



Memorandum

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TO: Senate

FROM: Professor Chris Buddle (Associate Provost, Teaching and Academic Programs)
Professor Angela Campbell (Associate Provost, Equity & Academic Policies)

SUBJECT: Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies
Monthly Report

DATE: May 11, 2022

DOCUMENT #: D21-62

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL

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| ISSUE | The Final Report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (“Committee”) is presented to Senate for approval. |
| BACKGROUND & RATIONALE | At its regular September meeting this year (September 22, 2021), Senate approved a motion to establish the Committee. Its terms of reference and membership were approved at a special meeting of Senate held on 4 October 2021, via the Nominating Committee of Senate. The Committee’s mandate stipulates the following: <i>The Advisory Committee shall meet weekly throughout AY2021/22 and shall report to Senate throughout AY2021/22 through a standing agenda item for information.</i> The minutes of the Committee’s monthly meetings are viewable here . |
| PRIOR CONSULTATION | n/a |
| SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS | n/a |
| IMPACT OF DECISION AND NEXT STEPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas and feedback generated within the Senate discussion will be taken back to the Committee for review and development of recommendations. Continued reporting to Senate each month. |
| MOTION OR RESOLUTION FOR APPROVAL | <i>Be it resolved that Senate approve the recommendations included in the Final Report of Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies.</i> |
| APPENDICES | n/a |

Senate Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies**Final Report****Submitted to Senate for its 11 May 2022 Meeting**

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Mandate and Membership

- The Advisory Committee shall liaise with and advise the University's senior administration on COVID-related decisions affecting academic planning and policies, and how such decisions can be most effectively communicated and implemented.
- The Advisory Committee shall meet weekly throughout AY2021/22 and shall report to Senate throughout AY2021/22 through a standing agenda item for information.
- The Advisory Committee can solicit and receive feedback on matters within its mandate from members of the McGill community and will respond to this through the University Senate.

Ex officio members

- Professor Christopher Buddle, Associate Provost (Teaching and Academic Programs) (Co-chair)
- Professor Angela Campbell, Associate Provost (Equity and Academic Policies) (Co-chair)
- Dr. Laura Winer, Director of Teaching and Learning Services

Three members of the academic staff:

- Professor Petra Rohrbach (AES representative on Senate)
- Professor Daniel Weinstock (Arts representative on Senate; nominated by MAUT)
- Professor Rebecca Fuhrer (Department of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Occupational Health/School of Population and Global Health)

Administrative and support staff representative on Senate:

- Nancy Czemmel (Manager of Student Services, Schulich School of Music)

Student members:

- Ms. Jennifer Chen (Graduate student Senator)
- Ms. Claire Downie (Undergraduate student Senator)

Resource People: Ms. Gillian Nycum, Registrar & Executive Director of Enrolment Services and Ms. Elyse Cragg (Communications)

Introduction

The global pandemic significantly impacted academic activities across our University, fundamentally altering the way in which we teach and learn. While many academic activities are now returning to patterns and levels reminiscent of pre-COVID days, it is clear that not everything from this period should be left behind. Many important lessons have been learned over the course of the past two years, including the manner in which academic affairs have been governed. Senate’s Ad-Hoc Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (the “Ad-hoc committee”) has played an especially critical role throughout the 2021-2022 Academic Year and may be a model by which the University can navigate future issues that impact the University at a large scale. It is a good example of how collegial governance can work during periods of disruption and illustrates how academic planning can appropriately intersect with other decision-making bodies (e.g., the Emergency Operations Centre).

The Ad-hoc committee began its mandate at the start of the Fall 2021 Academic Term, and with the exception of holidays, met at least weekly through the entire 2021-2022 Academic Year. Minutes from all the meetings are posted [online](#), and illustrate the range of topics and issues discussed throughout the year. In addition to regular meetings, the Ad-hoc committee received feedback through a resource email account (covidadhoc@mcgill.ca), sponsored an open discussion in Senate in February 2022, and all members received feedback from their own constituents throughout the year. The Ad-hoc committee also met with members of the University’s Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), the Recovery and Operations Resumption (ROR) committee, and the Workgroup on New Models of Academic Program Delivery (New MAD).

