



MAUT General Meeting

Friday, February 11, 2022 | 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Zoom Meeting

Approved Minutes of the General Meeting

1. Welcome

Andrew Kirk called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm and welcomed everyone (84 participants).

2. Adoption of Agenda

J. Mauzeroll moved to adopt the agenda, seconded by N. Hall. The agenda was adopted unanimously.

3. Open discussion of members around MAUT response to the adequacy of the current return to in-person policies and COVID precautions

A. Kirk invited those who called the meeting to begin the discussion.

M. MacKenzie took this opportunity for the membership to share their impressions of both the adequacy of the policy that was implemented for January 24 and the process by which that policy came to be and the extent of satisfaction with the meaningfulness of the faculty engagement in that process. Those who requested the meeting recognized the wide variation across campus of individual's risk threshold and the needs of the different departments and units. He went on to describe the concerns of the School of Social Work and how their situation was unique and how students were in field placements serving vulnerable communities during the week in the Montreal area, and then returning to campus. That motivated their interest in seeing policy that was more flexible and recognizing that variation but also acknowledged that this does not speak for all. Something M. MacKenzie felt discouraged by was the extent by which conversations happened on campus both within MAUT and central administration. He stated that we have tools at our disposal to readily survey the membership and see how people feel and whether the policy adequately reflects their needs.

P. Rohrbach who sits on the Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Covid Academic Policy and Planning, mentioned that there is no policy on the 'return to campus on January 24' and that their role is to make requests, provide guidance and how to modify things that are better for the community.

D. Weinstock is the contact person and the MAUT representative on the ad hoc committee.

M. MacKenzie expressed his concerns to which extent MAUT is being active in giving voice to faculty satisfaction and decision-making.

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A. Kirk clarified the difference between administration making decisions in providing information for in-person teaching as opposed to implementing actual policies that must go through the proper Board, Senate channels, etc.

Comments and feedback from members as follows:

- Everyone should have respectful dialogue when reasonable people disagree. Everyone agreed that no one wants to transmit Covid as a community – that we are all on the same page. Procedurally, it seemed there was an improvement in governance when Senate agreed to create the Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Covid Academic Policy and Planning last year in providing more communication on how to accommodate students and how to deal with issues. D. Weinstock who sits on the ad hoc committee reported that they were not consulted on the return to campus. Though the committee provides advice and consultation on other Covid related concerns, they were not involved within the parameters leading up to this decision made by the administration.
- MAUT is part of a consultative structure but there has been a severe break down in collegiality within the university and it needs to be restored in a constructive way.
- It was suggested to poll all faculty asking them to express their concerns and think about the entire university and the primary mission as a university (but we can only poll MAUT members - the university would have to poll the students and administrators if we want a global result).
- Undergraduate students from the School of Social Work voted to go on strike if online teaching was not provided. Because the faculty is a practice school preparing students for professional practice, they are worried they could be Covid spreaders because of their exposure in hospitals and in marginalized communities and home visits. This is disruptive to the class when half the students do not show up. Having full classes is not safe at this time and having hybrid learning is demanding and stressful. Ideally, some of their courses should continue online.
- Supported canvassing the members. They expressed their concern with the decision from the upper administration for return to in-person teaching without adequate consultation from the faculty or students. There was no real consultation at Senate from the senators and felt there is a loss in pedagogic quality when things shifted to online teaching (in the first year) and masked teaching in-person last fall. It was better for both the teachers and students but at an increased risk but now greater today because of the Omicron variant and reduced restrictions from the provincial government. A poll among members is a first step, in asking their opinion to return to large in-person teaching. MAUT needs to press administration to reconsider the return to compulsory in-person teaching and faculty and reopen the possibility of faculty having the option to continue to remote teaching. Students become accustomed/resigned themselves to this.
- There was lack of polling from faculty and found the directives to return on the 24th was very clear with recommendations for hybrid but there not a lot of thought put towards how stressful this can be. She does not record her lectures but offers office hours to review the slides and meet the students to ensure they do not fall behind (using assessment tools). Her students find it easier not having to attend in-person. However, the issue then becomes a

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question of quality – teaching online versus teaching in-person is very different. The university oversimplified in-person and offering hybrid. How do we accommodate those who want in-person and those who want remote learning? It does not represent all the students. The MAUT poll may oversimplify how people want to teach.

