

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies
MINUTES

Meeting of October 8, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. TEAMS Conferencing Application

Present: Chris Buddle (Co-Chair)
Angela Campbell (Co-Chair)
Jennifer Chen
Nancy Czemmell
Claire Downie
Rebecca Fuhrer
Gillian Nycum
Petra Rohrbach
Daniel Weinstock
Laura Winer

This was the inaugural meeting of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (Committee).

Following introductions, the Co-Chairs invited preliminary questions tied to the Committee's Terms of Reference. The following questions were addressed:

- 1) *The Committee's mandate indicates that it will "liaise with and advise the University's senior administration" – who would be the "senior administration" concerned?*
Further to some discussion, it was determined that "senior administration" would mean different actors depending on the matter in question. This could include, for example, the Principal, Provost, or Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) notably in the latter's role as Lead of the EOC.
- 2) *The terms of reference do not set a meeting quorum; what should that be?*
Further to some discussion, it was determined that two-thirds attendance (i.e., six members) would constitute quorum. It was also decided that in the event that either student member could not attend the meeting, a delegate could attend in their place.
- 3) *To what extent is the Committee's work confidential?*
The Committee had a substantial discussion on the importance of transparency. None of the Committee's members felt that the Committee's business should be treated as confidential unless the Committee otherwise determined this would be necessary in regard to a particular question. Hence, members of the Committee are able to share with stakeholders information about the Committee's discussions and recommendations.
- 4) *To what extent can the Committee members speak if asked to publicly state their views on University policies and protocols regarding COVID-19?*

Members of the Committee agreed that each retains full freedom to express their views, whether supportive or not of McGill's policies and protocols.

5) *How will the Committee proceed in case of disagreement among members on a matter under review?*

The Committee determined that it would strive for consensus but where that could not be reached, a recommendation would be made to the McGill administration if supported by a majority of members, with any dissenting view(s) recorded.

The Committee engaged in an extensive discussion about how to communicate with the McGill community in relation to its mandate and activities. Members were of the view that the credibility of this Committee calls for a high level of visibility into its work and the ability to react nimbly when necessary to evaluate and advise on any matters that fall within its mandate.

Members articulated the importance of communicating our mandate to the McGill community, stressing the need for clarity that this Committee is not an EOC replica and that our work is about academic planning and policies.

The Committee determined that it would be beneficial to create a site to post regular updates of the Committee's activities and recommendations. Members also underscored the need for a two-way flow of information. The Committee thus determined the need to create opportunities to hear and learn from members of the McGill community about matters germane to this Committee's mandate. The following ideas to meet this objective were posited:

- Creating a resource email account to field questions, concerns, ideas
- Survey(s)
- Town hall(s)
- Focus groups

The Committee also noted the need to engage directly with stakeholders who have been most vulnerable in the face of COVID-19. The Committee further recalled the importance of not losing sight of the way in which academic planning revisions have affected the workload of administrative and support staff.

The Committee reviewed part of a presentation that had been made to the Board of Governors on October 7th outlining COVID-related data at McGill. Members agreed that the new [COVID-19 Situation Dashboard](#) would be beneficial for the community to understand the state of affairs at McGill and will inform the work of this Committee in relation to academic planning and policies.

The Committee determined that as a first item of business at its next meeting, it would begin to examine and clarify the parameters around blended (partially remote + partially in-person) teaching, the discretion Faculties can be given to allow some courses to be taught remotely, and the parameters pursuant to which academic accommodations for instructors and students are made.