Over the course of its mandate, the Ad-hoc committee initiated a series of recommendations, all of which led to important developments for our campus community. They are set out in the following table.

| Recommendation | Outcome |
|---|--|
| Provide instructors flexibility to offer up to 20% of their W22 courses online without requiring additional approvals (percentages and processes were Faculty-specific) | Senate resolution (via) APC adopted 17 November 2021 |
| Review and permit alternate pedagogical arrangements in W22 for instructors cohabiting with dependents who have COVID-related vulnerabilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation adopted by the Provost • 18 requests made, 15 granted |
| Maintain COVID-related student accommodations processes in place for W22, including a process for students to request accommodations for chronic or long-term conditions preventing them from coming to our campus. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation adopted by the Office of the Dean of Students and OSD. • 1906 requests received in F21 and 2311 in W22 (as of April 11). |
| Enhance support for instructors who wish to record lectures and/or offer online synchronous participation (OSP) and/or other modes of ensuring students who must miss class do not fall behind. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support extended to Faculties for such initiatives. • Enhanced support – including drop-in sessions – offered by TLS. |
| Do not mandate or require recording OSP of lecturers but support instructors who use these modes of teaching in W22 term, and clarify that instructors have a responsibility to reasonably accommodate student absences due to COVID. | Recommendation adopted by the Provost and communicated to all Faculties. |

Going forward, the Ad-hoc committee is of the view that we must shift to a new phase of academic planning and policies that will involve **ending the foregoing measures and replacing these with**

approaches that realign our academic activities with the fundamental commitments of McGill’s mission.

We are also entering a phase of the pandemic where we are learning to live with the virus in our midst. We are therefore not in the same situation as in March 2020, or even at the beginning of the Winter 2022 term where many of our operations and actions were, in part, in response to specific protocols established by the Government, relevant Government Ministries, and Public Health authorities. Instead, we have an opportunity to position our academic affairs in a manner that will provide some robustness to future pandemic-related disruptions. We also can, and should, recognize that there have been some fundamental changes in our understanding of the ways in which teaching and assessment can vary from the pre-COVID status quo.

This report thus presents a **series of recommendations for endorsement by McGill’s Senate** in the thematic areas most relevant to academic planning that received considerable attention during our committee’s mandate. The thematic areas include **Teaching and Learning, Accommodations and Accessibility, Final Exams, Classroom Scheduling and Teaching Spaces, and Communications**. These recommendations are followed by some reflections for the community’s consideration as we look ahead.

Recommendations

Recommendations related to online and remote teaching and learning¹

- The pandemic has provided a window into the promise and limits of using online tools to teach remotely. We have seen that even when circumstances prevented us from gathering physically, we were able to sustain academic life at our university. At the same time, remote teaching has limits and, for many, is pedagogically suboptimal. The Ad-hoc committee had extensive discussions about the isolation students experienced during the pandemic and the toll this took on mental health. We also considered how remote teaching deprived many learners of access to important aspects of student life and campus engagement that can define the university experience and are crucial to the development of many soft skills. Additionally, because remote teaching is not intentionally designed for optimal pedagogy but is rather an emergency response, it is misaligned with our mission and commitment to teaching excellence at McGill which is currently predicated upon in person teaching, with the exception of courses or programs that have been specifically designed for online delivery.

Accordingly, the Ad-hoc committee recommends that **McGill no longer rely on remote teaching** unless future significant disruptions to our academic activities warrant its resumed use. However, there may be exceptional circumstances at a course level which would justify its incidental use in courses otherwise delivered in person (see point entitled “*Limited remote components within our existing curricula*” below). This is distinct from the intentional and planned use of online teaching and assessment strategies used in a blended or fully online course (see the recommendation below regarding blended learning).

- Whether, when, and how online teaching can be a viable proposition at McGill are questions to be taken up more fully by the [New Models of Academic Program Delivery \(“New MAD”\) Working Group](#), which is presently pursuing its mandate. It is recommended that the **New MAD Working Group consider what it means to deliver some course components online (i.e., blended**

¹ Terms related to online and remote teaching are defined in Appendix 1.

learning), whether some classrooms can be properly outfitted for true hybrid teaching, what types of support instructors need to teach in a hybrid mode, and what factors should be considered in designing and implementing fully online courses and programs.

- It is recommended that the Subcommittee on Courses and Teaching Programs (SCTP), in collaboration with Teaching and Learning Services (TLS), and in alignment with work from New MAD, **clearly define thresholds for blended learning at McGill**, and consider the types of formal governance approval processes that may be necessary as we look to the possibility of increased interest in blended and online program/course offerings, particularly in connection with continuing studies and lifelong learning. Many online tools, notably myCourses, are already part of the fabric of teaching and learning at McGill, but the extent of their use and the impact on overall student learning must be assessed thoughtfully, with advance planning, and with consideration of sustainable support for instructors and the systems themselves.
- *Limited remote components within our existing curricula*: Last November, Senate adopted a [motion to support a course delivery parameter](#) that allowed instructors, during the Winter 2022 term, to integrate remote learning components within their courses. The Ad-hoc committee recommends the **general 20% leeway instituted by Senate motion for the Winter 2022 term end (i.e., not be renewed or extended past the W22 term) and that, going forward, Faculties determine whether individual instructors may retain some limited flexibility to integrate occasional remote components to their courses**. This might include, for example, having one or two remote sessions per term when the instructor must be away from campus for a short period (e.g., for a conference, due to illness), and/or where they wish to bring in guest lecturers from abroad, which has the added benefit of supporting our University's efforts vis-à-vis sustainability and decarbonization. The acceptability of such a framework will depend on course and program requirements, as determined by the relevant Faculty. Any such framework must adhere to the general principle that teaching and learning at McGill occur in person and remote teaching is permissible only exceptionally, where justified by the circumstances.
- It is generally recommended that **'Online synchronous participation' (OSP) should not remain part of the digital learning experience going forward** (but see below for some possible limited use as a temporary accommodation, where the instructor is amenable). While OSP was attempted in Winter 2022 to respond to public health circumstances and guidelines, this proved cumbersome and, in many cases, resulted in a sub-par experience for instructors and students.
- **Hybrid (or Hyflex) pedagogical approaches are generally not recommended** unless they are implemented in spaces that are properly designed for these experiences, and only if the instructors have the appropriate training and capacity. Moreover, full approvals by Faculties (and perhaps the University) may be necessary.

Recommendations related to accommodations and accessibility

- Throughout the pandemic, McGill put in place a range of robust accommodation measures. The University sometimes went above and beyond public health requirements to demonstrate and build confidence in its approach to campus health and safety. Recognizing the disquiet many would experience about transitioning back to campus following lockdown periods, the University instituted a range of good-faith efforts to ease that transition. Some of these measures resulted

from the Ad-hoc Committee's recommendations. At this point, however, circumstances have changed, and **the state of public health no longer justifies measures that were put in place at various times between March 2020 and April 2022.** We now have many more options at our disposal to manage risk than previously had been the case. The Ad-hoc committee thus recommends that **McGill approach accommodations in a way that prioritizes in person academic activities, and which responds equitably to the needs of members of our community who face COVID-related health vulnerabilities.**

- *For students:* Where a student's disability limits their ability to participate in curricular or assessment activities, accommodations should be developed in a manner that accounts for the student's needs while also accounting for the requirements of the relevant course(s) or program. It is only where the established learning outcomes of a course/program cannot be achieved, even with reasonable accommodations, that a student should have to withdraw from a course or program; it is expected that this situation would arise very infrequently. Flexibility and openness to exploring diverse possibilities will be key, always preserving the integrity of the program/course requirements. We recommend that the Office of the Dean of Students, the Office for Students with Disabilities, Associate Deans (Student Affairs) work in concert with student associations to **develop a clear, learner-centred protocol for students who seek accommodations reflective of the University's duty to provide reasonable accommodations on account of disability to the point of undue hardship.** This work should consider all the lessons learned around student accommodations that were in place because of COVID-19 (e.g., the centralized online accommodation request form, impact of remote assessments on accessibility considerations). Considering alternative or flexible grading systems or different pedagogical approaches that increase accessibility may be part of this conversation. Collaboration with TLS also will be necessary.
- *For faculty and administrative and support staff:* In 2019 McGill established a [protocol for accommodations in situations where a staff member seeks a disability-related accommodation](#), which aimed to ensure local ability to adapt to the needs of employees with disabilities. With the onset of the pandemic, a special process was established for COVID-related accommodations. We recommend that the **special COVID accommodations process now end and that, going forward, the 2019 accommodations protocol again be used** for all staff medical accommodations including those related to COVID (for example, long COVID or health vulnerabilities related to COVID).
- The Ad-hoc committee recommends an **expansion of our "toolbox" of reasonable accommodations, with a view to boosting the potential for all colleagues to work on campus in a manner that upholds their dignity and safety.** We must move away from the binary perception of illness and disability pursuant to which we are either "healthy and at work" or "unhealthy and on leave or 'off-campus'." Further, we are urged to **consider a wide range of accommodations that can facilitate participation in the McGill workforce on campus, wherever possible, reflective of the University's duty to provide reasonable accommodations on account of disability to the point of undue hardship.** In the context of COVID, accommodations might include, in situations where public health circumstances demonstrate that case counts are rising or high, safety measures for faculty and staff who have COVID-related vulnerabilities, such as providing them with N95 masks and/or exploring the potential of ensuring that the staff member's workspace and/or classroom has additional mechanical ventilation.

