



Memorandum

SSMU Policy Formulation

SSMU Policies are supposed to form the core of the direction and ethics of the SSMU. However many of our policies are too narrow in scope, are no longer relevant, or have been lost among the dozens of policies SSMU has adopted half-heartedly. This is largely a result of SSMU's policy system.

Here is the description of the SSMU policy process, from By-Law Book I:

BY-LAW I-15– POLICY MANUAL

Article 1—Creation and Definition of the Policy Manual

- 1.1 There shall be a body of position papers known as the “Policy Manual.”
- 1.2 The Policy Manual shall contain declarations of the Society’s Legislative Council and General Assemblies.
- 1.3 The Policy Manual shall be made available, upon request, to any member of the Society.
- 1.4 The Policy Manual shall be subject to the Constitution and By-laws of the Society, but shall in no way be construed as taking precedence over the Constitution or By-laws of the Society.
- 1.5 The declarations within the Policy Manual shall not be binding on the Society.
- 1.6 Individual declarations within the Policy Manual shall be referred to as “Policies.”
- 1.7 Policies shall contain Council’s position on matters not within the legislative competence of Council.

Article 2 – Adoption, Amendment & Repeal

- 2.1 General Assemblies or Special Assemblies of the membership of the Society may adopt, amend or repeal a Policy by simple majority vote.
- 2.2 Council may adopt, amend or repeal a Policy by simple majority vote.
- 2.3 The Executive Committee may adopt, amend or repeal a Policy between meetings of Council. It shall remain in effect until the next meeting of Council, at which time it shall be subject to ratification by Council by simple majority vote.

Article 3 – Language

- 3.1 The Policy Manual shall be made available in English or in French.
- 3.1 All new Policies and amendments to the Policy Manual may be adopted in either French or English.

Here is PGSS's, with innovative and effective sections underlined:

2.8 Society Policy Manual

- 2.8.1 There shall be a Society Policy Manual that shall be comprised of all policies adopted by Council.
- 2.8.2 The Society Policy Manual shall be a universal reference for people acting on behalf of the PGSS in various capacities. As such, the Policy Manual shall be a catalogue of broad guiding principles.
- 2.8.3 Any Policy adopted by Council shall:



- 2.8.3.1 Be expressed in broad and widely applicable terms;
- 2.8.3.2 Be relevant to the Society and relate to its mission statement;
- 2.8.3.3 Remain within the areas of responsibility of Council, as outlined in the present bylaw;
- 2.8.3.4 Be forward looking and proactive in essence;
- 2.8.3.5 Not refer to specific events or incidents;
- 2.8.3.6 Be reviewed, not any less than every five (5) years at the minimum; and
- 2.8.3.7 Meet further requirements, as defined by Regulation.

2.8.4 The President shall be responsible for the upkeep of the Society Policy Manual, and for ensuring that policy drafts are reviewed by the Policy and structure Advisory Committee (PSAC) to ensure that such drafts meet the requirements set out in this Bylaw and any relevant Regulations.

2.8.5 The formal process for enactment, amendment or repeal of policies shall be as follows;

2.8.5.1 First Reading: Council

2.8.5.1.1 Notice of a proposed enactment, amendment or repeal shall be given to the President at least two (2) weeks before the meeting of Council at which the motion is to be introduced.

2.8.5.1.2 Notice of the wording of the proposed motion shall be given to Council members at least five (5) days before the meeting of Council at which the motion is to be introduced and debated.

2.8.5.1.3 The motion shall be read a first time at Council. The motion shall be debated and amended if so desired, and approved in principle by a simple majority vote.

As for the actual policy manuals, The SSMU Policy Manual is only partially complete (due to lost policies), but still contains 21 policies, ranging widely in continued relevance or purpose:

- Submission to the Parliamentary Commission
- Environmental Policy
- Academic Mission Statement
- Tuition Fees
- Muslim Prayer Space on Campus
- CAFS submission to Dining-at-McGill Committee
- Policy regarding turnitin.com
- Policy on Equity
- Negative Corporate Influences on Campus
- Solidarity with Workers' Struggles
- Sustainability Policy
- Ethical Business Policy
- Accessible Education
- Student-Parent Status
- Online Opt-outs
- Transparency in Animal Testing
- AGSEM
- 2008 Federal Election Policy Positions
- Universities' Independence
- AMUSE



- Transparency in Military Research

The PGSS Policy contains a concentrated 8 policies, at the core of grad student concerns:

- Issues Policy: University/Industry Research Partnerships
- Issues Policy: Policy on Guaranteed Funding for Graduate Student Researchers
- Issues Policy: Policy on Research Funding at McGill
- Operations Policy: The PGSS Health Insurance Plan
- Operations/Issues Policy: The PGSS Environment Policy
- Issues Policy: PGSS Policy on Equity and Diversity
- Issues Policy: On the Quebec Tuition Freeze
- Issues Policy: On Graduate Students as Teaching Assistants

Here is an easier chart of comparisons of these systems:

SSMU	PGSS
No guidelines for what a policy should be	Definition of what a policy should contain
Policies can be issue specific or time-sensitive	Policies must be broad-reaching and long-lasting
Policies can be on issues unrelated to SSMU	On issues central to grad students
Are lost or forgotten	Form the core tenets of PGSS
Can be initiated at GAs or Council	By a strict committee, then Council, procedure
Over 21 policies	8 policies total
Varied length, structure, forcefulness, and specificity	Standard structure and specificity
Last forever	Must be reviewed every 5 years

All this being said, I think we as a body should reflect upon how SSMU policies should be made, what they should contain, how they should be reviewed, and what their ultimate purpose should be. This will be a long-term discussion that will hopefully result in a vast improvement to our policy process. I hope we can create a clearer, more thorough policy framework within the SSMU.

On February 18, next Council meeting, I would like to have an open discussion about SSMU's policy system. Please bring your ideas, suggestions, and concerns for SSMU's policy formulating and reviewing process.

- Sarah Olle
Vice President (Clubs and Services)