

# Clubs Guidebook

2023 -2024

Updated as of DD-MM-YYYY



## **Vice-présidence (Vie étudiante) de l'AÉUM**

*Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.*

### **SSMU Vice-President (Student Life)**

*Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.*

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# Introduction

Hello! If you're a new Club executive or collective member, welcome! And if you're a returning member, welcome back! There's a lot of information about Clubs and it can sometimes be hard to find all there is to know, which is why we made this guide.

This guide is meant to be a resource for everything you'll need to know to successfully run your Club and make sure you're aware of all the requirements and benefits of being a SSMU Club. Keep reading to find explanations of our processes, links to useful forms and resources, and some recommended best practices.

But first, here are the main requirements that you'll need to fulfill in order to maintain your Full or Interim Club Status:

1. **Adhere to your Club Constitution**
  - a. All Clubs must ensure that an up-to-date copy of their constitution is on file with the Vice-President (Student Life)
  - b. If you ever make changes to your constitution, make sure to send it to the Clubs Committee for review and approval!
2. **Submit the Student Group Information Form**
  - a. Clubs must provide the Vice-President (Student Life) with an up-to-date list of all the executive or collective members by the last day of Add/Drop Period **in the Fall semester**
  - b. Any changes that occur to this list during the year should be resubmitted to the form
3. **Attend Club Workshops**
  - a. Clubs must send representatives of the Club to the mandatory workshops held at the start of every semester
4. **Submit Club Audits**
  - a. Clubs must submit an audit of their financial activity each semester.
5. **Insurance Coverage**
  - a. Clubs are required to submit information about their activities and events in order to be covered by the Society's general liability insurance coverage
6. **Adhere to All SSMU, McGill Policies, and Provincial Regulations**
  - a. This includes all SSMU and McGill policies as well as all Municipal, Provincial, and Federal regulations that are in effect



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# Clubs 101

## General

SSMU stands for the Students' Society of McGill University. SSMU is *not* a part of McGill. Rather, we are our own organization and we act as your representatives to the McGill administration. As such, we are your student union and we operate as a not for profit company. We are here to speak out for you and advocate for your interests. One of the ways we do this is by supporting Clubs.

We have many teams here to support Clubs including the clubs and events team, the operations team, and the finance team.

## SSMU Governing Bodies & Committees

The governing bodies are made of:

1. **Board of Directors:** Generally, the Board of Directors makes financial and legal decisions for the SSMU as a company. For your purposes, they ratify all decisions of the Legislative Council. Decisions that pass through the Legislative Council include anything that has passed through Clubs committee including, but not limited to, interim status Club applications, full status Club applications, or constitution amendments.
2. **Legislative Council:** Legislative Council creates policies and motions for SSMU to abide by, in many cases these policies outline specific requirements for Clubs and Services. There are also several committees under the Legislative Council, such as the Clubs Committee or Mental Health Committee. There are two Club Reps on the Legislative Council who are responsible for representing the interests of SSMU Clubs.
  - a. **Clubs Committee:** This committee serves as a consultative body for the improvement of policies related to SSMU Clubs.
3. **Executive Committee:** Makes administrative decisions, helps draft policies and motions, and represents each executive's portfolio at legislative council. The executive committee might approve internal processes as well.



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## Clubs Committee

As mentioned above, the clubs committee serves as a consultative body for the improvement of policies related to SSMU Clubs. Specific responsibilities include:

1. Review and approve or reject interim and full status Club applications;
2. Review and make recommendations on Club Constitutions;
3. Make recommendations to the Vice-President (Student Life) on Policies related to Clubs
4. Review and make recommendations on Club policies, workshops, and Club committee terms of reference.

The members of this committee include:

1. Clubs Coordinator, Chair (non-voting);
2. SSMU VP Student Life and VP Finance;
3. \*Clubs Representatives to the Legislative Council (2);
4. Club or Service Executives (2);
5. FYC Councillor (1);
6. Member-at-large (1);
7. Up to two (2) additional Councillors.

\*Club Representatives sit on the SSMU Legislative Council and the Clubs Committee. If you have questions or concerns about SSMU policies, procedures, or motions going to council, you should reach out to [Club Representatives](#).

## Interim Status Approval Process

In order to become a Club, you must first apply for interim status. There are certain criteria you must meet in order to satisfy rubric requirements. These criteria span over the domains of uniqueness and feasibility, institutional sustainability, financial sustainability, autonomy, mandate and student interest. The rubric for interim status Clubs can be found [here](#) and specific instructions on how to satisfy rubric requirements can be found in the Clubs application [handbook](#)

## Coffee Hours

Every semester the Clubs Coordinator hosts coffee hour sessions where Club executives, Club members, or those just interested in Clubs can attend and ask questions or meet other like-minded individuals. Here, you can ask questions related to Club applications, events, finances, or general questions while also enjoying free coffee and pastries! Coffee hour dates are announced at the beginning of every semester at the Clubs workshops and student life instagram (@ssmustudentlife)



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## Sanctions

The VP Student Life may issue sanctions in response to failure to abide by the Internal Regulations, the Constitution, Policies, Plans, the constitution of the Service in question, or other stated causes. Note that you can face sanctions if your service is in a financial deficit.

Sanctions with a duration longer than one academic year may only be issued with the approval of the Legislative Council

Sanctions may include the denial of any privileges associated with Club Status, including but not limited to the loss of space in the University Centre, the loss of room booking privileges, and the revision or revocation of Club Status.

[The full list of sanctions can be found here.](#)

## Clubs Finance

### Banking Resources

The SSMU offers the following banking resources to its Clubs:

- RBC Express
- Virtual Soft Tokens
- ACH Transfers
- Interac Deposits
- Cheque Books
- Deposit Slips
- Credit Cards

### RBC Express

All Signing Officers Clubs can receive access to enterprise-grade online banking for their Club's bank account. RBC Express allows you to make and receive payments as well as view the balance of your account.

For more information on setting up access to RBC Express, please refer to [this guide](#).



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## Virtual Soft Tokens

Tokens are a security feature that provide Two-Factor Authentication to better protect your Club Bank Account. In the past, Clubs were provided with a physical device known as a “Hard Token” but SSMU Finance has since transitioned to exclusively using virtual “Soft Token”.

For more information on setting up a Soft Token, please refer to [this guide](#).

## Making Payments and Reimbursements

Now that your bank account is set up, you can begin making transactions. All Club financial activity should be conducted through your Club bank account. This includes, but is not limited to, purchasing supplies, paying for event venues, paying guest speakers, and reimbursing members for Club-related expenses.

There are a few different payment methods available. Please refer to [this guide](#) for more information on each payment method. If you have any questions about making payments, you can reach out to [finance@ssmu.ca](mailto:finance@ssmu.ca).

## Best Practices for Signing Officers

- Keep all original documentation, receipts, deposit slips in the same place.
  - Not only will this help you with understanding your Club’s annual spending patterns, it will also save you the time of looking for everything during the Audit
  - This includes receipts for credit card purchases!
- Check your Club account balance and credit balance frequently.
  - If you notice any unusual activity, please contact [finance@ssmu.ca](mailto:finance@ssmu.ca) and [drodriques@ssmu.ca](mailto:drodriques@ssmu.ca) as soon as possible.
- Keep your cheque books and deposit slips somewhere safe.
  - Lost Cheque Books and deposit slips cannot be replaced on a case-by-case basis. You will have to wait until a bulk order is made.



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## Funding Applications

SSMU Offers around \$350,000 per year in funding for student groups. Around \$160,000 is set aside just for Full Status Clubs as the Club Fund. Interim status Clubs may apply to all other Funds.

Funding can be used to support events, general meetings, conferences, competitions attended by Clubs, general operating expenses, etc.

All funding is done through a single application available at [ssmu.ca/resources/funding](http://ssmu.ca/resources/funding)

You must review the [Funding Guidebook](#) before submitting your application!

If you're not sure what fund to apply for, or have any questions about the application, feel free to email the Funding Commissioner at [fundcom@ssmu.ca](mailto:fundcom@ssmu.ca).

A funding application may be retroactive (within the same fiscal year) or proactive. Each application must provide:

- Details of the event/initiative being funded and how it fits the mandate of the fund
- An annual budget for your group, as well as a budget for the event/initiative itself
- Quotes (for proactive applications) or Receipts (for retroactive applications) as proof of the event expenses
- Event Declaration Number
- Complete criteria is available in the funding guidebook on [ssmu.ca/resources/funding](http://ssmu.ca/resources/funding)

The Funding Committee meets once a week (but does not meet during the summer or during school breaks). A typical application, from submission of form to receipt of funds, assuming the application is complete when it is submitted, takes between 3 and 4 weeks.

## Club Audit

Clubs must submit an audit of their financial activity each semester. Only Clubs that submitted an audit in the previous semester are eligible to receive funding from the Club Fee. The Fall 2023 Audit is due in January 2024 and the Winter 2024 is due in May 2024. Exact deadline details will be communicated to all Clubs closer to the date.



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The following need to be submitted for the audit:

- Transaction list;
- RBC statements (January-April for the Winter audit, May-December for the Fall audit);
- Documentation (receipts/invoices, deposit slips, credit card statements);
- Disclosures.

For more information on successfully completing the audit, please refer to [this guide](#).

## How the Audit is Evaluated

The Audit is evaluated according to three categories:

1. Completeness.
2. Compliance.
3. Accuracy.

Each category is scored out of 5 points and **a score of less than 3 in any category results in a failing audit grade**. More details on the audit evaluation are available in the [audit guide](#).

# Communications

## Communications Resources

### SSMU Email Account

Interim and Full status Clubs can have access to an [@ssmu.ca](mailto:@ssmu.ca) email account. You can reach out to IT at [support@ssmu.ca](mailto:support@ssmu.ca) to create your account. Please note that you are not required to use an [@ssmu.ca](mailto:@ssmu.ca) email address, but you are still responsible for all communications (i.e. setting up an auto-forwarding system to keep up with all official communications). If you are having trouble accessing your [@ssmu.ca](mailto:@ssmu.ca) email account, please reach out to [studentlife@ssmu.ca](mailto:studentlife@ssmu.ca) or [studentlifeassist@ssmu.ca](mailto:studentlifeassist@ssmu.ca) for help with resetting your password.

