

Minutes of the meeting of the **Academic Policy Committee** held on Thursday 7th March 2013, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Room 302, James Administration Building

Present: A.C. Masi (Chair), K. Dalkir, J. Galbraith, H. Hatch-Dinel, W. Hendershot,, L. Hendren, M. Kreiswirth, C. Mandato, M.J. Mendelson, A. Misra, P. Perez-Aleman, P. Smith, S. Stroud, P. Tikasz, H.M.C. Richard (*Secretary to the Committee*)

Regrets: W. Adams, A. Ghoshdastidar, I. Henderson, S. Huebner, E. Laverdière, S. MacDougall, J. Potter, N. Srinidhi, L. Stone, C. Urbain (for C.C. Cook), C. Weston, M. Zidel

Guest: J.-P. Remillieux (item 5)

Document circulated at the meeting: none

09.01 Proposed agenda

The proposed agenda was adopted.

09.02 Minutes of previous APC meeting held on 14th February 2013

The minutes were approved as circulated.

09.03 Business arising

- Principal's Prize for Excellence in Teaching – revised Guidelines (*Revised 13-APC-02-46*)

Deputy Provost Morton Mendelson confirmed the modifications that were made to the Guidelines on the basis of APC's discussion of the revisions proposed by the Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning. The revised document, as circulated to APC, will be **presented to Senate for information**, as having been approved by APC (it will be appended to APC's 445th Report to Senate, for the meeting of Senate on 20th March 2013).

09.04 Senate and Board of Governors approvals

At its meeting on 19th February 2013 Senate approved the proposal for the creation of the McGill Centre for the Convergence of Health and Economics / *Centre McGill de convergence de la santé et de l'économie*. The Executive Committee of the Board of Governors approved it on 22nd February.

Senate also approved the following programs: B.A.; Joint Honours – African Studies Component (36 cr.); Certificate in Applied Marketing (30 cr.); Diploma in Applied Marketing (30 cr.); Diploma in Health and Social Services Management (30 cr.); Graduate Certificate in Health Services Management (15 cr.); B.Com.; Major in Organizational Behaviour (30 cr.); B.Sc.; Honours in Neuroscience (74 cr.); and B.Sc.; Honours in Earth System Science (66 cr.).

09.05 APC Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning (STL) Working Group on Distance Education

- Report of the Working Group (*13-APC-03-49*)
- Proposed Distance Education Guidelines (*13-APC-03-50*)

Jean-Paul Remillieux, Director, Instructor Services & Educational Technologies, School of Continuing Studies, presented the Report of the STL Working Group on Distance Education and the Guidelines, stating that the recommendations in the Report were not intended for teaching units but for the University's central administration, to facilitate the application of the Guidelines.

Discussion ensued. Some of the Guidelines, 4.10 Student Assessment in particular, were thought to require some tightening up, by changing "should" to "must" and by making it compulsory, for example, for distance courses and student assessment matters to be reviewed by SCTP. It was argued that the Working Group did not see its role as recommending a review of the course approval process, and that there is no requirement or mechanism for vetting the means of student assessment for courses taught on campus and for ascertaining that academic integrity is maintained. The idea of holding distance courses to a higher standard than that of courses taught on campus was questioned. It has been implicit in the design of a course that integrity procedures (such as proper student identification) would be followed. The 2001 Regulation regarding credit regardless of course modality ("No course offered by McGill University and approved by APPC in the name of Senate can be disallowed for credit in a program of study on the sole basis of its mode of delivery") would not seem to imply that a specific approval process should be required.

Thinking about such issues was said to be the purpose of the proposed exercise. Although the University is primarily geared to residential education, and is not necessarily exercising pressure on teaching units for them to be engaged in distance education, it cannot ignore the current transformative wave of technology in higher education and the variety of issues that trend raises. Although the Working Group's mandate was to think about guidelines and criteria, APC raised broader questions with respect to the University's preparedness for offering programs on line. With or without a policy on distance or online education, some universities seem to be more involved in distance education, although some of them may refrain from offering regular credit courses and programs through distance education. It was suggested that McGill should be aware of developments and study the issues they raise and their effects on the University. It was also reiterated that the University should strive to retain credibility and not allow the integrity of McGill degrees to be sacrificed.

