

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee held on 11 October, 2001, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in Room 609 of the James Administration Building.

Present: P. Bélanger (chairing), C. Bushnell, E. Cooper, D. Crowley, P. Depalle, M. Crago, H. Goad, M. Graham, F. Froen, A. Grover, N. Kasirer, W. Hendershot, N. Jackson, A. Lau, T. Masi, J. Paquette, F. Sagel, C. Straehle, H.M.C. Richard (Interim Secretary)
Guests: R. Drew (item 3.c), R. Harris (item 6)
Regrets: J. Bilec, R. Eley, L. Vinet

02.01 Agenda.

Consideration of one item of Business Arising, B.Sc.; Minor in Computational Molecular Biology, was postponed to the next meeting on October 25, when both the Director of the School of Computer Science and the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry can be present. The agenda was approved as amended.

02.02 The **minutes of the meeting held on September 13, 2001** were approved as circulated.

02.03 Business Arising

a) Model Research Progress Report Form for Graduate Students (*01-APPC-09-02 Revised*)

The revised form responds to the concern that there should be some kind of agreement as to expectations, between graduate students and their supervisor or department Chair. Suggestions made during the discussion included the following: that the appeal mechanism available to students (should they fail to meet objectives and be asked to withdraw) be alluded to on the form; that language be made more congenial, given that the progress report might be used to other ends; that indication be given as to where forms would be kept; that the form be available and printable from the web.

Approval of the form, duly moved and seconded, was voted upon and **carried**.

b) McGill Institute for Advanced Materials (MIAM)

Professor Robin Drew, Department of Mining, Metals and Materials Engineering, joined the meeting. A number of points were clarified. The proposed unit will function as a network for existing centers. It may help to stimulate the development of undergraduate courses within existing department-based undergraduate programs and propose graduate-level programs. Those distinctions should be much more clearly stated in the revised proposal and any confusion removed. The proposed unit would thus be an institute which would promote interdisciplinary research activity and provide a mechanism for cross-boundary collaboration in graduate-level teaching.

The new institute would fit the Regroupement stratégique criteria for applying for infrastructure funding, enabling participants to apply for such funding. Participating centres would include the Centre for the Physics of Materials in the Faculty of Science, and the McGill Metal Processing Centre and Polymer McGill in the Faculty of Engineering. In the discussion it was noted that the institute structure could be useful in fostering interdisciplinary programs in the context of a restructured Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

There was general agreement that the text of the proposal would have to be edited or rewritten in order to remove any ambiguity and confusion about the proposers' intent, before being submitted to Senate for approval. Vice Principal Masi voiced concern about ensuring the adequacy of library resources. Completion of a "Library Requirements...", such as is required for new program proposals and signed by a librarian, has not been submitted nor have accompanying letters of assurances of the necessary financial resources to cover such new costs.

The motion to approve the establishment of the McGill Institute for Advanced Materials, on condition that the rewritten proposal reflect the wishes expressed by APPC and therefore satisfy the Chair of APPC, and that it include an acceptable analysis and assurance of library support, was voted upon and **carried**.

02.04 **Principal's Prize for Excellence in Teaching** (*01-APPC-10-05*)

The proposed amendments were twofold: 1) that eligibility for the Principal's Prize for Excellence in Teaching be extended to GFT-H staff and that nominations of GFT-H staff should be made at the level of the rank they hold, i.e. full, associate and assistant professor, and 2) that the teaching faculties be asked to submit their nominations to the Principal by April 30, instead of May 31. GFT-H (Geographic Full Time – Hospital) staff are involved in teaching in the hospital milieu, but much less engaged in research. The proposed amendments, duly moved and seconded, were voted upon and **carried**.

02.05 **Name change: Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering to Department of Biosystems Engineering (01-APPC-10-07)**

In 1995, the name of the Department of Agricultural Engineering was changed to Department of Agricultural and Systems Engineering. The proposal from the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences was now to change the name of the Department to "Department of Biosystems Engineering". Agriculture being a subset of Biosystems Studies, the term "Agricultural" was felt to be redundant. No objections were raised by other units when consulted. The name of the B.Sc. program would not be changed at this time. It was also noted that accreditation was concerned with content, not name, and that there was no indication of program change. The motion, duly moved and seconded, was voted upon and **carried**.

02.06 **Course Evaluation at McGill University - APPC fall 2001 Report and Recommendations (01-APPC-10-07)**

Professor Richard Harris, Department of Physics, joined the meeting. Associate Vice-Principal Martha Crago summarized the sequence of events leading to the present report, as stated in the Report (01-APPC-10-07). The Course Evaluation Working Group (CEWG), mandated by APPC to look into a number of questions (to which answers are provided in Appendix 1), also looked into collecting the evaluations data electronically but felt that the response rate would be higher in the classroom for the time being. The format and questions proposed in Appendix 2 are being recommended and not required. The questions proposed by the CEWG were extracted from the total pool of questions and crafted from students' ideas, and are designed to provide guidance to departments.

