

**STANDING RULES OF PROCEDURE, GOVERNING THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE SENATE OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY**

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**STANDING RULES OF PROCEDURE, GOVERNING THE PROCEEDINGS
OF THE SENATE OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY**
(Hereinafter, the “Rules”)

1. Enacting Clause

The proceedings of Senate are governed by the Statutes of McGill University (as enacted in 1939, and re-enacted or amended by the Board of Governors from time to time) insofar as they are applicable; in particular, with reference to the following:

- Regular and Special Meetings (Articles 6.4.1, 6.4.2)
- Constitution of Quorum (Article 6.3.1)
- The Chair (Article 3.7)
- The Secretary-General (Article 5.1)
- Appointment of Committees (Article 6.3.15)
- Granting of Honorary Degrees (Article 13.2.2)
- Amendment of Statutes (Article 15)

2. Open Meetings of Senate and Spectator Attendance Conditions

Although certain items on the Senate agenda may require confidential treatment (see section 8), Senate meetings are normally open meetings. An "open" meeting is one that is open to observation by any member of the University community and accredited press, subject to limitations of space and good conduct.

The number of spectators and members of the press will be limited to the capacity of the room in which a Senate meeting is held. Admission of spectators and members of the press will be on first-come, first-accommodated basis. Seating may also be reserved prior to a meeting by contacting the Secretariat.

No external person should be asked to address Senate without the proposal having been approved at a meeting of Senate or of the Steering Committee.

Committee reports are normally presented to Senate by the committee’s Chair. If the committee Chair is not a Senator, the committee Chair will be invited to the Senate meeting and granted speaking rights to present the report and act as the committee’s spokesperson. Other members of the committee are welcome to attend the Senate meeting in the area reserved for spectators and could, if Senate so desired, be invited to participate in the discussion.

3. Recording of Senate Meetings

The open sessions of Senate meetings may be livestreamed by the University and accessible to members of the McGill community on the Senate website. The livestream of each open session will be accessible until the minutes of the meeting are approved. No other recording, communication or transmission of sound or images of the deliberations of Senate is allowed during meetings, except with the express permission of Senate.

4. Frequency and Time of Meetings

4.1 Frequency of Meetings

Based on article 6.4.1 of the Statutes, Senate will normally meet once a calendar month during the academic session (i.e. from September to May). The Steering Committee is empowered to call special meetings or to cancel scheduled meetings of Senate, as required. Based on Article 6.4.2 of the Statutes, "special meetings may be summoned by the Principal according to discretion and must be summoned on the request of any ten members of the Senate."

4.2 Time of Meetings

Senate meetings normally commence at 2:30 p.m. and adjourn no later than 6:10 p.m.

4.3 Meetings held by Electronic Means

The Steering Committee may recommend that a meeting, or a part thereof, be held (1) remotely by means of equipment enabling virtual participation or (2) by electronic vote.

If a meeting is held remotely, access to Senate's open session proceedings by spectators and members of the press will be permitted through a process established by the Secretariat.

Meetings conducted entirely by means of an electronic vote will only include Senators.

5. Senator Attendance (Elected Members)

Senators who will be on leave from the University for a period longer than three months or unable to attend Senate for a period of the same length should normally resign and the competent body will select a successor following the procedure described in section 6.1.2.2 of the Statutes.

If Senators do not attend three consecutive meetings of Senate, or five meetings in a governance year, without sufficient reason, their seat will be deemed vacant by the Secretary and the competent body will select a successor following the procedure described in section 6.1.2.2 of the Statutes.

6. Notice of Meetings and Meeting Documents

6.1 Notice of Meetings

Written notice of regular meetings will be mailed, normally in electronic format, to Senators by the Secretary at least **five** calendar days in advance. As per article 6.4.2 of the Statutes, notice of special meetings will be sent at least **three** calendar days in advance.

6.2 Agenda and Meeting Documents (Open Session)

The agenda, together with related documents, will be distributed to Senators and, with the exception of draft meeting minutes, will be posted on the Senate website or otherwise made publicly available. The agenda and documents should be circulated at least four calendar days in

advance of the meeting. The meeting minutes will be posted on the Senate website or otherwise made publicly available once they have been approved by Senate.

6.3 Meeting Documents (Confidential Session)

Confidential documents will not be distributed but made available for consultation in the Secretariat by Senators only. In the case of remote meetings and meetings conducted by electronic vote, confidential documents will normally be made available to Senators on a secure and access-restricted platform.

7. Order of Business

The order of business at regular meetings will be as follows:

- Memorial Tributes for members or distinguished colleagues of the University
- Report of the Steering Committee
- Adoption of the Agenda
- Business Arising from the Minutes
Chair's Remarks
- Part A (i) Questions by Senators
(ii) Motions by Senators
- Part B - Motions and Reports from Organs of University Government
- Other Business

The order of business at special meetings will follow the order of the items contained in the notice calling the meeting.

The order of business at any meeting, as fixed by the above, may be changed by a majority vote of those present at such meeting. When considering the adoption of the agenda, there are to be no amendments permitted to alter the order of questions and motions in the question and motion period, all questions and motions to be considered in the order in which they are submitted prior to the meeting of Senate.

8. Confidential Sessions of Senate Meetings

In most cases, there should be advance knowledge of items that require confidential treatment and they should be so specified in the Steering Committee's Report or on the agenda. Since the motions to adopt the recommendations of the Report of the Steering Committee and the agenda are debatable, any reservation about confidentiality should be raised and settled at this stage. Once the agenda is adopted, Senate should automatically move into closed session when the item "Confidential Business" is reached, and all spectators should retire from the meeting. This would not preclude the presentation of a procedural motion to have a particular item transferred to "Confidential Business." "Confidential Business" would be minuted in an Appendix to the Minutes of Senate, accessible only to Senators; but the minutes themselves would indicate the general nature of the confidential items and the reasons for them being considered confidential.

Current and former Senators will respect the confidentiality of information received in the performance of their duties, as well as the confidentiality of Senate's deliberations.

At the conclusion of a confidential session there may be, if appropriate, a motion concerning whether any resolutions adopted by Senate during the confidential session, or any part of them, should be made public.

9. Questions and Motions by Senators

9.1 Submission of Questions and Motions

Any Senator may submit a written question or motion, on templates established by the Secretariat, to the Secretary for review by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee has the delegated authority of Senate to make a determination on the admissibility of questions and motions. The Senate Steering Committee is responsible for developing guidelines for the review of questions and motions.

9.2 Time Allocation

As the first item under Part "A" of the Senate agenda, a question and motion period limited to thirty minutes is to be scheduled. Items that remain unaddressed at the end of the thirty minutes will be tabled until the conclusion of Part "B" of the agenda to be addressed then, if time permits. Items remaining unaddressed will be added to the agenda of the subsequent meeting.

9.3 Questions

Written questions and responses will normally be circulated to Senators in advance of the meeting. During the question and motion period, the Senator(s) who submitted the question will be permitted to ask one or more supplementary questions, after which, all other Senators will have the same opportunity. No debate is to be permitted of either the question or the response.

In the case of questions directed to the Principal, the Secretary will assume the chair of Senate for the duration of any supplementary questions and their replies.

9.4 Motions

In view of the lengthy discussion that might develop in Senate when motions by members do not specify fully their intent, Senators are advised to preface the motions they submit for Part "A" of the agenda of Senate with a written rationale, based on a template provided by the Secretariat.

10. The Chair

Pursuant to the Statutes, the Principal or the Acting Principal / Interim Principal if one is appointed by the Board of Governors, is the Chair of Senate and presides over its meetings. The Chair will not normally vote unless there is a tie vote, in which case the Chair will have the deciding vote.

If the Principal is absent from a meeting, the Steering Committee will normally recommend the appointment of a faculty dean to serve as Acting Chair for that meeting. The Steering Committee's recommendation will be presented by the Secretary, who will take the chair at the outset of the meeting for that purpose.

In the case of an unanticipated absence of the Principal, the Secretary will take the chair and call for the appointment of a temporary chair. The member appointed as Temporary Chair will then take the chair and conduct the business of the meeting, with all the powers of the statutory Chair.

11. The Secretary

The Secretary-General is the Secretary of Senate. If the Secretary-General is absent from any meeting, an individual in the employ of the University appointed by the Chair will assume the duties of the Secretary.

12. Conflicts of Interest

Senators are expected to consult and adhere to the applicable University regulation governing conflicts of interest, review the agenda items and declare any conflicts of interest to the Chair or Secretary. They should indicate whether they will abstain from voting or withdraw from participation in the consideration of the agenda item.

