

**FACULTY OF SCIENCE  
ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on November 20, 2012, at 2:30 p.m. in Arts Council Room, Arts 160.

**PRESENT:** Dean Martin Grant (Chair), Associate Dean Laurie Hendren (Vice-Chair), Director Nicole Allard, Professors Lea Berrang Ford, Frédéric Guichard, Galen Halverson, Axel Hundemer, Bettina Kemme, Daniel Kirshbaum, Craig Mandato, Greg Marczynski, Guy Moore (in place of Kenneth Ragan), Ana Nyzhnyk, Gillian O'Driscoll, Linda Reven, Kathy Roulet; Louis Houle; Esther Bogorov, Chandra Curry, Eugene Kang, Kelsi Lix, Melissa Xie, Kate Zhang; Malek Yalaoui and Josie D'Amico.

**REGRETS:** Professors Julie St-Pierre, Barbara Hales; Pinkal Patel

**DOCUMENTS:** AC-12-24 to AC-12-36

Dean Grant called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

**(1) ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Ms. Curry **moved**, seconded by Prof. Mandato, that the Agenda be adopted.

**The motion carried.**

**(2) MINUTES OF OCTOBER 30, 2012**

**AC-12-24**

Prof. Mandato **moved**, seconded by Ms. Zhang, that the Minutes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**(3) BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**Minutes 205.7, 205.8, NSCI 430D1/D2 (AC-12-10)**

**303.1** Associate Dean Hendren said that at the Academic Committee meeting of October 30<sup>th</sup>, there were some issues raised concerning NSCI 430D1/D2. One of the issues was the time spent in the lab, in particular, the phrase in the course outline "work in the lab at least 360 hours." This has now been revised to "work on your research project at least 360 hours." The other issue involved grading. The final written report would now be worth 40% (from 30%), and the laboratory performance would now count for 40% (originally 50%).

**(4) MATHEMATICS & STATISTICS**

**New Courses:**

MATH 427                      Statistical Quality Control  
4 credits

**AC-12-25**

**304.1** Prof. Hundemer introduced MATH 427, and said that it was a problem-oriented course exposing students to the real-life workings of companies.

**304.2** Associate Dean Hendren thought that MATH 427 would be an appropriate course for the Joint Major and Joint Honours Programs in Statistics and Computer Science, and that

perhaps the issue could be brought to a staff meeting in the School of Computer Science. She said that in the meantime, MATH 427 could be approved, and that inclusion of the course into the two programs would depend on approval by the School of Computer Science. Prof. Kemme agreed to bring the issue to a departmental staff meeting.

**304.3** Prof. Hundemer **moved**, seconded by Prof. Halverson, that the course be adopted, and added to the two programs, with this proviso.

**The motion carried.**

**Secretary's Note:** *The School of Computer Science approved the inclusion of MATH 427, as a Complementary Course, in the Joint Major Program in Statistics and Computer Science.*

MATH 595	Topics in Analysis 4 credits	<b>AC-12-26</b>
MATH 596	Topics in Algebra & Num Theory 4 credits	<b>AC-12-27</b>
MATH 597	Topics in Applied Mathematics 4 credits	<b>AC-12-28</b>
MATH 598	Topics in Probability & Stats 4 credits	<b>AC-12-29</b>
MATH 599	Topics in Geometry & Topology 4 credits	<b>AC-12-30</b>

**304.4** Prof. Hundemer explained that the Department was introducing a sequence of topics courses suitable for both undergraduate and beginning graduate students. He said that having the courses at the 500-level would allow undergraduate students to register for them. Simultaneously the 600-level equivalents would be retired. In the past, advanced undergraduate students have taken the 700-level topics courses, which have now been converted to advanced topics courses.

Prof. Hundemer **moved**, seconded by Ms. Lix, that the above courses be adopted.

