Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. in Arts Council Room 160.

PRESENT:  Dean Bruce Lennox (Chair), Associate Dean Tamara Western (Vice-Chair), Director Nicole Allard, Professors Andrew Cumming, Michael Hendricks, Axel Hundemer, Michael Langer, Michel Lapointe, Greg Marczynski, Timothy Merlis, Ana Nyzhnyk; Anthony Mittermaier, Caroline Palmer, Jeanne Paquette, Kathy Roulet; Natalie Waters; Thérèse Koch; Victor Chisholm.

REGRETS: Professors Huy Bui, Thomas Duchaine, Barbara Hales; Mr. Daniel da Costa, Ms. Jasmine Leung, Ms. Elisabeth Sulmont, Ms. Jacqueline Chan, Mr. Gary Tom, Ms. Christina Kim.

GUESTS: Prof. Wayne Pollard, Dr. Laura Winer; Mr. Torsten Bernhardt, Mr. Emery Dittmer, Ms. Martine Dolmière, Mr. Justin Fletcher.

DOCUMENTS: AC-16-50 to AC-16-58

Dean Lennox called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Item #6, Psychology, PSYC 513, to be postponed to a future Academic Committee meeting.

Prof. Palmer moved, seconded by Prof. Cumming, that the amended Agenda be approved.

The motion carried.

2. MINUTES OF 12 DECEMBER 2016

AC-16-50

Prof. Paquette moved, seconded by Prof. Palmer, that the Minutes be adopted.

The motion carried.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

– Minor in Nanotechnology AC-16-5, AC-16-5A, AC-16-5B

603.1 Associate Dean Western said that, as discussed at the 12 December 2016 Academic Committee meeting, Associate Dean in the Faculty of Engineering offered to provide a mapping exercise in order to evaluate whether B.Sc. students could complete the Minor in Technology. The Minor is currently published in the eCalendar and is offered to both B.Eng. and B.Sc. students. She asked members for comments on the Chemistry and Physics mapping documents.

603.2 Associate Dean Western said in reviewing the Chemistry and Physics mapping, it will be possible for students to complete the Minor on time, however, these students will have to plan their courses early on in their degree since many of the courses will have to be taken in U3.

603.3 Dean Lennox strongly recommended that a strong advising note be included warning Science students that they should consult an advisor as early as possible.

603.4 Director Allard said another issue to consider at the next meeting is that the Minor leaves very little room for elective courses. Also, any changes in course offering or course scheduling will make it very difficult for students to complete the Minor in a timely fashion.
Dean Lennox asked that the Academic Committee representatives from the Departments of Chemistry and Physics report back at the next meeting.

Since the mapping documents (AC-16-5A and AC-16-5B) were not circulated to the AC, this item will be postponed to the next AC meeting scheduled for 21 March 2017.

**Secretary’s Notes:** Associate Dean Western circulated the Chemistry and Physics mapping documents to all members of AC.

### 4. ATMOSPHERIC & OCEANIC SCIENCES/ EARTH & PLANETARY SCIENCES/GEOGRAPHY

**New Course:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEOG 473</td>
<td>Arctic Field Research</td>
<td>6</td>
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Associate Dean Western said GEOG 473 was the field research component of the proposed McGill Arctic Field Study Semester (MAFSS) listed below. Three-previous approved courses (ATOC 373, EPSC 373 and GEOG 373), representing the structured part of the program, were first offered in fall 2016 as a set of three courses, only. She said that, since there had been some publicity about the McGill Arctic Field Study Semester (publicized as McGill Arctic Field Study “Program”), the Chair of the SCTP has requested that the MAFSS be officially approved, as soon as possible. Associate Dean Western said she was aware that some details still needed to be worked out among the three participating departments, but it was imperative to bring the proposals to the current meeting to be able to offer the MAFSS in fall 2017. The items related to the MAFSS proposal are (i) GEOG 473, (ii) MAFSS, (iii) Minor in Field Studies and (iv) ATOC 373, EPSC 373 and GEOG 373.