13. Voting

Senators will vote as follows: IN FAVOUR / AGAINST / ABSTAIN. Given that a Senator should hear the full arguments on a motion, there will be no provision for absentee voting. On any vote, Senators may request that their names be recorded in the minutes as voting in favour, against or abstaining. In all cases, in determining the number required for a majority, those members present but voting ABSTAIN are excluded from the total eligible to vote.

All motions will be decided by simple majority except those that require a two-thirds majority or a three-fourths majority, as established by these Rules or as stipulated in the Statutes in respect of recommendations such as the grant of honorary degrees and amendments to the Statutes.

Depending on the format of the meeting, voting will be conducted as follows:

a) For In-Person Meetings

Senators will vote on motions by a show of hands, unless by a majority vote upon a motion or, at the suggestion of the Chair, Senators decide in any particular case that the vote should be taken by secret ballot.

b) For Meetings Held by Electronic Vote

Senators will vote on motions by submitting an electronic ballot using a platform made available by the Secretariat for this purpose.

c) For Meetings Held Remotely

Senators will vote on motions either by voice or, as appropriate, by using the features within the remote platform made available by the Secretariat.

14. Reconsideration

A motion to reconsider any decision previously taken and recorded as a resolution of Senate may be presented, subject to the following conditions:

- a) At the meeting at which the resolution was adopted, a motion to reconsider may be presented after all items on the agenda have been disposed of.
- b) Otherwise, a notice of a motion to reconsider may either be given at the regular meeting immediately preceding the meeting at which such motion is to be presented, or be submitted to the Steering Committee for presentation at the next meeting of Senate; and it cannot be so presented unless it has been mentioned in the agenda included in the notice of such meeting.
- c) In any circumstances, the minimum vote required to carry a motion to reconsider will be two-thirds of the members present.

When a motion to reconsider has been duly presented and carried, the subject matter of the original motion is thereby reopened for discussing and voting anew.

15. Suspension of the Rules

Any or all of the present Rules may be suspended by a vote of not less than three-fourths of those present, provided that such three-fourths constitute an absolute majority of all Senators.

16. Amendment of the Rules

The present Rules may be amended by a majority vote of those present at any regular or special meeting, provided that notice of the proposed amendment has been given at the previous meeting and that the wording thereof has been included in the notice calling the meeting at which it is to be considered.

17. Allocation of Time for Debate and Discussion

The Steering Committee may submit with the agenda a recommended allocation of time for each item on the agenda. This schedule would be approved by Senate in the context of its approval of the agenda. The Chair would normally close debate at the end of the assigned period unless by a majority vote of those present, discussion were prolonged for a specific period. The motion to prolong debate would not itself be debatable. Before closing the debate on an item, which has not yet reached the end of its allocated time, the Chair will ask Senators if they have any further comments.

18. Duration and Frequency of Interventions

A Senator, in making a motion, will be permitted up to a total of four minutes to provide a rationale for the motion. The seconder of the motion, all other speakers on the motion, and Senators making amendments and sub-amendments will be permitted up to three minutes of speaking time. Seconders and speakers to amendments and sub-amendments will be permitted up to two minutes of speaking time.

In regard to questions or comments on agenda items, Senators will be permitted up to two minutes of speaking time.

Presenters will normally have up to four minutes of speaking time to deliver a report. The Steering Committee may recommend more time, which would be reflected in the recommended allocation of time for items included on the agenda (see section 17).

A list of speakers will be kept by the Chair and/or Secretary. Interventions by those who have already spoken will not be allowed until all Senators speaking for the first time have had a chance to speak. Senators desiring to speak on an amendment may express themselves without prejudice to their position on the speaker's list for the motion, and the same will apply with regard to the speaker's list for a motion and an amendment in the case of members desiring to speak on a sub-amendment. When the sub-amendment has been disposed of, there will be a return to the speaker's list for the amendment, and when the amendment has been disposed of there will be a return to the original speaker's list. In all of the above situations, the Chair may permit brief second interventions once the speaker's list in question has been exhausted.

At the discretion of the Chair, Senators whose knowledge or expertise is required in order to aid the Senate debate or discussion may be permitted to speak briefly to a given point even if they have already spoken, and without prejudice to their position on the speaker's list if they have not yet spoken.

All Senators have equal rights to be heard without interruption; however, the Chair may use discretion in judging the relevancy of an argument or commentary, and may act in the interest of using time efficiently so as to ensure that discussion is germane to the subject matter of the motion or discussion item and that Senate has sufficient time to address other agenda items.