- SSMU and PGSS have been vocal in demanding what they want from the university and we should take their lead. Opinion was shared that online teaching leads to bad choices. University decisions have been hasty and some comments from higher administration have been reckless. It is important that faculty have autonomy (expertise and wisdom).
- The reason for being at this meeting is the point of process and collegial governance in this situation now. As someone who is at the threshold of a long-term commitment to McGill as their tenure dossier is under review, and they are very concerned in the collegial governance process and wants to get a better understanding of faculty voice. The impression is that administration is online via Zoom, students have a powerful voice in putting pressure for recordings or hybrid (and can learn remotely) and with the acceptance of the 20% teaching remotely, it seems that in-person means 'in-person' is really meant for faculty. Faculty lack a voice. MAUT was not present and only reiterated what the administration was saying following the university's messages in December and January. A concern was celebrating the role of professors as essential and encouraged resiliency. Faculty were given the freedom to explore autonomy on how they teach remotely but it is different for everyone - turning structural issues into individual decisions are criticized by the students and not to the administration. These ad hoc decisions sets a precedence in the transformation of future teaching loads (long-term workload, hybrid learning, in-person, accommodations, pedagogy aims and values). Faculty was not polled nor were students. Who is supporting me?

As a point of information, A. Kirk said that MAUT has voiced to the administration that they would not accept any mandate for hybrid teaching or recording (should only be voluntary). Council had previously discussed that there should be no backlash against those who do not want hybrid and/or record lectures and that they don't suffer any negative student evaluations. If anyone is uncomfortable with hybrid teaching or recording should reach out to MAUT.

- How are we going to continue making decisions as the pandemic continues with new waves of the virus?
 - Transparency - How does the university collect its information? The university rejected the Faculty of Law in terms of their legal opinion/expertise despite presenting the facts to the administration.
 - Lack of engagement/consultation - How do we ensure moving forward that processes are put in place?
 - Access to information - was there transparency? What was the methodology by which that was done?
 - Accommodations (students will get sick, teachers get sick) How do we cope with that?
 - IT support?

Let us focus on what we can do through collective governance.

- They have not made hybrid easier (administration has not offered instruction). Students weren't informed that they had choice for hybrid and were pushed to attend in-person

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learning creating discomfort and fear. Other concerns were; 1. No planning for long Covid or guidance for instructors (there will be students who have gotten sick) 2. They stopped the on campus transmission reporting when Omicron began. They have not been transparent.

- The purpose of this meeting is to get a sense of opinion and consultation and to vote on a poll. The discussion and opinions during this meeting is important and it has been agreed by most that there has been lack of consultation. We should be crafting a decision by the general assembly.

A. Kirk expressed that MAUT's Council is the representative group that is elected to make decisions, as would other similar associations (SSMU, PGSS). Binding vote or not, the views of MAUT members are taken seriously. Though decisions are made, it does not necessarily change the direction of the administration, but by sharing MAUT's views we have been able to move the needle on some things. There are limits to the power of MAUT when it comes to the administration. We can compare ourselves with faculty associations at other universities and see that they have not achieved significant changes with their administrations either. It is up to everyone to keep collegiality working.

Other members expressed that:

- It is MAUT's responsibility to advocate for its members especially throughout the last two years. Polling a can be peculiar tool when everyone has been experiencing survey fatigue on top of general pandemic fatigue, incessant emails on Covid matters which can result in non-response rate collapse. The selection bias of who responds goes up and those who are dissatisfied, are more of those whose response goes up. Thermostatic polling - mood plays a role in survey results. It is pervasive and the outcome may not be favorable because of this.
- With a background in infectious diseases and as a Senator – it was difficult to listen to misinformation given by the Principal at a Senate meeting (exposure to the virus is a way to get vaccinated and procedural masks are just as good as N-95). McGill consults and reacts with the government and its own infectious disease experts (Dr. Don Sheppard, Microbiology and Immunology). Despite everyone being exhausted, we are in this together. There is no support for online teaching. Money has been given for support (TA's). The services are offered but has anyone signed up. The needs we think we have can be different when the time comes.

M. MacKenzie asked that the membership reflect their impressions on the current decision and the involvement of faculty governance. M. MacKenzie read the draft motion as follows: (page 5)

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WHEREAS the MAUT plays a central role in representing the views of the membership;

BE IT RESOLVED that the MAUT executive will undertake a straight forward electronic poll of the membership within one week and will share those aggregate percentage results for each question with the membership as soon as possible upon survey completion.

The survey will consist of the following 6 questions (formatted as needed for online survey delivery):

1. Did the McGill administration's decision for return to compulsory in person instruction January 24th provided adequate flexibility to meet the diversity of needs and risk on campus?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Did the return to in-person teaching decision provide adequate protection and safety to faculty as of January 24th?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Have professors and academic units been adequately engaged by the central administration in decisions touching on modes of instruction during COVID?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Would you like to see MAUT take a more assertive position in advocating for the safety of its members?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Would you like to see MAUT take a more assertive position in advocating for faculty governance in decisions related to pedagogy and modes of instruction?
 - Yes
 - No
6. What additional protections, if any, would you like to have seen in the return policy (formatted with check boxes for any that may apply and/or enter other in open text box):
 - Better masks (KN95/KF94 or better) provided to faculty, students and staff
 - Better masks (KN95/KF94 or better) required in classrooms
 - Safer distancing policy standards
 - Better transparency on classroom air exchange testing information
 - HEPA filtration in classrooms
 - Reinstatement of readily available rapid testing on campus
 - More flexibility for virtual instruction and learning
 - Other?: _____

The spirit of the motion was not binding as quorum was not reached and voting was not official (there were less than 100 members). V. Muniz-Fraticelli seconded. Members discussed and spoke to the draft motion as follows:

- MAUT should poll the membership but not use questions in the proposed draft motion. Questions should be more specific (not using yes and no responses) and should express the purpose it is serving.

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- In favor of the motion on the understanding that its particular formulation would still be within the preview of Council and to revisit it in more detail. The core question is the level of confidence the process is engaged by the university, it has been inadequate given that the ad hoc committee was established as a consultative group yet they were not consulted on key questions such as return to teaching in-person. This is a huge concern. The poll would show the discontent with the administration on this issue and to be responsive. Members should be given the occasion to express it.

- Everyone's comments were appreciated. Normally the Executive meets with the administration four times per year, but during the last two years of the pandemic, MAUT met with the administration numerous times and almost daily for several weeks. The objective is to improve working conditions and be able to discuss the return to campus. The administration followed provincial government directives for an in-person return (agreed they could have done better with consulting faculty). The poll is a good idea.

- In favor of the motion. It is urgent that we communicate to central administration the desire to be a university and that we take responsibility for the rules, decisions and policies that govern ourselves and the community. I see this vote and poll as independently of what its actual scientific value is by being far outweighed by the expressive value it communicates with respect to our discontent by not having been consulted for example about when we were going back to teach this winter.

A. Kirk reminded everyone that this was a consultative vote and not binding. 51 voted in favor, 7 were opposed and the remaining abstained. This will be brought to Council for discussion and a decision will be made.

A. Kirk thanked everyone for attending and sharing their opinions and for working respectfully and collegially together towards a stronger collegial governance. He invited members to get involved in MAUT's Executive and Council.

4. Adjournment

A. Kirk asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, R. Sieber moved to adjourn, seconded by J. Mauzeroll. Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by: JA Watier, MAUT Recording Officer