

PGSS Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy

Resources and Immediate Support:

If you or someone you care about experiences gendered and/or sexual violence, know that you are not alone. There are resources available to support you in your healing process. For a full list of all of the resource options please visit the SSMU resources page. Some of the primary resources include:

1. SACOMSS: The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society is a volunteer-run organization committed to supporting survivors of sexual assault and their allies through direct support, advocacy, and outreach.
2. Office for Sexual Violence, Response, Support, and Education (O-SVRSE): Resource run through the Office of the Dean of Students; offers active listening, accommodation support and facilitates initiating a complaint process.
3. The Montréal Sexual Assault Centre: Offers a range of free services to anyone who has been a victim of sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest, as well as survivors' family and friends.
4. Nightline: A McGill peer resource that offers a confidential, anonymous, and non-judgemental listening service. Services include active listening, resource referrals and crisis management. Nightline can be accessed at 514-398-6246.
5. Project 10: promotes the personal, social, sexual and mental well being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersexed and questioning youth and adults ages 14-25. They provide active listening services, drop-in hours, accompaniment, and a listening line.

Please note, if at any point you or someone you care about is in danger or harming themselves or others – seek emergency professional support by calling 911. If you prefer not to contact law enforcement officials, you can be connected with professional crisis support at the Montreal Sexual Assault Centre at 514 933-9007 or 1 888 933-9007. They are available everyday, 24 hours/day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PREAMBLE	3
2. PURPOSE	4
2.1. Prevention	4
2.2. Support	5
2.3. Advocacy	5
2.4. Response	5
3. SCOPE	6
4. DEFINITIONS	6
5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	11
6. PREVENTION & TRAINING	13
7. ADVOCACY	14

1. PREAMBLE

This Post Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy, herein referred to as the GSVP, aims to counter gendered and sexual violence at the graduate student level in the McGill community. PGSS recognizes that acts of gendered and sexual violence are not isolated incidents. They occur within the context of the prevalence of rape culture in the broader communities of McGill and beyond. Thus, this policy seeks to address gendered and sexual violence by focusing on specific commitments PGSS will make to support the existing prevention and support programs, as well as create new student-led responses. While graduate students are uniquely vulnerable to experiences of sexual violence, from both peers and superiors, they are known to underreport such incidences (McMahon, O'Connor and Seabrook, 2018, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*). Addressing this issue for graduate students is of utmost importance for several key reasons:

[...] First, [graduate students] stay at the same university for a number of years (in the case of doctoral students, up to 6 or 7 years). Second, they may work in close proximity with faculty (collaborating on projects, publishing papers together, etc.). Third, graduate students are often highly dependent on a small number of faculty members in a way that undergraduates rarely are. These three factors are likely to place graduate students at unique risk of sexual harassment from superiors. (Rosenthal, Smidt and Freyd, 2016, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*)

It is further important to note the intersectional nature in which these situations arise. For example, some students, such as international graduate students or students of marginalized or minority backgrounds, may be more at risk of isolation. Major consequences of isolation among these students include, but are not limited to, reduced awareness of available support resources, decreased confidence to access these resources, and a diminished sense of community. These problems may be exacerbated in fields where women and marginalized people are traditionally underrepresented, such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. It is also possible that fewer resources exist at the graduate level in general, and within these fields in particular. Recent movements, such as the #MeTooSTEM initiative, have shed light on the prevalence of these issues and contributed to promote a culture of solidarity, inclusivity, and safety that in turn is diminishing feelings of isolation. Thus, considering the totality of these factors is essential to crafting an effective and comprehensive policy.

This policy is based on the GSVP created by the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU), which applies at the undergraduate level. Their GSVP created a disciplinary procedure to respond to sexual violence within the SSMU context. It also had a broader scope of addressing gendered violence than the overarching McGill policies. The present GSVP is therefore the initial step towards a graduate student counterpart of SSMU's GSVP.

