



General Faculties Council
Committee on the Learning Environment
Approved Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, February 06, 2019
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Sarah Forgie, Chair
Fahed Elian (delegate)
Geoff Harder (delegate)
Akanksha Bhatnagar
Robert Desjardins
Kyle Foster
Brian Maraj
Janice Miller-Young
Jeff Rawlings

Norma Rodenburg
Mani Vaidyanathan
Stanley Varnhagen
Christine Wiesenthal
Kevin Zentner

Janice Causgrove Dunn
Eva Lemaire
Jennifer Tupper
Janet Wesselius

Staff:
Meg Brolley, GFC Secretary

REGRETS:
Masoud Aliramezani
Dale Askey

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Varnhagen/Miller-Young

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 5, 2018

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Maraj/Zentner

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Open Session Minutes of December 5, 2018.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

The Chair noted that she and Mr Rawlings had presented the report on 2017/18 USRIs discussed at CLE in December 2018 to GFC on January 28, 2019. She provided an update on the GFC discussion of the early opening date of the USRIs *on* rather than *after* the course drop date. Mr Rawlings noted that this occurred when the drop date was a Friday in order to avoid the first day for USRIs being a Saturday. He reported that: there was a significant drop in response rates over the entire period when USRIs opened on a Saturday, there was no one available at the university to answer student questions and no vendor support on Saturdays, and that his team had removed all USRI responses from students who had subsequently withdrawn from the course. The

committee discussed response rates and the window of time for USRIs responses; the Chair noted that the committee would discuss this further in conjunction with the new procedures at upcoming meetings.

The Chair reported that the Provost's Office engaged the Centre for Teaching and Learning to produce a white paper as requested by CLE on the use of long form handwriting for examination purposes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Zero/Low cost Textbook Course Indicator on Bear Tracks

Presenter(s): Akanksha Bhatnagar, Vice-President Academic, Students' Union

Purpose of the Proposal: This discussion item will be to look at how the University of Alberta can incorporate an indicator, category, or filter to courses in Bear Tracks with zero or low textbook costs (ZTC, hereafter). ZTC indicators can allow students to find low-cost course options through simple input like selecting a dropdown menu option, and has already been piloted at other Canadian institutions.

Discussion:

Ms Bhatnagar provided a presentation on the results of a student survey on the perceived value of textbooks, alternate ways to access materials, cost barriers, and benefits of a low cost textbook indicator for courses. She noted that this was discussed at the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) who supported the initiative and noted: sometimes there is no choice due to program requirements, students would consider this as one of many criteria in choosing courses, co-creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) could increase collaboration amongst instructors.

Members expressed comments and questions, including but not limited to: gathering requirements and inputting data, the Bear Tracks system, whether textbook information is available when students are registering for courses, potential for cost being a deterrent to registering for a course, that a disproportionate focus on this indicator could result in students making decisions detrimental to their education. Members suggested that an indicator that OER is available could be a good compromise. Also noted were the efforts of instructors to reduce costs, alternative sources of textbooks and other resources, and reserved materials available at the Libraries. Members noted the importance of students being able to make informed choices.

The committee discussed what constitutes an OER and how widely they were used. The Chair indicated that an invitation would be issued to Krysta McNutt and Michelle Brailey to provide further information to the committee on OER.

5. Student Success/Learning Analytics Ethics Framework

Presenter(s): Jeff Rawlings

Purpose of the Proposal: General discussion and feedback

Discussion:

Mr Rawlings provided an overview on the item, the use of analytics to enhance student success in a course, and the need for an ethical framework for using data. He noted the data in Moodle has some learning analytics available.

Members expressed several comments and questions, including but not limited to: FOIP restrictions on the collection and use of data; research ethics; information contained in eclass - how instructors use it during the course and is there a framework on the use of that data; who owns the data; how will the use of learning analytics impact students; do students opt-in or opt-out on the collection and use of their data; transparency and confidentiality; and the importance of having clear principles to use in decision making.

6. Teaching Policy (documents to follow)

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee for discussion and in preparation for early consultation at the GFC Executive Committee and GFC.

Discussion:

The committee discussed the document and provided comments, including but not limited to: maintaining student learning as the ultimate goal; training graduate students to be teachers; the importance of providing a safe environment for teaching innovation; integration of research and teaching; the use of technology appropriate to the specific course. The Chair invited members to continue to comment on the draft document through the google document.

7. Updates

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) – Dr Miller-Young noted the call for proposals for the Festival of Teaching and Learning, May 2, and noted the keynote speakers scheduled.

B. Information Technology – No report.

C. Learning Services – Dr Harder reported on the February roll out of the OER platform and indicated that the Digital Scholarship Centre would have a soft launch in April.

D. General Faculties Council – Ms Brolley reported that GFC had met on January 28 and in addition to the USRI report, considered standing committee terms of reference, revisions to the Animal Ethics Policy and Procedures, the draft Employee Code of Conduct, and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Strategic Plan.

E. Academic Success Centre – Dr Desjardins noted the accessibility resources available at the centre and spoke about the fresh start program.

8. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

9. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots

There were no items.

10. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm

