Minutes of the twelfth meeting held on Tuesday 24th October 2006
from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in Room 310, James Building

Present: M. J. Mendelson (Chair), C.-E. Bouchard, D. Boyer, A. Costopoulos, D. Frost, L. Jacobs-Starkey,
J. Nemes, J.-P. Rémillieux, D. Starke-Meyerring, Y. Steinert, S. Tran, C. Weston, J. Wapnick,
L.R. Winer, H.M.C. Richard (Secretary to the Committee)
Regrets: B. Baker, D. Fraser, D. Harris, A. De Motta, T. Kirby, A.C. Masi, T. Wheeler
Guest: J. Timmerman (item 6)

Documents circulated at the meeting:
- TL.06-10-03   Document 1 Working Group on Graduate Attributes: Project Update
- ---------------   Document 2 Attributes of University Graduates - Questionnaire

1. Adoption of the agenda

The proposed agenda was adopted as circulated, with item 6 being considered ahead of item 4.

2. Approval of minutes of the SCTL meeting held on 23rd May 2006

The minutes were approved as circulated.

3. Business arising from minutes of previous meetings

None.

4. Reports on activities of working groups, other committees, and TLS

a) Working Group on Best Practices in Classroom Teaching
  - Report of the Working Group on Best Practices, 24th October 2006 (*TL.06-10-01*)

The Working Group on Best Practices in Classroom Teaching was comprised of: dik Harris (Chair),
Daniel Boyer, Heather Goad, Andrew Kirk, Steve Maguire, Torrance Kirby, Mariela Tovar, and students
Christine Mitchell and Kalanga Joffres. The Report from the Working Group that was presented reflects
the activity of summer 2006 and contains five recommendations, the first one being a prerequisite to the
other four. It was noted that the second one has the most potential. The third aims at teaching awards
having similar criteria across the University reflecting best practices. The fourth will be integrated into the
TLS website currently under construction, highlighting best practices taken from the compendium. The
fifth recommendation results directly from the interviews in which professors referred to structural
barriers to best practices.

**TLS will undertake Recommendations 1 to 4 and report back to SCTL, as well as discuss to what
extent Recommendation 5 needs to be addressed, on the basis of the interviews.**

b)   Teaching and Learning Space Working Group and its two subcommittees:
      i) Teaching Space Standards and New Technologies Subcommittee, and
      ii) Teaching Space Priorities and Funding Subcommittee

The Teaching and Learning Space Working Group is a free-floating working group that was struck by
Provost Anthony Masi and is not under SC-IST. Its primary task has been to try to create a better
framework facilitating funding to faculties. A form was developed and was demonstrated to faculties on
the previous Friday. Institutional goals are clearer and the process is becoming more transparent; basic
improvements are being made.

c) Academic Policy and Planning Committee (APPC) - Academic Program Reviews

In September 2006 APPC began reviewing Academic Program Reviews. A total of sixty such reports will be considered over the next fifteen months, at a rate of 25 minutes per dossier. Much of the delay in completing the reviews has been due to the ability of central administration to provide data in the appropriate format. The major purpose of the reviews is to improve the quality of teaching programs. CREPUQ's Commission de vérification de l'évaluation des programmes existants (CVEP) will be visiting McGill in December to make sure that the process adopted by McGill is being followed.

d) Teaching and Learning Services (TLS)

Six priorities were identified:
1) helping the University develop a shared vision of teaching and learning, by focusing on graduate attributes, nexus between research and teaching, constructing a TLS website that unites everything relating to teaching and learning, including teaching awards;
2) assuming responsibility for the course evaluation process and running it completely online; the new course evaluation policy statement, drafted in the Office of the Provost, will be finalized for submission to SCTL for approval;
3) space improvement, funding and setting standards;
4) course and program intervention, program curriculum to support outcomes, how to deliver using all available resources;
5) promoting the McGill teaching support team: Libraries, IMS, TLS support for programs, courses, and communicating to faculties;
6) centralizing information on teaching awards, on request from the Principal and the Provost.

e) Other

None.

5. Course evaluations
- Course Evaluation Policy, Revised version, 24th May 2006 (*Revised TL.06-05-14 - TL.06-10-02*)

The document circulated to the Committee was a revised version of the draft Course Evaluation Policy statement discussed on 23rd May TL.06-05-14. The title, "Proposed policy on official end-of-term course evaluations", now clarifies that these are not informal in-course evaluations to get student input. The document is still missing a set of core questions (item 8). McGill uses 58 different course evaluation questionnaires; the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Engineering use uniform faculty questionnaires for all their units. It was thought that McGill should adopt a set of three to five common questions so that when course evaluations are used for merit, tenure decisions and promotion, commonalities in the type of information collected can be found. While it may be possible to formulate questions that are not personal, questionnaires will most likely include questions that could be considered personal: answers to such questions can only be made public in Quebec with instructor's permission.

In the discussion, it was suggested that the policy should provide a definition for "course" as there exist many different types of courses: field-courses, stages, clinical teaching, undergraduate research supervision, etc. The Faculty of Medicine does not have rigorous evaluations as the University's process applies only to the first 18 months of the medical curriculum. In response to a question as to whether TLS would be equipped to take on the evaluations of graduate students in the way it will be doing regular course evaluations, Professor Weston responded that this would be possible as long as students are registered in Banner.

The document will return to SCTL with core questions listed under item 8, before it can be approved by SCTL for submission to APPC.

