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for all matters relating to the operation and management of business at the Legislative Council.

The membership of the Committee has been updated to allow voting by members of the Governance department due to their expertise in the responsibilities of the Steering Committee. Additionally, the meeting timeline has been changed to advance the timeline for agenda approval.

3.18. Students Society of McGill for Maintaining Operations and Strategic Advancement Committee

The overarching work of the SSAMMOSA committee consists of updating and amending the Master Plan and tracking the progress towards and completion of the goals set out therein.

Henceforth, the SSAMMOSA Committee shall be renamed the 'Strategic Planning Committee' to clarify the goals of the committee and encourage participation. Additionally, the composition of the Committee has been altered to ensure more representation of Members and staff of SSMU, shifting the focus away from SSMU Executive Officers to encourage student participation. Finally, the timeline for reports to governing bodies has been updated to ensure adequate time to receive and implement feedback.