Prof. Pollard explained that GEOG 473 will be a great opportunity for students to take full advantage of a research experience from beginning to end. The course involves background preparation, field data collection, a detailed report on research design, field methods and data products. At the end of the course, there will be a conference and a final report in the form of a manuscript. He added that the course is unique in Canada.

Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Prof. Lapointe, that GEOG 473 be adopted.

There was some discussion concerning the lack of specific prerequisites for GEOG 473 and whether a statement should be included to restrict the course to students in the MAFSS. It was agreed that the prerequisites will be clarified.

Associate Dean Western said that the proposed course has a Geography subject prefix, and since the MAFSS was a collaboration among three departments, she suggested that GEOG 473 be proposed as a triple-prefix course, i.e., ATOC/EPSC/GEOG 473. Prof. Merlis, Prof. Paquette and Prof. Pollard were in favour of a triple-prefix course.

Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Prof. Lapointe, an amendment to create a triple-prefix course, ATOC/EPSC/GEOG 473, which will recognize the contributions of the three departments.

The amended motion carried.

**Secretary’s Notes:** After consultation with Cindy Smith, Secretary, SCTP, the prerequisites should refer to the course and not to the MAFSS. Since there are too many prerequisites to list, and since the projected enrolment is 10, the best option would be to indicate “Permission of the instructor.” The instructor agreed.

**New Field Study Semester**

- McGill Arctic Field Study Semester

AC Minutes 21 February 2017
Associate Dean Western explained that the proposed MAFSS lists the previously approved courses (ATOC 373, EPSC 373, GEOG 373), and ATOC/EPSC/GEOG 473.

A member pointed out that in order to avoid delays, it was essential to include on the form the name of a contact person in Geography for possible queries from SCTP and APC.

Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Director Allard, that the above McGill Arctic Field Study Semester (MAFSS) be adopted.

The motion carried.

- Minor in Field Studies

Associate Dean Western said the Minor in Field Studies was being updated to include the new McGill Arctic Field Study Semester to the list of available field study semesters.

Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Director Allard, that the above changes be approved.

The motion carried.

**Related Course Revisions:**

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATOC 373</td>
<td>Arctic Climate &amp; Climate Change</td>
<td>AC-16-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPSC 373</td>
<td>Arctic Geology</td>
<td>AC-16-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEOG 373</td>
<td>Arctic Geomorphology</td>
<td>AC-16-60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the creation of the research field course (Item #4 above), it was necessary to update the Supplementary Calendar Information by including ATOC/EPSC/GEOG 473 to the list of existing concurrent courses (ATOC 373, EPSC 373, GEOG 373).

Associate Dean Western moved, seconded Prof. Lapointe, that the above changes be approved.

The motion carried.

5. GEOGRAPHY

**New Course:**

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG 670</td>
<td>Wetlands Advanced</td>
<td>AC-16-54</td>
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Prof. Lapointe introduced GEOG 670, a new course to be offered in conjunction with an existing course GEOG 470. GEOG 670 was intended for graduate students with no previous background in Wetlands. GEOG 670 covers the same material as GEOG 470, except that GEOG 670 will include a graduate-level research paper worth 30% of the final grade.

After some discussion concerning a more suitable course title, Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Prof. Lapointe, that the course be adopted, pending consultation with the instructor for an alternate course title.

The motion carried.
Secretary's Notes: After consultation with the instructor, the course title for GEOG 670 will be Wetlands-Advanced because GEOG 670 students will be required to write a graduate-level research paper, whereas GEOG 470 students will not.

6. **PSYCHOLOGY**

*The Following New Course was Postponed to a Future Meeting:*  
PSYC 513  
AC-16-55

Program Changes:  
– B.A. & Sc.; Major Concentration in Psychology  
AC-16-56

606.1 Prof. Palmer explained that the program requirements in the list of Complementary Courses was rewritten to clarify the course levels permitted.