The present GSVP has been crafted to create confidential and survivor-centric processes

to respond to disclosures and make existing campus resources more accessible to graduate students. This policy will also aim to prevent acts of gendered violence - a broader spectrum of harm that includes sexual violence. Finally, this policy will aim to advocate in favor of intersectional and survivor-centric processes beyond PGSS and within the broader context of McGill University. Beyond the scope of this particular policy, PGSS advocates for survivor-centric reforms to both campus policies and provincial legislation.

2. PURPOSE

The PGSS GSVP has been created to provide an intersectional and survivor-centric approach to sexual harassment, gendered violence, and sexual violence within the PGSS community and applied to the PGSS context.

PGSS is a unique entity whereby their jurisdiction within the PGSS context is different from the institution of McGill University. PGSS has jurisdiction over its members, employees, volunteers, participants in PGSAs and PGSS committees, and those who are present within PGSS spaces (i.e. attendees and employees present at Thomson House and events). Furthermore, PGSS is comprised of elected and appointed officials - Board of Directors, the Judicial Board, Council, the PGSS Officers (also known as Executives), and the PGSS commissioners - who, by provincial legislation are subject to different processes with regards to sanctions. It is important to note that this jurisdiction is different than that of McGill University, whose Policy Against Sexual Violence has limited authority within the PGSS context of membership, employment, PGSAs and committees. Thus, the purpose of this policy is to fill this gap and complement the existing campus and community structures in place to respond to gendered and sexual violence. This is done with a three-pronged approach against gendered violence: prevention (2.1), support (2.2), advocacy (2.3). Additionally, PGSS recognizes the need for appropriate steps to be taken in order to ensure that PGSS events are safe spaces, free of gendered and sexual violence.

Confidentiality Statement:

All material dealing with content brought forth from the Gendered and Sexual Violence policy shall remain confidential within the limits of the law and shall only become public upon written consent from all parties involved.

2.1. Prevention

In September 2017, the SSMU Legislative Council passed a motion to acknowledge that gendered and sexual violence does not occur in isolation from the larger context of rape culture that exists

on campus and in Canadian society. In this motion, they defined rape culture as “a culture in which dominant ideas, social practices, media images and societal institutions implicitly or explicitly condone sexual assault by normalizing or trivializing male sexual violence and by blaming survivors for their own abuse”. To address the larger context of sexual violence in the McGill community in general and at the graduate level in particular, the PGSS GSVP will actively engage with prevention efforts outlined in the policy. PGSS will work with existing campus stakeholders to create and mandate prevention training and campaigns that address the existence of rape culture on campus, promote a culture of consent, and actively facilitate the creation of a safe and inclusive environment that is free from gendered and sexual violence.

2.2. Support

PGSS will support and make available the existing support resources on campus and in the larger community. PGSS acknowledges that its role is to reinforce and complement the existing support structures while advocating for increased resources and intersectional support options (i.e., Anti-Violence Coordinator). Graduate student liaison positions will be created in relevant SSMU services to increase their accessibility for graduate students. PGSS aims to ensure individuals who experience gendered and/or sexual violence have access to timely and specialized resources to support their healing processes.

2.3. Advocacy

PGSS will take on an active role in advocating for intersectional and survivor-centric processes at McGill University. In addition, PGSS will take an active role in efforts on campus and internal to PGSS pertaining to gendered and sexual violence.

2.4. Response

Although the GSVP creates accessible, confidential and survivor-centric processes to ensure that all members of the PGSS community have options available, this policy does not include a response protocol. Nevertheless, all experiences may be disclosed and will be heard by an Anti-Violence Coordinator. This person is then able to make referrals to other campus resources (see section 5.1.)

3. SCOPE

3.1. Upon the passing of this policy, all other relevant PGSS policies and documents will be updated to ensure that they are adapted to the GSVP. This includes the PGSS Society Activities Manual (SAM), PGSS Bylaws, PGSS Corporate Operations Manual, and the PGSS Society Policy Manual. The updating of these documents will be the responsibility of the Anti-Violence Coordinator who will work in conjunction with the Secretary-General and the Equity and Diversity Committee. Any revisions or updates to existing PGSS policies and documents will arise from motions at Council meetings subject to ratification at the next Annual General Meeting where required.

