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Second Term Report of the Deputy Speaker Internal

# Table of Contents

[Table of Contents 2](#_Toc80628167)

[1. Introduction 3](#_Toc80628168)

[2. Second Term Overview 3](#_Toc80628169)

[2.1. Second Sitting 3](#_Toc80628170)

[2.2. SRC Review 3](#_Toc80628171)

[2.2.1. Overcoming Initial Jurisdictional Limitations of the Accountability Committee 3](#_Toc80628172)

[2.2.2. The Review Process 3](#_Toc80628173)

[2.3. Constitutional Review Committee 4](#_Toc80628174)

[2.4. Co-curriculum Application 4](#_Toc80628175)

[3. Challenges 4](#_Toc80628176)

[4. Goals 4](#_Toc80628177)

[5. Conclusion 5](#_Toc80628178)

# Introduction

This is the second term report of the Deputy Speaker Internal and Accountability Committee Chairperson of Student Parliament 2021. In my previous report, I noted that Student Parliament (“SP”) faces numerous challenges, particularly relating to governing policies and general mandates. Although this is still true, the SP Committee of 2021 has made great strides forward in the fulfilment of our mandate. This report will analyse the status and progress of this portfolio.

# Second Term Overview

## 2.1. Second Sitting

The second sitting of Student Parliament was successfully held on 17 June 2020. The minutes of this meeting have been made available by Madam Deputy Speaker Kritzinger on the SP website.

## 2.2. SRC Review

### 2.2.1. Overcoming Initial Jurisdictional Limitations of the Accountability Committee

In my first report, I noted that I felt frustrated by the reactive (and not proactive) nature of the Accountability. The unfortunate truth is that although SP is responsible for holding the SRC accountable, students do not utilise us a structure. It is apparent from the lack of reports from the Accountability Committee (“AC”) since the start of SP in 2013, that it has actually never been utilised. This does not necessarily mean that there is no accountability and transparency that ought to be advanced, however. As such, the AC spent weeks trying to find a way to institute some form of investigation of the SRC’s conduct this year. After weeks of brainstorming, we found a provision within Addendum F of the Student Parliament Constitution, 2013 which states that the AC is specifically responsible for formulating its own additional policies to ensure that it fulfils its mandate effectively. These additional policies must be approved by the Policy Unit to come into effect. A proposal to expand the jurisdiction of the AC was sent to the Policy Unit on 27 July 2021. All four members voted in favour on 28 July 2021. *Please refer to* ***Addendum A*** *for the proposal.*

### 2.2.2. The Review Process

The Ac had numerous meetings to discuss its approach to the investigation. We agreed that the report would focus on infringements of the Student Constitution by the SRC; failures of the SRC to fulfil their general proposals and obligations outside of the Constitution, and issues pertaining to the detention of information from the general student body. We were not sure what we would find, but between 6 and 9 August we did our best to find any relevant issues within the current SRC. We noted that this terms SRC had done commendable work, but unfortunately quite a few issues were flagged. The AC wrote up a report that was sent to the SRC on 16 August 2021, to which we await a response. The full content of this report and the SRC’s response will be made available to all students in due course, and thereafter an extraordinary sitting will be held to discuss the status and issues arising from these documents.

## 2.3. Constitutional Review Committee

The Constitutional Review Committee was appointed this term. The SP Steering Committee has asked the SRC for an extension to the initial deadline for the SP Constitution, especially considering that under the new Constitution, SP will cease to exist as we know it and two new structures subsequently need to be created from scratch. We are still awaiting an adequate response. I look forward to working with our new members – Tamara Foyn and Tajme Maharaj on this endeavour.

## 2.4. Co-curriculum Application

The co-curriculum application has been quite a tedious process. The Steering Committee has been working hard with Kate Roodt from the CSC. We have joined the online design series running through August and September, which aims to assist leaders through the application process. We hope that this aids us in our mission to complete this project before the end of our term.

# Challenges

The Policy Forum Chairperson/ Deputy Speaker External has expressed frustrations with members of her forum. The Speaker has also expressed frustrations with the lack of attendance and communication between members of parliament. Unfortunately, the Constitution of SP currently lacks the provisions that compel members to attend meetings or offer their full cooperation. This makes the fulfilment of their roles quite difficult, which in turn makes the full Steering Committee’s functioning quite stagnated. Our duty is to hold leaders accountable, but with no provisions that make it compulsory for broader SP members to participate. Unlike the general review process that the AC did with the SRC report (refer to 2.2.), making such engagement compulsory would require an amendment to the Constitution – it is not simply an added policy. I feel challenged by the weakness of our current Constitution, and I can feel the disappointment and disgruntlement of my fellow Steering Committee members. Once the AC is finished with its SRC review process, we will have to work on either finding another way around the issues faced, and also ensure that the new constitutions cater for the lack of authority; the gap of the AC to hold members of its own substructures accountable; and the stress of the workload that comes with members of the Steering committee having to sit on numerous sub-structures in SP.

# Goals

This term, I aim to successfully finish off any projects that I have started (such as my contributions to the Constitutional Review process, the Co-curriculum application, and the SRC investigation report). If not, at the very least, I aim to leave them in such a state that our successors can complete them with ease.

This incoming term, we will have two sittings: (1) an extraordinary sitting which I will lead (in order to fulfil the constitutional obligation highlighted in Addendum F to provide feedback on the AC) and (2) an ordinary sitting that will deal with usual agenda points and the election of our 2022 Speaker. A lot of preparation is needed in order for both to go smoothly.

# Conclusion

The SP Committee has worked tediously to revive the structure. The Accountability Committee, specifically, has never actually functioned to its fullest capacity, as the general student body is hesitant to utilise Student Parliament as a structure. I am quite proud of myself and the team for the amount of effort that has been put in. Student Parliament has a long way to go, and this report has highlighted just a few of the various flaws within. However, we have come a long way. I hope that the efforts invested are not in vain but are rather built on by our successors.