6. Applicability of the Boyer Report at McGill – Graduate Attributes (*TL.06-10-03*)

Professor Weston explained how Graduate Attributes made their way to the SCTL agenda. The report written by former Dean of Students Bruce Shore and former McGill student Fred Sagel on the applicability of the Boyer Report presented a number of proposals for incorporating research in undergraduate teaching. A detour was taken to explore graduate attributes: starting with the premise that research should be integrated into teaching led to asking what outcomes were being pursued; such outcomes were related to the qualities McGill should like to see in its graduating students (critical thinking for example), i.e. graduate attributes. This might take a little more time than would be desirable for pursuing the nexus on teaching and research. The Chair had proposed that a **working group be struck to consider the incorporation of research in undergraduate teaching**, which is one of the themes of the White Paper and was raised in the Report of the Task Force on Student Life and Learning. The Working Group includes: Cynthia Weston as convener, TLS professional associate Sharon Roy, Doreen Starke-Meyerring, Yvonne Steinert, Andre Costopoulos.

The Working Group expects to hold two or three meetings and report to SCTL in February.

Ms Julie Timmerman presented 1) the Summary of first steps taken in response to the proposal on graduate attributes, 2) Lessons from the Literature, and 3) Suggestions for Moving Ahead, as described in document TL.06-10-03.

Discussion included the following questions and points:
- Will the generic attributes formulated be so generic as to come across as motherhood statements? "Development of specific skills within the disciplines" or "developing the foundation of knowledge within the discipline" can be freely manipulated.
- Will the statements identify what students should be able to do rather than what students should be? Students may see their learning outcomes differently.
- The terms "outcomes" and "attributes" can be used interchangeably. "Outcomes" may be a preferable term as it more clearly expresses the competences expected from graduating. In order to make outcomes common to all disciplines, they may have to be oversimplified. Competences expected from graduating Medicine students would have to be specified by medical discipline. Such tailored, program-specific outcomes are already available. Similarly, Engineering students need to acquire certain skills to meet accreditation demands; these have already been formalized. The exercise entails building on statements that already exist.
- Program-specific outcomes would not preclude a list of general University attributes: one could have two sets, one broader and one more specific; one could build on the other.
- If commonalities could be found across the sixty academic program reviews, terms could be categorized and one could build on what the community says it does. With both program reviews and accreditation requirements, one could list outcomes, program by program and cluster by cluster, and formulate a more generic abstract.
- McGill's list of graduate attributes should enable one to distinguish what is viewed as important at McGill; if similar values are expressed elsewhere, content might be slightly different; the value of the exercise is to make sure that what we say we want our graduates to do aligns with what we do. How does the McGill experience change the students? How does internationalization change critical thinking? Interaction between the outcomes and between the generic and specific program goals might not be very different at universities of similar caliber. Making ourselves unique is not the goal: the mission and expectations are known. Watching people's responses to the statements of other institutions may be helpful and revealing. The process is an important piece of the exercise, similar to articulating a mission statement: shuffling the same elements does not mean that the exercise is not a worthwhile undertaking. There may be broad similarities but the meaning may differ in McGill's particular context.
- Re. whether this would have the effect of directing teaching within faculties: the outcomes become part of building curriculum and courses, much like a statement of academic integrity in a course outline. A coherent list of attributes will define the outcome of the teaching and learning activity. One should make sure that the outcomes that are advocated are being reached with the students. This would have to be verified: will there be ways of verifying that outcomes are being achieved?
- Students should be involved in the process; consulting with the Planning & Institutional Analysis Office may be useful as the PIAO runs student surveys in which some of those issues are addressed. There was

concern about putting a lot of energy in developing attributes; more energy should be put in their implementation.
- The exercise should be situated within a framework for guiding all our curriculum development. The environment created should be such as to allow students to achieve the outcomes that have been defined.

The Working Group will continue its work with Julie Timmerman.

5. **Second Annual Canadian Summit on the Integration of Research,**
   Teaching and Learning, Edmonton, May 4-6, 2006
   - Report from dik Harris, July 2006 (*TL-06-10-04*)

   Professor Harris will address any questions at the next meeting.

8. **Teaching awards**

   McGill is under-represented among winners of external awards. Centralizing information on all teaching awards that are available to McGill staff (so as to publicize them on the TLS website) is one purpose of the proposed project. Applications require a lot of work: it would therefore be wise to make internal teaching awards consistent with external ones so that it might be easier to turn them over for proposing candidates for external awards. This project will entail calling together the chairs of faculty committees that deal with teaching awards and soliciting their input. It was suggested that an inventory of local awards should be required before tackling the national and international ones. **Professor Steinert agreed to prepare a one-page text on the concerns relating to the Faculty of Medicine**: based on current criteria, the majority of teachers in Medicine are not eligible for University teaching awards because they are not tenure-track.

9. **Teaching large classes**

   It was announced that **a Working Group on Teaching Large Classes was being formed.** It will focus on how best to foster learning in particularly large classes by looking at successful and less successful experiences and by looking at certain methods being used at McGill and elsewhere and ideas to draw from. A presentation on 14th November by Professor Tom Haffie from the University of Western Ontario will deal on teaching large classes, on how questions can be used effectively in addition to technology. Other issues will be brought forward later: for example, breaking up a large class into small groups after lectures. An invitation to the presentation on 14th November was extended to all members of SCTL.

10. **Report to APPC 2005-06 and plans for 2006-07** (*TL.06-10-05)*

    As a subcommittee of APPC, SCTL is required to report to APPC annually on work accomplished and plans for the coming year. A document is being prepared.

11. **Other business**

    Another member for the Graduate Attributes Workgroup will be identified.

12. **Adjournment**

    The meeting adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

Helen M.C. Richard, 2007-01-17

HMCR/teaching and learning/minutes/2006-10-24