

Consultation Policy

Updated as of 2025-04-08



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Consultation Policy

Adopted by Legislative Council: 2025-04-03

Ratified by Board of Directors: 2025-04-08

Expires: 2030-05-01

[Adopted Motion \(Link\)](#)

1. Description

1.1. The Students' Society of McGill University ("the Society") holds representation as one of its core values, which is underscored by the use of ongoing and productive consultations to ensure student voices are continuously centred in the conduct of the SSMU. This policy shall describe the standards and practices of the SSMU to best understand and represent student perspectives in all actions of SSMU and its actors.

1.2. All actors of the Society will be under the direct direction of this Policy, including:

- Members;
- Officers;
- Councillors;
- Directors;
- Commissioners; and
- Staff.

1.3. This Policy aims to provide a flexible, non-binding framework for effective communication and transparency;



1.3.1. Sections 4-10 shall be considered suggestions for best practices and the entirety of the suggestions therein shall not be considered as universally mandatory to the consultative process as every consultative process and the context in which they occur is unique.

1.3.2. It shall be the responsibility of the Steering Committee, and subsequently the appropriate governing body, to conclude whether consultations sufficiently meet the standards as outlined in this Policy.

2. Purpose and Interpretation

2.1. All representatives of the Society have a mandate to serve and represent the SSMU Membership and, when relevant, specific constituencies and groups of SSMU Members.

2.2. This Policy outlines the Society's responsibility to appropriately consult relevant stakeholders and interest groups on matters pertaining to the Legislative Council, Board of Directors, SSMU Committees, and General Assembly, specifically when voting and approving matters of the Society or when wishing to propose or amend resolutions, policies, positions, the Constitution, Internal Regulations, or other governing documents of the Society.

2.3. This Policy is intended to better guide and inform representatives on the ramifications and impacts of resolutions, policies, and plans within the Society, support the development of informed, equitable, and representative decision-making, as well as uphold the Society's commitment to Representation and Leadership.

2.4. Moreover, this Policy aims to promote an accessible and transparent decision-making process within the Society. It will guide representatives in gathering the views of the Membership and empower Members to collaborate with representatives on matters pertaining to the Society. +

2.5. It should be noted that this Policy and consultations, in general, are not substitutes that can be used to sidestep the governing bodies of the Society, particularly the Legislative Council, which remains the primary advisory body and consultative forum of the Society.

2.5.1. It is not guaranteed that every piece of feedback can be directly implemented due to procedural, governance-related, or legal implications.

2.5.2. In the case of motions regarding the interests of a specific stakeholder or group of stakeholders, motions are not required to be written verbatim by such an individual or group,

although consultation must be properly conducted to maximize the inclusion of the constituency wherever possible in accordance with the guidelines presented below.

2.6. As elected individuals of the Society, consultations will be undertaken in two ways, pertaining to Legislative Council, Board of Directors and General Assemblies:

- (a) When bringing forth a resolution for adoption that drafts, amends or reviews:
 - A. The Constitution
 - B. Internal Regulations
 - C. Policies
 - D. Positions
 - E. Resolutions
 - F. Other governing documents of the Society
- (b) before voting on a given resolution.

3. Definitions

3.1. The following terms used in this Policy will have the same definitions as in the Constitution.

- (a) Board of Directors;
- (b) Councillor;
- (c) Director;
- (d) General Assembly;
- (e) Legislative Council;
- (f) Member/Membership; and
- (g) Officer.

3.2. The following definitions will apply to the Policy:

- (a) Accessibility refers to the ability for everyone, regardless of disability or difference in needs, to access, use, and benefit from everything within their environment. As a practice, it aims to facilitate the full participation of individuals with disabilities in SSMU.
- (b) Inclusion shall refer to the provision of equitable access to services for all individuals along the continuum of human ability and experience through intentional, ongoing efforts on the parts of all involved SSMU staff members.