### Canva

Canva is an online graphic design tool pre-loaded with templates. Canva helps design simple and efficient designs without needing extensive graphic design experience or complicated Adobe programs.



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## How to Access Canva

SSMU Clubs can access the PRO version of Canva for free. Each Club has a Canva login that is shared between Clubs of the same category. Credentials will be shared directly by the Communications Manager.

Login credentials are reset annually so make sure to back up your visuals each academic year.

Check [the Canva Guide](#) for more information!

## Graphic Design Accessibility

Considering accessibility in design allows users of diverse abilities to better navigate, understand, and relate your content. [This presentation](#) has tips to consider when creating your graphic.

## Websites

The SSMU has a website designer who can assist you with creating a website for your Club. You can request a website by filling out [this form](#).

Please note that the Club Website Designer takes website requests on a first come, first served basis. By filling out this form, you are adding your Club to the waitlist. Once your Club reaches the top of the waitlist, the Club Website Designer will reach out to you by email to schedule a meeting to discuss design requests.

SSMU can provide you with a subdomain under [ssmu.ca](http://ssmu.ca), which will look like *myClub.ssmu.ca*. This includes hosting on the SSMU Clubs server and is free.

You are also able to use a custom domain but this is not free. If you wish to have your own domain, your group needs to make the necessary arrangements to buy a domain. If you are buying your own domain, you can still get hosting with the SSMU, but you will need to configure the domain to redirect to the location of the site on the SSMU server. Example: *Clubname.ca* can redirect to *Clubname.ssmu.ca*.



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## Promotional Opportunities

### Student Life Listserv

This listserv is where we regularly share updates on important information for SSMU Clubs and Services. If you aren't already subscribed, you can [sign up here](#).

### The SSMU Calendar

The SSMU Calendar is where we promote our groups' events and activities on the SSMU website. You can submit your events and activities [through this form](#).

### Posting in the University Centre

Posters are a great way to promote your Club's activities. To have your posters displayed in the University Centre, you can submit them to the front desk of the SSMU office.

Posters are reviewed every Tuesday and if approved, they are installed the same day.

### Posting outside the University Centre

If you'd like to poster in locations outside of the University Centre, you can refer to this list here ([link](#)). Please note that posting in other buildings is subject to different regulations. Make sure to check with the relevant staff before displaying posters.

## Sponsorship

We recognize that external sponsorship is a great way to raise funds for your Club or Service and help foster ties within the McGill community. Most student groups will aim to gain sponsorship from outside the SSMU to help bolster their budgets and help finance some of their activities or events. However, sponsorship can also offer products and services, such as discounts on products or even free goods!

For more information on getting a sponsorship, see [this guide](#) for more details. Failure to follow these procedures may result in a sanction.



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# Event Planning

## Event Checklist

Planning and executing events can involve a lot of moving parts so [here is a checklist](#) of common tasks to help you keep track of your planning!

This checklist can be a good starting point but not everything will not apply depending on the nature of your event so feel free to print out and customize your checklist based on your group and your event's needs.

## Getting Events Approved

### Events Inside the University Centre

Events under this category can be booked through VEMS or by contacting the [Internal Events Coordinator](#) directly. These events do not need to be declared as they are automatically in our system when the request is made. Please note that events booked with Gerts *do* need to be declared because, Gerts bookings are not processed by the Events team.

For more information on booking events at the University Centre, please see [this guide](#).

### Events Outside the University Centre

This procedure applies to on-campus events outside of the UC (e.g. Leacock, Athletics, etc.) as well as off-campus events (e.g. bars, parks, conference halls, etc.). These events need to be declared in order to be approved.

For more information on approving events outside the University Centre, please see [this guide](#).

## Events that Need Additional Documentation

Some events will need additional information or documentation in order to be approved depending on the nature of the event. Please see below for more information on specific procedures.



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## Events Involving Selling Food

If you plan to sell or serve food within the University Centre (UC) or at external locations, it's important to follow specific guidelines and procedures. Please read [this guide](#) carefully.

## Events Involving Alcohol

The following regulations describe what Clubs can and cannot do with respect to organizing events that include alcohol and alcohol purchasing. Please note that any events involving alcohol must be approved by the Student Life Operations Department.

For more information on getting approval for events with alcohol, please see [this guide](#).

## Activities Involving Athletics, Sports, or Travelling Outside of Montreal

Please be reminded that the University Centre cannot accommodate any sports-related activities such as dance, fitness, yoga, etc., due to limitations with insurance and the building's amenities. For these types of events, we recommend reaching out to McGill Athletics or an external rental space that can provide the necessary insurance coverage.

## External Venues

If you plan to host your event at an external venue, please ensure that the venue can provide a certificate or proof of insurance as part of your event planning process. This documentation is essential to ensure the safety and compliance of your event.

## One-Time Event Insurance

- If your event falls outside the scope of our insurance policy, including activities involving athletics, sports, alcohol-related events that are not in a licensed venue; or travelling outside of Montreal externally, you have the option to purchase additional one-time event insurance for a fee. This ensures adequate coverage for your specific event needs;
- Please submit these requests a minimum of (60) days in advance to allow for proper coverage arrangements and to ensure our broker can find the appropriate coverage for your event.

For inquiries related to insurance please contact [the External Events Coordinator](#).

## Events Involving Sponsors

If your event involves sponsorship from an organization external to the SSMU, specific requirements must be met.



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## Sponsorship Declaration Form

- For both events held within the University Centre or off-site, you are required to submit the [Sponsorship Declaration Form](#).

## Assistance and Resources

- If you need assistance or have questions regarding sponsorship for your event, you can reach out to the [Internal Events Coordinator](#) for guidance.
- Additionally, you may refer to the [Sponsorship Guide](#), which provides comprehensive information and guidelines related to external sponsorships.

## Review and Verification

- We will review and verify that the sponsorship does not conflict with any of our existing partnerships, policies, or positions.

## Important Note

Please be aware that any form of sponsorship, whether related to an event or independent of an event, must be declared in accordance with our policies. See the “Sponsorship” section for more information.

## Submitting Supporting Documentation

Depending on the nature of your event, you may need to provide additional documentation to ensure the approval of your event, whether it's hosted within the University Centre or externally.

## For All Events

Events, regardless of location, may require various supporting documents for approval. Required documents may include:

- [Sponsorship Declaration Form](#);
- [Guest Speaker Form](#);
- [Sale & Service of Food Request Form](#);
- Contracts and Agreements with external venues and vendors;
- [Independent Contractor Agreement Request Form](#);
- Proof of Insurance, Insurance Certificate or Additional Insurance and/or Waivers;
- Memorandum of Understanding and/or Memorandum of Agreement between the Club, the SSMU, and/or a third party.



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If you are unsure, the events team will assist you in identifying which specific documents are needed when you submit your request and provide guidance throughout the process.

*\*Please be reminded that you **do not** have signing authority (with the exception of University Centre rental agreements). SSMU authorized signatories are the only individuals who can sign agreements and contracts on your behalf. We will collect these for you once you have submitted the proper documents.*

## For On-Campus Events

- In some cases, email confirmations for on-campus bookings may suffice instead of a formal contract.
- We recommend discussing this option with our team during the request submission process.

## For Off-Campus Events

- Off-campus events typically involve signing contracts between the venue and the hosting group;
- All contracts must be submitted to SSMU for review and signature;
- To facilitate smooth coordination, we stress the importance of promptly signing and finalizing booking contracts, along with any necessary supporting documents;
- Please ensure completion no later than (2) days before the scheduled event;
- Failing to meet this deadline may lead to event date postponements or other potential delays and cancellations.

# Sustainable Event Planning

When hosting events it is important to consider how these events can impact the environment. Making these considerations can seem like a huge task when in reality there are some small changes that can make all the difference.

If you ever need help with making your events and activities more sustainable, you can reach out to the Sustainability Commissioners at [sustainability@ssmu.ca](mailto:sustainability@ssmu.ca) and [sustainability2@ssmu.ca](mailto:sustainability2@ssmu.ca) or

## Sustainable Events Certification

The McGill Sustainable Events certification program is an initiative from the Office of Sustainability that provides consultations, training, and resources to encourage and support more environmentally responsible events at McGill.



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The program focuses on events' environmental impact (carbon footprint, waste management), inclusivity (diversity of organizers, programming, and participants), and accessibility (reducing barriers).

To get the certification you start by filling out the [Sustainable Event Checklist](#) and follow the instructions there. Make sure to submit the checklist at least 3-4 weeks in advance of the event!

Events can be certified Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, or Virtual. Certification levels depending on the number of sustainability and accessibility goals that you meet. Below are some sustainability best practices that you might consider implementing at your events.

## Best Practices for More Sustainable Events

### Location

- Consider holding events at a McGill Location
  - Hosting events nearby means foot and bike transportation would mainly be used
- You can also consider hosting events in a sustainably-designed building:
  - La maison du développement durable (LEED Platinum)
  - McGill Life-Science Complex (LEED Gold)
  - Palais des Congrès Green Events (BOMA BEST Level 3)
  - The Queen E
  - Bibliothèque de Boisé in Saint Laurent

### Food

- Encourage participant to bring tupperwares
- Provide food for volunteers
- Arrange for donations of leftovers to shelters
- Provide reusable or recyclable dishware rather than disposable ones
  - reduce food packaging waste
- Partner with groups The Plate Club, Midnight Kitchen, and SNAC
- Comply with McGill and SSMU's single-use water bottle ban

### Waste

- Utilize signage and waste education materials to dispose of waste properly signage ("[Waste Reduction at McGill](#)" and "[Waste Sorting at McGill](#)")
- Learn about disposing of [electronic waste](#) at McGill



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- Avoid providing stand-alone garbage bins (people tend to just throw anything in them)
- Adhere to McGill Paper Policy standards
- Compost
  - Hire [Compost Montreal](#) / [McGill Events Support](#)
  - Use compost in the McGill cafeterias

## Funding

- [Sustainability Project Fund](#) (SPF)
  - All current members of the McGill community are encouraged to apply for support from the SPF
  - Different funds are available from under \$300 to over \$100,000
- [SSMU Environment Fund](#) (Green Fund)
  - For example, we can subsidize the cost difference between choosing biodegradable materials that will cost more than regular materials
- [SSMU Equity Fund](#)
  - funding for matters of socioeconomic equity

## Accessible Event Planning

When hosting events it is imperative to consider how those events can be accessible to everyone. Each individual person has varied accessibility needs, including but not limited to individuals who have disabilities. Being considerate to these needs can seem like a huge task when in reality there are some small changes that you can make that make all of the difference.

If you are working on your own policies related to accessibility, support for individuals with disabilities or even internal protocols to make your organization more accessible, please feel free to reach out to the Accessibility Coordinator at [accessibility@ssmu.ca](mailto:accessibility@ssmu.ca).

## Best Practices for More Accessible Events

### Before an Event

#### Know your Attendees

Without knowing your attendees it is hard to know what kind of accommodations you may need for your event. On your RSVP form or featured in QR code format on your advertising materials





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consider providing a place where attendees or staff can tell you what kind of accommodations they may need to attend the event. These forms should provide the option to be anonymous or be contacted for a follow-up to gain more information if the attendee is interested. This provides you an opportunity to look into specialized accommodations that match with the needs of your attendees. The same courtesy should be given to any of your staff, guests, speakers etc.

QR codes for Google forms can be developed on various websites including [here](#).

## Venue Accessibility

Before making a booking of a venue try to do a walk-through of the space or request a floor plan. Some venues may also have virtual walk-through options or supply accessibility information on their website. This kind of research is integral to utilizing venues that are inclusive of all McGill students and Montreal community members.



Some factors to consider in venue accessibility and that should be communicated to your attendees are as follows;

- Parking
- Bathrooms (gender neutral and accessible)
- Seating
- Elevators
- Doors/Entrances (entrance buttons, braille, wide doors etc.)

A more comprehensive list of considerations for what makes a venue physically accessible can be found within the Accessibility Canada [“Planning Accessible Events Guidebook”](#).

## Speeches and Presentations

Before an event is being held consider if you or guests of your event will be making any speeches or presentations. Factors like this add other accessibility considerations that should be considered from an early stage.

Firstly, speech or presentation material should be sent to attendees, or at minimum it should be communicated that the material can be sent on request. All shared content should be sent in an online, ereader compatible format to allow for the use of assistive technology as needed.

The design of any speech or presentation material should also consider elements of accessible design including factors such as contrasting colours, legible font, no flashing lights.





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More information on accessible graphic design of presentations, guides or online content can be found within the [Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design](#) by the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

Any video content displayed during a presentation should also be offered with closed captioning when possible. Online services such as [Clideo](#) and [Veed.io](#) can auto-generate closed captioning for video or allow you to manually add closed captioning to video or presentation content.

## Signage

Signage is another important consideration before an event. It helps to keep attendees aware of the space that they are being hosted in and the support around them.

Signage should be made following the accessible design standards outlined in the above section. This includes consideration for accessible fonts, colour schemes and sizes.

Some resources in a space that should have signage include:

- Directions to accessible elevators
- Signage on the nearest gender neutral bathroom
- Water fountains/tables
- Food and beverage options

## Food and Drinks

Some events may provide food for attendees. If attendance is set or ticketed it is important to collect dietary restriction information from your attendees directly. There may be cases where food is being given out at events without set attendees or ticketing. If this is the case inclusive food options should be prioritized. Making note of any dietary restrictions disclosed in your accommodation form can also help you when deciding on food options.

Inclusive food options that should be prioritized include but are not limited to:

- Vegetarian options
- Vegan options
  - Checking the ingredients list may not always be comprehensive enough to know if an item is vegan. There are many animal-derived ingredients that may not clearly state that they are made from animal products. Utilize [PETA's Animal Derived Ingredients List](#) or do a quick google search to assure that any ingredients that you do not recognize are not animal derived



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- Some vegan individuals may also have different stances on animal derived products, when in doubt it is a good decision to ask attendees when possible and keep attendees informed if needed.
- Gluten free options
  - Use the [Celiac Canada Gluten-Free product](#) finder to check if an item is gluten free if you are not sure
  - Check the allergen warning on the ingredients list for “wheat” to determine if an item is gluten-free. The allergen warning is found underneath the ingredients list.
- Halal
  - Check out [Resto-Montreal's](#) ongoing updated page of Halal restaurants in the city
- Kosher
  - [Resto-Montreal](#) also maintains an up-to-date list of kosher establishments
- Nut-free

## Volunteers and Staff

Make sure you always have enough staff to keep instructions clear in the space. For larger scale events volunteers/staff should be shifted to divide tasks appropriately and assure support is spread across event tasks.

Volunteers and staff should be given the opportunity to also voice concerns regarding accessibility or the need for accommodations.

