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**TO:** Senate

**QUESTION FROM:** Senators Erin Sobat and Sean Taylor

**RESPONSE FROM:** Senator Ollivier Dyens, Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)

**SUBJECT:** Question Regarding For-Cost Course Assessment Software

**MEETING DATE:** September 21, 2016

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**PREAMBLE:** Whereas, some courses currently use online programs such as McGraw-Hill Connect for practice problems and/or extra credit assignments;

Whereas, students must purchase an online license or subscription in order to access these practice opportunities and/or extra credit points;

Whereas, there is no University-wide policy or regulation on the use of for-cost assessment software;

Whereas, institutional licenses are sometimes provided for other in-course assessment software and/or reference materials.

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**QUESTION:**

1. Should students be required to pay for technologies needed for course *assessment*?
2. What steps can the University take to work with students and instructors to determine if particular technology licenses should be provided centrally?

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**RESPONSE** Dear Senators Sobat and Taylor,

Thank you for your question.

To answer the first question: Yes, they might be required to. Textbooks, lab fees, clickers (student response system) for example are all (or were) items students had to purchase as part of the course.

On the specific issue: extra credits associated with *optional* materials, purchases should not be part of the assessment process.

Instructors should be aware that software used at McGill for teaching and learning purposes must respect the confidentiality of students' personal information in accordance with Quebec privacy laws. Instructors wishing

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to use software not currently available through McGill should consult Teaching and Learning Services ([tls@mcgill.ca](mailto:tls@mcgill.ca)) to insure appropriate procedures are followed.

**What steps can the University take to work with students and instructors to determine if particular technology licenses should be provided centrally?**

As more teaching and learning tools become available, instructors have more and more choices they can make regarding the selection of pedagogical tools. The University is in the process of forming a working group that will address support for technologies for teaching and learning purposes. Questions about centrally provided technology licenses is a topic that will fall under the purview of this working group, which is anticipated to convene in Winter 2017. In the meantime, instructors are strongly encouraged to contact Teaching and Learning Services to discuss their technology needs and choices.

Thank you  
Ollivier Dyens  
Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning)

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