- (c) Commissioner shall refer to any staff member of the Society who is responsible for chairing a committee of the Legislative Council or Board of Director along with their other employee responsibilities.
- (d) Consultation shall refer to the establishment of dialogue and exchange of views between the mover/seconded (or any actor leading the consultation process) and stakeholders, at such time, in such fashion, and with such content as enables these stakeholders to express an opinion or recommendations on the basis of the information provided about the proposed measures to which the consultation is related.
- (e) Consultative process shall refer to the progression of actions which facilitate consultation from the time that a motion, policy, plan, or amendment is first proposed up until the moment of the conclusion of the voting period of the appropriate governing body of the SSMU.
- (f) Indigenous shall refer to a person who self-identifies as First Nations, Metis, Inuit (status or non-status), American Indian, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians.
- (g) Mover/Seconded shall refer to the duo of representatives or members putting forward a motion at the Legislative Council, the General Assembly, or the Board of Directors.
- (h) Representatives shall include Councillors, Officers, and Directors.
- (i) Staff shall include permanent, contract, full-time, and part-time employees of the SSMU.
- (j) Stakeholders shall refer to any group with an interest or involvement in the whole of or a particular process of the SSMU (See Appendix A). Stakeholders may include;
 - (i) Officers/Executive Committee.
 - (ii) SSMU staff.
 - (iii) SSMUUnion.
 - (iv) SSMU Clubs and Services.
 - (v) SSMU Independent Student Groups.
 - (vi) Representative societies/associations.
 - (1) Faculty/departmental associations.
 - (2) Individual Councillors/representatives.
 - (vii) Traditionally marginalized groups (through formal organizational bodies such as a SSMU club/service or informally).
 - (viii) Cultural communities (through formal organizational bodies such as a SSMU club/service or informally).
 - (ix) The Society's Membership.
 - (x) The McGill Campus and local community.
 - (xi) The McGill University administration.

4. The Right to Be Consulted

4.1. Members of the Society shall be consulted and kept informed of decisions taken by their representatives. Consultation should be offered to them as a way to express both their needs and their feedback regarding a specific action taken that will impact them.

4.2. Consultation shall be conducted in an inclusive and accommodating space for all parties. Ensuring that the inclusion of the SSMU student membership is central to the consultation process.

4.3. As any member of the Society may request to be consulted on any ongoing or upcoming projects, initiatives, activities, operations or campaigns of the SSMU.

- i. To this extent, the SSMU shall implement and maintain a process for regular consultation of the Membership, such as:
 - a. Including feedback forms on Referenda.
 - b. Communicating opportunities to provide consultation on upcoming motions through listservs, email communications and social media.
 - c. Encouraging the involvement of SSMU Services, Clubs, ISGs and Committees in the consultative process.

5. The Responsibility To Be Informed

5.1. Members have the responsibility to inform themselves on the Society's activities and associated procedures when providing consultation. This includes:

- a. Being familiar with proceedings of the Society, including the Standing Rules.
- b. Communicating with their respective representatives regarding the proposed motions for debate and adoption about which they would like to consult or intervene.
- c. Staying informed of the relevant meeting's agenda.

5.2. Although all actors of the Society may be consulted on items relevant to their portfolio, information should be sought primarily from elected Councilors and Officers of the Society.

5.3. Sufficient information shall be given to stakeholders to enable them to make informed comments. The organizer of the consultation process should be able to give background information and justify how decisions were made.

5.4. After consultation, the mover/seconder of the consultation shall make clear, at least in broad terms, how they have taken previous feedback into consideration, and what future plans (if any) they may have for engagement.

5.5. The mover/seconder of the resolution shall be able to indicate before the governing body to which the motion is being presented to and the Steering Committee how stakeholders consulted were selected.

5.6. Unless expressly authorized by the Executive Committee or the Board of Directors, the release of information in matters relating to the Society's finances, matters of ongoing litigation, disposition or acquisition of property by the Society, or matters regarding human resources is not permitted.

5.6.1. Except as required by law, the Society's governing documents, and this Policy, any information on the essence of the consultation process is confidential until they are publicly released, unless authorized in writing by the relevant authority.

6. Consultation for Motion Writing

6.1. In every circumstance, consultations shall be conducted a reasonable amount of time prior to the submission of a resolution to the governing body of the Society.

6.2. The mover/seconder of any proposed resolution is ultimately responsible for ensuring an appropriate level of consultation has taken place and shall be reported on as part of its introduction at the relevant governing body.

6.3. An appropriate level of consultation is considered to have been met when the mover/seconder can demonstrate the following standards:

- a. Timely communication with stakeholder(s) and documented information gathering where sufficient time for planning and responses to invitations and written contributions should be provided.

- b. A list of the measures taken to gather information and the stakeholders consulted in their efforts to be representative.
- c. Completion of the 'Consultations Completed' section of the motion document.
- d. Clear evidence that the mover/seconder has acknowledged the stakeholders' feedback and has meaningfully responded to their comments/concerns.
- e. The Steering Committee has approved the motion for consideration.

7. Consultation For Voting

7.1. This consultation framework is intended to assist those elected individuals who shall consult stakeholders prior to voting on resolutions.

7.2. Excluding time-sensitive and/or confidential circumstances, consultation shall be conducted prior to participating in voting on a given resolution submitted to an elected body of the Society.

