

Minutes of the meeting of the **Academic Policy Committee** held on Thursday 9th January 2014, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., Room 302, James (Administration) Building

Present: A.C. Masi (Chair), D. Bader, K. Dalkir, O. Dyens, I. Henderson, L. Hendren, M. Kreiswirth, C. Mandato, S. McDougall, E. Sarigöllü, J. Shea, L. Stone, S. Stroud, C. Urbain, L. White, L. Winer, B. Xu, P. Smith (*Acting Secretary to APC*)

Regrets: W. Adams, A. Defo, A. Deguise, J. Galbraith, W. Hendershot, S. Huebner, A. Misra, J. Potter, S. Sumasundaram, F. Subhani

Guest: Claire Stewart-Kanigan (item 4 ii b i)-

06.01 Agenda

The agenda was adopted, with SCTP recommendations being moved up to accommodate our guest.

06.02 Minutes of APC meeting of 12th December 2013

The minutes were approved.

06.03 Business arising

None

06.04 New Business

i. APC Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs (SCTP)

14-APC-01-40

a) SCTP Report # 6 from SCTP meeting on 5th December 2013

- McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, Faculty of Arts (*Guest: Ms Claire Stewart-Kanigan*)
BA Minor Concentration in Indigenous Studies (18 cr.) *Appendix A*

Ms Claire Stewart-Kanigan (representing Prof. William Straw, Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada) briefly presented the proposed Minor Concentration in Indigenous Studies. Given the courses listed in the Minor, APC members wondered why it was not called “North American Indigenous Studies”. Ms. Stewart-Kanigan explained that since indigenous people do not refer to this landmass as North America, it was not appropriate to refer to the program as such. In addition, it is anticipated that the program may be extended beyond North America in the future. Concern was expressed regarding the course requirements. A minor program should have both depth and breadth, such as a requirement to take courses from several different departments (which would prevent a student from taking all their complementary courses in History), a requirement that a certain number of credits be at or above a certain level, etc. It was decided to refer the proposal back to the MISC to revise the course requirements accordingly, with the proviso that the revised document will come directly back to APC for final approval.

- Faculty of Arts
BA Minor Concentration in European Literature and Culture (18 cr.) *Appendix B*

This was approved.

b) SCTP Report # 5 from SCTP meeting on 14th November 2013

- Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts *Appendix C*
- MA Program in Sociology, Development Studies *Appendix D*
- MA Program in Sociology, Medical Sociology *Appendix E*
- MA Program in Sociology, Gender and Women’s Studies *Appendix F*

These were approved.

Approvals will be presented to Senate in APC's 453rd Report (for the meeting of Senate on 19th February 2014).

ii. Referrals from Senate Steering Committee

14-APC-01-39

Senate Steering Committee referred two items to APC for consideration.

a) Question regarding Lecture Recordings

The question asks what the University does to encourage the use of lecture recording systems (LRSs) and what steps need to be taken to make lecture recordings mandatory. This issue has two components: one educational and the other policy-related. The discussion centered around the following questions: how do we educate lecturers that recording facilities are available in certain classrooms? How can we provide guidance on the use of this technology, and alternatives, and how it might affect teaching style/delivery? Should there be a university policy on this topic? Laura Winer reported that McGill currently has 50 rooms with a built-in system, COOL, that can record classes automatically (32 that can capture screen and audio and 18 that can capture content, audio and video). As well, all instructors have free access to Camtasia, a software program that allows instructors to record their screens and audio. For Fall 2012, Winter 2013 and Fall 2013 approximately 150 courses per term are recorded automatically. No data are available for the number of courses being recorded on an individual basis.

There was extensive discussion. Although there may be some pedagogical value in recording lectures, this value is clearly not applicable to all types of teaching; in fact, it must be determined on a course-by-course basis. One of the assertions contained in the question, specifically that non-use of LRSs leads to "...increased levels of anxiety and depression in students" was questioned; there appears to be no empirical evidence to support this claim. The Chair remarked that the new classroom scheduling system currently permits instructors to request rooms that are equipped with LRSs. There is also software available (Cantasia) to all lecturers, paid for by the university, that enables them to record lectures directly from their laptop computers.

The current university policy regarding recording of lectures is that students are permitted to do so if they first obtain the permission of the instructor. Concern was expressed about illegal uploading of recordings to YouTube or other websites without obtaining prior permission. There was an affirmation of the usefulness of the improvisational nature of teaching, where recording would not necessarily be effective or appropriate. Another point raised was the right to privacy of student participants in classes which are recorded. While APC appreciates that the learning styles and expectations of students are changing, members pointed out that implementation of any type of policy regarding mandatory recording of lectures is not in the purview of APC, nor should it be done at the university level; rather this is an issue that should be addressed at the departmental and/or the individual instructor level, with professors able to make choices in this regard.

In conclusion, APC was strongly of the opinion that there should be no university-wide policy on lecture recording. At the same time, APC recommends that guidelines for students and faculty on effective use of lecture recordings should be expanded. Laura Winer undertook to look into this, on behalf of TLS.

b) Motion regarding Anonymous Marking of Examinations

The motion raises the possibility of adopting anonymous grading of written exams on a university-wide basis. Consideration of the motion raises issues of principle, as well as logistics.

There was extensive discussion on this issue. APC was informed by Laura Winer that several studies in the past have indicated there exists a potential bias in grading if the grader knows the persons involved. APC felt that there is no evidence (either way) as to whether this is in fact a problem at McGill. The global norm is **not** to grade anonymously (with the apparent exception of Faculties of Law); the statement contained in the motion "Anonymous grading is currently the norm in several countries, including the UK..." is inaccurate.

It was felt that potential bias is likely to be less prevalent in large lecture classes, more prevalent in smaller seminar type classes. It was agreed that instructors should be made aware of grading strategies that help to avoid potential bias. Laura Winer reported that offerings within the SKILLSETS program for graduate students already cover this issue; she undertook to see whether information could be made available to professors as well.

The logistics of implementation of any practice of anonymous grading across the university was discussed. It was agreed that this would be overwhelming and very labour-intensive. Suggestions were raised concerning how to deal with this in a manner which would not be too cumbersome, including separating student nominative information from the grading table on the first page of exam booklets, or using only student ID numbers rather than names on exam booklets.

In summary, APC does not consider that the possibility of university-wide anonymous grading should be further considered.

APC expressed concern at the fact that Senate Steering had referred the question and motion to APC. APC asked the Chair to request that Senate Steering Committee adopt a more judicious approach to accepting and referring questions and motions.

06.05 Other business

- Copibec

The Chair reported that the University is unlikely to renew the agreement with Copibec Alternative procedures will be implemented to ensure compliance with copyright.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Philip J. Smith (Acting Secretary)