- For our present purposes, it is opportune to signal that **remote teaching and learning generally should not be considered a reasonable disability-related accommodation**. Rather, where an instructor lives with a disability, the procedures set out above should be followed to devise creative and robust accommodations to facilitate that person’s ability to teach, learn, and/or carry out other academic responsibilities in person. This could well call for adjustments and accommodations in relation to, for example: teaching schedule; location of classrooms, offices, labs; access to on-campus parking; as well as physical assessments, modifications, and renovations to the building(s) in which the staff member works.²
- Likewise, **where a student seeks an accommodation, decisions should aim to ensure fulsome inclusion and participation in learning activities**. If a student’s medical condition prevents in person attendance, accommodations can take many forms such as recording lectures (depending on instructor willingness) or strong note-taking support. In some limited cases, perhaps online synchronous participation (OSP) can be set up with the instructor’s agreement but should not be a default response for reasons already cited here.

Recommendations related to final examinations³

- In the COVID-19 context, both remote final exams and the return to in person final exams presented important challenges (see Appendix 2). We recommend that **McGill’s approach to final exams be evaluated through the New MAD Working Group and through the implementation of the new Policy on Assessment of Student Learning**. The latter gives instructors more flexibility in all modes and structures of assessment, including final assessments. This evaluation should be informed by the logistical and practical challenges McGill encountered during the pandemic.
- High-stakes, time-limited, end-of-term invigilated final examinations — in which hundreds of students gather in a gymnasium for three-hour blocks of time — presented significant logistical challenges over the past two years given public health conditions. This led to increased demands for deferred exams, and increased stress for students who may have felt pressure to attend finals despite feeling unwell on the exam day. **Instructors are thus encouraged to continue to pursue alternative forms of final assessment**. Save for cases where these traditional final examinations are necessary, viable alternatives ought to be considered. These may include synchronous online examinations, take-home examinations, or other kinds of final assessments. With limited exceptions, assessment modalities should be consistent for all students in the course (for example, if a final assessment is delivered in-person, the deferred exam should also be in-person).
- Deferred examination at the University may require some adjustments going forward, as increased absenteeism around final examinations may recur, especially with the prospect of future pandemic waves occurring at the end of an academic term. This situation presents particular risks for graduating students during the Winter term final exams. The Ad-hoc committee recommends that Enrolment Services works with Faculties and relevant committees (e.g., ESAAC) to explore **our processes and timelines for deferred examinations in light of possible continued pandemic related disruptions**.

² The University’s Universal Access Capital Projects considers requests to support costs associated with such projects.

³ Appendix 2 provides a contextual overview of final examinations during the pandemic period.

Recommendations related to class scheduling and teaching spaces⁴

- The Ad-hoc committee recommends that, whenever possible, **teaching spaces and class scheduling plans account for risks that can present with the onset of future large-scale disruptions**. This would require, where possible, integrating adaptability and flexibility in classroom schedules and teaching spaces. This may call for adding time between classes to reduce densities as students enter/exit classrooms and scheduling class to reduce student density in learning spaces (i.e., scheduling everything in the largest possible space). This may require alternative approaches to class scheduling to accommodate; investigation of which is taking place within the New MAD workgroup.

