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## Minutes

### 46<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning (STL) of the Academic Policy Committee

Monday, 17 February 2014, 3:00pm – 5:00pm

McLennan Library Building, room MS-74

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**Present:** Jeremie Abitbol, James Archibald, Lawrence Chen, Svetlana Komarova, Lucy Lach, Sara Laimon, Jana Luker, John Silvius, Yvonne Steinert, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Carole Urbain, Laura Winer (Acting Chair)

**Regrets:** Nicole Allard, Andre Costopoulos, Ollivier Dyens (Chair), Jaye Ellis, Haley Hatch-Dinel, Murray Humphries, Sujata Madan, Ronald Morris, Laura Nilson, Sharon Roy

**Guests:** Mariela Tovar, Teaching and Learning Services

#### 1. Administrative:

##### a) Adoption of the agenda

Dr. Laura Winer Chaired the meeting in the Deputy Provost's absence. Members were advised that should the Deputy Provost not be able to join the meeting, item #4b) *the SLL Narrative* would be postponed to the next meeting.

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

##### b) Approval of the minutes, 29 October 2013 (STL2014-02-09)

There being no comments, the minutes were adopted as circulated.

#### 2. Action items:

##### a) Assessment Working Group

**Guest: Mariela Tovar, Teaching and Learning Services**

Mariela Tovar updated the members of the Subcommittee on the activities of the Working Group. Members were reminded that at its meeting of 21 May 2013, they approved a 1-year extension to the mandate of the Assessment Working Group.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, the Working Group launched a survey on student assessment in large classes. Three broad questions were posed during the survey and expanded upon during follow-up interviews:

1. What is a large class? *to be considered a large class, over 100 students must be enrolled or it must be one of the 3 largest classes in the department.*

2. What do we want to find out about assessment practices in large classes at other institutions? *we mandated the EAB (Education Advisory Board) to conduct a custom research*
3. What do we want to find out about assessment practices in large classes at McGill? *we conducted an open-ended survey with the intent to capture and identify interesting and creative practices as well as barriers to effective assessment practices in large classes.*

As a result of the survey and follow-up interviews several initiatives have been proposed:

- a series of brown bag lunch events will be held. The first lunch will be hosted by Professor Tamara Western, Department of Biology and entitled “*Managing Writing assignments in Large Classes*”, will be held on March 14, 2014.
- the Teaching for Learning blog will be re-launched: it is planned that the discussions from the follow-up interviews will be transformed into mini-case studies.

Some discussion ensued on the best way to communicate these activities to instructors. It was noted that the *Focus on Teaching (FoT)* bulletin will be used extensively and that members should ensure that these bulletins do not land in their junkbox. Jeremie Abitbol suggested that the lunch event be recorded.

**Action:** the Secretary will forward both an invitation to the March 14<sup>th</sup> luncheon and the link to the [Teaching for Learning@McGill University](#) blog to members of STL.

Laura Winer thanked Dr. Tovar for her presentation.

**b) Teaching Awards: Revised guidelines – Lifetime Achievement Award for Leadership in Learning (STL2014-02-10)**

**Laura Winer, Teaching and Learning Services**

Laura Winer reviewed the proposed revisions to the guidelines. The following points highlight the substantive changes:

- Faculty members are eligible for nomination within 36-months following their retirement;
- the Award will not necessarily be conferred annually;
- Faculty Deans will be asked to list the relative merits of each nominee should there be multiple nominees from one Faculty.

Some discussion ensued with one final clarification being made as follows: *Faculty members are also eligible for nomination within 36-months following their retirement.*

**Action:** The revised guidelines were approved by STL and will be forwarded to APC for approval at its 20 March 2014 meeting.

Dr. Winer mentioned that the guidelines for the Principal’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching are also being revised. She reassured the Committee that most of the proposed changes are to clarify existing language and that the spirit of the award will remain unchanged.

**c) Revisions to the Course Evaluations Policy (STL2014-02-12)**

**Laura Winer, Teaching and Learning Services**

Laura Winer reviewed the proposed revisions to the Course Evaluation policy. The following points highlight the substantive changes:

- a new point 3 has been added;
- the language in point 5 has been clarified to explicitly state the required versus optional elements;

- point 6 has been revised to change the default dates of the course evaluation period;
- point 8 has been revised to change the default regarding the accessibility of results.

Dr. Winer confirmed that broad consultation on the proposed revisions was undertaken and feedback has been incorporated. Although there has been some concern that students will 'punish' their instructors with negative course evaluations due to difficult exams, research and benchmarking does not support that concern.

**Action:** The revisions to the Course Evaluation Policy were approved by STL and will be forwarded to APC for approval at its 20 March 2014 meeting.

#### **4. Discussion/Information**

##### **a. McGillX Update**

**Laura Winer, Teaching and Learning Services**

Laura Winer updated the members on the McGillX project. She confirmed that to-date, over 27,000 students have enrolled for the McGill offering *Food for Thought* with ~7,000 students being actively engaged. The three professors giving the course (David Harpp, Ariel Fenster and Joe Schwarcz) are very pleased with the dynamic interaction as well as the quality and thoughtfulness of some of the posts.

Dr. Winer also confirmed the upcoming MOOCs:

- Natural Disasters with John Gyakum and John Stix
- Social Learning for Social Impact with Henry Mintzberg and Leslie Breitner
- Sports Medicine with Ian Shrier (just announced)

##### **b. SLL Narrative**

**Professor Ollivier Dyens, Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)**

Postponed to the next meeting

##### **c. Ad Hoc item**

At a recent meeting with the SLL E-team, Louise Savard from the Safety Office expressed concerns that instructors are not adequately prepared to handle emergency situations. TLS has agreed to help disseminate information to instructors in those classrooms considered most at-risk. In the meantime, STL members were encouraged to help themselves to Emergency Measures pamphlets and to contact the Safety Office should they have any concerns.

There being no further items for discussion the meeting was adjourned at 4:05pm.