

Guidelines for the Review of Questions and Motions by the Senate Steering Committee

(Approved by the Senate Steering Committee on November 26, 2019)

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Senate Steering Committee (the “Committee”) has the delegated authority of Senate to review written questions and motions submitted to Senate in order to determine their suitability for inclusion on a Senate agenda.

These Guidelines serve as a point of reference and guidance for Senators who wish to submit questions or motions for review by the Committee. The Guidelines also serve as a point of reference for the Committee, which, ultimately, has the authority to make a determination on the question of admissibility on behalf of Senate.

I. REVIEW OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS: ADMISSIBILITY

In its review of a proposed question or motion, the Committee must first assess whether the question or motion falls within the purview of Senate.

In general, questions and motions that pertain to the academic mandate of Senate, as established by the Statutes of McGill University, would normally be accepted by the Committee. Examples of such topics are accounted for in the Statutes and include the following:

- Academic priorities and projects involving academic policy;
- Academic activities including academic programs, curriculum, courses of study, degrees;
- Affiliations with other institutions of learning or research;
- Senate governance and procedures;
- Student conduct; student discipline;
- Establishment or discontinuance of academic entities (faculties, schools, departments).

For additional information concerning the mandate of Senate, please see articles 6.3 to 6.3.16 of the [Statutes](#).

Questions and motions that pertain to the academic business of Senate, based on Senate’s consideration of reports/agenda items that have academic implications and which feature regularly on Senate’s agenda, would normally be accepted by the Committee. Examples of such items include the following:

- Budget Report;
- Staffing Report;
- Employment Equity Report;
- University Advancement Report;
- Official position of the University on a matter pertaining to its academic mission.

II. REVIEW OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS: SUBSTANCE AND FORMULATION

If the question or motion is deemed to be within the mandate of Senate, the Committee will evaluate the details of the question, based on the elements provided in the table below.

QUESTION	MOTION
Is drafted using the template established for questions (available on the Senate website);	Is drafted using the template established for motions (available on the Senate website);
Is clear and thematically cohesive;	Is clear and thematically cohesive;
Shows evidence of due-diligence, normally described in the preamble, which provides contextual information based on factual, accurate data supported by credible, legitimate sources;	Shows evidence of due-diligence, normally described in the preamble, which provides contextual information based on factual, accurate data supported by credible, legitimate sources;
	Seeks a specific outcome (i.e. approve, authorize, reconsider).

Administrative deadlines for submitting questions and motions for review by the Committee are indicated on the Senate website and are generally set to fall on the Thursday preceding the Committee meeting. Questions or motions submitted after the deadlines may need to be considered by the Committee at its subsequent meeting.

III. OUTCOMES

The table below summarizes the types of actions that the Committee may take following its review of a question or motion.

QUESTION	MOTION
Accept the question for inclusion on the agenda of the next-scheduled Senate meeting and provide advice on the appropriate officer to answer the question submitted.	Accept the motion for inclusion on the agenda of the next-scheduled Senate meeting.
Defer the question to the agenda of a subsequent Senate meeting. This may be necessary if more time is needed to collect and assess information or data to issue a response.	Defer the motion to the agenda of a subsequent Senate meeting. This may be necessary if more time is needed to collect and assess information or data.
Return the question to the submitter(s) for revision and resubmission with such suggested changes as the Committee may advise. This would normally be done when the question pertains to the mandate of Senate but requires revisions, based on the Committee's review described in section II of these guidelines.	Return the motion to the submitter(s) for revision and resubmission with such suggested changes as the Committee may advise. This would normally be done when the motion is deemed to be in order but requires revisions, based on the Committee's review described in section II of these guidelines.

<p>Refer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The question to the responsible University officer to provide a response directly to the submitter (outside of Senate) if the question is deemed to pertain to matters that are outside Senate’s mandate (broaching largely non-academic issues); or - The submitter to the appropriate resources if the information is readily available through other sources. 	
<p>Refuse the question if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is highly speculative; - It solicits personal opinions of individuals; - It could be answered in the context of the presentation of an item already included on the Senate agenda. 	<p>Refuse the motion if it is deemed to pertain to matters that are outside Senate’s mandate (broaching largely non-academic issues).</p>

If a question/motion is accepted by the Committee, it will be included in the Senate document package and form part of the official Senate record. With respect to questions, a written response will be provided prior to the Senate meeting and will form part of the official Senate record. The Senator(s) who submitted the question will be permitted to ask one or more supplementary questions at the Senate meeting, after which, all other Senators will have the same opportunity.

If a question/motion is not included on the Senate agenda, a rationale for the Committee’s decision will be provided in the Committee’s report to Senate. Any Senator wishing to view a question/motion not included on a Senate agenda is able to do so by consulting the Secretariat. In addition, Senators whose questions or motions were refused may choose to transmit them to the Students’ Society of McGill University (SSMU) with a request that they be uploaded to an online hub. Senators wishing to post documents on the hub need to reformat them to ensure that they are not presented on official Senate templates. The hub, which will serve as an unofficial repository for these documents, will be maintained by SSMU.