



Memorandum

Secretariat

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TO: Senate

FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General

SUBJECT: Open Discussion: *How do we think about and define Academic Excellence for Academic Staff?*

DATE: November 16, 2022

DOCUMENT #: D22-14

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE: Proposed discussion questions in support of the Open Discussion are provided.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE:

Open Discussion Context

The Senate Steering Committee selected to focus the November 16, 2022, Senate Open Discussion on “*How do we think about and define Academic Excellence for Academic Staff?*”

Universities increasingly recognize that, for the purposes of recruitment, merit, tenure, and promotion, scholarly achievements include more than publications alone. Without discarding or displacing the importance of peer-reviewed works, some institutions have expressly acknowledged the value of work that advances knowledge, spurs innovation, and/or has impact beyond the academy. Examples include, but are not limited to, land-based and community-based research and engagement, policy and government work, tech transfer, and artistic works and performances.

Similarly, universities have also turned their minds to how we ought to recognize and reward teaching and other academic contributions (“service”) that we might consider “non-traditional” within the context of higher education. Examples include experiential and land-based teaching, and academic contributions to communities beyond the university.

The expanded range of activities that many members of academic staff pursue should prompt Senate to consider whether and how such work is valued and recognized in the context of assessing academic performance. More precisely, these circumstances call for Senate to explore, identify, interrogate, and justify the factors that it deems relevant to discerning excellence in the context of academic staff performance.

Open Discussion Questions

1. By what factors do/should we assess academic “excellence” in academic staff performance?
2. Academic peers are typically understood as the best assessors of “academic excellence”. Does this idea continue to resonate today in the same way as has traditionally been the case? Are there circumstances where we might seek assessments from outside/beyond the academy in connection with academic performance?
3. In Senate’s view, does McGill require a clearer and more explicit acknowledgement of the value of “unconventional” scholarly contributions within the context of academic performance assessment? Why or why not? If such acknowledgement is needed or desirable, should this occur through an amendment to the regulations that govern academic staff performance, through departmental appointment letters that set expectations for academic staff, and/or through amending [this document](#), which outlines examples of research accomplishments valued at McGill?

Open Discussion Format

It is proposed that we allocate 45 minutes for this discussion. Please see Appendix A for instructions.

PRIOR CONSULTATION:	Members of the Open Discussion Working Group provided valuable input for framing the topic and guiding discussion. The Working Group comprised the following members: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Angela Campbell, Associate Provost (Equity and Academic Policies)• Professor Celeste Pedri-Spade, Associate Provost (Indigenous Initiatives)• Professor Lisa Shapiro, Dean of the Faculty of Arts• Professor Terri Givens• Professor Andrew Kirk
SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS	N/A
IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS	Follow-up action may result from the Open Discussion.
MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL:	N/A
APPENDICES:	Appendix A: Breakout Session Instructions Appendix B: Reference Material

Preamble:

Open discussions provide Senators an opportunity to have a 45-minute discussion on an academic topic or a topic with academic implications. Further to a recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Enhancement of Senate Meetings (2013), open discussions are scheduled regularly (normally twice a year) to increase discussion and engagement at Senate meetings.

The topic of the November 16, 2022 Senate open discussion is: *How do we think about and define academic excellence for academic staff?*

This topic allows Senators to explore the concept of academic excellence at McGill University with a focus on the concept's application to academic staff.

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Instructions:

- Each group will be in a separate breakout area and will have 20 minutes to discuss their assigned question.
- At the outset of the group discussion, each group should quickly appoint (a) a discussion facilitator (who monitors the discussion and ensures all members of a group who want to speak have a chance to do so; and (b) a rapporteur who takes notes on the discussion and reports back to Senate in full.
- When Senate reconvenes after group discussions, each group's rapporteur will report back. Each rapporteur will have a maximum of 1-1/2 minutes to do so, and therefore this section will last approximately 10 minutes. Rapporteurs are encouraged not to lose time raising points that earlier groups have signaled.
- Following the reporting back from the rapporteurs, all Senators will be invited to take part in a broader discussion about points raised in an open discussion for 10 minutes.

Group	Question	Senators in Group
1	1	Arseneault, Louis Baron, Sam Bartlett, Joan Czemmel, Nancy Geddes, Maiya Rachel Krishnamurthy, Srinivasan Manfredi, Christopher Mittermaier, Anthony Nystrom, Derek Rodriguez Saenz, Maria Soehl, Thomas
2	2	Beauchamp, Yves Bede, Jacqueline D'Iorio, Luciano Fakih, Mustafa Girard-Lauriault, Pierre-Luc Leckey, Robert Levey, Margaret Ndao, Momar Perepichka, Dima Roosta, Alireza Sroka-Fillion, Nathalie

Group	Question	Senators in Group
3	3	Beaudry, Guylaine Beech, Robin Deschenes, Jean Grignon, Chantal Hunter, Claire Levy, Jacob Nicell, Jim Quitariano, Nathaniel Steinhauer, Karsten Yang, Kerry Xia, Isabella
4	1	Campbell, Angela Dirks, Melanie Hansen, Patrick Karaminassian, Roubina Low, Bronwen Mantere, Saku Rassier, Dilson Richard, Marc Sekhon, Harmehr Subramanian, Narendra Theodore, David
5	2	Behzadi, Houman Blanchette, Mathieu Chan, Yolande Drouin, Susan Hastings, Kenneth Kochkina, Svetlana Londono, Jose Robillard, Martin Shapiro, Lisa Syed, Mahidul Zorychta, Edith
6	3	Borenstein, Bonnie Elbourne, Elizabeth Emami, Elham Hébert, Terry Liu, Sonya McKenzie, Jeffrey Snider, Laurie Rohrbach, Petra Weil, Carola Weinstock, Daniel Rogers, Dakota

Group	Question	Senators in Group
7	1	Carrieri, Francesca Crago, Martha Ellis, Jaye Hickman, Miranda Hnatchuk, Darlene Moore, Catriona Ronholm, Jennifer Vaillancourt, David Weinstein, Marc Wright, Risann
8	2	Cumming, Julie Elstein, Eleanor Ferguson, Sean Jie Wang, Coco Johnson, Juliet Kirk, Andrew Nalbantoglu, Josephine Nilson, Laura Poirier, Étienne Ruge-Murcia, Francisco Touimi, Ghali Benjoullon
9	3	Cummings, Beth Fronda, Michael Geitmann, Anja Khoury, Lara Lennox, Bruce Levine, Alissa Nycum, Gillian Poorhemati, Hossein Shor, Eran Werber, Joshua

Guidelines for the Creation of a Research Portfolio (Page 22 of the Regulations Relating to the Employment of Tenure Track and Tenured Academic Staff)

https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/employment_of_tenure_track_and_tenured_academic_staff_regs_relating_to.pdf

Examples of the Range of Research Accomplishments, Recognition, and Impacts Valued at McGill:

https://www.mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/examples_of_research_-_final.pdf

San Francisco Declaration (McGill is a signatory of this Declaration):

<https://sfdora.org/>