606.2 Associate Dean Western moved, seconded by Prof. Palmer, that the program changes be approved, pending approval by the B.A. & Sc. PAC.

The motion carried.

For Information Only:  
– B.A. Major Concentration in Psychology

7. **REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COURSE EVALUATION QUESTIONS**  
AC-16-57

607.1 Associate Dean Western introduced the following people to join the discussion on course evaluation questions and student participation:

Dr. Laura Winer, Director, Teaching & Learning Services (TLS)  
Justin Fletcher, Learning Technology Consultant, (TLS)  
Mr. Torsten Bernhardt, Course Administrator & Pedagogical Developer, Department of Biology  
Mr. Emery Dittmer, V.-P. (Finance) McGill Biology Student Union

607.2 Mr. Fletcher gave an overview on the response rates in departments in the Faculty of Science, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation. He said there was a wide range of response rates among the departments. For fall 2016, the range was 36% to 51%, and for winter 2017, the range was 36% to 60%.

607.3 Below are some strategies used by TLS to encourage student participation:
– email reminders to students and instructors  
– announcements on myMcGill Portal, myCourses, public display boards, various computer labs, McGill's Twitter, Facebook, student association Facebook pages, McGill app  
– links to the Mercury, TLS websites, and faculty homepages  
– Testimonials from Instructors

607.4 What can departments and faculty do as a unit?  
– post reminders on display screens  
– send messages to students from Chairs/Directors/Advisor  
– visit classes (especially large ones) to explain why student feedback was important  
– ask student leaders to spread the word  
– remind students during advising appointments  
– post Mercury graphics and posters available from TLS

607.5 Dr. Winer said that although there were 10 strategies that instructors can do to increase student participation, she would only mention the most important ones:

Strategy 1: provide students with concrete evidence of the impact of completing evaluations, and
let students know that their feedback is used.

Strategy 2: instructors can include up to three additional questions per questionnaire

Strategy 3: ask students for feedback during the course

Strategy 4: instructors can simplify access from myCourses by adding course evaluations widget or link

Strategy 5: ask SUS or student leaders in departments to encourage their classmates

607.6 Dr. Winer said she is pleased that the Faculty of Science is working towards a set of uniform course evaluation questions.

607.7 Associate Dean Western said the members of the Academic Committee Subcommittee on Course Evaluation Questions (document AC-16-57) were: Prof. Axel Hundemer (Mathematics & Statistics), Prof. Michel Lapointe (Geography), and Associate Dean (Academic) Tamara Western. She said that, currently, course evaluation questions were not uniform across the Faculty. The mandate of the Subcommittee was to recommend uniform questions both for comparison of instructors for consideration for merit, tenure, promotion and teaching awards, and to simplify questions for students. The Subcommittee reviewed a comparison of the existing questions across the Faculty, and categorized them into common types of questions. The Subcommittee also reviewed questions from other faculties in the University as well questions available on the database from TLS. Associate Dean Western said she also discussed the suggested questions with both Mr. Emery Dittmer and Mr. Torsten Bernhardt, and with TLS. She reminded members that departments/instructors can include additional questions to the suggested course evaluation questions in document AC-16-57. Associate Dean Western asked for members’ comments on the suggested course evaluation questions.

607.8 Mr. Dittmer said he was present at the meeting representing the SUS, and the SUS would fully support the changes to the course evaluation questions. A Letter of Support will be sent to Josie D’Amico.

607.9 Dean Lennox said that with lab/lecture courses, it was sometimes confusing for students to know the name of the instructor of the course. He asked if it can be simplified for students.

607.10 Associate Dean Western said that course evaluations varied from one department to another, and that in Biology, e.g. BIOL 111, one evaluation is made available for both the lab coordinator and the instructor, whereas in Chemistry, the lab coordinator and the instructor are evaluated separately. She said that perhaps using the Chemistry model could be considered for the entire Faculty.

