



McGill

## Motion

**TO:** Senate

**FROM:** Emily Yee Clare, Student Senator (SSMU)

**SUBJECT:** Motion Regarding Academic Amnesty

**MEETING DATE:** October 19, 2011

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**BACKGROUND  
AND RATIONALE:**

SSMU Senate Caucus researched the history of Academic Amnesty at Canadian universities, including McGill. By grasping the complexity of the issue from a historical perspective, the motion addresses prominent concerns, such as the possibility of abuse and vagueness in regards to defining ‘reasonable accommodation’. Additionally, Caucus engaged in extensive consultation with the vast majority of faculties and schools at McGill. Feedback was solicited in multiple ways, including but not limited to, social media, interpersonal relations, listservs, mini-town halls and different student committees.

Students need for a safe avenue to express moral and ethical views in regard to issues pertaining to the McGill community in the event of a strike or a lock-out. This motion encapsulates the base understanding that students have the individual responsibility and choice to form ethical standpoints. Academic Amnesty is by no means a “free pass”; it is an active process that forces the individual to carefully consider the implications of invoking such a motion. Furthermore, “reasonable accommodation” entails a discussion and negotiation between the professor and student.

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**MOTION OR  
RESOLUTION FOR  
APPROVAL:**

*Whereas* strikes and lock-outs have a direct impact on the academic climate of a university and the student population therein;

*Whereas* McGill University Senate is the ultimate academic authority;

*Whereas* McGill prides itself as “...a university that is known worldwide for its academic freedom and freedom of speech...”<sup>1</sup>;

*Whereas* Academic Freedom includes freedom to express freely one’s opinion about the institution, its administration, or the system in which one works; freedom from institutional censorship; the right to contribute to social change through free expression of opinion on matters of public interest.

*Be it resolved* that the McGill University Senate grant the right to

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<sup>1</sup> Jabir, Humera. Heather Munroe-Blum in "Senate Discusses Choose Life and MBA Tuition." *The McGill Daily*. 15 Oct. 2009. <[http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2009/10/senate\\_discusses\\_choose\\_life\\_and\\_mba\\_tuition/](http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2009/10/senate_discusses_choose_life_and_mba_tuition/)>.

Academic Amnesty, as outlined in the provisions below, for all students in the case of a strike or lock-out involving a McGill affiliated organization. Provisions:

1. Academic Amnesty includes the right to abstain from participating in academic commitments for reasons of conscientious objection and/or cases of ethical or moral conflict without penalty.
2. Any student who chooses to exercise their right of Academic Amnesty shall notify the appropriate faculty members and relevant department of their upcoming absence at least 72 hours prior.
3. The notice of absence shall name the relevant strike or lock-out. However, the student shall not be required to state their stance on the issue.
4. Faculty members shall be required to provide reasonable accommodation for the deferral of any assignments or course related projects with deadlines that fall within the duration of Academic Amnesty for the student.
5. Academic Amnesty shall not be exercised and shall not apply to the following academic commitments:
  - a. Assignments worth 35% or more of the final grade
  - b. Pre-scheduled mid-terms
  - c. Final examinations
  - d. Mandatory clinicals, field placements and rehearsals
6. Academic Amnesty will apply to any student for the duration of up to 3 consecutive or non-consecutive working days.

*Be it Further Resolved* that no action shall be taken by the University or a Member of the University Community against the Student for having exercised or attempted to exercise their right to Academic Amnesty under this Resolution.

*Be it Further Resolved* that the McGill University Senate ensures the provision of Academic Amnesty is communicated to all faculty, staff and students.

*Be it Further Resolved* that this Resolution of Academic Amnesty take affect immediately for the duration of a year.

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