In response to a suggestion that APC may consider adding text to the Guidelines, in order to specify when a change in course delivery may require SCTP approval, APC was reminded that course approvals happen almost entirely at the level of faculties; SCTP may consider the courses approved by faculties but does not approve them; Course descriptions are not circulated to SCTP. It was further noted that any course instructor will be mindful about the identity of the individuals taking exams. Tools are available; they should be identified and provided to instructors. Like in the case of take-home exams, the University needs to trust, not create bureaucratic hurdles. It was suggested that the University should seek to succeed in distance education by identifying a niche, a high-demand area for it to deliver courses and programs through the internet.

It was noted that use of online technology for on-campus course teaching may be confused with distance education; online is not restricted to distance education. In response to a suggestion that Guidelines 4.4.2 and 4.6.1 may be inadequate in the current context, it was stated that the mandate of the Working Group was to focus on distance education, and that producing a course for distribution on a platform is significantly more expensive than online technology for traditional courses.

The Chair thanked Mr Jean-Paul Remillieux and the STL Working Group for the Report and Guidelines. APC discussed what the next step should be. It was suggested that the Report should be clarified and updated, and that further consultations should be conducted before the Report could be finalized and presented to Senate. **APC agreed to strike a workgroup, composed of Professors Paola Perez-Aleman, John Galbraith, Will Hendershot and Craig Mandato**, who in light of the concerns raised at APC, will consider the proposed guidelines on Distance Education.

09.06. APC Subcommittee on Courses and teaching Programs (SCTP) (for information)

Report # 9 from the SCTP meeting of 7th February 2013 (13-APC-03-51)

The report from SCTP did not contain any proposals for approval.

09.07 Research Advisory Council

- Proposal for the creation of a new research prize: The Principal Prize for Excellence in Research, memorandum from Dr. Rose Goldstein, VP (RIR), 5th March 2013 (13-APC-03-52)

Professor Sarah Stroud, Associate Dean (Research and International Relations), presented the proposal for the creation of The Principal's Prize for Excellence in Research that would parallel the Principal's Prize for Excellence in Teaching. The proposal is that the Prize would be intended for "Early-career" and "Mid-career" researchers. Each faculty may nominate one person for each category. A specific theme may be announced in a particular year's call: for example, it is proposed that the theme for this year's Prize should be in line with the Strategic Plan.

In the discussion the following concerns were raised:

- Insufficient time may be available for announcing the Prize and preparing dossiers in order for the Prize to be awarded for the first time at Spring Convocation 2013.
- The eligibility criteria, requiring no more than 8 and 15 years beyond the Ph.D. may discriminate against persons who have worked elsewhere or taken time off. In response it was stated that time taken for maternity or disability would not be counted.

- The categories proposed were said not to be convincing: it was not clear how one would distinguish among researchers in early-career, mid-career, and senior researchers. It was also suggested that, if the Prize for Excellence in Research were to be parallel to the Prize for Excellence in Teaching, it should follow the same categories.
- Selecting the “best researcher” among all of McGill’s researchers was thought to be an uneasy proposition: offering a greater number of Principal’s Prizes for Excellence in Research would be preferable.
- It would be difficult to compare research performance across the disciplines. The selection committee would need to be very diverse. Dividing the Prize by broad research council areas should be considered.

It was further noted that the Principal’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching was created because of a common perception that teaching was not sufficiently recognized at McGill. The Prize also allows the University to identify nominees for external prizes, creating a pipeline for external nominations, which the proposed Prize would also likely do.

It was agreed that more time was necessary to define the appropriate parameters (perhaps in line with those for external nominations) and that broader consultation (with the Deans’ Working Group, for example) should be conducted before the proposal could be approved for presentation to Senate. It was suggested that it would be appropriate to have this new Principal’s Prize inaugurated by McGill’s next Principal.

09.08 Other business

None.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Helen M.C. Richard - HMCR/APPCdocs/minutes/2013-03-07