

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies MINUTES

Meeting of October 19, 2021 at 4:45 p.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

A special meeting of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on COVID Academic Planning and Policies (Committee) was convened to discuss Winter 2022 academic planning as pertaining to the classroom allocation process and achieving our goals in connection with on-campus teaching and learning while maintaining a safe on-campus environment. The matter is time-sensitive, given that the class scheduling teams have only a short window before the end of this term to re-assign classrooms to courses that will be delivered in-person in the W22 semester.

AP Buddle began the conversation with contextual information. He shared information recently received from the MES, which is based on an analysis of cross-referenced McGill registered student lists with provincial public health data regarding vaccination status. It shows 94.9% of McGill students are adequately vaccinated. The Committee felt this was unequivocally good news that must be widely communicated across McGill campuses as reassuring and important information.

In terms of Winter 2022 planning, the following principles were shared with the Committee:

- Classrooms would be allocated to courses without planning any overages; normally, classrooms are assigned at a 107% ratio in relation to course enrolments, but that has not happened (for scheduling that is done centrally) in F21 and it will not occur in W22.
- No courses will be assigned to classrooms that are naturally ventilated (i.e., no mechanical ventilation). If it turns out that these classrooms are needed, then they may be used with CO₂ monitoring in those spaces when in use.
- While classrooms can be scheduled at capacity, to the extent possible, class scheduling will be done in a manner that minimizes densities in classrooms.

McGill wishes to increase the threshold for determining which courses will be taught fully via remote delivery from enrolments of 150 to 200 students. The principal objective underlying this increase is to allow a greater number of students access to in-person learning experiences next term. If McGill maintains the cut-off for in-person teaching at enrolments of 150 students, approximately 6.8% of McGill students would have only online courses next term. By moving the bar to 200, only 2.6% of McGill students would have only online courses. Given concerns expressed by some students in F21 whose courses were given entirely online, it is important to do what is possible and safe to allow a greater number of students to have access to in-person curricular opportunities. The Committee discussed these points in detail and there was general agreement (but see points below) that our current circumstances, considered in their totality, justified the principles enumerated above.

Several members of the Committee signaled that where an instructor taught a large (150+)-enrolment course via remote delivery in F21 term and will teach the same course again in W22, the instructor should be allowed to teach it again online in W22 regardless of enrolment. Members of the Committee concurred that this approach was well-advised.

The committee acknowledged that because large enrolment classes will be delivered remotely, there will still be a need for flexible study spaces across our campuses for students to follow online lectures in between their in-person teaching activities.

Claire Downie noted that some students continue to feel unsafe learning on campus and that without more information about what accommodations are provided to these students, SSMU might not support a decision to increase the threshold from 150- to 200-enrolment for remote delivery of courses.

The Committee agreed that its next regular meeting this upcoming Friday would focus on questions in relation to academic accommodations for students.