607.11 Dr. Winer said that courses with multiple instructors, the names of each instructor is indicated on the course evaluation questionnaire. However, having separate evaluations for lab coordinators and instructors, will mean that the rate of responses from students will decrease because students will have to complete more evaluations.

607.12 Ms. Koch said that for lab/lecture courses, a different set of standardized questions for the lab coordinator and the instructor would be beneficial for students.

607.13 Mr. Dittmer said that it was important to define the type of data needed for lab evaluations versus lecture evaluations. The course evaluation questions recommended in document AC-16-57 include a comment section for each question. Mr. Dittmer said students are much more interested in the comments section of a course, than the numerical data, but perhaps, for lab evaluations, numerical data would be better.

607.14 Prof. Langer suggested adding a question on whether the amount of hours needed to successfully complete a course was appropriate to the course credit weight.

607.15 Ms. Roulet said regarding the question on whether the evaluation methods in a course was fair (Question #5, Page 1, document AC-16-57), the feedback from her unit was that it may depend on how the student feels he/she was judged, and if the student did poorly, it does not mean that...
the assessment was not fair. It was suggested to rephrase the question to “The expectation for successful completion of assignment was communicated effectively?” Ms. Roulet will send the suggested questions to Associate Dean Western.

607.16 Associate Dean Western added that at the Pre-Academic meeting, Question #8 (Page 2, document AC-16-57) on whether the evaluation methods used in the course were fair, Dean Lennox suggested that the question should be asked in two questions.

607.17 Mr. Dittmer suggested to add “Please expand” to some of the questions which would encourage students to give more in-depth and high-quality feedback.

607.18 Mr. Bernhardt suggested that Question #4 (Page 2, document AC-16-57) about how the course could be improved, could be expanded to also ask what should not be changed about the course and what was great about it.

607.19 Dean Lennox said that in Questions #5, #6 (Page 2, document AC-16-57) the term “good” is part of the question, and he suggested to use “excellent” instead. Dr. Winer agreed that “excellent” is used in the four University core questions.

607.20 Ms. Roulet and Director Allard suggested that for Question 5 (Page 2, document AC-16-57), that the term “good” be replaced with “promoted.”

607.21 Regarding Question #6 (Page 2, document AC-16-57) concerning team-taught courses and coordination among instructors, the question should refer to “…good coordination of the course content.” Dr. Winer said it was important to separate feedback on professors versus feedback on courses, for confidentiality issues.

607.22 Also, regarding Question #6, Dean Lennox said that the different parts of a course should fit well together and should not be a repetition of previous parts.

607.23 Dr. Palmer said that Questions #9, #10, #11 (Page 2, document AC-16-57), the term “enhanced” would be more appropriate than “contributed to.”

607.24 Associate Dean Western said that another comment that came up was to make the questions more personal to encourage participation.

607.25 Associate Dean Western said that members could email her with any other comments or suggestions. She thanked everyone for their feedback. The questions will be revised and brought back to a future Academic Committee meeting.

607.26 Associate Dean Western asked for comments and suggestions on improving student response rates, and on issues related to instructors teaching in the early part of the course versus the later part. In addition, she would also like members' feedback on the possibility of conducting course evaluations throughout the term. She said that, although this issue was not part of the discussion on course evaluation questions, it was an issue that frequently came up in discussions with students. Associate Dean Western added that students appreciate knowing that instructors are open to feedback during the course.

607.27 In reply to a member who asked if there had been systematic differences in evaluation of instructors teaching in the early part of the course versus the later part, Dr. Winer said that it was difficult to evaluate.

607.28 Dr. Winer said that in the Faculty of Engineering and other faculties, TLS had examined the results on student response rates during the condensed course evaluation period versus the default period, and statistically there was no significant differences. TLS has no information on evaluations of instructors teaching in the early part of the course versus the later part. Dr. Winer also mentioned that with two different course evaluation periods, students sometimes miss the deadline date.
607.29 Associate Dean Western said that most departments in the Faculty of Science use the default course evaluation period, as well as most of the biomedical departments.