**The motion carried.**

**(5) PSYCHOLOGY**

**New Course:**

PSYC 538	Categoriz Communic & Consciou 3 credits	<b>AC-12-31</b>
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**305.1** Prof. O'Driscoll introduced the new course PSYC 538, a cognitive science course.

Prof. O'Driscoll **moved**, seconded by Prof. Guichard, that the course be adopted.

**The motion carried.**

**(6) CHEMISTRY**

**New Course:**

CHEM 516	Nuclear and Radiochemistry 3 credits	<b>AC-12-32</b>
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**306.1** Prof. Reven said that CHEM 516 was being proposed by Prof. Ralf Schirmmacher of the McConnell Brain Imaging Centre. This course should be of interest to students in the biomedical field, as well as students from the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

**306.2** In reply to Dean Grant concerning the absence of a prerequisite course in quantum mechanics, Prof. Reven said that there was no prerequisite in quantum mechanics because the course would deal mainly with organic chemistry.

Prof. Reven **moved**, seconded by Ms. Lix, that the above course be adopted.

**The motion carried.**

**(7) EARTH & PLANETARY SCIENCES**

EPSC 355	Sedimentary Geology 3 credits Changes: number [from 455], description	<b>AC-12-33</b>
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**307.1** Prof. Halverson said that the changes were to update the curriculum in sedimentary geology. EPSC 355 should not be at the 400-level, as it will be a stepping stone towards the more advanced course, EPSC 425.

Prof. Halverson **moved**, seconded by Ms. Curry, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

EPSC 425	Sediments to Sequences 3 credits Changes: description, prerequisites	<b>AC-12-34</b>
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**307.2** Prof. Halverson explained that EPSC 425 was intended to be a higher level and a more quantitative course than EPSC 355. The prerequisite courses will be at the 300-level, and will allow both EPSC and ESYS students to take EPSC 425.

Prof. Halverson **moved**, seconded by Prof. Mandato, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**(8) COURSES WITH MISSING COURSE DESCRIPTIONS **AC-12-35****

**308.1** Associate Dean Hendren explained that MELS now required course descriptions for graduate courses. She said that rather than having the central administration create the descriptions for the Faculty, this had been an opportunity for units to create their own course descriptions. The descriptions so created were listed in Document AC-12-35. Associate Dean Hendren thanked everyone for submitting their descriptions in a timely manner.

**308.2** Associate Dean Hendren added that in future all new graduate courses would have to have course descriptions, even if, as in the case of topics courses, these were basically a repeat of the course title.

Prof. Berrang Ford **moved**, seconded by Ms. Curry, that the list of course descriptions, Document AC-12-35, be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**(9) B.Sc. (GLOBAL) OPTION**

**AC-12-36**

- 309.1** Associate Dean Hendren said she had been thinking about how to frame the proposal for the B.Sc. (Global) Option, and had come up with Document AC-12-36. The document describes field studies courses and global courses in general terms. Specific lists of courses will be assembled at a later date, and will be maintained separately from the description of the B.Sc. (Global) Option.
- 309.2** Associate Dean Hendren went through Document AC-12-36. The designation at graduation would be, e.g., B.Sc. Biology (Global). The Option consisted of two required elements (a language course and a research course), and at least one of four complementary elements (an approved field studies course, an internship [an industrial practicum course or an internship year in science], an exchange [at least one term as an exchange student at a university outside Montreal], and a global course(s) [at least 3 credits from a McGill course with a substantial global component]).
- 309.3** The Dean has appointed Martine Dolmière, the Internship and Field Studies Officer, as the Global Options Coordinator.
- 309.4** Ms. Roulet, the MSE representative, has submitted a list of courses that were considered field studies courses by the MSE. This will be the starting list of field studies courses for the B.Sc. (Global) Option. Other courses may be added later, and students will be able to request that specific field studies courses be approved.
- 309.5** In response to a question, Dean Grant said that only Science internships would be acceptable.
- 309.6** "Study Away" status did not qualify as "Exchange." Dean Grant said that attending another university in Montreal would not qualify as "Exchange," but that Mont St-Hilaire would qualify as a location for a field studies course.
- 309.7** With reference to the global courses, Associate Dean Hendren said she was thinking of compiling a rather short list, with students having the option of requesting that specific courses be approved.
- 309.8** Dean Grant said he was confident that other faculties would follow Science's lead.
- 309.9** Associate Dean Hendren thanked everyone for their input.
- Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Ms. Lix, that the framework of the B.Sc. (Global) Option be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**(10) SUS ACTIVITIES**

There were no SUS activities to report on.

**(11) OTHER BUSINESS**

- 311.1** Associate Dean Hendren said that on November 14<sup>th</sup>, Provost Anthony Masi had met with the SUS. She asked if anyone at the current meeting had attended the Provost's presentation.
- 311.2** Ms. Zhang, Vice-President (SUS), said that the Provost had attended an SUS General Council meeting. The SUS Executive and a representative from each departmental student association were present. There was an extensive question and answer session with the Provost.
- 311.3** Associate Dean Hendren asked for the perception of the students as to whether Science takes undergraduate teaching seriously or not.
- 311.4** Several students said that there were some professors who took teaching seriously and some who did not. A student pointed out that in first-year classes in Science there were very many students, and it was difficult to feel any personal connection. As compared to graduate students, it was difficult for undergraduates to have communication with professors.
- 311.5** Associate Dean Hendren said that students, as members of departments, could take any issues to their departments, rather than to the Provost. Change should be a "bottom-up" process, not "top-down." She said that this was a very important message for the student representatives to transmit to the departmental undergraduate committees.
- 311.6** A member who is an undergraduate program director said that it is difficult to take any action if students are unwilling to come forward with specific problems relating to the undergraduate teaching.
- 311.7** Dean Grant said that while students may have the perception that it would not be fruitful to talk to a departmental chair about problems with teaching, this was certainly not the case. Chairs take their responsibilities very seriously and would be disturbed if they knew that a professor was not performing well in the classroom. The chair would definitely talk to the professor. Poor teaching is a reflection on both the department and the chair.
- 311.8** He said that both undergraduate and graduate students seemed to have the impression that there would be repercussions if they complained. This was definitely not the case.
- 311.9** A member who is also a chair said that students should absolutely fill out course evaluations. Too often the only feedback he gets is students who like a course because they did well or did not like a course because they did poorly. He said that he was horrified at the thought that half of the teaching was poor.
- 311.10** A student member said that there would be more incentive to fill out the course evaluations if they were published. In response, Associate Dean Hendren said that the evaluations were used for many purposes. Dean Grant added that this included merit, so poor teaching would be reflected in a professor's paycheck.
- 311.11** A student member said that if students were more aware of the uses to which course evaluations were put, they would be more likely to fill out the evaluations.
- 311.12** Dean Grant suggested that the SUS could make it a project to encourage students to fill out the evaluations, and attempt to increase the proportion of respondents. Associate

Dean Hendren added that the departmental student representatives should let students know that there is a willingness to change performance, but it must first be known that poor performance is occurring.

- 311.13** Associate Dean Hendren said another issue arising from the Provost's meeting, was that students apparently felt there were insufficient interdisciplinary opportunities. She said that the B.Sc. (Liberal) was deliberately designed to provide the maximum flexibility in creating interdisciplinary programs according to students' own desires. Another member added that it was necessary to make choices between studying a particular field in depth versus an interdisciplinary approach.
- 311.14** Dean Grant pointed out that it was possible to have too broad an education, with insufficient depth, which would not open any doors.
- 311.15** A member pointed out that it was impossible for a department to have experts in every sub-discipline of that department, thus naturally limiting the possibilities for study in any field.
- 311.16** Dean Grant reiterated the importance of course evaluations in the operations of the university, including the value of merit increases. Associate Dean Hendren added that teaching evaluations strongly figured in the promotion of (tenured) associate professors to full professors.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.