



Memorandum

Secretariat

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TO: Senate

FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General

SUBJECT: Senate Open Discussion: “The Engaged Classroom in a Digital World”

DATE: February 21, 2018

DOCUMENT #: D17-43

ACTION REQUIRED: INFORMATION APPROVAL/DECISION

ISSUE Background documents and discussion questions in support of the open discussion on “The Engaged Classroom in a Digital World” are provided to Senate in preparation for Senate’s discussion.

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE Following a review of topics suggested by Senators, the Senate Steering Committee selected “The Engaged Classroom in a Digital World” as the topic for the February 21, 2018 Senate meeting. A Working Group was struck to frame the open discussion and identify background documentation.

Context

Our technology-rich society has transformed the way students and professors engage within the classroom. It has also put into question teaching and learning methods, which are being examined in various ways to promote engagement and continuous learning. Impacting the teaching and learning environment, the presence of technology has created new opportunities and challenges that merit further reflection and discussion as we strive to promote meaningful and enriching experiences for all.

Many educators have embraced this changing landscape and see strengthening engagement as crucial for ensuring effective learning (see Appendix A). Some instructors at McGill have implemented a variety of strategies to enhance teaching and learning opportunities and Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) has developed resources to help instructors enhance engagement in class (see Appendix B).

The ubiquity of laptops and mobile devices has created the need to address the impact of technology on teaching and learning. While technological changes may enhance engagement, they have exacerbated opportunities for disengagement in classrooms. At McGill, TLS developed guidelines on the use of mobile technology in the classroom (see Appendix C) and ran surveys in 2010 and 2016 on the impact of technology in the classroom (see Appendix D).

Open Discussion Format

Small Group Discussions (15 minutes)

- During the Senate meeting, Senators will be asked to form small groups and discuss their most and least engaging experiences in a classroom. (What were they? Why were they so engaging/disengaging?)
- After the small group discussion, Senators will be invited to report on the themes that arose during the small group discussion to the larger group.

Presentations (20 minutes)

- Three members of the McGill community will share examples of strategies they have used or witnessed which enhanced the teaching and learning experience in the classroom:
 - Professor Sharmistha Bhadra (Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Faculty of Engineering);
 - Professor Kenneth Ragan (Department of Physics, Faculty of Science);
 - Ms. Salma Youssef (U3 Biochemistry student and science Senator).
- The presentations will be followed by a Q&A session and Senators are invited to share their own experiences and strategies for improving engagement in the classroom.

Action items (10 minutes)

- At the end of the discussion, Senators may suggest measures that could be implemented at the University-level to enhance the teaching and learning experience with or without technology.

PRIOR CONSULTATION

Senate Steering Committee; Senate Open Discussion Working Group.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The open discussion format has a sustainable framework in place to further Senate's mandate.

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: Research on Active Learning

Appendix B : TLS Online Resources

Appendix C: Guidelines for the Use of Mobile Computing and Communications Devices in Classes at McGill

Appendix D: Summary of Mobile Computing and Communication Devices Surveys

D17-43 Appendix A

For research on active learning, please see:

1. Michael Prince, "Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research," *Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 93, No. 3, 2004, pp. 223-231,
<https://proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2004.tb00809.x>
2. Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent, "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction," *College Teaching*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring, 1996), pp. 43-47,
<https://proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/27558762>

TLS Resources

- **TLS teaching resources index**

<http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/resources>

- **TLS guide on strategies to engage students in learning**

<https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/strategies>

- TLS short video series on quick strategies to engage students in learning:

<http://mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/strategies/videos>



- For instructors who would like assistance making their classroom teaching more engaging, individual consultations can be booked with TLS by emailing tls@mcgill.ca.



Guidelines for the Use of Mobile Computing and Communications Devices in Classes at McGill

More and more students are using mobile computing and communications (MC2) devices in class, and some instructors and students find this inappropriate or distracting. Therefore, the APC Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning struck a work group to propose a framework for the use of MC2 devices in classes at McGill. These guidelines – based on best practices of peer institutions, a comprehensive literature review, a survey of McGill instructors and students, and extensive consultation – were unanimously endorsed by APC at its meeting of May 27, 2010.

Introduction

Instructors are encouraged to discuss their expectations about the use of MC2 devices openly with the class, and provide a statement about the nature of MC2 usage permitted, a rationale for their choice of usage permitted, and how non-compliance will be handled. Instructors are free to change their guidelines during the term, with the expectation that any changes will be discussed with students.

Students are reluctant to formally complain about behaviour by their peers that they find distracting in class; however, they should be encouraged to inform the instructor of any concerns that they may have, or that may develop over the term, about the use of such devices in class. This is not in the spirit of “getting someone in trouble,” but rather helping the instructor create an atmosphere conducive to learning for all.