3.2. This policy applies to all members of the PGSS community, including graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, employees of Thomson House, individuals using or participating in PGSS services, PGSS events or individuals on PGSS property.

3.3. This policy applies to all forms of gendered violence, sexual harassment and sexual violence, as defined in section 4 of this policy, whether they are in the University's learning, living or work environment, on or off campus, or interacting through social or other electronic media and when the potential consequences of the incident(s) may adversely affect the complainant's ability to feel safe and be able to access PGSS spaces or services.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. Affirmative Consent: Affirmative consent requires that a person is able to freely choose between two options: yes and no. This means that there must be an exchange of mutually understood affirmative words or body language which indicates a willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity. It is the responsibility of the person initiating or engaging in a sexual activity to obtain clear and affirmative responses at all stages of sexual engagement. Silence or non-communication must never be interpreted as consent. The fact that consent was given in the past to a sexual or dating relationship does not mean that consent is deemed to exist for all future sexual activity.

Consent is not obtained or implied if:

- ❖ The agreement is expressed by the words or conduct of a person other than the specific individuals who are involved in the sexual activity.
- ❖ An individual induces another individual to engage in the activity by abusing a position of trust, power, or authority.
- ❖ An individual expresses, by words or conduct, a lack of agreement to

engage in the sexual activity.

- ❖ An individual, having consented to engage in sexual activity, expressed, by words or conduct, expresses a lack of agreement to continue to engaging in the activity.
- ❖ An individual is asleep, unconscious or otherwise unable to communicate;
- ❖ An individual has been threatened or coerced, as outlined in the definition of sexual violence, into engaging in the sexual activity.
- ❖ An individual has been drugged.
- ❖ An individual is incapacitated due to consumption of alcohol or drugs.

Additionally:

- ❖ Any sexual activity involving alcohol or drug-use requires the standard of affirmative consent. The use of alcohol and/or drugs by an individual never implies consent and should not be assumed to have played a role in causing a survivor's experience of sexual violence. Furthermore, the use of drugs or alcohol by the perpetrator never justifies their actions;
- ❖ An individual's profession should not impact their ability to provide or withdraw consent. Specifically, individuals choosing to engage in sex work maintain autonomy over their bodies and the ability to consent or not consent to any form of sexual activity. However, it is important to distinguish the term 'sex work' from 'sex trafficking'. Sex trafficking is a criminal act, under which consent cannot be obtained in any circumstances.
- ❖ Recognizing the intersectionality of consent and ability, consent may not be present properly if an individual has a disability that limits their verbal or physical means of interaction – in such instances, it is necessary to determine how consent will be established.

4.2. Board of Directors: The body of the PGSS made up of all the Directors in accordance with the PGSS Corporate Operations Manual.

4.3. Club: A formal and accredited organization which has been recognized by the Student Society of McGill University (SSMU) as a Full-Status Club or as an Interim-Status Club, in accordance with the Internal Regulations of the Student Life Portfolio of SSMU. Although PGSS does not operate its own clubs, the composition of SSMU clubs may include graduate students. While a graduate student is participating in an SSMU club or activity, they are under the jurisdiction of SSMU policies.

4.4. Commissioner: Commissioners are appointed members of PGSS that include, but are not limited to, Equity and Diversity, Environment, Health, Member Support, and Innovation Commissioners. They are responsible for assisting Officers in the implementation of the PGSS's

policies and the coordination of its activities in targeted areas.

4.5. Discloser: An individual who discloses information about an incident(s) of gendered and/or sexual violence that they have experienced.

4.6. Employee: A person who is hired for a wage, salary, fee, or payment to perform work for the PGSS or Thomson House.

4.7. Executive Committee: A governing body of PGSS with authority within the areas of administration (implementation and coordination) and is composed of the Officers.