Recommendations related to communications

- It is imperative that the recommendations set out here, if endorsed by Senate, be widely communicated across McGill so that our individual and shared rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis accommodations and other activities are both known and clear. The recommendations must be understood by all relevant actors. The Ad-hoc committee recommends that a **communications strategy** be designed and deployed to ensure a clear and seamless transfer of knowledge about all recommendations in this report. This includes information about accommodations, which all students, faculty, and staff – and all relevant decision-makers (e.g., OSD, HR, academic and administrative unit heads) – must understand. In the Ad-hoc committee’s view, McGill’s central Office for Communications and External Relations (CER) is best placed to develop and lead this process and ought to **report back to Senate early in the Fall 2022 term** on how information contained in this report is being relayed to all relevant campus stakeholders.
- We recommend that **definitions related to teaching modalities (see Appendix 1) continue to be promoted across the University** to clear up widely reported confusion about what different terms mean and to ensure clarity and consistency of use of a shared vocabulary.
- **Opportunities for continual two-way communication** should be offered, to allow the community to provide feedback on measures implemented and suggestions for further changes. A resource account or webpage soliciting such feedback should be established, monitored, and publicised to all relevant parties. We recommend that **CER oversee this initiative**.

Guiding Principles as We Look Ahead

The years to come will likely be marked by the continued presence of the COVID-19 virus in our midst. While the WHO has claimed that the most likely scenario is one in which subsequent waves will be characterized by greater transmissibility and diminishing virulence, deviations from this trajectory are possible. What’s more, even a virus that is relatively benign for most people can, given high rates of transmissibility, cause significant disruption to the functioning of major institutions such as universities. The continued presence of the virus will, moreover, represent a significant threat for those of us who live with certain underlying medical conditions, or who live with and care for people with such conditions.

⁴ Appendix 3 provides a contextual overview of planning teaching and learning spaces during the pandemic period.

In navigating this unpredictable and still difficult terrain, McGill must be guided by two core principles. **First, we must be guided by compassion and care.** We must make every effort to ensure that those within our community who, whether episodically or chronically, are unable to come to campus under usual conditions when the risk of contagion reaches beyond a certain level, nonetheless be able to conduct their research, attend their lectures and seminars, and pursue their career paths. The first two years of the pandemic have taught us a great deal about how to accommodate this need and that it is attainable. But our use of technologies to allow us to continue to function as an academic institution in the context of the pandemic has been tacitly premised on the assumption that these technologies were there as a stopgap, to deal with a temporary situation. This assumption most likely will wane as we become more adapted to the presence of these technologies in our daily and work lives. We need to contribute to the improvement of these technologies and their use and recognize that they can help us respond to ongoing needs as well as support pedagogical evolutions. These technologies therefore require appropriate infrastructure and support.

Second, we must not lose sight of the fact that McGill is primarily an “in person” institution, and that there are great benefits in the members of our community being able to interact with one another in our physical spaces. Classrooms and seminar spaces allow for multidimensional communication that is not easily replicated virtually, and that are, for many of us, central to our being able to carry out our pedagogical mission. Campuses are, moreover, precious places of socialization for members of our community, especially for students, many of whom will be taking their first steps as adults while attending McGill. That function of an embodied campus is one that is realized within classroom settings, but also, importantly, outside of such settings. Many extracurricular activities (e.g., workshops, athletics and recreation, clubs, social activities) that are central to the university experience and carried out by our students are only possible in embodied space. There is broad concern being voiced about [disengagement and disconnection](#) among students after trying to learn during the most difficult parts of the pandemic. It is therefore critical that McGill reinforces its commitment to in person teaching as well as the other activities that contribute to the University experience for students.

These two principles are central to the way in which the Ad-hoc committee sees McGill functioning in the context of the pandemic, but also in the challenging conditions that we will continue to face as we transition toward endemicity. The challenge we will face is that, at times, they will seem to push in different directions. Care and compassion for members of our community who face medical vulnerabilities requires a progressive approach to accommodations that prioritizes inclusion in our in-person academic activities. Such accommodations are necessary in order not to create the perverse incentive that might impel any member of our community to come to campus when they are sick, for fear that not doing so will penalize them in some way. The insistence on continuing to view McGill as primarily an “in person” campus seems to push in an opposite direction, one in which physical presence on campus is privileged.