19. Points of Order and Rulings of the Chair

19.1 Points of Order

If a Senator believes that the present Rules have been incorrectly applied or overlooked, the Senator may raise a Point of Order to bring the matter to the attention of the Chair.

The Senator will raise the Point of Order as soon as the alleged breach occurs by stating "Point of Order". When recognized by the Chair, the Senator will be invited to briefly state the Point of Order to be addressed by the Chair. The Chair will then make a ruling on the matter.

A Senator may not use a Point of Order in an attempt to gain the floor to participate in or provoke a discussion; in such cases, the Chair may refuse the intervention and the ruling of the Chair will not be subject to a challenge.

19.2 Rulings of the Chair

The duty of ruling on all questions of procedure rests with the Chair. However, any two Senators may, except as noted above, challenge a ruling by the Chair, as follows:

1. A Senator can challenge a ruling of the Chair by moving to challenge immediately following the ruling.
2. A seconder is required for such a motion.
3. The mover of the challenge is allowed two minutes in which to explain the basis of the challenge, and the Chair is allowed two minutes in which to explain the ruling. The vote then proceeds in the form "Does Senate sustain the ruling of the Chair?", and the result is decided by simple majority.
4. If the vote is affirmative, Senate's business proceeds. If negative, Senate reverts to the matter that was originally disallowed by the Chair.
5. During the whole procedure of a challenge to a ruling of the Chair, further challenges to rulings of the Chair will not be allowed.

20. Rules on the Rights of Senate

20.1. Rights of Senate

1. A breach of the rights of Senate consists in such improper obstruction, or attempt at or threat of obstruction, of Senate, its members, officers, or committees, as is causing, or likely to cause, substantial interference with the performance of their respective functions.
2. Where the business of Senate or of any of its committees or of any officer of either involves a confidential matter, a breach of that confidentiality will be a breach of the rights of Senate, without prejudice to application of rules relating to University discipline.
3. An act will not be dealt with by Senate as a breach of the rights of Senate unless it is essential to do so in order to provide reasonable protection for the Senate, its members, officers, or committees in the performance of their respective functions.

20.2. Order at Meetings

1. It is the right and duty of the Chair to keep order at meetings of Senate.
2. (a) When any person, whether a Senator or not, by disorderly words or disorderly conduct obstructs the business of Senate, the Chair may:

- (i) If of the opinion that, despite the continued presence of the offender, the business of the Senate can continue unobstructed, order that it do so for the time being, subject, in the case of a Senator, to the loss by the offender of the right to speak for the duration of the meeting; and subject, also, to the right of the Chair at any time to determine that the meeting cannot continue unobstructed; or
- (ii) Require the offender to withdraw from the meeting.

(b) Either order, unless varied by the Chair, continues in force for the remainder of that meeting, and extends to any time and place to which the Chair may adjourn the meeting.

(c) In those cases where obstruction is forthcoming from persons other than Senators, the Chair may order that some or all non-Senators withdraw. An order that all non-Senators withdraw constitutes, unless the Chair orders otherwise, an order that no non-Senators enter thereafter. This order will be confirmed by a majority vote of Senators after the room has been cleared.

3. (a) Following an order by the Chair described in section 20.2(2) above:

- (i) It is the duty of a Senator who has been deprived of voice by the Chair to remain silent for the duration of the meeting.
- (ii) It is the duty of any person ordered by the Chair to withdraw to leave the meeting immediately.
- (iii) The Chair's order to a Senator to withdraw automatically deprives the Senator in question of the exercise of the Senator's rights as such for the remainder of the meeting, whether or not the ruling of the Chair is obeyed. The Senator is accordingly without voice or vote during that time.

(b) A Senator deprived of voice by order of the Chair, may, before ceasing to participate in the meeting, formally object and may, if given leave by the Chair, and during such time as the Chair permits, offer explanation.

Likewise, a Senator required to withdraw from the meeting may, before doing so, formally object, and may, if given leave by the Chair and during such time as the Chair permits, offer explanation.

(c) Where the Chair is satisfied with an explanation offered by a Senator under subsection 20.2(3)(b), the Chair may rescind the order which then ceases to have effect.

(d) When a Senator has been ordered to withdraw from the meeting and has in fact withdrawn and remained absent, the Chair may, with respect to the Senator's conduct and exclusion from the meeting:

- (i) Invite opinions from Senators;
- (ii) Entertain motions by Senators;

subject, in every case, to the Chair's right at any time to close discussion or debate and to call any question which may have arisen, keeping in mind Senate's scope of authority.