7.3. Unlike for movers/seconders of proposed resolutions, consultation conducted by non-moving elected representatives is much more limited and specific in scope.

7.4. An appropriate level of consultation is considered to have been met when the representative can demonstrate a majority of the following standards:

- a. Clear and meaningful efforts to consult with respective constituencies on all motions they are eligible to participate in voting on.
- b. Timely communication with stakeholder(s) and documented information gathering.
- c. Provision of forums of opportunities to allow relevant stakeholders to submit statements for consideration by the governing body.
- d. Clear communication of the results of the decision of the proposed resolution to their respective constituencies.
- e. If applicable, the representative has clearly communicated the results of the decision of the proposed resolution to other relevant stakeholder(s) consulted.

8. Accessibility and Inclusion

8.1. Representatives must be conscious of the obstacles hindering participation in discussions and be committed to promoting an accessible and inclusive space.

8.2. Barriers that must be considered include but are not limited to: information, transportation, finance, residency, technology, religious holidays.

8.3. Ensuring the inclusivity of consultations promotes and preserves the engagement of the membership as a whole.

8.4. Representatives shall strive to develop policies and practices adapted to the needs of the membership.

8.5. Stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and abilities should be invited to participate in the discussions.

8.6. Representatives shall ensure that consultations are conducted in an inclusive, functional and anti-oppressive manner.

8.7. Beyond consulting stakeholders, representatives should reflect on whether stakeholders should instead represent themselves, especially considering if there are alternatives wherein they might aid stakeholders to advocate for themselves.

8.8. Consultation is considered accessible and inclusive, functional, and anti-oppressive when the mover/seconder can demonstrate the following standards

- Clear evidence that the relevant Commissioner(s) and Services have been consulted, if applicable.
- The scheduling of the meeting follows the guidelines set out by section 6.6. Scheduling Meetings.
- An offer has been extended to have the consultation in an accessible online space (Zoom, Google Meet, MS Teams).
 - If there is agreement between all parties of the consultation to meet in-person, said meeting shall occur in a physically accessible space allowing for confidentiality.
- All attendees should be given the opportunity to express their accessibility needs to the moderator of the consultation meeting and effort should be made to accommodate any needs expressed by attendees.

- If the moderator is unsure how to address a need brought forward by an attendee, they can reach out to the Accessibility Commissioner.
- Representatives should reach out to the Equity Commissioners within an appropriate time frame if they have any questions about how to promote an inclusive, functional, and anti-oppressive consultation process.

9. Tools

9.1. Both written communication and meetings shall be considered valid forms of consultation.

- a. The nature and complexity of the topic(s) at hand, as well as the stakeholders availability will influence the format of the consultation.
- b. Both formats shall be offered to stakeholders, who will be allowed to decide their preferred method of consultation.

9.2. Tools that can be used in the consultation process include, but are not limited to:

- Digital survey;
- Townhall/forums/general assemblies;
- Office hours;
- Listserv publicity;
- Focus groups discussions;
- In-depth interviews;
- Written consultation and public letters/petitions; and
- Legislative Council/Executive Committee/Faculty Council/Constituency meetings
- This can take place through creating an agenda/discussion point during the meeting, or through encouraging participants to contact the eligible 'voter' with comments/concerns.

9.3. In attempting to identify which consultation tools should be used and how to apply them, the individual in question should consider the following factors:

- Time sensitivity of the consultation process;
- Extent of the impact of proposed motion to stakeholders;
- Feasibility of consultation options;
- Ability to properly access and communicate information to perceived relevant stakeholders.

10. Best Practices

10.1. Scheduling Meetings

- 10.1.1.** The organizer of the consultation process shall provide numerous opportunities for potential meetings, to ensure that parties can meet at a time that is convenient for them.
- 10.1.2.** An adequate amount of time shall be given for the purpose of consultation between both parties.
- 10.1.3.** The organizer of the consultation process shall utilize various outreach methods.
- 10.1.4.** Should a stakeholder be unresponsive despite multiple attempts, the organizer of the consultation process will reach out to other stakeholders.

