

Minutes of the meeting of the **Academic Policy and Planning Committee** held on Thursday 16th February 2006 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in Room 310, James Building

Present: M.J. Mendelson (chairing), G. Brown, W. Caplin, V. Errunza, J. Feine, D. Fraser, P. Holland, J.C. Hurtubise, D. Jutras, M. Nahon, J. Nemes, I. O'Reilly, T. Rivard, J. Schmidt, S. Stroud, M. Szyf, H.F. Upham, H.M.C. Richard (Secretary to the Committee)  
Regrets: L. Butler-Kisber, W. Hendershot, A.C. Masi, S. McDougall, M. Reed, D. Thérien  
Guests: K. Kruczowyj (item 6), L. Winer (item 7)

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Documents circulated at the meeting:

05-APPC-02-36: McGill On Line Evaluation aka MOLE - APPC MOLE report on fall 2005 course evaluations

Revised 05-APPC-02-38: Agreement for a Bilateral Student Exchange Program between McGill University and the University College London (UCL)

**06.01 Proposed agenda**

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

**06.02 Minutes of meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006**

The minutes were approved with one correction: Dr. Jocelyne Feine should be added to the list of members present.

**06.03 Business arising**

The recommendation from CGPS that the Dean's Honour's List should be eliminated for doctoral programs after the June 2006 Convocation, approved by APPC at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February for submission to Senate, was not included in APPC's 377<sup>th</sup> Report to Senate. The Provost will be consulting the Deans at their next meeting, before the recommendation can be submitted to Senate.

**06.04 Report on Senate approvals: APPC's 377<sup>th</sup> Report (Senate meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2006)**

Senate on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2006 received APPC's Report, which included the DMURL, proposed by the Faculty of Science, as having been approved by APPC in the name of Senate.

**06.05 Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs (SCTP)**  
- Report on meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006 (05-APPC-02-37)

The report did not include any items requiring approval.

*[Note: the report includes a change of degree title for the proposed Ph.D. in Education to "Ph.D. in Educational Studies". This change results from the evaluation by CREPUQ's Commission d'évaluation des projets de programmes (CEP) which recommended implementation of the program. The proposal has now been submitted (along with CEP's Avis) to the Minister of Education, Leisure and Sport for approval.]*

**06.06 Student exchanges**

a) University College of London – Linguistics (Revised 05-APPC-02-38)

A revised version of document 05-APPC-02-38 was circulated at the meeting. The revision relates to item 8: "Exchange students shall be subject to the rules and regulations of both institutions, however, in the case of conflict, the rules and regulations of the home host institution will prevail. They will also have the rights and privileges enjoyed by other students at the host institution."

The need for one further correction, from “home institution” to “host institution”, was noted. Associate Provost Morton J. Mendelson explained that regulations had to be consistent with those of the local jurisdictions. It would be difficult for the regulations of both institutions to prevail. In response to a question as to whether student aid students may be eligible to at their home institutions could be applied to their exchange programs, it was stated that a complete answer would be provided in the minutes.

[Note: Excerpt from "Steps to a Successful Exchange 2006-07" p. 14, under the heading "Other things you need to know" – <http://www.mcgill.ca/studyabroad/steps/>:

**“Financial Assistance** - Students participating in an official exchange program are eligible for government student assistance as McGill students, but are not eligible for McGill Student Aid. Students who "study away" are not eligible to receive government student loans through McGill because they are not registered at McGill. Students should verify with their host institution whether they will be eligible to receive government student assistance.”

Judy Stymest, Director, Student Aid and International Student Services, confirmed that this information was correct: McGill does not help students who "study away" but gives minimal support in the form of a loan to those on exchange.]

On motion by Professor Sarah Stroud, seconded by Interim Deputy Provost Jacques Hurtubise, the **proposed agreement for a bilateral student exchange program between McGill University and University College London, limited to UCL’s Department of Phonetics and Linguistics and McGill’s Department of Linguistics, was approved.** This approval will be reported to Senate in APPC’s 378<sup>th</sup> Report (8<sup>th</sup> March 2006) as having been approved by APPC.

b) Memorandum from Morton J. Mendelson, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2006 (05-APPC-02-39)

1) EHaz Consortium Agreement to Promote Mobility of North American Student for Earth Hazards

At its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2005 APPC approved a *EHaz Consortium Agreement to Promote Mobility of North American Student for Earth Hazards*(05-APPC-11-26) “although the partner universities (had) not yet approved the version of the agreement that includes McGill’s clarifications”. Associate Provost Morton J. Mendelson explained that the other five institutions involved did not wish to change Clause 16 of the agreement, as requested by McGill. McGill’s Legal Services and Office of Technology Transfer were consulted and are of the opinion that Clause 16 as originally stated is acceptable. McGill has therefore signed the agreement in its original version.

In the discussion, there was concern that Clause 16 as stated does not address the issue of intellectual proprietary rights. It was noted that McGill should make sure that participating graduate students are well informed of their intellectual property rights.

