



Memorandum

Secretariat

845 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 313
Montreal, Quebec, H3A 0G4
Tel: 514-398-3948 | Fax: 514-398-4758

TO: Senate
FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General
SUBJECT: Open Discussion: COVID-19 Academic Planning
DATE: May 13, 2020
DOCUMENT #: D19-48
ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

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

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE:

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the way in which the University's mission has been carried out in the last two months. As the University prepares for the next academic year, Senate is asked to engage in an open discussion on COVID-19 academic planning. The open discussion will provide an opportunity for Senators to reflect on how to prepare for and ensure a quality teaching and learning experience during the Fall semester. With that in mind, key questions have been developed to guide the open discussion.

Questions

The following questions are presented to Senate for discussion:

1. Based on our current experience in remote teaching and learning, what lessons or insights should we draw upon as we plan for the possibility of remote delivery of academic programs in the Fall?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities when thinking about remote or virtual research activities?
3. What opportunities and challenges does the virtual campus present for engagement and academic governance?

Discussion Format

In line with our standard practice, it is proposed that we allocate 45 minutes to this discussion, to be distributed as follows:

- Senators will be divided into small groups and invited to discuss all of the questions (with a particular focus on one of the questions) noted above in virtual chat rooms. A discussion leader and rapporteur will need to be appointed. (20 minutes)
- After the small group discussion, the rapporteur of each group will be invited to report on the themes that arose during the small group discussion to the larger group. (10 minutes)
- Senators will participate in a group discussion with all of Senate. (15 minutes)

It is proposed that speaking rights be granted to Professor Christopher Buddle, Associate Provost (Teaching & Academic Programs) so that he may participate in the open discussion.

PRIOR CONSULTATION:	Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic) Senate Steering Committee
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: Background document on COVID-19 academic planning (to be distributed)

Open Discussion on COVID-19 Academic Planning Breakout Session Instructions

Breakout rooms are sessions that are split off from the main Zoom meeting. They allow the participants to meet and discuss topics in smaller groups.

- Participants will be randomly divided into **nine groups** and moved automatically to breakout rooms.
- Breakout room participants have full audio, video, and screen sharing capabilities.

1. ASSIGNMENT OF QUESTIONS BY BREAKOUT GROUPS

Each group is asked to focus on one of the **three questions** included on the memo above, as follows:

- **Breakout Groups: Rooms 1, 2 and 3** → **Question 1:**

Based on our current experience in remote teaching and learning, what lessons or insights should we draw upon as we plan for the possibility of remote delivery of academic programs in the Fall?

- **Breakout Groups: Rooms 4, 5 and 6** → **Question 2:**

What are the challenges and opportunities when thinking about remote or virtual research activities?

- **Breakout Groups: Rooms 7, 8 and 9** → **Question 3:**

What opportunities and challenges does the virtual campus present for engagement and academic governance?

2. INDICATION OF THE NUMBER OF YOUR BREAKOUT ROOM

If you are joining by videoconference, you will be able to view your room number once you are in your breakout session. The number of your breakout room will be indicated in the top left-hand corner of your screen.

Those members participating by phone will be automatically transferred to one of the nine virtual rooms. An operator will inform them of their room number, prior to transferring them to the breakout room.

3. **ASSIGNMENT OF DISCUSSION LEADERS AND RAPPORTEURS**

For efficiency purposes, we recommend that you open the list of participants (by clicking on “Participants” in the meeting controls located close to the bottom of your screen) and assign the first participant on the list as the discussion leader and the second participant on the list as the rapporteur.

In the event that either of these participants would prefer not to assume their role, please ask for a volunteer from amongst the other participants.

The **discussion leader** facilitates the discussion to ensure members have sufficient time to discuss the question and agree on the top points that will be presented by the rapporteur to the rest of Senate.

The **rapporteur** will take note of the ideas generated from the discussion and present a verbal report on the top points to the rest of Senate.

4. **TIME, TOOLS AND ASSISTANCE**

20 minutes are allocated for the small group discussions. If there is time remaining, groups may discuss the other two questions but will only report on their assigned question. Participants can use the Whiteboard feature on the conferencing application to collaborate and take notes. (The Whiteboard tool is located in the Share Screen icon on the meeting toolbar.) Please be sure to save your work to your device before leaving the breakout session.

For assistance, participants can click on “Ask for Help” in the meeting controls to submit a query to the host of the meeting (i.e. representative of the Secretariat).

5. **END OF BREAKOUT SESSIONS AND RETURN TO MAIN SESSION**

Participants will be notified when the breakout session ends and given the option to return to the main room immediately, or in 60 seconds, which is the time notice established by the Zoom application. Participants joining a breakout room by telephone **may press #** to join the main room immediately or wait to be automatically transferred back into the main room at the end of the 60 seconds.

When all participants return to the main room and the Senate meeting resumes, the Chair will call on the rapporteurs, one by one, to share the key themes that arose during their small group discussions. Rapporteurs should aim to be precise and concise in the delivery of their verbal reports.

COVID-19 Academic Planning

Presentation to McGill University Senate
Open Discussion

May 2020

Professor Christopher P. Manfredi
Provost & Vice Principal (Academic)



Academic Planning Overview

The Provost, as chief academic officer of the University, is charged with the responsibility of ensuring and overseeing the delivery of academic programs and courses at the University, in a manner that accords with McGill's regulations and policies.

The University's closure as of 13 March 2020 required a rapid, coordinated, emergency-based response to meet this responsibility.



Academic Planning Overview: COVID-19 Immediate Response Measures

- Transferring of ~1900 courses to remote delivery, including supports for instructors.
- Modifying of modes of assessment, including remote final examinations.
- Measures to relieve pressures for students with a view to promoting their academic success and well-being for the Winter 2020 term (e.g., extension of the S/U option, extended exam deferral periods).
- Forecasting that the summer term would need to be delivered entirely through remote teaching and making necessary adjustments.
- Boosting financial supports for students.
- Reducing stressors for professors through:
 - (a) deciding that course evaluations would be without prejudice to instructors' performance assessments in the context of the annual merit exercise, tenure, and promotion; and
 - (b) allowing pre-tenure professors in that Winter 2020 to extend the time to reappointment and tenure by 1 year.



Decisions and Responsibilities through the COVID Crisis

1. Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

Shared responsibility: Campus Public Safety, DP-SLL, Facilities management & Ancillary Services, Legal Counsel, and more.

Focus: Campus Safety

2. Academic Planning

PVPA responsibility

Focus: Maintaining continuity of academic programs and courses

3. Research Planning

VPRI responsibility

Focus: Research activities and funding



Academic Planning (Provost & V-P (Academic)) through the COVID Crisis:

Focus: academic programs and courses, specifically:

- Continuity of student learning and pursuit of programs despite external constraints that currently limit, or have the prospect of limiting, on-campus activity
- Strong outreach to prospective and returning students to provide reassurance about the Fall 2020 term
- Supports for instructors required to pivot to remote teaching, supervision, course delivery as of March and for those who are teaching through virtual platforms in Summer and in Fall terms.
- Creation of engagement opportunities for students – both remote and, if possible and safe, in person – in Fall 2020.

Led by: Provost's senior leadership team with support from Legal Services and Communications & External Relations

Consultations and Collaborations: (regular, ongoing and forthcoming): Faculties, GPS, MAUT, employee groups, student associations, members of the McGill community.



Looking Ahead: Fall 2020

Context

We continue to follow governmental directives and the public health authorities:

- The health and safety of our community members is paramount.
- Although the possibility of assembly might present over the coming months, limits may still be in place for months.
- We must be mindful that Montreal remains a COVID-19 hotspot, and there is the possibility of a “second wave”.

Resuming campus life “as usual” this Fall is not foreseeable at this time:

- Public health and safety protocols are likely to remain in place, limiting in-person gatherings especially in large groups.
- International mobility restrictions and anxiety among new and returning students, and their parents, would limit the ability of some students to travel to Montreal.



Looking Ahead: Fall 2020

Guiding Principles

Even in this moment of crisis, academic planning at McGill must:

1. Remain focused on our Mission
2. Ensure continued delivery of academic programs and courses
3. Innovate within limits, without losing sight of our identity
4. Maintain high quality teaching and learning
5. Demonstrate agility and flexibility
6. Prioritize accessibility
7. Retain student enrolment and engagement
8. Communicate clearly and consistently across our community



Looking Ahead: Fall 2020

Areas of Concentrated Effort

1. Student Admissions, Yield
2. Enrolment Management
3. Remote Delivery Preparations & Instructor Support
4. Student Engagement and Experience



Looking Ahead: Fall 2020

Key Challenges

- Building instructor capacity and confidence re remote teaching
- Supporting students' needs as remote learners (e.g., engagement, time-zones)
- Crafting in-person opportunities for student life and learning that respect safety protocols and that are possible within our means and capacities
- Exploring options for in-person learning experiences (e.g., clinical placements, labs, internships, field courses)
- Conducting remote assessments (including final exams)
- Maintaining morale in our situation of prolonged uncertainty



Concluding Messages

- We are actively planning so that we will be ready to welcome new and returning students, come what may in September.
- Our decisions must accord with public health directives and will be guided by eight key principles: focused on our Mission, continuity, innovate within limits, academic quality, flexibility and agility, accessibility, maintaining student enrolment and engagement, clear and consistent communications.
- Academic programs will be delivered primarily through robust remote delivery of courses. Yet we will also ensure a rich student life and learning experience through activities delivered both remotely and, within public health and safety parameters, in-person.

