

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee held on 5th December 2002, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. in Room 609, James (Administration) Building.

Present:	C. Bushnell, E. Cooper, Ph. Depalle, M. Graham, F. Groen, W. Hendershot (chairing), A. Lau, H.G. Leighton, F. Sagel, H.M.C. Richard (Secretary to the Committee)
Regrets:	J. Bilec, M. Crago, G. Demopoulos, J. Galbraith, H. Knox, P. Martineau, A.C. Masi, N. Peters, G. Philie, L. Proulx, L. Vinet
Guests:	J. Galaty (item 4), N. De Takacsy (item 6)

Documents circulated at the meeting:

- 02-APPC-12-24 List of questions raised re. Graduate Admissions, Retention, and Funding Issues
- 02-APPC-12-29 Bilateral exchange agreement with Chinese University of Hong Kong

In the absence of Vice-Principal Vinet and Associate-Vice-Principal Crago, Professor Hendershot chaired the meeting.

07.01 Proposed agenda

Consideration of item 3 (Graduate Admission, Retention, and Funding Discussion Points) and item 7 (Comité de suivi des programmes) was postponed to the next meeting on January 9, 2003. With this amendment, the agenda was approved.

07.02 The minutes of the meeting held on November 21st, 2002 were adopted as circulated.

07.03 Business arising Business arising

Graduate Admissions, Retention, and Funding Issues (02-APPC-11-20)
- List of questions raised (02-APPC-12-24)

Consideration of this item was postponed to the next meeting.

07.04 Field Study Semester Definition

- Memo from SCTP Chair M. Crago, Nov. 22, 2002 (02-APPC-12-22)

APPC considered the field study semester definition proposed by the Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs. The main concern expressed was that the proposed definition did not specify the number of credits that a student was allowed to take. It was noted that the reason for this was that some field study semesters could be taken during the fall or winter term, which would allow students to take a full load of courses, or in the summer, which would entail a lesser number of credits. In a previous version of the definition SCTP had mentioned 15 credits as the minimum, but in light of the summer credit number being less, the field study semester had to be redefined.

The question as to whether students' transcripts include /will include a notation that students participated in a field study semester was raised and will be investigated (Note, from the Associate-Dean -Academic, Faculty of Science: *There are no narratives on students' transcripts regarding their participation in a field study semester. Therefore, the only indication would be that the student has taken a course whose description specifies that it is a field course.*). Knowledge of a particular language as a requirement for participation in a field study semester was another concern: it was noted that knowledge of Spanish was already built in the Panama Field Semester.

It was proposed and agreed that a second sentence should be inserted which would read as follows: "A field study semester should provide the opportunity to students to take a full academic load during that semester." **With this addition, APPC approved the proposed Field Study Semester Definition.** It will be reported to Senate for information, so that it gets into the public record and in Senate indexes.

Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs - Nov. 14, 2002 meeting (02-APPC-12-23)

- *African Field Study Semester*

Professor John Galaty joined the meeting and presented the proposed 15-credit African Field Study Semester (AFSS). Courses may be taken beyond the assigned 15 credits but students are encouraged to take 15 credits. Through the AFSS as part of the Canadian Field Study in Africa Program (CFSA) students are exposed to the social science and natural science aspects of the region in an international framework, with visits to relevant sites and courses offered by McGill professors in biology, anthropology, geography etc and by professors from other participating Canadian universities. The program is delivered in a field setting: large tents for classes, a tent with an itinerary library. It runs through the winter term, followed by a few weeks or months of independent travel. It is intellectually demanding and rewarding and is intended for students interested in field biology, development etc. Year by year negotiations are held with Langara College of B.C. which administers the program. Up until now students have been registered at Langara and credits were transferred back to McGill. A modular system of course teaching has been developed whereby McGill teaching staff participate in the AFSS in East Africa for periods of three-four weeks. This allows staff members to pursue their activities on the McGill campus. Regarding the possibility that Langara College may cease to provide administrative and logistical support for the Canadian Field Study in Africa Program, Professor Galaty indicated that McGill would be able to launch and run its AFSS in East Africa.

In the discussion, the Committee raised issues concerning field study programs in general which it felt should be addressed whenever such programs are proposed for approval. One such issue was that of security. In the case of the proposed Africa Study Semester it was noted that students are fully alerted of any potential risks and asked to accept liability for those risks in writing; they are urged to take precautions and have travel insurance. It was stated that the University has an obligation to minimize risks and to make sure that students are fully apprised (regarding tropical diseases, thefts, poisonous snakes...). Over a period of six years, the McGill group has not encountered any snakes or automobile accidents, only a couple of thefts which prompted greater attention to securing the camp with fences and guards. Risks are minimized by taking other precautionary steps such as traveling on secondary roads to prevent automobile accidents. Sites are examined carefully and routinely. As a result of recent events in Mombassa and despite increased police presence, sites in northern Kenya and visits to Mombassa have been taken off the itinerary. Uganda which is now safer than Kenya has been chosen for the second period. A number of British and American websites give day-by-day information on security and if the Canadian High Commissioner advises that the region is not safe, the program will either be closed or moved to another area or country.