4.8. Gendered Violence: Any act of physical, verbal, or emotional aggression which implicates, targets, or de-legitimizes an individual's gender expression or identity, or implicates gendered dynamics in its perpetration. Gendered violence can manifest as singular or continued acts of violence as perceived by an individual, including intentional misgendering, intentional "outing", verbal abuse, and use of gendered slurs.

4.9. Graduate Student Liaison: The graduate student liaison will be a self-appointed member of any SSMU service that caters to survivors of gendered and sexual violence and their allies. This individual will serve as the first point of contact for the AVC and their client when making a referral to a SSMU service. The graduate student liaison will also be provided with a fact sheet summarizing this policy along with additional information pertaining to the graduate student context at McGill.

4.10. Judicial Board: The governing body of the Society, established in accordance with Chapter 13 of the PGSS SAM.

4.11. Council: The governing body of the Society, established in accordance with Chapter 4 of the PGSS SAM.

4.12. Leisure Courses: PGSS offers a variety of courses to their members as well as spouses of members and associate members. Courses are offered at a fee in the Summer, Fall and Winter. The course offering includes, but is not limited to language and exercise classes.

4.13. Macdonald Campus Graduate Student Areas: These include, but are not limited to, the Graduate Student Lounge, the Graduate Student Study Room and the MCGSS Office located at McGill's Macdonald campus.

4.14. Non-Directional Service: A non-directional service is one where unbiased information

rather than coercive advice is provided.

4.15. Officer: Elected officials of PGSS who make up the Executive Committee and shall retain all the powers of Council in between Council meetings.

4.16. Post Graduate Student Associations: Post Graduate Student Associations (PGSAs) are either departmental, faculty or program based. PGSAs have to include their Postdoctoral fellows, since they are also receiving the funds from those individuals. PGSAs are recognized by PGSS. A PGSA is not a McGill association since they are not recognized by the University.

4.17. Rape Culture: A culture in which dominant ideas, social practices, media images, and societal institutions implicitly or explicitly condone sexual violence by normalizing or trivializing sexual violence and by blaming survivors for their own abuse.

4.18. Respondent: A member of the PGSS community named as an offender in any report of sexual violence.

4.19. Service: A formal and accredited organization that has been recognized by the SSMU as a Service in accordance with the Internal Regulations of the Student Life Portfolio. Additionally, PGSS members could use SSMU services and clubs accredited.

4.20. Sexual Violence: Any non-consensual, unwanted actual, attempted, or threatened act or behaviour, that is carried out through sexual means or by targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity, or gender expression. This act or behaviour may or may not involve physical contact. Sexualized violence includes all forms of sexual misconduct including but not limited to:

- a) **Sexual Assault:** Any form of sexual contact or the threat of sexual contact without the individual's consent.
- b) **Sexual Coercion:** The act of using subtle pressure, drugs, alcohol, influence, power, and/or force to have sexual contact with someone against their will. Sexual coercion includes ongoing attempts to have sexual contact of some kind with another person who has already expressed that they do not want to have sexual contact.
- c) **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the working, learning, or living environment, or leads to adverse consequences for the one directly subjected to the harassment.

- d) **Stalking:** Engaging in conduct that causes an individual to fear for their physical or psychological safety, such as repeatedly following or communicating through any means with someone, engaging in threatening conduct, or keeping watch over the place where the individual happens to be.
- e) **Indecent Exposure:** Exposing one's body/body part(s) to another individual for a sexual purpose or coercing another individual to remove their clothing in order to expose their body or body/body part(s), without their consent.
- f) **Voyeurism:** Non-consensual viewing, photographing, or otherwise recording another individual in a location where there is an expectation of privacy and where the viewing, photographing or recording is done for a sexual purpose.
- g) **Distribution of Sexually Explicit Media:** The distribution of any sexually explicit media (including, but not limited to, photograph or recording) of an individual to any party without the consent of the individual in the media.
- h) **Stealthing:** Nonconsensual interference with safe practices during sexual intercourse, including, but not limited to: condom/protection removal or intentional lying about birth control and sexual health history.