607.30 Dean Lennox said that the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, students are given one day to complete course evaluation questions. Dr. Winer will look into the matter.

607.31 Mr. Dittmer said that overall the student body would support mid-course evaluations. He said in discussions with the SUS, there is a possibility of student leaders working to create a culture that increases student response rates during events such as Frosh week, Discover McGill, McGill Orientation Week, and by making announcements in classrooms. Mr. Dittmer said he prefers the default course evaluation period, and asked whether the period could be extended even further into the final exams.

607.32 Dr. Winer said that currently the default course evaluation period ended two days after final exams, and if it were to be extended, instructors teaching in the fall semester, would not get the results before the start of the winter semester.

607.33 Prof. Palmer said that students are extremely busy during finals and extending the default period further would not be beneficial. However, she would be in favour of either holding a “course evaluation day” or holding mid-course evaluations, as a pilot project.

607.34 Director Allard asked whether the Mercury system would work if every student completed course evaluation questions in one day? Dean Lennox said that perhaps it would be a good idea to experiment with mid-course evaluations. Also, would there be a different set of questions for mid-course evaluations? Associate Dean Western said questions for mid-course evaluations could be quite simple, and gave some examples.

607.35 Dr. Winer said that the Mercury system does not manage mid-course evaluations but instructors could use MyCourses, and standardized course evaluation questions are not required since mid-course evaluations are not mandated by the University. This would allow instructors to ask questions that are particularly relevant to their course. Associate Dean Western said that by suggesting questions could simplify the process.

607.36 Dean Lennox said the discussion was very informative. He said the aim was to have a Faculty of Science set of course evaluation questions to be approved by the Academic Committee, and then brought to a Faculty of Science meeting. The questions would be subject to review every two years. The reason for this initiative is to eliminate confusion for students, and to assess instructors on the same basis for tenure, promotion and teaching awards.

607.37 Associate Dean Western said that since the course evaluation questions are a Faculty of Science initiative, the Faculty cannot enforce these questions on the five biomedical departments teaching B.Sc. programs because these five departments fall under the jurisdiction of the Faculty of Medicine. However, she pointed out that B.Sc. students do not see the distinction between the two faculties, and asked the representatives of the biomedical departments to discuss this initiative with their departments.

607.38 In reply to Mr. Dittmer, Dean Lennox said the proposed course evaluation questions do not require Senate’s approval because the questions are for departments in the Faculty of Science and not University ones. Dean Lennox added that the membership of the Faculty of Science includes a Science Senator of the SUS.

607.39 Associate Dean Western said it would be beneficial for student societies to encourage students to complete course evaluation questions because it is very valuable and support from students is critical.

607.40 Prof. Mittermaier said that making critical comments about a course or instructor was valuable as well as making positive comments.
607.41 Mr. Fletcher said that TLS is working on guidelines on how students could provide constructive and positive feedback.

607.42 Associate Dean Western thanked Dr. Laura Winer, Mr. Justin Fletcher, Mr. Torsten Bernhardt, and Emery Dittmer for their valuable contribution in the discussion.

**Secretary’s Notes:** (i) A Letter of Support from the SUS has been received; (ii) After the meeting, Associate Dean Western circulated to AC members the TLS presentation.

8. **SUS ACTIVITIES**

   There was no Report from the SUS.

9. **OTHER BUSINESS**

609.1 Dean Lennox reminded members that there will be only two more Academic Committee meetings (21 March 2017 and 25 April 2017) before the end of the current academic year. He said it was important to bring forward any time-sensitive proposals to the next meeting.

   There being no other business, Dean Lennox **moved**, seconded by Director Allard, that the meeting be adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

   **The motion carried.**