2) Equity Statement

At its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2005 APPC considered a proposal for an Equity Statement in Exchange Agreements (05-APPC-12-30). It was subsequently decided, following consultation with Legal Services, that the equity statement should reflect McGill’s newly approved *Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited by Law*, which itself reflects the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedom.

06.07 **Course evaluations**

- McGill On-Line Evaluation aka MOLE (05-APPC-02-36)

Dr. Laura Winer, of the Offices of the Provost and C.I.O, presented the report on the fall-2005 On Line McGill Evaluations (MOLE) exercise. MOLE has been involved with the collection of evaluation data, not with the dissemination of course evaluation results. While some departments chose to have all their course evaluations on line, others selected one or more courses. The same questionnaires as for paper evaluations have been used: one question has been added to obtain student feedback on process, and comments boxes are provided for each question. The evaluation period lasted two weeks and three days; weekends are prime time for students to enter their course evaluations. The system closes at midnight on

the last day before exams begin. Central email reminders were the most effective reminders. One faculty is considering having its course evaluations done in class on the students' laptops.

Multi-section courses pose difficulty because MOLE is tightly linked to Banner and students can only evaluate the section in which they are registered; as a result they may not be evaluating the section which they have been attending. Students could be asked on the evaluation questionnaire whether they are attending the section they are registered in and, if not, why not. APPC wondered whether students could be made to attend the section in which they are registered. It was noted that the Department of Biology has found a way to do so by customizing section teaching, i.e. changing the material covered in each section; students may have difficulty with their final exam if they have not attended their section. This was said to be a policy question that would have to be addressed. Other issues need to be addressed beyond the current MOLE process, such as the consistency of questionnaires in view of the three functions of course evaluations at McGill (formative, evaluative, and informative), the gathering of permissions on line, and the dissemination of course evaluation results to students.

APPC further discussed a number of questions:

- response rates: comparisons between paper evaluations and MOLE have not been easy to do. Professor Brown offered to check the data relating to the Department of Biology.

- 30-minute time-out on each comment: Comments cannot be stored in order for the system to meet the anonymity requirement. It was suggested that students should be warned of the 30-minute time-out and of the possibility to paste in responses.

- advantages of on line course evaluations: besides saving paper, they give all students a chance to express their opinion, whereas absence from class may result in students missing the paper course evaluation exercise. To the assumption that some students may not make the effort to do their evaluations on line, it was noted that many in-class course evaluations forms are returned blank. Students who wish to submit comments can take the time to be thoughtful and many enter course evaluations on weekends. Instructors can monitor response rates during evaluation period, but whether they all remind and urge students to do their course evaluations cannot be ascertained. It was suggested that explaining to students that course evaluations have an impact on the evaluation of staff for tenure purposes would help students understand that the course-evaluations exercise has substance.

- on whether the evaluation period should be extended: it was noted that the Faculty of Science would not participate if course evaluations were not done before final exams, as it is feared that evaluations beyond exam-period might undermine standards in examinations.

- on whether course evaluations should be compulsory: students and instructors are agreed that compulsory course evaluations would be done for the sake of getting rid of the obligation but not thoughtfully; this would compromise the quality of the data. Providing incentives is preferred. Raising awareness has been McGill's approach, and a 50% -response is considered acceptable.

- on the evaluation of Teaching Assistants: departments can request that T.A.s be evaluated as well. This has been discussed with the T.A. union. Course evaluation results do not become part of a T.A.s' employment file.

- on whether there should be a common questionnaire across the University: long and taxing questionnaires used by some departments may discourage students; some do not meet psychometric standards, and different rating scales are used. If a common questionnaire were to be developed, identifying what it is that the University and the students wish to know would be the first step and should involve focus groups that would include students. Deciding how to do it would be the second step, not the other round. "Was the instructor a good teacher?" which is part of the Faculty of Engineering questionnaire seems to be an obvious question for common inclusion.

**Course evaluations will be further considered by APPC at a future meeting to which specific recommendations will be presented.**

**06.08 APPC Terms of Reference**

- email from Secretary General to Chair of APPC, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2006 (05-APPC-02-40)
- Terms of Reference: proposed revisions and questions (05-APPC-02-41)

Associate Provost Morton J. Mendelson stated that an e-mail from the Secretary General relaying a question from the Steering Committee of Senate (05-APPC-02-40) has prompted a closer scrutiny of APPC's terms of reference, which do not reflect the current activities and responsibilities of the Committee. APPC agreed to the proposal that a workgroup should be established to prepare a new mandate statement that would more closely reflect current practice. The workgroup will be composed of the Secretary-General, a member of the Nominating Committee of Senate, Associate Provost Morton J. Mendelson and the Secretary to APPC. A proposal for a revised mandate will be submitted to APPC for consideration and approval before it is recommended to the Nominating Committee of Senate.

*[Note: Professor Phil Oxhorn will represent the Nominating Committee of Senate on the APPC Mandate Workgroup.]*

**06.09 Other business**

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

*Helen M.C. Richard 2006-02-21*