4.21. PGSS: The Post Graduate Students' Society is an association of all graduate students and postdoctoral fellows at McGill. The PGSS is a non-profit corporation constituted under Part III of the Quebec Companies Act, with all graduate students and postdoctoral fellows at McGill University as its members.

4.22. Report: An anonymized document written by the AVC recording an incident(s) of sexual and/or gendered violence.

4.23. Support Person: An individual present during a complaint who gives emotional support through the complaint process.

4.24. Survivor: For the purposes of this policy, a PGSS community member who has experienced an act or acts of sexual and/or gendered violence as it has been defined above. Survivors themselves may self-identify using whatever language they prefer.

4.25. Survivor-centrism: A survivor-centred approach requires all those who engage in sexual and/or gendered violence prevention and support programming to prioritize the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor. This requires a commitment to mitigating the potential for re-traumatization when survivors seek recourse or accommodations.

4.26. Thomson House: A well-frequented student restaurant and bar offering the use of study lounges and conference rooms to PGSS members, alumni, membership holders, and visitors. Thomson House is often the main site for PGSS events.

4.27. Thomson House member: Thomson House members include McGill graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, law students, undergraduate medical students, undergraduate dental students, graduate administrative assistants as well as any faculty or staff member that has purchased a membership.

4.28. Trauma-informed: A process that is informed by the understanding of how trauma affects Survivors' response to services, resolution processes, and procedures. Trauma-Informed processes should be carried out with the goal of avoiding Survivor re-traumatization, increasing the safety of all, and increasing the effectiveness of interactions with Survivors.

4.29. Visitor: An individual who is present on PGSS owned or leased property, attending PGSS-sponsored events or is using PGSS services regardless of their geographic location.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Anti-Violence Coordinator: One Anti-Violence Coordinator (AVC) will be appointed by PGSS to oversee the implementation and application of the GSVP. The coordinator will be responsible for organizing GSVP training in conjunction with the parties identified in section 6.1. Prior to the beginning of their mandate, they must receive extensive training as required in their contract. In addition, the AVC will provide a non-directional service, receiving disclosures and offering information on available resources. Upon a survivor's request, the AVC may put them in contact with on-campus services through the respective graduate student liaison (see section 5.2). Moreover, the AVC will serve as the point person for communicating community feedback collected during consultations as outlined in section 7.1.

5.1.1 Appointment of AVC: The PGSS Equity and Diversity committee will interview any PGSS member interested in this position. The committee will then recommend this individual through a majority vote to the PGSS Appointments Board who will then have to seek approval of the PGSS Council. An individual will hold this position for one year from the date of their appointment (the day council ratifies their appointment). Once the individual for this position is ratified, they will become a de facto member of the PGSS Equity and Diversity committee.

5.2. Graduate Student Liaison: Each SSMU organization providing a service relevant to ensuring the well-being of survivors of sexual violence will be encouraged to appoint a graduate student liaison. These services include but are not limited to the Union for Gender Empowerment, SACOMSS, Nightline and the Peer Support Centre. This individual will receive information about the PGSS context. They will also serve as a point of contact for the AVC when referring a survivor to any of the above mentioned services.

5.3. PGSS Executive Officers: The Executive Officers are responsible for assisting in the implementation of the GSVP at the PGSS level. The following is a breakdown of their roles as it pertains to the GSVP.

5.3.1. Financial Affairs Officer: The Financial Affairs Officer is responsible for ensuring that the designated amount of funding needed to carry out the duties set forth in the GSVP is provided for in the PGSS budget.

5.3.2. Secretary-General: The Secretary-General is responsible for updating any relevant PGSS policies to be in accordance with the GSVP (in collaboration with the Equity and Diversity Commissioner as well as the Anti-Violence Coordinator).

5.3.3. Equity and Diversity Commissioner: The Equity and Diversity Commissioner is responsible for coordinating efforts with SSMU with respect to the GSVP policy.