The Committee's discussion highlighted the need for a certain degree of flexibility. For example in instances where a course is taught by many professors, filling one form per instructor could not be required in cases where ten are involved; a different questionnaire format would have to be devised. The Workgroup could not identify every conceivable situation and format, hence the "recommended" rather than "required" questionnaire. Concerns about summing the scores of all the items were expressed since the suggested question concerning space was not under a professor's control. The Committee was informed that summing scores was not suggested in the teaching dossier documentation. Regarding the need to contextualize the listed ten core questions, it was made clear that these questions would be melded in under the different categories (environment, course structure, etc.) and could be bolded.

The Committee considered the Workgroup's recommendations

1. *It is reaffirmed that all units will evaluate courses at all levels in keeping with the recommendations previously approved by Senate in 1980 and 1992.*

The purpose of this recommendation was to make clear that APPC did not intend to change the intent or the bulk of the procedure in use, and to remind the University community that courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are subject to this policy.

Approval, duly moved by Professor Crago, seconded by Ms Groen, was voted upon and **carried**.

2. *It is required that the following disclaimer concerning the purpose, uses, utility, and mode of accessibility be put at the top of every course evaluation questionnaire. The mode of access chosen by each Faculty shall be inserted in the second sentence. (Eventually, web access is envisioned.)...*

Amendments to the third and fourth sentences of the explanatory text were proposed, so that they should read as follows: "... A statistical summary of responses may be used: a) by other students for course selection, b) by professors to improve their teaching, and c) by administrators for personnel decisions. Any written comments that you choose to include will be used, as is, to provide useful information (e.g.

suggested improvements) to the instructor and Chair/Director of the academic unit and will not be made available to other students.”

Approval of the recommendation thus amended, duly moved by Professor Crago, seconded by Professor Goad, was voted upon and **carried**.

3. *It is required that the following disclaimer be put at the top of disseminated course evaluation results...*

It was suggested that the text of the proposed disclaimer be amended to read: “Your ratings relate only to this course and course ratings are only one indicator of teaching effectiveness. Results will therefore be treated with caution.” It was felt that statements about research and potential factors influencing results may not be helpful to students filling out the evaluation forms. Students need only to know that the information will be used in an intelligent way.

Approval of the recommendation thus amended, duly moved by Professor Crago, seconded by Mr Grover, was voted upon and **carried**.

4. *It is recommended that all units use a set of between 15 and 25 questions that cover the areas outlined by Senate in 1992. To this end, units are encouraged to consider the attached core questions and the additional pool of questions when designing their course evaluations (see Appendix 2). The results from the questions will be made accessible to the McGill community.*

It was noted that the Workgroup was concerned that questions designed independently of the proposed pool of questions might not be suitable for being made accessible. It was clear that questions could not be policed. It was proposed that the last sentence, stating that “the results from the questions (would) be made accessible to the McGill Community”, should be omitted, as this was already made clear.

Approval of the recommendation thus amended, duly moved by Professor Crago, seconded by Professor Hendershot, was voted upon and **carried**.

02.07 **Guidelines for Developing a Teaching Portfolio (Appendix A of “Regulations Relating to the Employment of Academic/Librarian Staff”)** - Memo from the Secretary-General to the Chair of APPC, 03-10-2001 (01-APPC-10-08)

APPC was asked to consider the amendments suggested and further concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in her memo. Discrepancies and contradictions were noted. The “recommended” teaching statement in the first paragraph under “Formatting a teaching Portfolio” is taken as a given in the next paragraph (“append to your teaching statement...”).

For the second sentence of that first paragraph the following text was suggested: “A teaching statement not exceeding five pages in length must be used, to which supporting documents and materials can be referenced and appended”. APPC agreed to the amendments to the first two lines of the next paragraph which were suggested by the Secretary-General. The following amendments were also suggested to the last sentence of that paragraph: “In order not to overwhelm ~~yourself~~ or the reader, ~~append to your teaching statement~~ only those documents which support the discussion you have presented.” Furthermore, the first bullet should now simply read: “~~The teaching statement itself should not exceed five pages~~. In general, the complete teaching portfolio (including appendices) should not exceed 40 pages.”

Approval of the amendments, moved by Professor Hendershot, seconded by Ms Groen, was voted upon and **carried**.

02.08 Other business

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.