Key to easing this tension is the observation that accommodations be as targeted as possible. We need to ensure that those of us who are put at great risk by in person participation be able to participate in academic life as fully as a broad range of accommodations can allow, while incentivizing those of us who can participate in on-campus activities to do so. **We must find ways to avoid a scenario in which what is meant as an accommodation is used by many as a convenience.** There is a collective action problem that we must take steps to avoid, lest we allow a situation to develop that ends up being suboptimal for all.

Creating the right mix of incentives requires a mix of measures. Requests for accommodation by instructors are already governed by a procedure aimed at validating the medical rationale on the basis of

which accommodation is being sought. Some members of our committee have voiced the concern that these procedures were, in their present form, excessively demanding. For example, the concern has been voiced that certain medical conditions can simply not be diagnosed in the timeframe required to access accommodations. Some of us have formulated the hope that these procedures might evolve in a way that gives more space to trust, and to instructors' self-assessment.

Quite clearly, however, such procedures are inadequate to deal with the question of student absenteeism, which has been reported as a problem by many instructors during the academic year that has corresponded to the mandate of the Ad-hoc committee. As we get better at accommodating those students whose health circumstances might warrant accessing class through a virtual platform, an unintended consequence is to increase the attractiveness of remote access by students who would be using the methods put in place as a convenience rather than as an accommodation.

In sum, the Ad-hoc committee feels strongly that we must adhere to the two principles – that our actions **must be guided by compassion and care** and that **McGill is primarily an “in person” institution**. Through careful consideration, cross-community collaboration and planning, an openness to learning from our circumstances, and a willingness to adapt to new ways of thinking and operating, we believe these tenets can be realized concurrently.

Appendix 1: Diverse modality of teaching and learning definitions

The Ad-hoc committee notes that the manner in which teaching and learning occurs at the University was upended in March 2020, and since then, a suite of new approaches and tools has been used. Many of these vary in their application across the University, and many vary in their ease of use and applicability, as well as in terms of level of interaction and engagement.

In November 2021 the Ad-hoc committee provided definitions to the community, which were approved by the University's Senate. These definitions are important to promote and ensure consistency across the University.

Blended learning refers to teaching and learning activities made up of a combination of online and in person course components, both of which are necessary for students to achieve the learning outcomes of the course. The online components may be synchronous (e.g., delivered 'live' via Zoom) or asynchronous (e.g., pre-recorded and available for students to access at their convenience).

A **Flipped classroom** is a kind of blended learning where students engage in learning activities such as doing readings, completing individual learning activities, and perhaps viewing pre-recorded lectures outside class time, and class time is designed for learning activities that require interaction and inquiry.

Online course (or Online course component) refers to a course (or part of a course) that has been expressly designed for online delivery through the intentional implementation of instructional activities and selected technologies that support the achievement of course learning outcomes. Students have advanced knowledge that their course (or course component) has been designed for online delivery.

Remote delivery or Remote instruction refers to a situational need to deliver a course online that would normally be delivered in person. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote instruction happened largely through lectures delivered over Zoom instead of in person and, in some cases, with the implementation of additional technologies on an ad hoc basis.

Hybrid (often referred to as **Hyflex** elsewhere) refers to a class where some students are physically present, and others attend virtually at the same time, with all students having the same opportunities to participate and engage in the classroom activities. Hybrid classes require technologies not readily available in most McGill classrooms and demand additional instructor support for course planning and delivery.

Online Synchronous Participation⁵ refers to the option of having students attend class online and participate in activities (e.g., discussions, polls, brainstorming, debates) during scheduled class time. Students connect to in person classes using web conferencing software (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams). Students attending remotely will not be able to engage to the same extent that those students attending in person and therefore this modality differs from Hybrid (described above).

High quality online teaching--just like high quality face to face teaching--uses a variety of different strategies to support student engagement. This includes different **interaction types**: synchronous (virtual classrooms), asynchronous (online discussions, simulations, and other interactions), as well as different

⁵ Defined as part of the accommodations' framework put in place for the Winter 2022 academic term

opportunities for **pacing** (collective deadlines vs. self-paced). Ideally the approaches going forward would benefit from being **flexible and customizable** (adaptable to multiple needs), **evolutionary** (adaptable to future needs), and **enable diverse strategies** (multiple means of representation and expressions of learning). They also would ideally support **multiple means of assessment** (providing feedback in multiple forms, including automated self-testing and peer and instructor feedback).