5.4. PGSS Employees: Certain PGSS employees are responsible for assisting in the implementation of the GSVP at the PGSS level. The following is a breakdown of their roles as it pertains to the GSVP.

5.4.1. PGSS Administrative & Media Coordinator: The Administrative and Media Coordinator is responsible for communicating any relevant information regarding the GSVP including prevention initiatives and training to the PGSS body at large.

5.4.2. PGSS Student Life Coordinator: The Student Life coordinator is responsible for applying the GSVP as it relates to GSVP training for PGSS Executive Officers, Commissioners and all other employees as well as recourse mechanisms in the Employee Manual for full-time and casual staff pursuant to the GSVP.

5.4.3. PGSS Operations Manager: The Operations Manager is responsible for applying the GSVP as it relates to GSVP training for employees of Thomson House and recourse mechanisms in the Employee Manual for full-time and casual staff pursuant to the GSVP.

6. PREVENTION & TRAINING

6.1. Gendered and Sexualized Violence Prevention and Support Training, herein referred to as GSVP Training, will be coordinated by the AVC (or members of the policy working group in the first year following this policy taking effect) in collaboration with various actors, including but not limited to the Secretary-General of PGSS, the Financial Affairs Officer, and the Equity Commissioner.

6.2. This training will be provided by members of SACOMSS, and will include information pertaining to:

- ❖ Defining sexual violence and gendered violence
- ❖ Consent including discussions of consent and alcohol or drug use
- ❖ Rape culture and consent culture
- ❖ Intersectional impacts of gendered and sexual violence
- ❖ Bystander intervention
- ❖ Survivor-centric responses to disclosures
- ❖ On-campus and off-campus support options
- ❖ Reporting options at PGSS and beyond

6.3. All individuals in the following positions are required to complete training as part of their held position and may be remunerated at their respective pay rates for their attendance (if applicable): all Thomson House staff, paid PGSS staff, Secretary-General, Financial Affairs Officer, External Affairs Officer, Internal Affairs Officer, Academic Affairs Officer, Member Services Officer, Health Commissioner, Environment Commissioner, Equity Commissioner, Student Support Commissioner, Innovation Commissioner, Judicial Board, Board of Directors as well as representatives from post graduate student associations.

6.4. Individuals have the ability to have alternative trainings to those offered by PGSS recognized as equivalent to the GSVP training, based on the discretion of the AVC. The alternative trainings must be conducted by individuals who have received adequate training from professionals in the field of sexual violence, such as OSVRSE, and the training must cover all of the topics mentioned in section 6.2.

6.5. Upon completing their training, individuals will be asked to complete a feedback form to measure the impact of the training and record ways the training can be continuously improved.

6.6. The AVC will keep records of the names and numbers of individuals who completed the

training.

6.7. Students who complete the training will have the ability to add it to their McGill co-curricular record. This will be monitored by the AVC.

6.8. PGSS will host trainings annually within a month of the beginning of each academic term. Individuals identified in section 6.3. must participate in PGSS training or any alternative training every year, regardless of whether they have received training previously. If any individual listed under section 6.3. is unable to attend training, they must consult with the AVC about alternative training options.

7. ADVOCACY

7.1. Where possible, PGSS will provide a representative to committees and working groups within McGill University pertaining to gendered and sexual violence.

7.1.1. This individual will ensure continued representation of PGSS's stance on intimate staff-student relationships.

7.1.2. PGSS Council retains the right to amend any stances as required.

7.1.3. PGSS will continue to voice graduate students' opinions for future community discussions. Such opinions must be presented to and approved by Council prior to voicing them in a public forum.

7.1.4. In all matters pertaining to membership, day-to-day functioning, and finances of PGSS, any decisions made by the representative must then be ratified by Council at the earliest possible time.

7.2. During an annual equity committee community consultation, the above points will be discussed and the elicited feedback will be shared at council. The AVC shall take the results of this consultation and address any feedback or needs identified.