

Guide to Equitable Events

Adopted March 19th, 2019

Effective July 1st, 2019





This policy applies to any event hosted by an MSS member, that (1) has, at minimum, 15 people intended on attending or signing up; (2), is open (e.g. open to the class, all MSS members, members of the public); and (3) advertised (Murmur, Facebook, MSS website, email, etc). If your event meets all criteria, you must submit the checklist to equity.mss@gmail.com at least 2 days before your event.

1. MANDATORY

ATTENDANCE

The Equity Committee believes first come first serve is an inaccessible method of recruitment for events, due to the fact that people have external obligations and may not be able to access the internet via their phones or computers at the time the sign up is posted. We therefore mandate that:

- Activities or events that reach capacity must hold a lottery for limited spots.
- Suggestions:
 - Waitlist orders can be created by the original lottery (e.g. an order list is created in one lottery round), or by random selection based on the remaining people who did not receive a spot.
 - For events that are known to fill up and sell out quickly (e.g. Internos), you may opt to have a reasonable (min. 4 hrs) window for sign up and perform the lottery after the window has passed. If an event is not full after the sign-up window, additional spots can be allotted on a first-come first-serve basis.
 - Deadlines can also be applied to payment. However, you must provide at least 48 hours for money transfer before potential attendees lose their spot to the next person on the waitlist.

ACCESS

The Equity Committee believes MSS events should be easily accessible to everyone and should be non-discriminatory for all marginalized groups. We therefore mandate that you or your club/committee:

- Ensure that the event space is accessible to everyone, including those using wheelchairs.
- Ensure that the facility is accessible by public transportation.
- Ensure that there is enough seating for people who may need to sit throughout the event.
- Ensure gender-neutral bathrooms are available at the event. If not, provide directions to gender neutral bathrooms.
- Include a space in the sign up form (confidential, i.e. not on any public google forms or documents) titled “accessibility needs” for those wishing to report access needs (i.e. translator, hearing restrictions, etc.) and try to ensure those needs are accommodated.



COST

The Equity Committee believes that the cost of an event should not prohibit any student from enjoying social activities with their classmates. We therefore mandate that:

- Small events, for instance, end of block events, should not cost more than \$20, especially since larger events such as Internos cost significantly more and may place a burden on students. The low cost of smaller events helps to balance the larger events and encourages participation from a greater number of people.

FOOD, DRINKS, AND GENERAL SAFETY

The Equity Committee believes that food and drinks restrictions and preferences should be accommodated at the MSS events. We therefore mandate that:

- Dietary preferences are incorporated into meals that are provided to attendees.
- A member of the group hosting must ensure food is distributed equally (i.e. 2 slices of pizza per person, 2 samosas per person) especially in cases where there are food limits (i.e. only 100 samosas, and 50 attendees) until everyone in attendance has received food. This applies to the first 15 mins of the event.
- Ensure that there are non-alcoholic options available if your event is serving alcohol.
- Events should not offer special prices for drinks according to gender.

ADVERTISING

The Equity Committee believes that all students should have access to events regardless of whether they use social media or not. We therefore mandate that:

- Events should not solely be advertised on one social media platform (e.g. Facebook). Be sure to advertise your event on multiple platforms such as email listservs, the Murmur, the McGill Med website, school announcements, etc.
- Ensure there are multiple ways guests can contact you if they have questions about the event or would like to make accommodation requests (e.g. Facebook + email, or phone + email).

2. RECOMMENDED

1. Consider religious holidays in the planning of your event.
2. Consider potential hearing, language and reading challenges.
3. Consider offering child care services.
4. Be clear on whether your event is offering a full meal or snacks.
5. Consider reminding participants to follow a scent-free policy, and that strong smelling perfumes or lotions can be a barrier to access for some.
6. If an attendee is going to be late to an event and notifies an organizing member, the organizing members may keep some food on reserve as some circumstances are beyond the control of attendees.
7. When you invite multiple speakers to your event, try to think about diversity and gender equality.
8. Notify the audience if there are any sensitive topics being presented at your event via, for instance, trigger warnings.



9. When you have a theme for an event, avoid themes that could be perceived as cultural appropriation. For example, try to avoid themes in which people could wear offensive costumes or “dress up” as a culture or identity that is not their own.
10. If your event includes discussion amongst peers (club meetings, committee meetings, etc.), share an agenda before so people can incorporate topics they want to discuss beforehand. Encourage the opinion of those who are sharing less and those who are under-represented.

3. CONSEQUENCES

The Equity Committee is not here to punish you, in fact it is the opposite: we want to help you and your club/committee think about issues related to equity on a regular basis and are here to support you. The goal of this policy is not to stop events from happening, but to allow more people to attend MSS events. That being said, we do feel that it is important that there are some consequences for individuals or groups who do not make any effort to follow the policy. Therefore, we will be implementing a stepwise friendly warning system that will be enforced starting Fall 2020. Applying equity policies are not meant to be easy, they can be tough, however they aim to create environments where people from marginalized groups feel more comfortable, and this is the priority.

STEPWISE FRIENDLY WARNING SYSTEM

Each year will be divided into two consecutive periods, each lasting 6 months (Jan-June and July-Dec). The accumulated number of warnings will be reset to zero (0) at the end of each period.

- What constitutes a warning: No form submitted or lack of sufficient explanation as to why your event can not fulfill the criteria.
- Consequences:
 - First warning: event organizer(s) will receive a message from the Equity Committee notifying them that a warning has been documented.
 - Second warning: event organizer(s) will be invited to a meeting with the Equity Committee to discuss reasons for failing to submit the Equitable Events Form or to discuss why no explanation was provided as to why the event did not fulfil the requirements and to find try to find solutions.
 - Third warning: event organizer(s) will receive an email from the Equity Committee notifying them of a 6-month suspension from organizing a subsequent event*.



Fall 2019 - Fall 2020

- The first year of the implementation of the policy will be a pilot, where any and all MSS members who host events must abide by the policy, follow the rules, and submit the event form. However, we understand that change can be difficult, and a transition period can help alleviate some of the stress associated with the policy. Therefore, no formal consequences will be implemented, though, we will give out warnings.
- What constitutes a warning: No form submitted or lack of sufficient explanation as to why your event can not fulfil the criteria.

Fall 2020

- Again, the purpose of this policy is not to punish but to encourage all MSS members to think about creating accessible events. Therefore, we will implement a stepwise system of 3 friendly warnings in the event that MSS members or groups do not abide by the policy.

We want to emphasize that the Equity Committee will support implementation of this policy to the best of its abilities. We are here to support you! If, at any point, individuals/groups experience difficulty meeting the requirements, the Equity Committee is open to re-evaluating the requirements and/or working with event organizers to assess the availability of additional supports.