

**Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (“Committee”)  
MINUTES**

Meeting of January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 8:30 a.m. TEAMS Conferencing Application

Present:

Chris Buddle (Co-Chair)  
Angela Campbell (Co-Chair)  
Jennifer Chen  
Elyse Cragg (communications)  
Nancy Czemmel  
Claire Downie  
Rebecca Fuhrer  
Gillian Nycum (SME/resource person)  
Petra Rohrbach  
Daniel Weinstock  
Laura Winer

Regrets:

Paola Colapelle (secretary)

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**Communications and Outreach**

Over the past week, three messages came into the Committee’s resource account. One related to accommodations, one to the application of the 20% discretionary threshold for instructors to hold their courses remotely, and one to express discontent with the University’s return to campus. All emails have received a response with direction to relevant information and resources.

**TLS Drop-In Sessions**

TLS organized and hosted two drop-in sessions for instructors who had questions and wanted support in connection with teaching in the current term. These sessions had been widely communicated through various channels. The first session, held on 21 January, hosted just two instructors (six had registered). A second session is scheduled for today, for which 10 instructors are registered. [Note: Further to the Committee’s meeting the Director of TLS, Dr. Winer, advised the committee that there were four attendees at this session]. No additional session are being planned, but this can be revisited if necessary.

**Supports for Instructors**

Members of the Committee expressed concern that instructors are not able to avail themselves of supports available to them, particularly in connection with offering online synchronous participation in their courses. The Committee discussed how best to ensure that Chairs and Directors have all the relevant information that can in turn be shared with instructors. The Committee determined that it would be helpful to prepare FAQ or “checklist” document for all Chairs/Directors to provide guidance to them on teaching supports for their instructors this term. And a template could be provided so

Chairs/Directors can ensure information pertaining to the local context can be added. The Committee will set to work on this.

### **Update on Return to Campus – Week of 24 January**

The return to in-person/on-campus activity this week has been gradual. Some instructors have availed themselves this week of the discretion to teach 20% of a course remotely.

On Monday there were ~20,000 WIFI connections on campus and by Thursday this had reached 21,000 connections. Last fall, the average daily connection rate was approximately 28,000.

The return to campus has been relatively smooth and people are happy to be back on campus even though some pockets of concern remain. The Committee heard that the progressive nature of the return, notably the fact that most instructors had the option to use their 20% allowance to teach remotely this term, reduced anxieties for some.

### **Student Boycotts of Classes**

The Committee discussed the student boycotts of classes in some areas of the University, with upcoming or planned votes occurring the coming days in three Faculties. The Committee discussed the reasons for which student accommodations this term remain crucial. At the same time, the Committee recognized the multitude of reasons underlying the reticence of some instructors to record or provide online synchronous delivery of classes this term. These include, for example:

- Pedagogical concerns
- Privacy concerns
- Concerns about inhibiting or imposing a chilling effect on free expression in class discussions, especially in courses where morally contentious issues are discussed
- Intellectual property concerns

Accordingly, Committee members shared the view that it would be ill-advised for the University to mandate recording or online synchronous delivery of classes this term. This position aligns with the most recent official position articulated by MAUT on this matter.

At the same time, the Committee agreed that instructors who choose not to record or provide online synchronous delivery of classes this term must understand that they have a duty to provide reasonable accommodations to students who miss class for reasons related to COVID-19. The Committee felt that it would be helpful to provide this by way of formal advice to senior academic leadership, through the Provost. The Committee will provide a memo to the Provost setting out this position.

### **Final Examinations**

The Committee learned of a considerable drop in the number of seatings (i.e., individual sit-down final exams) in the most recent exam periods, as reflected in the following data:

April 2019: 55,055

April 2022: 31,490

Dec 2019: ~61,000

Dec 2021: ~40,000

The considerable drop (by at least 1/3) of final exam seatings is indicative of a declining trend in in-person final examinations, which suggests that instructors are opting for alternate modes of assessment.

Given this information, the Committee decided to include an additional question for the Open Discussion at Senate that it will host next month, framed as follows:

*There appears to be an emerging trend away from in-person, centrally-administered final examinations as a mode of student assessment.*

- a) *What are Senators' views on such a move away from in-person final examinations that are centrally administered?*
- b) *What supports are needed for instructors to continue to support effective student evaluations that may not include final seated examinations?*

### **Community Perspectives on the Return to Campus Video**

The Committee discussed the [Community Perspectives on the Return to Campus](#) video produced by Chris Buddle and colleagues. The Committee recognized Associate Provost Buddle for his work and thanked him for it. The Committee felt that the video would benefit from tabs/clips to allow specific individual segments to be viewed separately, without having to watch the video in its entirety. The central Communications Office will be consulted to this end.

The meeting adjourned at 9h31.