In addition, as McGill moves into more formal programs that are wholly or in large part based on digital learning experiences (e.g., online programs), these must be aligned with the Faculty's strategic vision for the future of their academic programs. Decisions about online programs must be made following the same process as on-ground programs delivered in person to ensure academic rigour and integrity; these decisions should also recognize the importance of instructor autonomy in content development and pedagogical approach.

To ensure a shared understanding, the table below provides a list of different approaches to teaching and learning experiences and their key features – the Table is focused on 'Digital learning Experience' because the Ad-hoc committee assumes that pre-pandemic approaches to teaching have varied less than have approaches that integrate digital learning more directly. Considerable resources will be required to offer meaningful diverse digital learning experiences going forward and such necessary considerations will be discussed by the McGill workgroup on New Models of Academic Program Delivery.

| Digital Learning Experiences (DLE) | Objective | Description | Example | Student Support Services ^[2] | Instructor Support Services ^[3] | People involved |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| In person | Support in person teaching with online opportunities to enhance content, interaction, and assessment. | Using our LMS and other approved tools, instructors can supplement their face-to-face interactions with students with online activities to enhance course material, increase interaction, and provide feedback. No change in face-to-face contact hours; online activities are designed to support the course but are usually not essential. | Providing access to digital content through myCourses, implementing online peer-assessment assignments | Existing | Existing | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support |
| Blended | Enable different teaching and learning experiences, offering a balance of face-to-face and online activities. | Blended models allow instructors to shift some content activities online to allow for increased interaction when meeting face to face. | <p>1. Classes are flipped so that content is accessed online and class time is devoted to interaction and problem solving.</p> <p>2. Course meets face-to-face for a set period of time, then has online modules, and then reconvenes for more face-to-face activities to discuss and/or apply content</p> | Existing | Expanded | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support, Instructional design team (instructional designer, media services) |

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| | | | learned online. | | | |
| Hybrid (Hybrid Flexible – HyFlex) | Enables students to choose mode of engagement (in person or online) as part of the same synchronous activity | Hybrid models rely on infrastructure changes and technology to allow course objectives to be met in either mode of delivery. This mode requires additional instructional design (for each mode) and additional work on delivery (instructor must manage both modes simultaneously). | Allows students to choose either online or in person option and each class has a proportion of students in each mode. Student choice of mode of engagement could be either course or individual class based. | Existing | Expanded | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support, Instructional design team (instructional designer, media services) |
| Remote delivery | Enable switch to fully online interaction with little pedagogical restructuring. -Can also be used as “swing space” when classroom spaces are unexpectedly unavailable | Remote delivery courses are not designed for online, but rather in person courses that are temporarily adapted to online delivery. | Emergency response to a situation that restricts access to campus. Students/ instructors switch to mostly synchronous online experiences | Existing | Existing | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support |
| Fully online courses | Enable different teaching and learning experiences, by enabling students to complete entire courses online, as part of their on-ground degrees. | A fully online course does not meet face to face and therefore all interaction takes place online. However, a single online course could be taken with other in person courses – so a program of study would be ‘blended’. Note that certain assessments may require students’ physical presence if | The students may not be required to come to campus, except perhaps for some assessment activities such as exams. | Expanded | Expanded | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support, Instructional design team (instructional designer, media services), Assessment team (student impact) |

| | | invigilation is deemed necessary. | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|-----|-----|--|
| Fully online programs | Create new teaching and learning opportunities in new markets by creating new online programs for McGill. | | Design entire online degree to be offered without constraints of in person programs. | New | New | Instructor, TAs, Pedagogical support, IT support, Instructional design team (instructional designer, media services), Assessment team (student impact), Student Services team, Advising team |

Appendix 2: Contextual information on final examinations during the pandemic

The following table reports on the final exams organized centrally by Enrolment Services. Winter 2019 and Fall 2019 are appearing as comparator terms.

| Term | Remote final exams | In person final exams | Number of deferred exams written |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Winter 2019 | 2803 (Take Home) | 55,055 | 1042 |
| Fall 2019 | 3366 (Take Home) | 61,051 | 974 |
| Winter 2020 | 70,093 | 0 | 159 |
| Fall 2020 | 63,629 | 0 | 168 |
| Winter 2021 | 62,183 | 0 | 188 |
| Fall 2021 | 20,385 (Take home and online) | 39,207 | 1050 |
| Winter 2022 | 19,655 (Take home and online) | 31,725 | In progress / NA |

In the pandemic context, fully remote exams resulted in significantly fewer requests for deferred exams compared with pre-pandemic exam periods and with Fall 2021 and later where there was a return to in person final exams. The assumption here is that fewer students required deferred exams when they were able to write their exams remotely. However, numbers of academic disciplinary cases rose in some Faculties in relation to remote exams that were not time-limited. Concerns about, and incidents related to, academic integrity breaches in the context of online final exams rose dramatically, a point discussed at the Senate open discussion of February 2022. This is not only a matter of student misconduct, but also of equity given the cost to students whose grades, honestly earned, look weaker when compared with averages that might have been, or were, inflated on account of unethical behaviour (i.e., cheating) during online un-proctored final examinations. These points call for serious reflection and response should the University consider the possibility of online examinations in the future.

The in person exam period in Fall 2021 had 36% fewer in person exams compared to Fall 2019, but slightly more deferred exam requests overall, indicating a significant increase in deferred exam requests compared to the number of in person exams offered in Fall 2021. The Winter 2022 final exam period has seen 42% fewer in person exams compared to Winter 2019. This further decline in the number of in person exams between Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 may be related to relatively large increase in deferred exam requests in Fall 2021. In both final exam sessions, when addressing cases where students were unable to attend their in person final exams, some students and instructors requested permission to allow some students to write their exam remotely as an exam accommodation. This approach was strongly dissuaded as a matter of consistency and fairness.

For the Winter 2022 final exam period, Enrolment Services exceptionally organized a May special deferred exam period to allow graduating students unable to write a scheduled exam due to COVID related illness or isolation requirements at a time that allowed them to graduate in June. This exceptional measure required a significant investment from Enrolment Services, Instructors, and Faculty Advisors and placed pressure on already-tight graduation approval timelines. While there is no guarantee that students who write a deferred final in this special period can attend Spring 2022 convocation ceremonies, they can request to join Fall 2022 convocation ceremony.

Appendix 3: Contextual information on teaching spaces during the pandemic

The following table reflects classroom usage for courses scheduled centrally by Enrolment Services. Summer and Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 are provided as comparators for terms that follow, which were affected by the pandemic.

| Term | Type of schedule prepared / used |
|-------------|--|
| Summer 2019 | No distancing |
| Fall 2019 | No distancing |
| Winter 2020 | No distancing, switch to remote after March 20 |
| Summer 2020 | Remote |
| Fall 2020 | Teaching Hubs prepared and used, with most activities remote |
| Winter 2021 | 1m distancing schedule prepared. Teaching Hubs used with most activities remote. |
| Summer 2021 | Remote |
| Fall 2021 | No distancing schedule prepared and used with blended learning. 1m distancing schedule prepared as a backup. |
| Winter 2022 | No distancing schedule prepared and used with blended learning. 1m distancing schedule prepared as a backup. |

Teaching Hubs are limited access buildings that were set up early in the pandemic ([version 1 of the Teaching Hubs Design document](#) was generated in August 2020 by working group led by the University Registrar) for teaching activities that could not be completed remotely. 2m distancing was used in Teaching Hubs where possible. Where not possible (i.e., some teaching labs), additional PPE was used.

Over the course of the pandemic, Enrolment Services' Class Scheduling Team collaborated with Design Services to generate classroom densities based on 2m distancing for use in Teaching Hubs and 1m distancing for the 1m distancing schedule. To activate reduced density classrooms, consultations to prioritize in person teaching activities were led by the Associate Provost Teaching and Academic Programs, the University Registrar, and Faculty Associate Deans, and supported by the Class Scheduling Team in Enrolment Services.

Distancing for labs was, for the most part, handled by Faculties and Building Supervisors, in collaboration with Design Services, to generate specific distancing densities.