

## **The Student Senate Committee Handbook**

### **Mission Statement**

As stewards of creation, we strive to holistically respect, represent and uphold the voices of each student in our community to promote safe, caring, and equitable learning environments. We are called to become the bridge for student voice and be leaders in the community while advocating for our peers.

### **Pillars of Advocacy**

The four Pillars of Advocacy serve as the guiding principles and goals for the Student Senate to strive for, to both uphold the Gospel values and engage students in exciting and meaningful initiatives. While the four pillars have descriptions and general expectations, the topics and potential projects for each one are at the discretion of the Student Trustees and Subcommittee Chairs. The pillars include:

1. **Equity & Inclusivity:** To work towards upholding and protecting the grounds of the Ontario Human Rights Code as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and Tribunal. This pillar serves to guide the Student Senate to educate and protect students on all grounds of discrimination that currently exist, and may be added to the Code.
2. **Student Well-Being:** To address the mental health crisis through de-stigmatization, mental and physical well-being resources, etc.
3. **Ecological Sustainability:** In keeping with the Holy Father's encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (or "care for our common home") on environmental stewardship, this pillar guides the Student Senate to actively combat the climate emergency as a Durham Catholic community.
4. **Outreach:** To continue working towards engaging all Durham Catholic students as well as other community partners, speakers, and charities that the Student Senate can serve or collaborate with. This may include the Student Voice Forum, student voice surveys, and other initiatives.

### **Responsibilities of the Student Senate Committee**

The Student Senate Committee is comprised of two (2) Student Senators from each Secondary School, one Student Council President or other designated Council member, i.e., secretary, head grade rep, etc., and two (2) Student Trustees. The

Student Senate will also have three (3) staff advisors, i.e., Director of Education or designate, Principal or Vice Principal, and a Trustee advisor. Each student member of the Student Senate Committee is expected to:

1. Participate collectively and actively in a productive and engaged demeanour, and arrive prepared for discussion and debate;
2. Engage with their respective student body to accurately advocate for their issues and concerns on the Student Senate Committee;
3. Effectively communicate the ideas discussed within the Student Senate Committee to their respective student body and school administration in a timely manner;
4. Adhere to all Board policies and procedures regarding the Code of Conduct of students and committees of the Board, and;
5. Work to create and complete Board-wide initiatives as well as additional initiatives of the Student Senate Subcommittees;
6. Uphold and actively work towards achieving the goals set out in the four Pillars of Advocacy;
7. Begin the conduction of a policy review of the Student Senate Committee Handbook at the January meeting of each year;
8. Default to Robert's Rules of Order for matters and procedures not specified in the Student Senate Committee Handbook

### **Student Senate Expectations**

All members of the Student Senate Committee must adhere to the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Attend all Student Senate Committee meetings;
2. Attend all of the Student Senate Subcommittee meetings that they have been appointed to;
3. Represent their school's student population and student voice on the Student Senate Committee;
4. Facilitate discussions around issues that students are facing and strive to address them;
5. Vote on motions of the Student Senate Committee;
6. Speak their mind, opinion, and concerns respectfully and professionally, and in a way that is consistent with Catholic social teachings about all Student Senate Committee actions;
7. Add items to the agenda of the Student Senate Committee meetings, and;

8. Hold the elected Student Trustees accountable through respectful questioning.

### **Student Trustee**

A Student Trustee is a student who is elected by the preceding Student Senate Committee to represent students on the Board in accordance with the Education Act, its Regulations, Board policies and administrative procedures, and Catholic social teachings. The Student Trustees must adhere to the following responsibilities:

1. To jointly chair the Student Senate Committee in line with the procedures outlined in Robert's Rules of Order;
2. To represent the student population and student voice on the Student Senate Committee;
3. To vote on motions of the Student Senate Committee;
4. To speak their mind, opinion, and concerns respectfully and professionally, and in a way that is consistent with Catholic social teachings, about all Student Senate Committee actions;
5. To create the agenda for all Student Senate Committee meetings, and;
6. To report and bring the actions of the Student Senate Committee to the Board of Trustees and be a bridge between the Board of Trustees and the Student Senate Committee;
7. To attend conferences, workshops, and events as approved by the Board and in doing so, conduct themselves in a manner that portrays a positive image as a representative of the Board;
8. Support the Subcommittee Chairs in their projects and group management when needed;
9. Lead the Operations Team.

### **Student Senator**

A Student Senator is an individual, selected to represent the voice of students as an active, voting member of the Durham Catholic District School Board's Student Senate. Each Secondary School of the Durham Catholic District School Board is to be represented by two (2) Student Senators. Each spring, the incumbent Student Senate will promote Senator applications in all Durham Catholic Secondary Schools. Candidates can apply or may be nominated by peers or staff. Applications/Nominations will be submitted through the respective school Principals or Vice Principals to the Operations Team of the Student Senate. The

Operations Team will review the applicants/nominees and confirm the incoming Student Senators (2 per school) for the following year in a timely manner, before June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ensuring diverse voices from across the region will guide the selection process. Candidates for the Student Senate must,

1. Be grade 9, 10, or 11 full-time students;
2. Adhere to the rules, procedures, and Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the Student Senate Handbook and DCDSB policies;
3. Be involved in their school community through clubs, societies, or other extracurricular groups to engage more students;
4. Submit a letter of reference to their Principal or Vice-Principal from a teacher, school chaplain, or additional school community member who can testify to the applicant's involvement in the school community. This letter is to be sent to the student's Principal or Vice-Principal who will decide whether to select the candidate as a nominee for their school to the Student Senate;
5. If nominated, they must complete and submit the Student Senator application form created by the incumbent Student Senate and await a decision from the Student Senate Operations Team.

### **Student Council Representative:**

To promote the relationship and collaboration of the Student Senate and all Student Councils, each school's Student Council will send either their President or designate to serve as a liaison between the two groups. This individual will sit on both the Student Senate's President's Council and the Student Senate as a non-voting member, in an advisory role. In addition to the expectation that the Presidents or their designates must adhere to all Student Senate Expectations, they must also:

1. Attend all Presidents Council meetings;
2. Provide reports to the Student Senate regarding Student Council updates and general school updates;
3. Promote Student Senate projects and campaigns through Student Council;
4. Advise the Student Senate on matters relating to student voice and individual school communities.

## **Student Senate Subcommittees**

The purpose of the Student Senate's Subcommittees is to ensure that Senators and Student Council Presidents/alternative representatives can take on initiatives that they are passionate about, as well as further engagement with the student body. The subcommittees also work towards achieving the goals set out in the four Student Senate Pillars of Advocacy. Each subcommittee will select a member to be the secretary who will take minutes at each meeting and send them to the Head Secretary no later than five (5) days before the regular scheduled Student Senate meeting. This will ensure that the subcommittee meeting minutes are approved at each monthly meeting to promote accountability and transparency. The subcommittees include:

1. **Equity & Inclusivity:** The purpose of this committee will be to address topics & issues under our Equity and Inclusivity pillar such as racial justice, Truth and Reconciliation, support for the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and other grounds of the Code;
2. **Student Well-Being:** The purpose of this committee will be to address topics & issues under our Student Well-Being pillar such as menstrual equity, mental health, physical well-being, and overall wellness for students;
3. **Outreach:** The purpose of this committee will be to address topics & issues under our Outreach pillar such as community outreach to non-profits and charities, and student engagement through event planning and other projects;
4. **Ecological Sustainability:** The purpose of this committee will be to address topics & issues under our Ecological Sustainability pillar such as promoting environmental stewardship, providing opportunities for students to learn about climate change and climate activism, being stewards of our school communities, etc.;
5. **Social Media:** The purpose of this committee will be to manage the Student Senate's social media platforms including the Student Senate Instagram, and lead other design projects and communications-related work for Senate. The Social Media Subcommittee will be comprised of the Chair of the Social Media Subcommittee, the two Student Trustees, and no more than two additional members who will have login information for all Student Senate accounts;
6. **President's Council:** The purpose of this committee will be to provide Senators and the Student Trustees with updates and perspectives from the respective student councils. The committee will also serve to encourage and facilitate discussions and open lines of communication between the student councils and the Student Senate.

## **Operations Team**

The Student Senate will have an Operations Team. At the beginning of each academic year, the Student Trustees will appoint individuals to fill the following positions transparently and equitably. Throughout the academic year, the Student Trustees will lead and support the individuals selected for the Operations Team. The selected positions of the Student Senate Committee who serve on the Operations Team include:

1. **Head Secretary:** responsible for recording minutes and attendance of all Senators, Student Trustees, staff advisors, and Trustee advisors at every meeting or function of the Student Senate Committee, as well as collecting minutes from all subcommittee secretaries to be sent to the Student Trustees;
2. **Chair of the Equity & Inclusivity Subcommittee:** Responsible for leading and organizing projects surrounding topics as outlined under the Equity and Inclusivity pillar.;
3. **Chair of the Student Well-Being Subcommittee:** Responsible for leading and organizing projects surrounding topics as outlined under the Student Well-Being pillar;
4. **Chair of the Outreach Subcommittee:** Responsible for leading and organizing projects surrounding topics as outlined under the Outreach pillar;
5. **Chair of the Ecological Sustainability Subcommittee:** Responsible for leading and organizing projects surrounding topics as outlined under the Ecological Sustainability pillar;
6. **Chair of the Social Media Subcommittee:** Responsible for co-managing the Senate Instagram account with the Student Trustees, and leading other design projects and communications related work for the Student Senate such as the Senate Star;
7. **Chair of the President's Council:** Responsible for providing Senators and the Student Trustees with updates and perspectives from the respective Student Council Presidents or designates and all Durham Catholic secondary school Student Councils;
8. **Faith Ambassador:** responsible for supporting the Student Senate and Student Trustees in faith-based initiatives and leading the Student Senate Committee in prayer at the beginning and end of every meeting and other events.

## **Student Senate Committee Agendas**

1. Student Trustees are to provide input for and complete the agenda with relevant and appropriate topics for each Student Senate Committee meeting;
2. The agenda must follow the same formatting as all other agendas of the Board;
3. The agenda is to include the minutes from the previous Student Senate Committee meeting;
4. The agenda is to be completed, revised, and sent to all members of the Student Senate Committee, including staff and Trustee advisors no later than five (5) days before the coming meeting, and;
5. Items for the next meeting must be an item for discussion present in each agenda. These items are to be carried to the next meeting's agenda.

## **Meeting Minutes**

1. Minutes are to be taken at every meeting of the Student Senate Committee by the Head Secretary;
2. Minutes are to be taken at every meeting of the Student Senate subcommittees by a designated subcommittee member;
3. All Subcommittee meeting minutes are to be sent to the Head Secretary by the subcommittee secretaries or designate no later than five (5 days) after the meeting;
4. All Student Senate committee meeting minutes are to be sent to the Student Trustees by the Head Secretary no later than five (5) days after the meeting;
5. When the Secretary is not present at the meeting, another Student Senator will be designated to take their place for that meeting; such designations shall occur in a collegial manner;
6. Minutes are to be appropriately formatted using the formal Student Senate template and comply with the guidelines laid out in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA);
7. After the minutes are sent to the Student Trustees, they can be revised and edited if needed to reflect any additional information covered or corrections for clarification;
8. The final meeting minutes are to be distributed to all members of the Student Senate Committee via email no later than one (1) week after the meeting, and;
9. All minutes are to be archived by the Student Trustees.



## **Attendance**

1. Attendance is to be taken at all meetings of the Student Senate Committee by the Head Secretary or Student Trustees for all members, including Student Senators, Student Council Presidents or designates, Student Trustees, and all staff and Trustee advisors;
2. A record of attendance for every meeting of the Student Senate Committee is to be kept by the Student Trustees for reference, and;
3. A Student Senate Committee meeting must be attended by half the Senators to be held. A quorum will not be called if less than half the voting members of the Student Senate Committee are present.

## **Suggesting Motions**

1. Voting members of the Student Senate Committee may create motions;
2. The motion must gain the majority approval from the voting members of the Student Senate Committee for it to be suggested, and;
3. Student Trustees must find two (2) Senators willing to move and second the motion, and;
4. Motions are to be prepared and respectfully debated in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.