McGill

MINUTES
Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 (12:30pm – 2:00pm)
Remotely through Zoom

Present: Manuel Balán, Peter Barry, Chris Buddle, Nathan Hall, Atagün Kejanlioglu, Roni Khazaka, Caroline Riches, Jenn Riley, Jennifer Ronholm, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Derek Tannis, Laura Winer (Chair), Glenn Zabowski

Regrets: Andrea Creech, Didem Dagdeviren, Adam Finkelstein, Rosalie Jukier, Sarah Leu, Charlene Lewis-Sutherland, Sujata Madan, Divi Maheshwari, Annette Majnemer

Guests: Jessica Latus, Sustainability Officer, McGill Office of Sustainability
Francois Miller, Executive Director, McGill Office of Sustainability
Veronique Brule, Academic Associate, Office for Science Education

1. *Administrative:*
   a) *Adoption of the agenda*: the agenda was adopted as circulated
   b) *Approval of the minutes, December 12, 2021:* the minutes were approved as circulated
   c) *Business arising:* no business arising was identified

2. *Discussion*
   a) *Sustainability in the curriculum* (Jessica Latus, Francois Miller)
   Francois thanked the members for the opportunity to present the initiative and added that he worked closely with Chris and Laura to create the position.

   Jessica provided the members with an overview of the initiative (refer the PDF presentation provided ahead of the meeting) and noted that the sustainability module for students should be launched in the Fall. They are also currently working with faculty to determine their needs. In addition, a website with initial information such as a toolkit or skeleton sets is being developed.

   Roni noted that the importance of the topic for Engineering, and that sustainability will be woven into the new MA program. As well, they are looking to more systematically incorporate sustainability in other programs. Roni asked for a better idea of the outcome being aimed at: is this at the course level, extra-curricular level, and are there specific areas that have been prioritized?

   Jess responded that they are not looking to create new courses, but rather to tweak what is already existing. Further, she noted that Sustainability Office would like to establish an advisory board to help identify goals and capitalize on activities already taking place on Campus.

Francois added that two short-terms goals have been identified. Working in collaboration with TLS, the goals are to:
1. develop a sustainability module similar to It Takes All of Us for students
2. provide training for educators on how to embed sustainability in the classroom and provide concrete examples

Roni asked if there are resources that instructors can be directed towards, and if the Office would be working with individual instructors to provide guidance as needed? Jess responded that the Office is planning on developing a consultation service as well as a discipline-specific bank of resources to create a knowledge base.

Laura added that as Jess begins her work, it would be important to get a sense of what is needed by the community. Laura encouraged members to reach out to Jess and let her know your needs. Since this initiative is in development, there is no guarantee that we can answer everything, but it is important to bring it forward.

In response to another question, Francois has promised to look into whether instructors might apply to the Sustainability Project Fund for funding to hire assistance to help design projects for students.

Nathan noted that social science researchers and graduate students in non-STEM fields might have difficulty seeing how they fit within this initiative, which seems to speak more to research needs. Jess note that sustainability is viewed along three pillars: economic, social justice and sustainability. All EDI work feeds into sustainability.

Laura thanked Jess and Francois and invited members to reach out to Jess directly for any further information or with their questions/suggestions.

b) *Update on Policy on Student Assessment of Learning (PASL)* (Laura Winer)
Members were provided with an update on the PASL, as well as a side-by-side comparison of the current USAP. Further, members were advised that the PASL will be presented to APC at an upcoming meeting for approval. Laura anticipates Senate approval before the end of this academic year.

Since beginning its work in Fall 2019, the Working Group has met 11 times. The PASL has been subjected to wide consultation as well as a discussion at the April 20, 2021 Senate meeting. It should be noted that very little pushback on the principles has been received.

The PASL includes significant changes from the current policy including:
• Recognizing the importance of assessment for learning
• Introducing accountability with a clear reporting path and response time limits
• Less exam-centric with broader understanding of different modes of assessment
• No predetermined distribution of grades nor preset averages
• Rating scale for all assessment tasks
• University-wide framework with local guidelines and procedures. This should provide instructors with flexibility in how they assess their students' learning

The next steps include a final consultation with APC and then Senate. Once approved, the implementation of the PASL is scheduled for Fall 2024. This two+ year implementation window will be used to:

- o Educate and build awareness for instructors and Chairs/Directors
- o Obtain buy-in from community
- o Work to develop rubrics and expand the repertoire of assessment options

It should be noted that additional resources have been requested to support the implementation.

Below are highlights of the ensuing discussion:
- Guiding principles section reads a bit like policy itself, and may be interpreted as such creating some confusion
- PASL states that an assessment rubric can be changed during the term, however students should have the option of remaining with the original grading scheme. Manuel also noted that changing assessments during the term is covered by the Charter of Student Rights, and was never included in the USAP
- PASL will suggest that grading criteria should be distributed at the same time as the assignment itself. This will eliminate the need for instructors to have all this information at the beginning of term as the method of assessment may change based on student learning and how the course is going
- PASL has made it explicit that some Faculties will need to develop their own language based on the intent
- GPS is currently re-examining comprehensive exams and asking instructors to provide rubrics and criteria for assessment. The timeline matches that of the new PASL
- Transition period will be important to manage student expectations. It was noted that the transition period will provide time to build awareness and reduce the possibility of non-compliance.
- USAP will remain in place, but there will be an examination of which areas of the PASL can be implemented right away to ease the transition period

c. *Promoting Thank a Prof within the Faculties* (Laura Winer)
This is a wonderful opportunity for students to thank an instructor for whatever impact they may have had. All submissions are vetted and instructors receive letters with student comments. While the submissions are not anonymous, all student identifying information is redacted prior to the letters being issued. The instructors names are then posted on a [website](#).

We have noticed that there is a significant imbalance in the number of instructors thanked by some Faculties and suspect that this is directly related to communications. In the past, we have worked with the Dean of Students (blurb published in Dean's Corner) and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences to promote the initiative. We would like to find ways to promote this within your Faculties.

Some ideas generated were:
- Nancy to send the text used by Robin in the Dean's Corner to members
- Suggested that this be sent regularly to students in Faculty communications
- Suggested that the text also be sent to Student Advising offices and student societies

Laura thanked the members for the feedback.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm