



Motion: to implement a hybrid teaching model for 2021-2022 academic year, and beyond

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RATIONALE:

The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected every way in which society functions. Through our new reality, we have learned to adapt in many ways. The largest adaptation we have made has been the shift to online ways of functioning within society. The modality of how we educate also adapted to this new reality, and in doing so we have inadvertently created the momentum and infrastructure to allow us to deliver an education through an online format. McGill has recently announced that in-person teaching will resume this coming fall, with no mention to including online learning as an option. There are many reasons why the option to learn online is essential and necessary.

First and foremost, people with learning disabilities, mobility issues, handicaps, chronic illness and more, have been advocating for online classes for years. The advocates need online learning options in order to access an education that is suitable for their needs. In addition, as we continue to face the unexpected reality of living in a pandemic, people's health, safety and needs are only met by the university if this institution provides an online learning alternative. As the third wave hits communities across Turtle Island, we are seeing institutions and people in authority continue to make poor decisions that do not keep us safe. The reasons McGill gave to say that it will be safe to come back in the Fall are not guaranteed, with more virus mutations appearing in Canada and the continued ineptitude of our elected leaders.

The School of Social work must therefore take proactive decisions to protect its students, staff, and faculty and ensure that the door to an accessible education does not get slammed back onto the faces of the many folks who have benefited from these new infrastructures. This shift to a hybrid way of teaching at the school of social work will also begin a process to being able to advertise McGill's social work programs as available through distance education. This beginning will thus allow unparalleled access to a social work education for folks with disabilities and Indigenous peoples who live in more remote communities, among the many other populations who would benefit to a more equitable and accessible education in Social Work.

The following are points, both related to the pandemic and to the accessibility of online learning, why allowing for a hybrid model of learning is the best decision to make, independent of what McGill is doing.

COVID-19 related rationale:

- students who are all essential workers sitting in the same room can easily become ground zero for a super spreader event.

- In person classes adds a large amount of covid related stress which will certainly be present come Fall 2021.
- looking 6 months ahead is too far, increasing variants and the recent start of a third wave makes it impossible to predict the future with any certainty.
- Forcing us back to school is unsafe for our families and/or roommates, as most people do not live alone.
- Many faculty and students are not in Montreal (remote community, Home Province, International), because of the pandemic. Forcing them to leave family during a pandemic is unreasonable, unsafe, and, quite frankly, cruel.
- Students can also be the main caregivers of family members who have caught COVID.
- Students or their family members who have caught COVID and now are living with long term post-COVID symptoms will make it harder to come to school.
- The vaccine is not mandatory, and the school is not asking students for proof of their vaccination. According to health Canada only 55% of the population is planning on getting their two covid doses. Epidemiologists say you need a minimum of 70-75% to have herd immunity, ideally 85%, and so forcing us to rely on a vaccine when others have said they will not get it is forcing us into unsafe conditions.
- Folks with autoimmune disorders and/or chronic illnesses would have to quit or defer their academic year because of this added risk that forcing them back into a classroom would create.

Accessible learning Rationale:

- People with mobility disabilities, chronic illnesses (Inflammatory bowel disorders, chronic pain disorders, migraines) can access online learning, more opportunities for them to pursue their degree, have more control over their learning, a lot more students would sign up if a hybrid model existed
- Recorded lectures are learning disability friendly. Allowing people with ADHD, autism, and dyslexia, among other disorders. To access recorded lectures helps because of lack of ability to concentrate in classes, difficulty following along with lectures, distractions of in class environment. While some may see this is a negative, as many deep disclosures may occur during class, our proposed fix for this would be to only record the lecture, but not the conversations that would occur after said lecture.
- Three-hour in person classes are not disability friendly. The average person has a hard time with three-hour lectures. People with learning disabilities cannot concentrate for that amount of time, they zone out, cannot sit still, and so miss out on important information.
- For students who may be the main caregiver for a family member, a hybrid learning model allows them to be present at home, gives them more time to meet the family's needs.
- Hybrid models allow for the organizing one's schedule to make it work for each person, due to the flexibility of online learning.
- costs of air travel right now are extremely high, so to force the previously mentioned out of town folks to come back to Montreal also bears high related costs.
- More opportunities for student-teacher interaction through schedule zoomed meetings from home/ place that works for each person.

- Travel times decrease with online learning: more time for family, needs, and working. Most students need to work because our stages continue to be unpaid.
- Online classes are much more environmentally friendly: no use of cars, trains, buses, etc in order to get to school. That means potentially 50% of the 40,000 people going to McGill not using natural gases, protecting environment.
- McGill's Zoom Licenses will still be active in the 2021-2022 academic year. This will allow time for the School of Social Work to acquire its own license for an online learning platform the years after.

The infrastructure is now in place. Let us take advantage of the lessons the pandemic has taught us and not leave behind those that finally have an accessible education. Let us give a choice to students who wish to return to the classroom and those who do not. We have learned that we can deliver courses online, let us add this new skill to our pedagogical toolkit to ensure that an education at McGill's School of Social Work can be better and easier to access for all.

- BE IT RESOLVED THAT The McGill School of Social Work deliver a hybrid learning model for classes starting in Fall 2021, wherein one section(s) of a course is to be delivered in person, and a second section(s) of that same course be delivered through online means.
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The McGill School of Social Work council strike a committee to immediately begin pedagogical development of a permanent HYBRID TEACHING AND LEARNING MODEL for the school to build upon the current infrastructure and modality of online teaching delivery.