

**FACULTY OF SCIENCE  
ACADEMIC COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on September 24, 2013 at 3:00 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, Thomas Bureau, Barbara Hales, Bettina Kemme, Daniel Kirshbaum, Justin Kollman, Vojkan Jaksic, Jeanne Paquette, Greg Marczynski, Aashish Clerk (in place of Guy Moore), Kathy Roulet, Amy Szuchmacher Blum; Sara Holder; Gregory Johnston, Caitlin Loo, William (Bill) Motsch, Alexander Norton, Emily Stewart, Tian (Peter) Zhi; Josie D'Amico.

**VISITOR:** Mr. Victor Chisholm, Undergraduate Research Officer, Faculty of Science

**REGRETS:** Professors Ana Nyzhnyk, Gillian O'Driscoll, Julie St-Pierre; Megan Schaezner; Malek Yalaoui.

**DOCUMENTS: AC-12-79, AC-13-1 to AC-13-12**

Dean Grant welcomed everybody and asked members to introduce themselves. He called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**(1) ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Prof. Clerk **moved**, seconded by Prof. Paquette, that the Agenda be adopted.

**The motion carried.**

**(2) MINUTES OF APRIL 30, 2013**

Prof. Hales **moved**, seconded by Prof. Kemme, that the Minutes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

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

There was no business arising from the Minutes.

**(4) COURSES ON DEAN'S MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH LIST (DMURL) AC-13-1**

**104.1** Mr. Victor Chisholm, Undergraduate Research Officer in the Faculty of Science, said that one of the reasons for attending the current meeting was to introduce himself, particularly to the students. He said he would be happy to coordinate with the students in the coming year.

**104.2** Mr. Chisholm highlighted the requirements for placement on the DMURL at each graduation period. Members were asked to review the list of courses in Document AC-13-1, and to check whether any courses should be added or deleted. This is done on an annual basis. He mentioned that one of the courses (EPSC 482) on the current Agenda, which was also on the DMURL, was being changed from a research and/or reading course to a research course only. The change would make it very clear to students that

the course was indeed a research course. He pointed out that there was another course, GEOG 490, on the DMURL that was running both as a research and/or reading course. He asked whether the Department of Geography intended to split GEOG 490 to clearly identify it as a research course, and create another course as a reading course.

**104.3** Mr. Chisholm said that, beginning with the October 2013 graduation, the DMURL will also recognize B.A. & Sc. students who have participated in substantial and broad undergraduate science research. As well, new courses had been added to the DMURL:

- COGS 444, Honours Research, 6 credits
- ESYS 480, Honours Research Project, 6 credits
- HGEN 396, Human Genetic Research Project, 3 credits

**104.4** Minor change: On Page 4, Document AC-13-1, MIMM 501, Hons. Research Proj – Immunol, should read 12 credits (and not 6).

**104.5** Dean Grant thanked Mr. Chisholm for his excellent work.

**(5) MINOR IN EDUCATION FOR SCIENCE STUDENTS AC-13-2**

**105.1** Associate Dean Hendren explained that the revisions to the Minor in Education for Science Students were due to the replacement of a Complementary course as a result of a prerequisite change.

Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Prof. Clerk, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**(6) EARTH & PLANETARY SCIENCES**

EPSC 320	Elementary Earth Physics Prerequisites 3 credits	<b>AC-13-3</b>
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**106.1** Prof. Paquette explained that the revisions were mainly housekeeping changes and that the prerequisites better reflected the necessary background.

Prof. Paquette **moved**, seconded by Director Allard, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

EPSC 350	Tectonics Prerequisite 3 credits	<b>AC-13-4</b>
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**106.2** Prof. Paquette said that the change was to streamline prerequisites since MATH 222 was already a prerequisite course for EPSC 320.

Prof. Paquette **moved**, seconded by Ms. Roulet, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

EPSC 482 D1/D2	Res in Earth & Planetary Sci	<b>AC-13-5</b>
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Title, description, supplementary Calendar information  
3 credits

**106.3** Prof. Paquette explained that the main change to EPSC 482, currently offered as a research and/or reading course, was that it would now be offered only as a research project course. A separate reading course would be created in the future.

**106.4** Associate Dean Hendren added that instructions (under Supplementary Calendar Information) concerning procedures to follow were a good idea for all research project courses, and departments should provide such instructions.

Prof. Paquette **moved**, seconded by Mr. Norton, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

EPSC 561	Ore-forming Processes Title 3 credits	<b>AC-13-6</b>
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**106.5** Prof. Paquette said the title change for EPSC 561 was due to the retirement of EPSC 562 (Ore-forming Processes **2**), to follow.

Prof. Paquette **moved**, seconded by Prof. Kirshbaum, that the change be approved.

**The motion carried.**

EPSC 562	Ore-forming Processes 2 Course retirement 3 credits	<b>AC-13-7</b>
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Prof. Paquette **moved**, seconded by Prof. Kirshbaum, that the retirement be approved.

**The motion carried.**

**Graduate Program Changes:**

- M.Sc.; Earth and Planetary Sciences **AC-13-8**

**106.6** Associate Dean Hendren said the required course, EPSC 666, Current Issues in Geosciences, was being removed since the Department felt that students would be better served by attending departmental seminars by outside speakers. Complementary courses were being raised by three credits to compensate.

Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Prof. Paquette, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

- M.Sc.; Earth and Planetary Sciences – Environment Option **AC-13-9**

**106.7** Associate Dean Hendren said that since September 2008, there had been only one student registered in this Environment Option. She said that there are four Science departments offering an Environment Option (Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences, Biology, Earth & Planetary Sciences, and Geography), and the total enrolment was currently five students. The four units should seriously consider whether there is a real need to keep

this Option. She pointed out that McGill was reviewing low-enrolment programs, because maintaining them generated a lot of administrative work.

**106.8** In response to Dean Grant, Ms. Roulet said that a graduate program in the MSE was still being developed.

**106.9** Associate Dean Hendren said that there were very few students enrolled in the graduate environmental seminar courses. With four Science departments (as well as Arts departments and FAES departments) offering Environment Options, it would be useful to examine whether there was a more efficient way of providing graduate education in the field of environment.

Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Prof. Paquette, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

- Ph.D.; Earth and Planetary Sciences

**AC-13-10**

**106.10** Associate Dean Hendren said that, as in the M.Sc. programs above, EPSC 666 was no longer required in the Ph.D. program. Also, the requirements for the Ph.D. 1 and Ph.D. 2 are now clearly specified in the program. She said that it was important to have clear program descriptions.

Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Prof. Paquette, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

- Ph.D.; Earth and Planetary Sciences – Environment Option

**AC-13-11**

**106.11** The Ph.D.; Earth and Planetary Sciences with an Environment Option should also be reviewed regarding the possibility of retiring the Option.

Associate Dean Hendren **moved**, seconded by Prof. Paquette, that the changes be approved.

**The motion carried.**

## **(7) GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**107.1** Associate Dean Hendren emphasized that it was very important that graduate programs match their Calendar description accurately. She said there had been a couple of situations where the descriptions did not match. If a student appeals, the Calendar description is the official version. She encouraged units to review their programs and to submit program revisions where appropriate.

## **(8) TEACHING EVALUATIONS**

**108.1** Associate Dean Hendren said that in the previous year instructors had been encouraged to make the results of their course evaluations available to students. For the previous year, of a total of 1069 instructor-course pairs, 535 (50%) instructors had granted permission, 167 (16%) had withheld permission, and the remainder did not respond on Minerva, meaning that permission was denied. She said that Teaching and Learning

Services had sent out an e-mail to chairs/directors on September 24, 2013 with the aim of encouraging instructors to make evaluation results available to the McGill community.

**108.2** Associate Dean Hendren gave a breakdown of Question # 3 (How good is the instructor?) for Science instructors for the 2012-2013 academic year:

40.5% A<sup>+</sup> (evaluation of 4.5 and above)  
23.3% A (evaluation of between 4.0 and 4.5)  
3.3% D (evaluation of between 2.5 and 3.0)  
2.4% F (evaluation of below 2.5)

**108.3** Associate Dean Hendren said she thought the results were very impressive, and that overall Faculty instructors were doing a very good job. Chairs/directors have been asked to look into the low evaluation situations. She emphasized how important it was to have comments from students.

**108.4** Dean Grant said that it was extremely valuable to have comments from students because it was important for instructors to know how they are teaching. Evaluations were taken very seriously, and were a major factor in tenure decisions and in promotion.

**108.5** Associate Dean Hendren added that the previous year, the SUS had encouraged students to fill out the online course evaluations. The efforts of the SUS were very much appreciated.

**(9) NEW STYLE GUIDE FOR COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**AC-13-12**

**109.1** Associate Dean Hendren said that there had been a long-standing issue regarding the rules for an acceptable course description. In the past, course descriptions could not exceed 50 words, but due to the eCalendar, the number of words had been increased to 100. She asked members for feedback on the latest revisions for course descriptions, Document AC-13-12.

**109.2** In reading through the revised guidelines, the Academic Committee made the following comments:

**109.3** Regarding statements such as "The student will learn..." and "The course will discuss/examine..." some members considered the statements acceptable whereas others felt they were superfluous.

**109.4** Even though the first example ("Metaphysics and essential material in the field of modern metaphysics") had been considered in the Guidelines to be an example of an appropriate course description, members thought that this course description gave little information about the actual course content.

**109.5** Regarding the example of a description that does not follow the guidelines, a member said that the information about the course being led by faculty from two disciplines, and that original research by the student was required, would be very helpful for students to know.

**109.6** Under "Additional examples...", in (1) members felt there were too many specific topics, and that the course description should be more broad.

**109.7** (2) and (3): members agreed that the course descriptions were good.

- 109.8 (4): members agreed that lodging information should not be part of a course description.
- 109.9 Associate Dean Hendren said she would bring members' comments to the Academic Policy Committee (APC).

(10) **SUS ACTIVITIES**

- 110.1 Ms. Caitlin Loo, V.-P. (Academic) announced the following SUS events:
- SUS Graduate and Professional Schools Fair will be held on November 13, 2013
  - Academia Week will be held on January 27-31, 2014
- 110.2 In other business, SUS has been working with Victor Chisholm from the Undergraduate Research Office regarding advertising for seminars and information sessions. SUS is also continuing work related to academic issues and careers, and with tutorials for students.
- 110.3 Dean Grant thanked Ms. Loo for the above announcements. He said that the Faculty will be happy to help SUS with academic matters. He said that at every meeting there will be an update from the SUS on their activities.

(11) **OTHER BUSINESS**

- 111.1 Associate Dean Hendren announced that the Academic Committee meeting originally scheduled for November 19 had been rescheduled to **November 26, 2013 at 2:30 p.m.**, and that the meeting on December 10, 2013 had been cancelled. She emphasized that the AC meeting on November 26, 2013 would be the last chance to submit proposals to appear in the 2014-2015 eCalendar. She also said that the Faculty of Science meeting will be held one week after the November 26<sup>th</sup> AC meeting, so submissions for the November 26<sup>th</sup> AC meeting should be flawless.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.