

# Recommendations Arising from November 7, 2018 Discussion Topics

AMS Governance Committee

November 23, 2018

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## 1 Introduction

On November 7, 2018, AMS Council (“Council”) considered two discussion items, entitled “Role of AMS Council and its Relationship with the Executive” and “Internal Teamwork at Council”. After these discussions, a resolution was adopted requesting that the Governance Committee consider changes to Code, policy and procedures relating to the discussions and to report to Council at its next meeting. The Student Life Committee was similarly tasked with developing recommendations in relation to the human factor components—the workplace culture piece. This report contains the nineteen (19) recommendations of the Governance Committee.

These recommendations are being brought to Council as part of the seldom-used consultation period section of the Agenda. Rather than be overly concerned with specific wording, the Governance Committee thought it would be better to focus on what changes we thought would be beneficial, present those ideas to Council, receive feedback on the recommendations and then reconvene to approve specific changes for those deemed beneficial by Council. As you will see in the recommendations below, making more use of the consultation period is one of our recommendations and we are hoping to lead by example by demonstrating what is a good use of this time.

## 2 The Issue at Hand

The *ex camera* portions of the discussions at Council largely focused on **engagement** and the **atmosphere** at Council. The Governance Committee has chosen to focus more on the engagement side of the piece as it was felt that Student Life Committee was better suited to handle the issue of atmosphere; however, it is understood that these two components go hand-in-hand.

The Governance Committees understanding of an “**engaged council**” includes the following components: familiarity with the substantive material before it and enough understanding of procedure that Council can properly conduct its business. The Governance Committees understanding of an “**engaged council**” does not necessarily require every Councillor speaking on every (or in fact, any) motion—there is an understanding that voting is the mechanism we use to hear the voices of all members.

The Governance Committee would like to recognize that a member of Council could go an entire term without speaking and still be engaged. Being engaged will likely look very different for different roles on Council. A Councillor whose sole role is as a representative to Council will likely be more engaged than a constituency representative. When Councillors are considering the matters before them, asking questions when warranted through the mechanisms accessible to them, and voting with an understanding of what is being discussed, Council is engaged.

## 3 Recommended Changes

The recommendations below fall into three broad categories:

1. those aimed at improving Councillors knowledge of substantive materials,
2. those aimed at improving understanding of procedure, and
3. those aimed at improving efficiency.

### 3.1 Improve Knowledge of Substantive Materials

The purpose of improving knowledge of what is being discussed at Council is to increase the understanding of topics discussed, so that Councillors can make informed decisions. The Governance Committee believes that informed Councillors will feel more comfortable to raise questions both inside and outside of Council. The following suggestions are raised to allow for Councillors to receive more information in advance of the meetings.

The Governance Committee recommends that Council make the following changes:

4. Executives provide written reports to Council each meeting to be included in the Agenda package. Such reports would be supplementary to oral updates and not replace them.

5. Committee chairs provide written reports to Council monthly, to be included in the Agenda package. Such reports would be supplementary to oral updates and not replace them.
6. Council enact steps to discourage motions being raised from the floor.
7. Executives provide Council with a year plan setting out expected dates of discussion on key operational issues. This may include topics such as:
  - (a) AGM,
  - (b) elections,
  - (c) Executive goal reporting as per Policy I-9, and
  - (d) budget presentations and timelines
8. Requiring all motions, consultation periods, and discussion items sent in through the usual process to include the name of the Councillor who will be moving the motion so that other Councillors know who to reach out to with any questions or concerns prior to discussion at Council.
9. Requiring all motions, consultation periods, and discussion items sent in through the usual process to include a brief written summary of why the motion, consultation, or discussion is coming to Council.
10. Organizing documents into single-file compilations based on document type (e.g. committee minutes, reports) for distribution.
11. Using the Consultation section of the Agenda to provide committees an opportunity to get feedback from Council on current issues before the committee.

### **3.2 Improve Understanding of Procedure**

The Speaker and Clerk serve as experts on *Roberts Rules of Order* and Code; it is not required that every member of Council understand the nuances of these documents; However, all members need a functional understanding of procedure so that it does not interfere with the ability to consider substantive discussions. We use *Roberts Rules* so that it is clear who can speak, when they can speak, and how we conduct our business. Issues arise when these things are no longer clear.

The Governance Committee recommends that Council make the following changes:

12. Provide more and ongoing training and orientation for Councillors both this year and in the future.
13. Set aside budget to run orientation three times per year, to reflect the periods in which we have a large number of incoming Councillors (i.e. April, September, and October/November). This is to take into account concerns of member availability in the summer, and the concern of members who are by-elected in September.

14. Have Councillors take an online quiz to demonstrate that they understood the orientation session. This will require discussion on what competencies Council needs to assess.
15. Treat orientation as a regularly scheduled meeting of Council for attendance purposes, counting towards missed meetings for the purposes of discipline and removal from office.
16. Provide digital copies of all orientation materials, with the understanding that no schedule of orientation will work for all Councillors and that reference material can provide a useful refresher throughout the year.

### **3.3 Improve Efficiency**

While Council should be giving due care and attention to all items before it, it is inevitable that as a meeting grows longer engagement suffers. As such, improving efficiency by focusing solely the issues that matter to Council is an important goal.

The Governance Committee recommends that Council make the following changes:

17. Place stricter limits on the number and content of presentations to Council, including creating some criteria to ensure presentations are relevant to Council.
18. Remove the “second game”.
19. Implement feedback processes to alert the Executive or relevant staff members to issues related to the procedure of at Council.