## Harm Reduction

The National Harm Reduction Coalition defines harm reduction as: a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with human behaviors that pose risk, primarily alcohol and drug use.

Events involving alcohol require additional mechanisms to support accessibility. Firstly, it is important to recognize that not all people engage in alcohol use for various reasons or may only engage in minimal alcohol consumption. For some individuals spaces in which other individuals drink alcohol may still be comfortable for them and for others these spaces may be triggering or otherwise difficult.



Firstly, the [SSMU Internal Regulations of Student Groups](#) has some limitations related to alcohol purchasing for student groups as follows:

### “9.5. Alcohol



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Alcohol may only be purchased within a reasonable limit, as determined by the Vice-President (Student Life) and must receive prior written approval of the Vice-President (Student Life) before the expense or any request for reimbursement is made.

9.5.1. The Vice-President (Student Life) will approve an alcohol purchase on the basis that:

- a. At least 30% of the alcohol expense is dedicated to non-alcoholic beverages, excluding water;
- b. Water be provided and available to all at no expense;
- c. The presence of at least one of the safety services (MSERT, Walksafe, Drivesafe) is requested for all events with an expected attendance of above 100 attendees, Club executives/representatives included.”

Safety services are useful to support any individuals who may over consume alcohol or need support in a difficult situation. Here is a description of each service and how to book them without cost:



**MSERT:** McGill Student Emergency Response Team is a student-run volunteer service, supported by the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU). Their mission is to provide a free and accessible first aid service to McGill University and the greater Montreal community. When MSERT is pre-booked for an event they send a team of first aid volunteers to monitor the event and supply first aid for attendees as needed.

**Walksafe:** Walksafe provides volunteers to walk individuals between locations as needed. This can include walking individuals from events/libraries/venues to home, even late at night. Walksafe can be ordered during their operating hours or pre-booked to attend an event with a team of volunteers.

**Drivesafe:** Drivesafe provides safe rides for individuals between locations as needed. Drivesafe is a great service to utilize for any individuals worrying for their safety or those who have over-consumed and may be rejected from drive share services such as Uber or Lyft. They can be pre-booked for an event, though this is a paid service to cover car rental but they are also available on-call during their operating hours from Thursday to Saturday from 11 pm – 3 am (last call at 2:45 am).

**Redfrogs:** Redfrogs are a group external to McGill. The Red Frog mission is to provide a positive peer presence in alcohol-fuelled environments where young people gather. When booked for an event Redfrogs arrive with their own jugs, cups and snacks which they distribute to attendees.



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These standards are in line with the SSMU's stance on harm reduction, also outlined in the [SSMU's Harm Reduction Policy](#).

To support an accessible event space when alcohol is being served other factors to consider include:

- Gluten-free alcoholic beverages
- Non-alcoholic options (especially those that look similar to alcohol options to avoid questioning on drink options)
- Have a chill space (separate space from loud music, with non-alcoholic options, snacks, low intensity games etc.)
- Have a roaming harm reduction volunteer (checking bathrooms, checking-in with attendees, serving water, monitor chill spaces)

## During an Event

### Check-in

No matter if your event is large or small, try to open up opportunities to have your attendees or staff check in with you as an organizer and open conversations with others to check-in as you go. If you have been in contact with specific individuals about accessibility needs (e.g. sign-language interpretation, childcare, dietary restrictions etc.) ask them if they would like a volunteer to meet them at the door and assure that they have the support that they need.

When presenting food options or drink options be sure to announce and label the varied options so individuals don't get them mixed up.

Assure that staff who are shifted are where they are meant to be. If a problem arises, assure that you have a clear communication line between organizers and know the support you have around you.

## After an Event

### Feedback

Getting feedback for an event can be beneficial to the long-term improvement of the events that your organization runs. No matter how on top of things an organizer is you may miss something or not be aware of something negative that happened at your event. Having a feedback form sent to attendees allows you to follow up on any concerns voiced by those who attended.



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If individuals have complaints regarding your event you can direct them to these resources:

General concerns of the functioning of your event or members of your team:

SSMU VP Student Life

Email: [studentlife@ssmu.ca](mailto:studentlife@ssmu.ca)

Complaints regarding equity-based concerns

SSMU Equity Commissioner

Email: [equity@ssmu.ca](mailto:equity@ssmu.ca)

Complaints regarding gendered or sexual violence

SSMU Anti-Violence Coordinators

Email: [avc@ssmu.ca](mailto:avc@ssmu.ca)

## Equity

As Clubs and Services of the SSMU, you have a responsibility to uphold the equity values outlined in the [SSMU Equity Policy](#). The Equity Policy works to create a framework within which SSMU works to address issues related to racism, sexism, transphobia, classism, etc., and to hold organizations and individuals accountable to create safe, equitable, and inclusive spaces.

The Equity Policy (as outlined in section 2.1), applies to staff, elected representatives, operations, Clubs, and services of the SSMU. All activities and events hosted, funded, and promoted by the SSMU and SSMU-affiliated Clubs and Services are also held to the standards of the Equity Policy. For you, as leaders in your Student Groups, this means it is your responsibility to uphold equity among Club members, events, communications, meetings, materials, and more.