Sample wording

The texts in italics below provide a range of sample wording that may be used or adapted by instructors on their course outlines and form the basis of class discussion.

I-Common to all courses

1. All McGill policies must be respected at all times; those of particular relevance are highlighted.
The use of MC2 devices must, in all cases, respect policies and regulations of the University, including in particular the following:
 1. The [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#);
 2. The [Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities](#);
 3. The [Policy on the Responsible Use of McGill IT Resources](#).

2. Due to the potential use of MC2 devices for recording and voice communication, such use is not permitted without explicit permission.
No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.
MC2 devices are not to be used for voice communication without the explicit permission of the instructor.

II-Options for level of usage

Instructors have flexibility for establishing the level of usage they will permit in class. It is advisable to establish the permissible conditions early and explicitly. Three main options exist:

1. Allowed under specified conditions;
2. Allowed as long as not disruptive¹, and;
3. Not allowed at all.

1. Allowed under specified conditions

Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class under the following condition(s):” (choose as applicable)

- a. *As negotiated by the class; (note that an open discussion with students can help create a sense of community and contribute to ensuring individual and collective good classroom experiences.);*
- b. *When “No technology time” is not in effect;*
- c. *Only for the specified use; e.g., note taking, consulting online resources, clickers;*
- d. *In specific locations; e.g., right or left side of the room;*
- e. *On a case-by-case basis:*
 - *Each individual student obtains permission*
 - *Certain events may be exceptions to the usage generally permitted; e.g., guest speaker.*

2. Allowed as long as not disruptive

Mobile computing and communications devices are permitted in class insofar as their use does not disrupt the teaching and learning process.

3. Not allowed at all

Mobile computing or communications devices are not permitted to be used in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Note that the [Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities](#) must always be respected.

¹ Note that disruptive behaviour is, to some extent, situationally defined. If the behaviour is persistent and prevents the instructor and/or other students from focussing on the class work, it is deemed to be disruptive.

III-Rationales for different levels of usage

Students are more likely to respect usage permissions if they are provided with a clear rationale. There are three broad categories of rationales:

1. Respect;
2. Freedom from distraction, and;
3. Course design.

1. Respect

In support of individual and collective positive classroom experiences, there must be respect for:

- a. Fellow students;
- b. The instructor.

2. Freedom from distraction

In support of individual and collective positive classroom experiences, there must be freedom from distraction for:

- a. Fellow students;
- b. The instructor.

In addition to the potential for others to be distracted, instructors may wish to discuss with their students the potential for the students themselves to be distracted from class activities when engaging in non-class related activities on their MC2 devices.

3. Course design

The course design has intentionally been structured to allow or disallow the use of mobile computing and communications devices in clearly identified ways.

IV-Handling non-compliance

When there are issues in class, instructors should make every effort to talk with the student(s) involved, either during class or afterwards; the rationale presented for the usage permissions may provide a useful context for this discussion.

If instructors are experiencing problematic behaviours in class, they are encouraged to discuss the issue with colleagues, the departmental or unit director, the Associate Dean of their Faculty, the Dean of Students, or a member of Teaching and Learning Services.

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance may lead to disciplinary action pursuant to the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#).

Mobile Computing and Communication [MC2] Devices Survey Summary of 2010 vs. 2016 Survey Results

A survey on instructor and student perspectives on the use of mobile computing and communication (MC2) devices in classrooms at McGill was first administered by Teaching and Learning Services (TLS) in 2010 to a representative sample of instructors and undergraduate students. The findings were used to inform the development of the first Canadian university-wide set of [guidelines](#) to govern mobile computing and communication device use in university classrooms. TLS administered this survey again in 2016, seeking to determine if and how the situation has changed since the implementation of the guidelines in 2010. Respondent demographics (gender and Faculty) were representative of the 2010 and 2016 populations.

These surveys investigated four areas:

1. Student use: how frequently and for what purposes McGill undergraduate students use their mobile computing and communication devices in class;
2. Instructor perceptions of student use: how frequently and for what purposes McGill instructors assume their students use these devices in class;
3. Student and instructor distraction: how distracting McGill students and instructors find students' in-class use of these devices; and
4. Instructor incorporation of technology: how frequently and in what ways instructors try to incorporate technology in their classroom teaching practices.

The findings demonstrated a significant increase in students' in-class use of digital devices since 2010 with more than 60% of students reporting that they use their devices for course-related tasks. Of note is the fact that faculty members are much more distracted than students by students' in-class use of digital devices – a level of distraction that has continued to increase since 2010. Finally, a new theme emerged in the 2016 student population: the instructional method used by the instructor is more important than class size with respect to frequency of use for non-course related activities. For example, one student commented:

"I don't think the size of the class has an impact but the teaching method of the prof does. If the class is more interactive, students will tend to use the devices less in class for non-content related activities."