



Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Dunn, Sobat and Singh

RESPONSE FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General

SUBJECT: Question and Response Regarding the Composition of Senate

MEETING DATE: May 15, 2017

PREAMBLE: The most recent review of Senate’s composition was finalized in December 2014. Prior to this, it had been twenty years since Senate reviewed its composition.

The Statutes require that Senate review its composition at least once every ten years. Recognizing that a review of Senate’s composition every ten years may not be sufficient to meet evolving institutional and governance needs and noting that frequent changes to Senate’s composition would have potentially destabilizing governance effects, this question seeks guidance with respect to establishing a frequency for the review of Senate’s composition.

We have been made aware of three requests that pertain to the composition of Senate. The requests are attached as Appendix A.

QUESTION: At what frequency should Senate engage in a review of its composition and what process should be used to facilitate the review?

RESPONSE: A governance body will usually review its governance functions when major changes occur and impact its ability to fulfill its governance mandate. An initial inquiry into practices at other Canadian universities on the question of frequency with which Senates review their composition suggests that such reviews are infrequent and that there is no established standard practice with respect to the rate at which Senates should review their composition.

Major reviews of a body’s composition should not happen often as they cause disruption in governance structures and functions and may impede the body’s ability to fulfill its governance obligations. Nevertheless, opportunities for regular reviews are necessary. The recommendations arising from the 2014 review of Senate’s composition support this view, which is reflected in the Statutes as follows: “Senate shall undertake a comprehensive review of its composition at least once every ten years”.

For the previous review of Senate's composition, an ad hoc Committee was struck in 2013 and delivered its recommendations to Senate, which were approved by Senate in October 2014 and by the Board of Governors in December 2014. The same process could be used for the next review, which could start halfway into the ten year period, in 2018. Such a review would allow the University to be more agile in meeting evolving institutional or governance needs, while ensuring stability in governance functions.

Senators are invited to submit input with respect to the composition of Senate, with the understanding that the Secretariat will keep track of the requests and ensure that they are addressed in the context of the next review.

APPENDIX A:

i. MCSS, the undergraduate student society of the Macdonald campus, has a permanent Senate seat, but MCGSS, the graduate student society of the Macdonald campus, does not. For the past two years, one of the PGSS at-large Senator seats has been held by a MCGSS member, though nothing necessitated that this be the case. MCGSS should have a seat at Senate not only for the purpose of equitable representation, but because the academic needs of MCGSS members are often distinct from those of other PGSS members and deserve to be represented at Senate.

ii. Recent changes to the status of post-doctoral fellows at McGill has resulted in some being classified as employees and thus no longer as members of PGSS. In its May 2013 report to Senate, the Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Composition of Senate concluded that "since postdoctoral students are PGSS members, it would be sensible to consolidate postdoctoral students with PGSS representation on Senate in the Statutes. Given that the nature of postgraduate studies differs from that of other graduate students, it is essential that postdoctoral students retain one representative on Senate." Since the current post-doc seat is a PGSS seat, postdocs who are employees no longer have representation at Senate.

iii. The Associate Provost (Equity and Academic Policies) [hereafter AP-EAP] regularly reports to Senate. For example, during the 2015-2016 academic year, the AP-EAP presented and/or spoke during nine agenda items at six distinct Senate meetings. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the AP-EAP has presented and/or spoken during ten agenda items at five distinct Senates. Given the current implementation of the recently adopted *Policy Against Sexual Violence*, this only stands to increase. The

current AP-EAP is a Senator from the Faculty of Law. Were the AP-EAP not a Faculty Senator, the Senate Steering Committee would need to grant the AP-EAP speaking rights on a regularly basis—an unnecessary administrative task. It thus seems sensible to make the AP-EAP a permanent member of Senate.