Financial considerations were then discussed. McGill students, numbering 23 (the largest contingent from Canada) are charged a \$11,900 fee by the CFSA, which covers transport, accommodation and food, park and special venue admission fees, instructor fees and expenses, and field teaching and research equipment, but not books and university tuition. This year 25 students are likely to register. Staff will get paid a *per diem* or travel cost will be covered. APPC members were concerned that students interested in taking advantage of a wonderful opportunity could be limited by their ability to pay; students from outside Quebec would be particularly affected. It was suggested that opportunities should be created for students who are unable to pay the fee. Professor Galaty stated that the cost to the University is cheap: it was a matter of taking a course from here and teaching it there, at a lower cost because of the lack of offices. As for the fee charged participating students, the difference between the fee minus the airfare, and the cost of living in Montreal (rent and food) should be assessed; the experience for students was worth that cost. Professor Galaty remarked that if McGill itself were to run the program it could do so more cheaply, utilizing dormitories at universities where McGill has contacts. Regarding the price paid by students at McGill whose professors are abroad on field studies, it was noted that internet communication eases the situation. Any loss experienced is compensated by gains in the quality of the University's intellectual life.

The chair thanked Professor Galaty. In the discussion which ensued, the financial cost to students was a major concern. It was felt that students were not given equal access to a unique opportunity and studies might be jeopardized by students' inability to pay for it. Given that the country benefits from having students take the Field Studies Semester in eastern Africa, and in order to counter discrimination by cost, it was thought that the University should take on the responsibility of aggressively identifying sources of funding for students in order to bridge the gap between the incremental difference between the field study fee and the cost of spending the semester in Montreal. Given that only 20 International Development Studies (IDS) students participate, it was suggested that it would be interesting to know how many students could be accommodated if the Africa Studies Semester were offered free of additional charge. Diverting University operational funds to allow students to go abroad was said not to be an easy proposition and one would have to explore whether there exists a funding mechanism for that sort of teaching activity. It was noted that the Panama field study program is much less expensive for students.

Regarding the issue of security, it was noted that McGill groups of students and professors on the Africa Field Studies semesters had so far been lucky and the staff were taking all necessary precautions; although hospitals in the region may not be safe, the groups travel with a doctor and have air ambulance services that can get them out rapidly.

There was consensus among Committee members that the proposed Africa Studies Semester should be moved forward in order to allow students to participate but that the Committee should consider separately the larger issues and general principles involved. The Committee was also mindful that should Langara College cease to administer the Canadian Field Study in Africa Program (CFSA), McGill would have to shoulder all the logistics and responsibility for its African Studies Semester. It was therefore **agreed that the African Field Study Semester should be approved for as long as it is administered by Langara College. Further approval will be required if and when McGill takes over its administration.**

APPC also **agreed to address general questions regarding field semesters at its next meeting on January 9th**. Committee members were particularly concerned about the following issues

- professors' participation in field study semesters, their absence from campus and their ability to ensure student supervision;
- the justification for field study semesters and the academic planning entailed; although field study semesters are unique and usually stem from individual academic initiatives which should not be discouraged, is there a reasonable number for McGill to offer?
- the provision of financial support for students who would benefit from participating in a field study semester but are unable to pay for the fee being charged;
- health and safety issues;

APPC's intention was to develop a set of guidelines or a checklist for the development, evaluation, and approval of field study proposals.

07.06 Bilateral exchange agreements

a) between Faculty of Engineering and Hong Kong Polytechnic University (02-APPC-12-27)

b) between Faculty of Engineering and Technische Universität Berlin (02-APPC-12-28)

Associate Vice-Principal de Takacsy joined the meeting and presented the proposals. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Technische Universität Berlin are both technical institutions, and the proposed agreements with them are limited to the Faculty of Engineering. The Faculty has a strong internal vetting mechanism and gives considerable attention to the proposals that it brings forward. Engineering courses have to be carefully vetted for any agreement to be acceptable. Although located at opposite ends of the world, McGill and Hong Kong entertain a significant amount of staff and student traffic and share academic interests, and the language issue is straightforward.

c) with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (02-APPC-12-29 *circulated at the meeting*)

The proposed agreement with the Chinese University of Hong Kong is a university-wide one. The C.U.H.K. is the Chinese-language counterpart of the English-language University of Hong Kong. It is a relatively young, research intensive institution, somewhat smaller than McGill (9000 undergraduate students, 4000 master's students and 600 doctoral students). The delay in submitting the proposal was due to negotiations regarding which courses will be open or closed to exchange students and the particular wording of the agreement. The urgency was due to the fact students were waiting to come to McGill.

All three exchange agreement proposals were approved and will be reported to Senate.

07.07 Broad questions

Comité de suivi des programmes

- CSP background information and calendar (02-APPC-12-25)
- Recommendations - Physics, Mathematics and Computer Science Programs (02-APPC-12-26)

Consideration of this item was postponed to the next meeting.

07.08 Other business

None.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.