10.2. Before Meetings

- 10.2.1.** Members should be offered the possibility to remain anonymous in documentation.
 - a. Stakeholders that are to be consulted can request for a consultation meeting to take place virtually.
 - b. Locations of consultations should not be publicized to the broader membership unless all Members are invited to consult.
 - c. When organizing online consultation meetings, preference should be given to platforms allowing for secure servers, end-to-end encryption and password-protected access.
- 10.2.2.** When hosting in-person consultation, moderators should consider the physical accessibility of the location and venue.
 - a. Priority should include the presence of bathrooms, tables and chairs for wheelchair and persons with reduced mobility.
 - b. If the venue is not fully accessible, participants should be informed prior to the consultation and given the offer of an accessible online alternative venue.
- 10.2.3.** An agenda for the consultation should be given within a reasonable time frame.
 - a. An exception can be made for an emergency meeting.
- 10.2.4.** Meeting times should be offered during diverse hours of the day in order to suit diverse schedules, including people who work and those who have caretaking responsibilities.
- 10.2.5.** Attendees shall be offered the possibility to reach out to the moderator to disclose any accessibility concerns.
- 10.2.6.** The organizer of the consultation process should inform participants of the language of consultation and make accommodations for the preferred language indicated by

participants to the best of their ability. As provided by the Constitution, English and French are the official languages of the Society and members may use either official language at all meetings and in all documentation of the Society.

10.2.7. If any presentation is being made or any material is being distributed to attendees, this information should be sent virtually to attendees before the meeting begins.

- a. Presentation material should also follow SSMU accessibility guidelines by using easy-to-read slides using large fonts, and good color contrast between background and print.

10.2.8. Consultation meetings should not be scheduled on religious holidays.

- a. If consultations are to be scheduled during a period of fasting, they should be organized in the morning unless otherwise requested by the stakeholder(s).

10.3. During Meeting

10.3.1. The moderator of the consultation meeting should deliver a traditional territory acknowledgment statement modeled on the example provided:

- a. *The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee nations. The SSMU recognizes and respects these nations as the true and constant custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Further, the SSMU commits to and respects the traditional laws and customs of these territories.*

- i. In the event the meeting is held online, the moderator shall encourage participants to research the lands they are located on.

10.3.2. If the meeting is conducted in an online space, accessible standards of practice as per the Accessibility Policy should be respected to the extent possible.

10.3.3. A scent free and smoke free environment should be privileged.

10.3.4. Jargon, technical language and acronyms should be avoided to be inclusive of all attendees.

- a. Unavoidable acronyms or technical language should be accompanied by a clear definition.

10.3.5. For meetings involving external stakeholders, meetings should start with a brief description of the Governance system of SSMU.

10.3.6. Moderators shall schedule regular breaks during meetings that exceed one hour.

10.3.7. Attendees should be invited to indicate their pronouns and preferred name, should they feel comfortable to do so.

10.4. Before Voting

10.4.1. Prior to a vote, representatives are expected to arrange consultation with their constituency.

10.4.2. Pre-vote consultation may be arranged through a number of means, including but not limited to:

- a. Hosting office hours;
 - i. Representatives shall ensure that these hours are clearly publicized/communicated to their relevant constituency.
- b. Hosting a general assembly or any other formal meeting;
- c. Bringing up the motions for discussion at faculty/constituency meetings;
- d. Publicizing upcoming matters within constituency newsletters/listservs;
- e. Developing and sharing online surveys.

10.4.3. Consultation with the constituency should include collecting feedback with the various members of the faculty associations' councils.

10.5. Transparency

10.5.1. The stakeholder(s) shall be provided with the same information from which the resolution is being derived, so as to foster informed comments and discussion.

10.5.2. The organizer of the consultation process will keep record, through the taking of notes. Recommendations expressed by the stakeholders must be accurately articulated.

10.5.3. The mover shall indicate the approval/disapproval of the stakeholders consulted in the corresponding motion.

Stakeholders should not be named personally in the resolution, instead their positions within the student group(s) or organization they represent shall be used if applicable.

11. Enforcement

11.1. The enforcement of this Policy shall be overseen by the Steering Committee, who will implement a system to evaluate the consultation process for completeness, efficacy, inclusivity, and compliance with respect to this Policy.

11.2. The Steering Committee shall evaluate a given motion based on the information provided in the relevant section in the Motion template or other supporting documents. Should it be deemed insufficient by the members of the Steering Committee, the motion shall be returned to the mover for further consultation and will not be permitted to appear on the agenda of a Governing body meeting.

Association étudiante de l'Université McGill
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11.3. During the examination of a motion at the Legislative Council, the Board of Directors, or a General Assembly, a voting member of the applicable governing body can present a motion for the item under review to be sent back to the mover for further consultation. Such a motion shall follow the typical process for motion adoption.

11.4. The Governance Reform Committee of the Society shall be tasked with the revision of the Policy six (6) months before the expiration date.