The Equity Policy contains information about specific topics described in this section of the Club handbook, including equity terminology, bias, the equity complaint process, and further resources.



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# Terminology

## **Equity**

Equity involves recognising that every individual is different, and thus may need different support and resources to ensure their rights are being fully realised. Equity is a process that is consistently engaged with to ensure that people with marginalised identities have the opportunity to grow, contribute, and develop - regardless of their identity.

## **Diversity**

Diversity is about the individual. It refers to the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics every person possesses.

## **Inclusion**

Inclusion is about the collective. It involves creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts, and values difference. Together, diversity and inclusion are about capturing the uniqueness of the individual, and creating an environment that values and respects individuals for their talents, skills, and abilities to the benefit of the collective.

## **Intersectionality**

The recognition that individuals may experience interconnected systems of oppression differently, in varying configurations and degrees of intensity

## **Oppression**

The systemic and institutional abuse of power by one group at the expense of others, and the use of force to maintain this dynamic. It includes actions, systems, cultures, ideologies, and technologies.

## **Implicit bias**

Any sort of prejudice and/or stereotypes held on an unconscious level. Often, implicit biases may be in stark contrast to our consciously held beliefs and ideas. Implicit bias acts as an important site of discrimination and an important tool in the reproduction of social inequality.

## **Positionality**

Positionality refers to where one is located in relation to their various social identities. The combination of these identities and their intersections shape how we understand and engage with the world, including our knowledge, perspectives, and teaching practices.

## **Microaggression**

The indirect, subtle, and, sometimes, unintentional phrases people use to



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discriminate against others. A microaggression can be a verbal, behavioural, or environmental signal that communicates something hostile or derogatory towards marginalised people.

### Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities.

*Note:* It is important to recognise that these terms have been created by marginalised people for marginalised people, and are intended to be used to describe specific experiences. Co-opting popularized equity language *does not* provide or maintain an equitable space.

## Addressing Bias in Your Community

In order to mitigate the effects of bias in your community you must accept that implicit bias impacts your perceptions of the world and commit to (un)learning more about bias, prejudice, discrimination, and the different forms of oppression that affect you and the people around you. A heightened sense of one's own objectivity can lead to a decreased ability to detect and adjust for implicit bias.

### Hiring

Hiring processes are often an important site of discrimination in the workplace. There are a range of actions that can be taken in order to address this, including (but not limited to):

- Ensure you leave enough time to adequately review all applicants
- Ensure the applicant pool is diverse
- Ensure there are limited barriers to participating in the hiring process
- Develop well defined hiring criteria and prioritise them prior to reviewing applicants
- Ensure the hiring committee is diverse
- Ensure the interview process is fair, accessible, and standardised

### Finance

In order to address bias and organisational racism in financing, there are several questions it is important to ask yourself:

- Who has control and influence over financial resources?
- Who develops the budget?
- When the budget/fundraising plan reflects work to be done in support of marginalised communities, do people from these communities have input on where the money comes from and how it will be spent?



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## Culture

In order to create a safe space for all your members, it is important to make a conscious effort to support a diverse community. This includes:

- Building trust and promoting inclusivity
- Actively working against discrimination and subordination
- Embracing a wide range of styles and voices and making cultural differences a resource for learning
- Maintaining transparency and encouraging dialogue, discourse, and feedback from community members

## Holding space

In order to hold space equitably, you should strive to ensure that no one is being silenced, ignored, dismissed, or undermined. Furthermore, it is important to be aware of your position and presence and how that may affect others, as well as continuing to recognize that personal prejudices can influence your decisions and interpersonal interactions with others.

## Equity Complaints

### What can be investigated?

Any activity or behaviour that does not align with the beliefs and/or commitments of the SSMU, as outlined in the Equity Policy, will be grounds for an Equity Complaint. This includes harassment, discrimination, marginalisation, and oppression.

### Who can file a complaint/who can be complained about?

All SSMU employees, members, departments, Clubs, and services can submit complaints. Complaints can be filed against other SSMU employees, persons on SSMU property or at SSMU events, Clubs and services, governing bodies, administrative units, committees, specific events campaigns, and SSMU sanctioned communications. If you're ever unsure, make sure to check the Equity Policy or reach out to the Equity Commissioners to verify.

### The Complaint Process:

Equity concerns/complaints can be filed in three primary ways:

- For non-staff complaints, direct email to Equity Commissioners at [equity@ssmu.ca](mailto:equity@ssmu.ca)



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- For staff complaints, direct email/calendar booking with the Equity and Policy Specialist at [scuthbertson@ssmu.ca](mailto:scuthbertson@ssmu.ca)
- [Complaint form](#)

*Note:* contacting or meeting with an Equity Commissioner to discuss an issue *does not mean* that you are filing an official complaint. It is up to you whether or not you decide to move forward with the official complaint process and any next steps will always be taken with your knowledge and consent.

## Outcomes

Generally speaking, complaints will be addressed through either mediation or a formal investigation. Mediation is the more informal avenue, and requires all involved parties to agree on the resolution of the complaint. This may include an apology from the party against whom the complaint was launched, the implementation of additional equity training, the removal of any problematic content, the alteration of certain practices, etc.

