

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee held on 2nd December 2004 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the Faculty of Dentistry Council Room, M48, Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building

Present: L. Vinet (Chair), A. Bryan, B. Arciero, W. Caplin, M. Crago, R.F. Clarke, V. Errunza, J. Galbraith, P. Holland, A. Kenjeev, S. McDougall, M. Mendelson, M. Nahon, J. Zucchi, H.M.C. Richard (Secretary to the Committee)
Regrets: J. Beheshti, L. Butler-Kisber, M. Dowsley, J. Feine, W. Hendershot, J.C. Hurtubise, A. Husain, A.C. Masi,

05.01 Proposed agenda

The proposed agenda was approved.

05.02 Minutes of meeting held on held on 18th November 2004

The minutes were approved as circulated.

05.03 Business arising

a) Report on Senate meeting held on 1st December 2004 (365th APPC Report to Senate)

1) Proposed Research Centre Guidelines and By-laws

Senate made suggestions that will be taken into advisement.

2) SYTACom Research Centre

Senate approved the creation of the research centre and will so recommend to the Board of Governors.

b) Freshman Year: The Arts Legacy (Freshman) option, Making Modernities

– Minutes of APPC, November13, 2003 (04-APPC-11-20)

- Program Committee response to APPC's questions and comments (04-APPC-11-21)
- Revised proposal (04-APPC-11-22)
- Letter of support from Dean John Hall, November 15, 2004 and email from Associate Dean Enrica Quaroni, November 17, 2004 (Addendum to 04-APPC-11-22)

The Chair invited the Committee to resume discussion and formulate suggestions. The APPC's reservations related essentially to the following:

- admission on a first-come-first-served basis;
- lack of flexibility;
- the possibility of students leaving after the first term: students should not be penalized or have an indication of withdrawal or any trace of academic penalty on their transcripts or any inconveniences.

Provost Luc Vinet read a statement from Associate Dean Galaty (19-11-2004 to the Secretary of APPC):

I believe the question of how we should recruit students for the Option arose. We debated in our committee whether we should establish a vetting process that would allow us to admit students based on various criteria, especially excellence of the record. Several students opposed this, on the grounds that all other programs in Arts are open to all students admitted to the faculty, and that choosing the academically 'best' students would make the program appear elitist and closed to the average student.

Other faculty pointed out that competitive admission might result in "skimming the cream" off the top of incoming students and this might be resented by departments. For these reasons, in addition to administrative convenience, we decided to recommend a more 'open' admission that follows already established procedure to handle registration in courses by "first come first served" under a room Cap.

Taking the first 176 students who attempt to register for the courses would be an equitable procedure, and would also avoid having to create an admissions committee that would inevitably have to handle diverse appeals based on the particular background and interest of students. However, the program

would certainly benefit by being able to "cherry pick" the best and most motivated students who apply and this would undoubtedly help establish a profile of excellence for the Option.

There are certainly pluses and minuses for both strategies of admission, which APPC should think through carefully if it chooses to make a definitive recommendation rather than leaving the question to the faculty.

At the outset, the following suggestions were made:

- students leaving half-way should be surveyed;
- students should be allowed to fill in slots vacated by students opting out of the program;
- students should be fully informed of the risks involved in taking this block-type of program;

In the discussion on the admissions process, it was mentioned that the Faculty of Arts already attracts many undergraduate students and the proposed program will likely be used as a recruitment tool; if turned down, students will not understand this first-come-first-served principle, citing the program as their reason for coming to McGill. The fact that choice is made at the point of admission may further cause difficulty, given that candidates for admission from the United States are dealt with before non-Quebec Canadian candidates. It was suggested that the Faculty might wish to consider requiring from candidates to the program that they write a one page statement explaining why they wish to take that option; this might allow the Faculty to adopt an in-between position between selective admission and "first-come-first-served". APPC members also wondered whether any accommodation would be made to take into account a common practice whereby students hold spots in courses until they decide on their final selection; allowing 7% more registrations to accommodate such a phenomenon, as some faculties do, may be difficult to manage for the Arts Legacy Option.

It was suggested that APPC should push for more flexibility and that the proposed program would be more likely to be successful if flexibility were built in. Students should be allowed to opt out at mid-term and join at mid-term, if space allows and permission is granted, but students coming in for the second term would not be able to take the first term afterwards since they would no longer be in UO. Exit surveys would assist the Faculty in managing the program in a responsible manner. It was also pointed out that the success rate in Arts is one of the highest in the University.

Regarding a review of the Arts Legacy Option, it was noted that it could be folded into the fall of the last year of the (three-year) Program Review Process; this would allow a review of the first two years of the program.

One last point related to class scheduling and space issues. There was concern as to whether the Faculty of Arts had given any thought as to which particular venues might be used for the three two-hour lectures per week. It was also noted that Friday afternoon scheduling of the creative/cultural activity may not enable some students to attend.

It was agreed that APPC should advise the Faculty of Arts that it supports the program but wishes to submit a number of requirements of an administrative nature. The Committee's points should be summarized and communicated to the Faculty.

Requirements:

- 1) Flexibility should be built into the program. APPC requires that:
 - a. dropping out of the first term should be permitted and not have a negative connotation of failure and penalty on the student's academic record;
 - b. the program should allow vacated slots to be filled after the first term.
- 2) Risks involved in taking this block-program should be clearly explained to entering students; for

example that they might lose their full-time student status if they drop out or fail a block.

3) Exit interviews should be conducted.

4) The exit strategies described in a) and b) of Appendix IV (Exit strategies for students who drop-out of Option 3) are predicated on students taking 18 credits in the Winter semester. Given that most students cannot take that many credits, alternatives should be proposed to students.

