



# McGill

Teaching and Learning Services

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## Minutes

36<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning (STL)  
of the Academic Policy Committee

Tuesday, 17 January 2012, 10:00am – 12:00pm

McLennan Library building, room MS-74

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**Present:** Nicole Allard, Andre Costopoulos, Julie Cumming, Jaye Ellis, Jane Everett, Alfred Jaeger, Maggie Kilgour, Sharon Roy (CIO delegate), Doreen Starke-Meyerring, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Carole Urbain, Cynthia Weston (Acting Chair), Rich Zereik (Student Services delegate)

**Regrets:** Tom Acker, Ian Henderson, Svetlana Komarova, Jana Luker, Morton Mendelson, Meyer Nahon, Yvonne Steinert

**Guests:** Lina Di Genova, Melissa Duffy, Jean-Paul Rémillieux, Stephanie Talsma, Pierre-André Vungoc, Lydia White, Laura Winer

Cynthia Weston advised that in Morton Mendelson's absence, she would be Acting Chair.

### 1. *Adoption of the agenda*

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

### 2. *Approval of the minutes of 6 December 2011*

The minutes were approved as circulated.

### 3. *Business arising*

#### **3.1 *Revised mandate, Distance Education Working Group (Guests: Jean-Paul Rémillieux, Melissa Duffy and Laura Winer)***

Jean-Paul Rémillieux, Chair of the Distance Education Working Group, updated members on the progress of the new working group since it was struck at the STL meeting of 20 September 2011.

Revised terms of reference were presented for feedback and approval. The ensuing discussion centered on the following points:

- the definition of distance education as “all modes of instruction where students are separated from the instructor by space or time for an entire course” meaning that the course is deliberately designed not to have face-to-face interaction;
- the policy would attempt to clarify the status of blended learning;
- the list of topics to be addressed should be grouped thematically;
- the importance of maintaining the quality of courses and programs;
- how to recognize and integrate online education internally and stimulate university-wide discussions on the topic;

- student fees and accessibility of the courses;
- developing minimum requirements and a consistent of evaluation method for both internally promoted and externally promoted courses/programs.

STL approved the terms of reference and suggested that they be forwarded to APC for review.

**Action:** JP Rémillieux will incorporate the feedback received and the Secretary will forward the revised mandate and terms of reference to APC for its review and approval. JP Rémillieux will be invited to the May 2012 meeting to provide an update on the working group's progress with a draft policy/vision statement aimed for being tabled for discussion by STL in December 2012.

#### **4. Teaching Portfolios (Guest: Lydia White)**

Lydia White, the Associate Provost, Policies, Procedures and Equity, advised the members that she was in the process of reviewing the Guidelines for Developing a Teaching Portfolio in order to simplify the process and clarify the requirements. The following bullet points provide the rationale for the proposed revisions:

- reducing the demands and stress placed on junior faculty and faculty up for promotion or reappointment;
- reducing the emphasis on the teaching approach and leadership activities component of the teaching portfolios;
- clarifying item 4 (Teaching development and educational leadership) which may not be applicable for all faculty members;
- streamlining the tenure committee deliberations.

Although STL members agreed with the desire to reduce the demands and stress place on faculty, some discussion took place on the following issues:

- ensuring that the wording does **not** indicate a scaling back of the importance of teaching;
- ensuring that teaching approach or philosophy continue to be included;
- including advising as a Teaching Responsibility (Item 2);
- adding 'if applicable' to item 4;
- providing example of what educational leadership means;
- providing one integrated guideline to address all three components of the tenure dossier (teaching, research and service to the community);

Although L. White agreed that providing one integrated document would be optimal, her intention was to bring the revised guidelines for the teaching portfolio to Senate for approval by the end of this term. This would ensure that the revised guidelines are in place for use by the next cohort. Guidelines for the research and service components may be drafted afterwards in consultation with other administrative units.

#### **5. Draft guidelines for interpretation of course evaluations (Guests: Laura Winer, Lina Di Genova, Stephanie Talsma and Pierre-André Vungoc)**

Laura Winer presented the draft *Guidelines for Interpretation of Course Evaluations* to members for feedback. These guidelines were developed to reduce the anxiety surrounding course evaluations, increase confidence in the results and increase the usefulness of the results. The guidelines are intended to:

- provide assistance to professors in interpreting the course evaluations results;
- provide assistance to chairs and deans in using the course evaluations results;
- help make the results useful in improving teaching;
- increase the credibility of course evaluations with the students.

Discussion on the draft guidelines ensued with the following points being brought forward:

- it might be useful to include a statement of purpose in the comments section to help instructors not be overwhelmed by the comments;
- the distinction between reporting and interpreting has been clarified;
- the guidelines underscore that statistical analyses are most useful for identifying strengths and weaknesses;
- the guidelines help advise on how to interpret student comments so that they can be used to pin-point areas that may need to be re-examined;

STL members noted the importance of working with students in teaching them how to provide meaningful comments; personal comments are not needed and can be hurtful.

**Action:** L. Winer will incorporate the feedback received and upload the guidelines to the TLS Website. L. White will be provided with the link to the document so it can be included in the 8 February 2012 Information Session on Reappointment for Junior Faculty. In addition, the document will be forwarded to Deans and Chairs of Departments.

## **6. Other business**

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 11:40am.