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## MINUTES

Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning

Tuesday, February 12, 2019 (10:00am – 11:30am)

McLennan Library Building, room MS-12

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**Present:** Chris Buddle, Adam Finkelstein, Jessica Head, Zi Huang, Sujata Madan, Annette Majnemer, Jean-Paul Rémillieux, Kira Smith, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Carole Urbain, Laura Winer (Chair)

**Regrets:** Peter Barry, Robin Beech, Angela Campbell, Miranda Hickman, Svetlana Komarova, Douglas McNabney, Laurent Mydlarski, Vrinda Narain, Lisa Starr, Christelle Tesson

**Guest:** Marcy Slapcoff, Senior Academic Associate, Teaching and Learning Services, and Director, Office of Science Education, Faculty of Science  
Leigh Korey, Academic Associate, Teaching and Learning Services  
Maggie Lattuca, Program Manager, Online Graduate Education

### 1. Administrative

- *Adoption of the agenda:* the agenda was adopted as circulated.
- *Approval of the minutes, September 20, 2018:* the minutes were approved as circulated.
- *Business arising:* no business was identified.
- *Other business:*
  - a) Jean-Paul Rémillieux: *Indigenous communities online*
  - b) Carole Urbain: *ECampus portfolio*

### 2. Discussion

a. *Partnership TLS/Faculty of Science (Marcy Slapcoff, Senior Academic Associate, Teaching and Learning Services, and Director of Science Education)*

Building on the idea begun with the Faculty of Engineering, TLS and the Faculty of Science have established a partnership which embeds an educational developer in the Faculty. This allows the educational developer to develop discipline-specific expertise along with a deeper familiarity with the Faculty's interests and methodology. The goal of the Office of Science Education (OSE) is to engage students in questions in the discipline they are pursuing, and to engage Faculty members in their teaching while maintaining a strong link with TLS.

Several strategies have been identified to guide the work of OSE:

- support teaching innovation at the individual, departmental & faculty level
- collect data about the effectiveness of new approaches to teaching and facilitate Faculty of Science contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning
- collaborate with faculty, students & staff both within Science and across the McGill community
- develop partnerships with external groups interested in science education
- share findings and celebrate success

OSE is staffed by Marcy, Tamara Western, Associate Dean (Education), Anita Parmar (half-time), along with a few consultants and Science students. Marcy noted that they are looking at increasing the interaction with Faculty of Education students as their expertise could be complementary to that of the Science students (teaching and/vs discipline-specific).

Responding to a question from Annette Majnemer, Marcy noted that shifting the culture to one that provides more support and resources to instructors who wish to enhance their teaching is a priority. To begin the dialogue, there were meetings with the department Chairs which allowed Marcy and Tamara to discover what questions are being asked, and how best to align their vision to create an environment that promotes this culture shift. They are also working with the Dean to develop other methods to recognize and reward instructors such as stipends or course releases.

*b. Academic Quality Standards and Procedures (Jean-Paul Rémillieux, School of Continuing Studies)*

The following discussion topic was suggested: what are the experience of McGill faculties, and do they have specific rules and formal procedures in place to define, implement, monitor and evaluate the quality of the student learning experience at the Faculty or departmental level? Jean-Paul noted that there is no formal training and that the resources they have found tend to be very broad. As this can be a delicate topic, SCS is looking for guidelines or experiences from other Faculties that they might be able to build upon.

Annette responded that at the Faculty of Medicine, merit is typically used, however each department has its own evaluation criteria, often based on student evaluations. This can be challenging as they can be perceived as negatively biased. The Faculty is beginning to look at other methods by asking what they are using, how it is used, and how that information can be used to stimulate change.

Sujata Madan noted that instructors at the Executive Institute must obtain a certain grade in their evaluations to have their contracts renewed.

Laura Winer agreed that this is a delicate topic. Unlike colleagues at some sister institutions, McGill Faculty are reluctant to participate in peer observation of teaching. In order to reduce the possibility of biased interpretations, multiple sources of data would be needed along with training, and a shared understanding of the goals and processes. She ended by stating that evidence does not indicate that students “punish” instructors on their course evaluations, however. The only bias research has shown is that the higher the students’ GPA, the more likely they are to complete the evaluations.

Adam Finkelstein noted that a framework for assessing teaching is but one half of the equation. Instructors are recruited for their discipline-specific expertise, but teacher-training is not required; rather they are simply encouraged to attend professional development workshops. Should a program for new Faculty be developed?

Jean-Paul further asked if a philosophy of what is considered good teaching at McGill exists. Laura responded that the guidelines for teaching portfolios address that to some extent, and that they provide a reflection tool. However, the guidelines are more geared towards tenure-track instructors and may not be relevant to contract academic staff.

Chris Buddle noted that online courses seem to be now leading the way in evaluations. Are there any institutions that do it very well?

Maggie Lattuca responded that she is currently scanning universities that have been teaching online for a long time, and noted that two rubrics are used primarily for this purpose. For the McGill Online context, she is currently adapting the rubric produced by the OLC.

Laura added that Leigh Korey, who would be working in partnership with the Desautels Faculty of Management, hails from the University of Michigan, and that they have a strong background in peer observation. A culture shift is slowly taking place as can be seen with the partnerships with Engineering, Science and now Management. There has never been a sense of urgency to address teaching assessment, but perhaps we can use the momentum to approach the topic again.

**Action:** Consensus was reached that STL should begin to develop a framework for peer observation.

*b. Update on the Student Assessment Policy (Chris Buddle, Dean of Students)*

Members were reminded that at their meeting of February 20, 2018, the former Deputy Provost presented a draft of the *Pedagogical Principles for Assessment (STL2018-02-08)* for feedback. Chris advised that the document has now been updated and that he would like to use it as a guideline to re-write the Policy itself. Originally drafted in 2011, the Policy underwent a small revision in 2016; however it is more prescriptive/punitive based, than principles-based. The intent would be to draft a policy that is pedagogically strong, and promotes a healthy teaching and learning environment for students and instructors.

The proposal is to have members of STL with additional participants, serve as an advisory group (1 meeting/term), with a smaller group meeting on a regular basis (~every 3 weeks or so) to draft the re-write. Chris anticipates that this would be a two-year commitment from STL.

**Action:** STL members supported the proposal, and will be kept in the loop as the dossier advances and membership, work schedule is concretized.

### 3. Other business

*a. Jean-Paul Remillieux and Indigenous communities online:* Jean-Paul recently met with Janine Metallic, Assistant Professor (Indigenous Education), to become better informed about the online Indigenous community. Laura added that TLS has been approached by a TV producer who created a wealth of content on Indigenous education, and was looking for suggestions on making the resources available. She is meeting with Janine and Angela Campbell to discuss the potential in the next few weeks. In addition, TLS has been meeting with the University of Saskatchewan, and are working on an invitation to McGill.

**Action:** Nancy will invite Janine to join the members at its next meeting. Further, Laura will provide an update on the meeting with Angela Campbell and the discussions with the University of Saskatchewan.

*b. Carole Urbain and ECampus:* Carole asked if anyone was aware of a government initiative to launch an ECampus portfolio. Laura responded that she had participated in a few meetings shortly after the launch, but that the initiative itself seems to have stalled.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30am.