(e) When a Senator has been deprived of voice, and has in fact ceased to participate in the meeting otherwise than by exercising the right to vote, the Chair may, at the Chair's discretion, with respect to the Senator's conduct and loss of voice:

- (i) Invite opinions from Senators;
- (ii) Entertain motions by Senators;

subject, in every case, to the Chair's right at any time to close discussion or debate and to call any questions which may have arisen, keeping in mind Senate's scope of authority.

4. (a) When a person excluded from a meeting of Senate enters or continues to be present, the Chair may:
- (i) Order an adjournment, either without a set date or to such other time as the Chair may fix; or
 - (ii) Order the forcible physical exclusion of the offender.

(b) In exercising discretion, the Chair will have regard to the desirability, in the interests of the dignity of the Senate and the good governance of the University, of avoiding, if possible, the use of force while protecting the Senate against forcible interference by any person whatever.

5. The provisions of section 20.2 will apply, with the necessary adaptations, to the committees of Senate; the Chair of the committee being substituted for the Chair of Senate and a member of the committee being substituted for a Senator.

20.3. Proceedings to Protect the Rights of Senate

1. (a) Complaint of breach of the rights of Senate may be made by the Chair or any Senator. It must be submitted to the Chair or to the Secretary for referral to Senate and be accompanied by a statement of the grounds on which the facts alleged are said to cause the substantial interference required by section 20.1(1).

(b) It must be accompanied also by a motion to refer the matter to the Committee on the Rights of Senate for investigation and report or, in cases thought to be of exceptional urgency, a motion for immediate consideration of the complaint by Senate. A motion to refer to the Committee on the Rights of Senate cannot be amended save to propose that Senate take the matter immediately into its consideration, and vice versa.

Either motion and any amendment, will be put to the question without debate. In the event that an unamended motion for immediate consideration by Senate is defeated, a motion for reference to the Committee on the Rights of Senate may be entertained but can neither be amended nor debated.

(c) Senate will not refer any complaint, which appears trivial or unworthy of consideration or, which on its very face, does not involve the substantial interference required by section 20.1(1).

21. Reference to *Robert's Rules*

With respect to any point or procedure not covered by the University *Statutes* or the present Rules, reference will be had to the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

If the said manual does not address the point in question, then the decision will rest with the Chair, provided that the Chair's decision may be overruled on a motion supported by the vote of the majority of those present.

22. Records

The minutes of meetings prepared by the Secretary and approved by Senate, together with all documents circulated to Senate or presented to Senate at the meeting, constitute the official record. However, only minutes and documents that are not confidential are made publicly available.

23. Routine Functions – A Steering Committee

Senate will be served by a Steering Committee that will, among other duties, carry out routine functions and deal with some of the contingencies that arise between meetings. The Steering Committee's mandate and composition will be described in its terms of reference, which will be approved by Senate. A written report of actions taken by the Steering Committee will be submitted to Senate.

24. Meetings and Minutes of Senate Committees

Senate committees that deal habitually with topics involving the private and confidential affairs of individuals, such as the Honorary Degrees and Convocations Committee and the Senate Nominating Committee, will hold closed meetings. These meetings may be held in open session if the committee members resolve to carry out a meeting or a part thereof in open session, provided that no breach of confidentiality would result from such a decision.

All other Senate committees and subcommittees should accept the same procedure as Senate, i.e., meetings should be open to observers, except in extraordinary circumstances when the majority of the members present vote to meet in closed session. In such cases, public justification should be given.

Reports and minutes of Senate committees that are not confidential should be made available for public access either online or upon request to the Secretariat.

25. Nominations and Elections to Committees and Other Bodies

Certain Senate Committees, such as the Senate Nominating Committee and the Senate Steering Committee, include elected academic or administrative and support staff members of Senate whose membership on the particular Committee is subject to a nomination and an election process, administered by the Secretariat.

Should the period for a call for nominations for committees and other bodies for which elections by Senate are required expire with no nominations, or with fewer nominations per stated position having been received, a second call for nominations will be issued by the Secretariat. Should vacancies remain unfilled following a second call for nominations, the matter will be referred to the Senate Nominating Committee for recommendations of candidates to fill the vacancies.

The Secretariat will inform the SSMU, PGSS, MCSS, and MACES of all positions on Senate committees that require students. Such notice will normally be given before the final meeting of the Senate Nominating Committee of the academic year.

Approved by Senate on November 18, 2020, Minute IIB4