Appendix A - Identifying Stakeholders

Beyond the general guidelines provided prior concerning stakeholder groups, certain stakeholders shall be consulted in certain circumstances when considering specific motions.

Three types of stakeholders should be consulted:

1. Those affected by the Policy/Action undertaken;
2. Those who will have to implement it;
3. Those who have a stated interest/expertise in it.

For all motions, unless inapplicable, the relevant SSMU Executive for which the resolution's scope best matches the portfolio shall be consulted (list of stakeholders according to Executive Portfolio).

For motions concerning governance matters, the following individuals shall be consulted:

- President (mandatory)
- Policy and Advocacy Coordinator (mandatory)
- Governance Reform Committee (mandatory)
- Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary (mandatory)
- Speaker (strongly recommended)

For motions concerning the Society's finances, the following individuals shall be consulted:

- Vice-President (Finance) (mandatory)
- General Manager (strongly recommended)
- Comptroller or Assistant Comptroller (strongly recommended)

For motions concerning the Society's Human Resources, the following individuals shall be consulted:

- Human Resources Director, or, if not possible, another staff member of the Human Resources department, such as the Human Resources Manager (mandatory)
- General Manager (recommended)
- Direct supervisor, if the motion targets a position in particular, (strongly recommended)
- Executive Committee (recommended)

For motions concerning the Society's operations, the following individuals shall be consulted:

- Vice-President (Student Life) (mandatory)
- Vice-President (Internal Affairs) (mandatory)
- Student Life Operations Director (strongly recommended)

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- Building Director (strongly recommended)
- General Manager (recommended)

Appendix B - Procedure

Consultation for Motion-Writing

1. The mover/seconder should identify the potentially-affected parties (stakeholders) of the potential resolution, as well as the potential impacts the resolution may have on such groups.
 - a. For further guidance, please refer to Appendix A on 'Stakeholder.'
2. The mover/seconder should contact the identified stakeholders.
3. The mover/seconder should provide them with an opportunity to meet to discuss pertinent issues and provide their opinions and recommendations.
4. The mover/seconder should offer stakeholders the opportunity to meet with their members and collect broader feedback.
5. The mover/seconder should indicate the stakeholders consulted in the motion document (if applicable).
6. The mover/seconder should offer the stakeholder the opportunity to make their opinion/advice known to the governing body by providing the following individuals a submission in writing, prior to the commencement of the voting period of the relevant governing body:
 - a. Their elected representative(s);
 - b. The Chair/Speaker (when applicable).

Following the voting period of the given resolution, the mover/seconder shall clearly communicate to the relevant stakeholder(s) the respective result and decision of the motion, as well as including supporting documents, such as voting records and meeting minutes.

Consultation for Voting

1. The representative should educate themselves on the topic at hand by conducting research on the background, the context in which the motion will be presented, and the motivations behind it.

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2. As part of their representative duties, the representative should consult their respective constituency on all matters/motions that they are eligible to participate in voting on.
3. If it is clear that a gap in the consultation process has occurred, and that the mover/seconders of the resolution has failed to conduct consultation with a perceived relevant stakeholder, the representative should consult with the identified stakeholders, as to ensure proper representation.
 - a. In this case, please refer to 'Step 2' within the steps provided for movers/seconders conducting consultation as part of the resolution approval process.
4. Following the voting period of the given resolution, the representative shall clearly communicate to their constituency, as well as, if applicable, any other relevant stakeholder(s) consulted, the respective result and decision of the motion, as well as including supporting documents, such as voting records and meeting minutes.

Appendix C - Checklist

- Have the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator and the relevant staff been contacted to inquire whether such projects have been undertaken in the past?
- Have the relevant SSMU Executive(s) been consulted for which the resolution's scope best matches the portfolio?
- Have permanent and casual staff members been consulted (if applicable)?
- Have various consultation methods been offered?
- Have the objectives of the consultation process been made clear (the reason for consultation, the goals and how the information collected will be used)?
- Have the Councillors and/or senators and/or faculty executives whose constituents will be impacted been consulted?
- Have the stakeholders been identified according to Appendix A 'Identifying Stakeholders'?
- Have inclusion and accessibility guidelines been observed?
 - Have the Equity Commissioners and /or Accessibility commissioners been contacted (if necessary)?
- Has the consultation process been advertised on platforms allowing for the broader membership to get involved, if applicable?
- Have detailed records of the consultation conducted been kept?
- Have participants been provided with all of the information needed to give an informed view?
- Have concerns been addressed and have explanations for the decisions made been given?
- Has the 'Consultation' section of the Motion template been completed?
- Have stakeholders been informed of the outcome of the motion?