5) The Arts Legacy Option should be reviewed in the context of McGill's Program Review Process after two years.

Request for further information:

1) Admission process – the Faculty should be aware of a number of questions raised by the first-come-first-served principle and APPC asks the Faculty how it will be deal with the following:

a. admission applications from U.S. candidates are processed earlier than those from non-Quebec

Canadians;

b. candidates for whom the Arts Legacy Option was their reason for coming to McGill may be

very disappointed not to be given a place in the program; this may lead to a number of letters of complaint;

c) will the Faculty allow a certain percentage of over-registration in order to accommodate

students' common practice of holding spots in courses until they decide on which courses to select?

d) would the Faculty consider requiring candidates for admission into the Arts Legacy Option to

write a one-page essay explaining their reasons for wishing to take that program?

2) Teaching space should be identified and the Faculty should report on this.

3) The Faculty should be mindful of certain constraints on scheduling required activities on Friday afternoons for religious reasons.

The proposed Arts Legacy (Freshman) Option was approved for submission to Senate for approval with a note stating that management issues would be solved in accordance with APPC's requests for adjustments.

The Provost will write a letter to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts conveying the Committee's views and suggestions and invite the Faculty to take the necessary measures to meet the concerns of APPC. It was hoped that a response from the Dean could be available before the proposal is presented at Senate's meeting on 12th January 2005.

05.04 Subcommittee on Courses and Programs (SCTP)
Report on meetings held on October 7 and 21, 2004 (04-APPC-12-23)

The report contained no items for approval by APPC.

05.05 Course evaluations
- Update, October 27, 2004 (04-APPC-11-15)
- Draft proposal: new course evaluation policy (04-APPC-12-24)
- Draft proposal: procedures based on online evaluations (04-APPC-12-25)
[Associate Provost (Academic Programs) Martha Crago]

Associate Provost Martha Crago reported that the Working Group on Course Evaluations was continuing to monitor the course evaluation situation at McGill and following up on the recommendations contained in the April 2004 progress report, as per the October update presented at the previous meeting (04-APPC-11-15). Two documents were drafted and circulated electronically to APPC members: a) a proposed Course Evaluation Policy statement to replace the 1980-1992-2001 approved recommendations, and b) a proposed procedure premised on the MOLE system piloted in spring and summer 2004 and again in fall

2004. MOLE is generating a high response; it is using the same questionnaires. The Faculty of Science has been examining the course evaluation issue and produced a report and recommendations which the Working Group has discussed. While it is not known how online evaluations match paper evaluations, a careful phasing-in period has been recommended. Data on online evaluations will be presented to APPC.

Discussion ensued, focusing first on the three conditions that currently have to be met for numeric results of course evaluations to be posted on the web.

– Condition a) (the instructor has held an academic teaching appointment for more than two years at any university) was felt to be reasonable as new professors may be put under pressure to grant permission, faced with the presumption that they are poor teachers if they do not. Teaching is a skill to be learned and course evaluations for new teaching staff should be essentially formative. Given that course evaluations are described as "only one of the indicators of teaching effectiveness", the possibility of a system whereby senior instructors could watch new instructors and provide feedback was raised: this practice is used at certain universities (Princeton) but not McGill. The possibility for an instructor to obtain better evaluations in small classes than in large ones (and vice versa) was said to be taken into consideration when evaluating staff.

– Condition b) (a minimum number of students or a minimum percentage of students in the class submitting an evaluation) addresses concerns about statistical significance and confidentiality (as it is no longer required that hand-written comments should be typed up). Hand-writing identification will no longer be an issue with online evaluations. As for statistical significance, it was suggested that the condition should be deleted and that there should be a statement instead, indicating that the data is not significant.

Other complexities were noted: for example, are students evaluating the course section they attend or the one they are registered in? The second sentence in item 3 (Evaluations shall be submitted prior to the date of the final examination), caused the question as to whether to include final examinations in the course evaluation to be debated at length. It was noted that one particular department runs its own in-house online evaluations through the examination period. It was suggested that default should be the last two weeks of class and that, although that department may wish to continue with its in-house online system, it should conform to the University's policy. Arguments were offered for and against including the examination in the evaluations: the quality of the course should be reflected in the method of evaluating students; some instructors teach well but evaluate badly; furthermore course evaluation questionnaires include questions as to how evaluation was done. In response it was stated that post-exam course evaluations would be over-determined by the final exam, and that response in the post-examination period might be low as most students leave town as soon as examinations have taken place; the University loses touch with students after final exams. It was suggested that evaluation of the examination should be done separately, in the next term, that a pilot two-stage evaluation might be possible, and that in order to allow some degree of objectivity, it would be better to allow time between the examination and the students' evaluations. Lastly it was mentioned that any change in methodology, such as the switch from paper to online evaluations, raises concerns among professors and students should realize the importance of teaching evaluations for tenure decisions.

The Working Group on Course Evaluations will consider APPC's comments, consult the Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning at its meeting on 7th December, and continue work on the documents.

05.06 Harassment and Discrimination _ update
[Associate Provost (Academic Programs) Martha Crago]

Associate Provost Martha Crago reported that a draft policy statement and procedure description were produced in June 2004 and circulated to student and staff associations and unions for consultation over the summer. A revised draft will be available by January 2005 for submission to the Working Group on Equity and to the Joint Senate Board Committee on Equity (JSBCE) for final input. The proposed policy will then be submitted to Senate for approval.

05.07 Other business

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Helen M.C. Richard 2004-12-13

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