## Preliminary Report on SASS Barriers
## SASS Equity and Inclusion Committee

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# Definitions

SASS: The Society of Arts and Science Students
Principle: A general accepted statement ("Events should be accessible")
Concern: The issue ("From the survey, something wasn't accessible")
Recommendation: What the Equity and Inclusion Committee would like SASSex or specific stakeholders to do ("Make accessible.")

**Virtual Engagement Accessibility Barriers**
Principle: SASS events should be accessible to all members of the community.

Concern(s): Reported physical or mental health related issues that made virtual attendance a lot harder than in-person attendance.

Concern(s): Based on the results in the EIC survey we found 50% of respondents report that attendance is more difficult in the virtual environment for reasons related to Zoom Fatigue or overworking.

Recommendation(s): SASSex should incorporate more events that do not require presence on a screen (ie. photo scavenger hunts, challenges, etc.) with flexible time spans to encourage participation

Recommendation(s): SASSex should begin collecting club meeting times for clubs that have popular engagement among Arts and Science students (ie. WarChild, etc.) to avoid time conflicts if possible.

**Financial Barriers**

Principle: SASS has students from varying financial backgrounds

Principle: Regardless of financial background, all SASS members should be able to attend SASS events

Concern: A number of students expressed that financial constraints limited their participation in events.

Recommendation: SASS bursary should also provide financial support to students wishing to attend online events where purchasing products is required (e.g., baking nights, art nights, etc).

**Health Related Barriers:**

Principle: Students with health concerns should still be able to attend and participate in SASS events.

Concern: A number of students cited mental health problems as part of the reason they were unable to attend events. Specifically, stress caused by being on camera or not knowing what to expect from virtual events.

Recommendation(s): Make it clear when advertising events that having cameras on is optional and clarify this at the start of an event as well. Additionally, consider making it clearer to students what to expect from virtual events.

**Limitations with Program Outreach**

Principle(s): Arts and Science should be well promoted as one of the few interdisciplinary and/or liberal-arts style programs in Canada.

Principle(s): Arts and Science should have a variety of methods used in advertising the program.

Concern(s): 46.4% of respondents said they heard about the Arts and Science program by word of mouth.

Concern(s): 82.7% of current students are originally from Ontario (from high-school).

Recommendations: Advertising our program in terms of its design "open-ended liberal arts program in Canada" rather than the program name alone "Arts and Science" may be more revealing to a broader range of interested applicants.

Recommendation(s): More efforts to identify underrepresented demographics in our program (even in the GTA) based on financial status, private/public school education, etc.

Recommendation(s): Increased education targeted towards McMaster recruiters about the program and being able to advertise it accurately and as attractively as other programs

Recommendation(s): Encouraging more Arts and Science alumni or current students to become involved in the OUF.


**Course Registration Barriers**

Principle: All students should have an equal opportunity to enroll in the courses required to graduate from whatever degree they are pursuing.

Principle: The process of navigating the course registration process should be equally accessible for all students.

Concern: 55.8% of survey respondents rated their experience navigating Mosaic, the main course registration platform for McMaster students, a 1 or 2 on a 5-point scale. Only 1.9% of respondents rated their experience as 5/5.

Concern: Students are not taught how to navigate Mosaic before they have to use it to enroll in courses, make payments, or check their transcripts.

Recommendation(s): Implementing a course waitlist function on Mosaic which enables students to be entered in a waitlist for a course, know their spot on the waitlist, and be notified and provided with a 24-hour enrolment window when a spot has opened up for them in the course.

Recommendation(s): A function on Mosaic that displays a visible catalogue of all courses, as well as the total number of spots available and spots overall, so that people can freely browse available courses without needing to know exact course codes.




**Note:** The EIC survey was made available via email as well as the Arts and Science Facebook Pages and Class Group Chats. As an added incentive, there was a raffle draw for two $15 gift cards to an online store of the winner's choice. A total of 52 students participated in the survey. The distribution by year is as follows: 25% of participants were in Level I, 36.5% of participants were in Level II, 30.8% of participants were in Level III, 5.8% were in Level V, and 1.9% preferred not to answer.