A formal investigation occurs when the parties involved cannot come to an agreement on the outcome of the complaint resolution. This process involves a written complaint that the person against whom it was launched is given an opportunity to respond to, the interviewing of witnesses (if applicable), Equity Complaints committee meetings to discuss evidence, a final written report, and, if appropriate, the implementation of sanctions. The sanctions imposed may be a requirement to remove certain content, change policy language, or a suspension or removal of an individual from their position.



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# Gendered and Sexual Violence

## Terminology

### **Sexual violence**

Is an umbrella term that describes any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This does not only include various forms of sexual assault e.g. sexual coercion, harassment, stalking, distribution of sexually explicit photographs or recordings, starting sexually explicit rumours, using sexually violent language or minimizing/demeaning survivors and their experiences.

### **Gender-based violence**

The use and abuse of control over another person based on their gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. This includes many different things, including sexual violence, as well as: intentional misgendering, intentional outing, verbal abuse, use of gender based slurs, physical violence or intimidation. Unintentional misgendering or asking questions on gender identity is not gender-based violence if asked appropriately with consideration for context.

### **Power**

The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events. It is not intrinsically negative, it is dependent on how it is used. Power dynamics do exist at the SSMU and can create barriers for survivors coming forward.

### **Survivor**

A term used by some people who have experienced sexual or gendered violence.

### **Survivor-centric support**

Involves prioritizing the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor. This includes thinking about supporting survivors in ways that avoid retraumatization e.g. non-directive support and considering consent at every stage of support.

## Support Resources

- [Office for Sexual Violence Response, Support and Education \(OSVRSE\)](#): The OSVRSE provides support for all members of the McGill community who have been impacted by sexual violence and works to foster a culture of consent on campus and beyond. Services include resource



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referral, mental health support, and accommodations like academic extensions, exam support, and advocacy to professors

- [Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Student's Society\(SACOMMS\)](#): is a peer support and volunteer-run organization, with services like DROP in and Line which is a helpline and drop in service for survivors, advocacy, support groups, and outreach initiatives
- [Student Wellness Hub](#): Local Wellness Advisors (LWAs) are mental health professionals who can supply support and resource referral. Can support specific groups based on faculty, demographic status and living location

## Reporting Resources

### SSMU Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy (GSVP)

Applicable to all members of the SSMU community, employees, individuals using or participating in SSMU services and Clubs, or individuals on SSMU property

### Submission

Complaints and disclosures are to be submitted to [avc@ssmu.ca](mailto:avc@ssmu.ca). In the email, explain the situation to the best of your ability or ask the Anti-Violence Coordinator to meet with you. If you are or others you refer to us are unsure we encourage still emailing and we can help with providing advice/support/resources/referral

### Initial meeting

Pre-investigation options at initial meetings include Third Party or Anonymous Complaints and Non-Anonymous Complaints.

For third party complaints, survivors must be informed before investigation is commenced. For anonymous complaints, complainants may remain anonymous to the investigating committee but procedural fairness must be met as described in the GSVP.

For non-anonymous complaints, complainants are not anonymous to the investigating committee and interim measures like temporary space bans, schedule changes etc. are discussed with the investigating committee. Consent to inform the respondent is established.

### Commencing Formal Resolution

Independent meetings with both parties are held to discuss the steps moving forward.



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If all parties agree on an outcome, then they begin an Alternate Resolution Process. This includes mediation, apology, training, stepping down from a position in a group, etc.

If parties do not agree on an outcome, then they begin a Formal Investigation. This process is led by the SSMU AVCs on the basis of the balance of probabilities to decide if there was a violation of the policy. Some examples include removal from office, limitations on access to SSMU Events and/or Clubs, etc.

This is carried out through witness interviews, evidence collection by the AVCs, and vote by GSVP committee to decide outcome on policy violation. The respondent and complainant are informed about the decision and the investigation report is shared with them. Confidentiality is considered at every stage of the investigation: only people involved in the enactment of sanctions are informed

## McGill Policy Against Sexual Violence

This policy is a mechanism to investigate sexual violence in academic settings. It can be used to enact sanctions in classroom or educational environments. E.g. Disclosures regarding Professors, TAs, students who are in their classes etc.

## Contacts

Vice-President University Affairs ([ua@ssmu.ca](mailto:ua@ssmu.ca)) can connect you to McGill resources

Dean of Students: [deanofstudents@mcgill.ca](mailto:deanofstudents@mcgill.ca)

## Involvement Restriction Policy

Enables SSMU or a Faculty Student Association to restrict a Person from participating in all student events organized by Student Faculty Associations. This policy has a broader scope than the GSVP and covers harassment, discrimination, and all forms of violence.

Faculties and AVCs conduct investigations and the names of those found to violate the policy are held by the AVCs in a list called the IRP list. The AVCs can check event attendee lists against this IRP list to assure that those who are restricted cannot attend events.

## How to submit a complaint?

Reach out to the AVCs. In an initial meeting, we can discuss if the IRP or GSVP fits better for your needs.