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## MINUTES

Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning

Tuesday, September 29, 2020 (1:30pm – 3:00pm)

Remotely through Zoom

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**Present:** Peter Barry, Darshan Daryanani, Adam Finkelstein, Nathan Hall, Roni Khazaka, Sujata Madan, Annette Majnemer, Douglas McNabney, Jean-Paul Remillieux, Caroline Riches, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Adrienne Tessier, Carole Urbain, Laura Winer (Chair), Glenn Zabowski

**Regrets:** Chris Buddle, Angela Campbell, Miranda Hickman, Rosalie Jukier, Svetlana Komarova

### 1. Administrative

- a) *Welcome and introductions:* The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of this new academic year, and reviewed the STL mandate.
- b) *Adoption of the agenda:* Caroline Riches asked that a discussion surrounding transfer credits be added to the agenda (item 2b). The agenda as modified.
- c) *Approval of the minutes, April 28, 2020:* The minutes were approved as circulated.
- d) *Revised composition and membership for 2020-2021:* The composition of STL has been modified in order to reflect a change in Chair: Chris Buddle, Associate Provost (Teaching and Academic Programs) has replaced Fabrice Labeau as Chair, however the role has been delegated to Laura Winer in his absence.
- e) *Business arising:*
  - o No business arising was identified

### 2. Action

- a) *STL annual report of activities for 2019-2020:* An error was made regarding the dates used on page 3, Plans for 2019-2020. This should have read **2020-2021**. The corrected version will be forward to APC for approval and inclusion with their annual report to Senate.
- b) *Transfer credits:* Following a recent request to have credits obtained through online courses transferred to McGill, Caroline wondered if there existed a university policy to guide Faculty decisions. Glenn confirmed that no university-wide policy exists in assessing transfer credits.

Laura responded that while some faculties may have the number of transfer credits accepted guided by accreditation bodies, the types and universities from whom we accept transfer credits is controlled by Enrolment Services. In specific instances however, programs can argue for them if they are not recognized. This is a manual process done on a program by program basis by ES as they need to evaluate each course within a program.

It was noted that McGill transcripts do not specify whether credits are obtained through on-campus or online courses, and McGill continues to state that online courses have the same value as on-campus courses. In addition, there may be instances where governmental regulations prevent McGill credits from being issued for online learning. While credits from a transfer program or semester-based exchange are recognized, there does not seem to be a strategy for recognizing course exchanges.

**Action:** TLS will follow-up with Enrolment Services in order to get a better understanding of transfer credits, along with information on distinguishing which policies at the faculty level can be changed, as well as governmental reporting expectations that will be difficult to change

### 3. Discussion

- a) *Early comments on Fall 2020:* STL members were asked to provide examples of challenges and successes during the early days of the Fall 2020 term. Below are highlights from that discussion:

#### *Challenges*

- Medicine:
  - Concerned about Zoom fatigue and social isolation for students; they are also missing out on the other facets of a campus learning environment
  - Health professionals' clinical placements and simulations have been challenging since they were cancelled in the Spring. Medicine is being creative to ensure graduations are not delayed with simulations and tele-medicine, for example, filling the gap. For those activities taking place on-campus, students have been following the guidelines but this is still very challenging and labour intensive
- SSMU:
  - No way to ensure that professors/students don't experience technical issues
  - Some professors are going over-time in their videos; some professors will upload a video on a Friday with an assignment due on Sunday which is not ideal
  - Is there a standardized leniency: set number of evaluations? Set amount of time?
  - Interaction in language course is challenging
  - Totally synchronous is less engaging
  - Lack of clarity regarding how students with accommodations will be affected. One STL member confirmed that accommodations continue to be communicated by OSD, but must be handled by the instructor.
- SCS:
  - some challenges in receiving feedback from instructors: some are providing feedback on how remote teaching is going while others are quiet
- Management:
  - Instructors may be struggling with teaching in various formats during the term; e.g. teaching remotely, remote/in-person, and in-person necessitate different approaches which can be challenging to adapt
  - Much slower online than in-person
  - Instructors may be providing more reading than usual to compensate for the remote environment which is becoming overwhelming for students
- Science:
  - Professors going over allotted time is a big issue
  - Burnout levels are equal to those normally seen in October; students are feeling isolated
  - Students are joking about cheating; assessments are being crowdsourced; while investigations can happen, a lack of resources prohibits each claim being reviewed; we need to make it more difficult for students to cheat

- Education:
  - Students have missed field experiences in spring, and are now uncomfortable due to COVID; if schools close again, this may pose a serious challenge for students who are unable to complete their field placements
  - Created concurrent courses and turned them into intensives, but that is a lot for instructors and students
  - Instructors are delivering synchronous courses and some are opting to not record lectures, however students are expected to engage with instructors, each other, and manage attendance expectations. While we can't mandate attendance for students, they may not necessarily understand that even if it is remote, this doesn't mean they should not attend or register their course conflicts, or for a course/field experience
  - STL member is now teaching graduate course and sent a survey before start of course and many students responded that they preferred synchronous so that they could exchange with their peers
  - It would be interesting to see the data regarding how delivery method (synchronous/asynchronous, with or without recording) affected attendance
- Music:
  - Music is unique; immediate interaction is based on sound and the internet is not capable of providing the level needed
  - Ensembles has been challenging: no online equivalent so difficult for students and instructor
- Engineering:
  - Challenges have included academic integrity and assessment
  - Many instructors have switched to multiple assessments but feedback from students is that they are feeling overloaded
  - Planning on surveys to get feedback from students so we can adjust for Fall and winter
  - Virtual labs are challenging due to uncertainty around support and resources

#### Successes

- Medicine:
  - Some instructors take easily to remote teaching and other have challenges; TLS has been great in supporting the learning curve but it is still a work in progress
- SSMU:
  - Some classes have been able to include lecturers from around the world which may not have been the case in regular circumstances
  - Professors have been fairly accommodating
  - Some Law courses have a mix of synchronous and asynchronous deliveries; overall seems to work well; great availability of instructors
  - Law has been running remote exams for a while so there are no concerns there
  - Advanced Civil Law is an excellent example: two weeks all asynchronous with built-in exercises; two professors did podcast style; synchronous class with interaction but ungraded exercises and virtual office hours
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- SCS:
  - The Summer term was online which allowed us to better prepare for Fall
- Management:
  - Students are appreciative of any effort
  - Group work: adding only students from their own time zone

- Music:
  - As we didn't offer lessons in the spring, we have been able to prepare for the fall
  - Practicals may be better delivered online so are now considering transitioning to long-lasting remote delivery
  - Auditions and exams will move to remote platform as they were successful
  - This has allowed us to look at things in a new way, and some things will stay even when we go back to on-campus classes
- Engineering:
  - Created requirements for remote teaching: insisted on both synchronous and asynchronous to help students managed their time.
  - While professors may have pre-recorded lectures, they still must do some synchronous lectures/activities.
- GPS:
  - I can see how faculty uploading more materials, last-minute content, or longer lecture content than is feasible is an issue - is it possible to provide an email update to faculty from TLS to warn against some of these student overload issues? Faculty/Chairs would find this enlightening and useful

Looking to Winter 2021:

- Bio-medical sciences are exploring virtual lab experiments and are being supported by the Remote Delivery Task Force for purchasing
- RLAs:
  - Confusion over their role; RLA may not have the knowledge base to know what is or is not important/relevant; confusion with TAs (SSMU)
  - Struggling to make good use of RLAs due to the delay in their hiring: we were careful about how we announced it so we did not get a lot of requests. However, with the approach of mid-terms, we plan on using them more; just not sure in what capacity (SCS)
  - RLAs are being used in different ways: helping professors in large courses, running tutorials for instructors in myCourses, Webworks...we've developed separate projects for them and are prioritizing their allocations based on requests

Following the exchange, Nathan noted that it is very helpful to hear from students what is problematic. He added that instructors going over-time in their videos might be intentional, but from the perspective of trying to go do a good thing. Instructors may be assigning more reading as they are not sure what the students are understanding. This may be based on a passion for the material and they may not be aware that they are putting an additional burden on students. Could TLS provide guidelines?

Adam added that COVID has had a larger impact on pedagogy than just about anything else. If guidelines or recommendations are provided to instructors, they should focus on the mental health aspect of not overwhelming students, and that performance expectations might need to be adjusted.

Finally, it was clarified that instructors cannot require students to turn on their cameras unless there are pedagogical reasons, and these must be included in the course outline. One example of this would be language courses where interaction is key.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3pm.