



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

Wednesday, January 26, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

John Nychka, Chair
Kathy Haddadkar
Abner Monteiro
Ali Shari
Connie Winther
Norma Rodenburg
Mary Olukotun
Christine Hughes
Gregory Thomas
Benjamin Cheung

Bora Kim
Angie Mandeville
Hollis Lai
Pierre Lemelin
Al Meldrum
Shauna Wilton
Angela Bayduza
non-voting:
Tommy Mayberry
Ben Louie (for Lara McClelland)
Kate Peters

REGRETS:

Ashmeen Aneja
Brad Hamdon
Mike MacGregor
Heather Richholt, Coordinator

Staff:

Edyta McLoughlin, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair of GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Discussion:

Before opening the meeting, the Chair made the following territorial acknowledgement:

The University of Alberta resides on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. To acknowledge the territory is to recognize the longer history of these lands and signifies our commitment to working in Good Relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as we engage in our institutional work.

Motion: Wilton/Hughes

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 1, 2021

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair of CLE

Motion: Lemelin/Shiri

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of December 1, 2021.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair of CLE

Discussion:

The Chair thanked CLE member Shauna Wilton for her acceptance of an invitation to serve on the Festival of Teaching and Learning committee. He also extended thanks to the numerous members of CLE who had supported multiple committees, which worked to develop the UAPPOL Teaching and Learning policy suite.

He called upon Norma Rodenburg to provide an update on behalf of the Public Health Response Team (PHRT) and the Academic Impacts Team (AIT). She noted the quick turn in events in terms of the University functioning in December and the decision to start in a remote mode. She expressed optimism about the return to Campus and the work that is going on to ensure that transition was smooth. She spoke to the work of the AIT, in particular their support to develop information, resources, tools and guidelines for students and instructors on admissions, program completion and the academic schedule.

The Chair, who is also a member of AIT, invited members of CLE to reach out with any concerns about the return to Campus.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Updates:

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Presenter(s): Tommy Mayberry, Executive Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Discussion:

T Mayberry provided an update on the hiring for two new lead Educational Developers – the Assessment and Evaluation Team and the Critical Pedagogies and Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Team. He invited the committee to join him in welcoming them to CTL. He also shared the information on the upcoming Open Education Symposium and the Festival of Teaching and Learning and promised to provide additional details to committee members later. He informed the committee that CTL is looking for expertise and individuals who have experience on digital technologies and pedagogies for online, hybrid and digital formats. He expressed a hope of finding individuals who could lead work in those portfolios.

B. Facilities and Operations

Presenter(s): Ben Louie, University Architect, Facilities & Operations

Discussion:

B Louie provided an update on the space optimization work and the support of two committees reminding the Committee of his earlier update at CLE in the Fall. He spoke to the upcoming work to consult with members of the University committee on needs for space that will inform space planning. The process is being called “Space Inventory” and will be supported by KPMG. They will be working to identify four types of space and gather information on the needs. The work will not be limited to quantitative information, but also contributions from individuals who can share information on their specific needs. There will not be any analysis in the short term, rather there will be data collection through the survey, and the committee will be reviewing the information once compiled.

D. Library and Museums

Presenter(s): Connie Winther, Head, Faculty Engagement (Health Sciences), University Libraries

Discussion:

C Winther noted that while libraries are closed, there is spaces available for students with masking and social distancing required.

A member asked about the increase of usage of the space available in the library and related the needs of students, especially for WIFI, and that some students are hoping to see different library spaces open. Representatives from the library explained that currently, given the space usage statistics, there are no plans to increase capacity. They added that Cameron library fulfills a number of technology needs and that access through OneCard has ensured individuals are safe.

E. General Faculties Council

Presenter(s): Kate Peters, GFC Secretary and Manager, GFC Services

Discussion:

K Peters provided an update on timelines and decision making related to changes to the GFC Meeting Procedural Rules, the pathway for the decision-making on the Teaching and Learning Policy, and the upcoming replenishment cycle for GFC and GFC Standing Committees.

ACTION ITEMS

5. Election of Vice-Chair (no documents)

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair of CLE

Purpose of the Proposal: To elect a Vice-Chair for the CLE.

Discussion:

The Chair thanked member Hollis Lai for agreeing to serve in the role of Vice-Chair and asked if there were any additional nominations. Hearing none, the Chair declared H Lai elected by acclamation.

The Chair then stepped out of the chair explaining that as proponent, he would be speaking to the proposal and thanked the Vice-Chair for agreeing to chair the item.

6. Approval of the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy Suite and Rescission of GFC Policy Manual Section 111: Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee to seek approval of the Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation Policy Suite and concurrent rescission of GFC Policy 111.

Discussion:

The Vice-Chair began by explaining that CLE has authority as set out in 5.1 and 5.7 of the Committee Terms of reference. He further explained that there are two motions before CLE. The first motion is to recommend the policy suite to the Board as presented. He clarified that CLE is recommending that the approval of future revisions to the Appendix come to CLE for approval and that approval of future revisions to the procedure would require approval by the Provost and CLE. The second motion is to recommend that GFC rescind GFC Policy 111 pending final approval of the new policy suite.

W Rodgers noted that this proposal was supported by pedagogical theory developed in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning. J Nychka reminded members that the proposal was anchored in the values of the University and the importance of setting out a concrete framework to enact the mission of the University. The scope of the project was presented, and the placement of the ten USRI questions currently set out in the GFC Policy Manual 111 in Appendix A of the policy was clarified. J Nychka explained the plans for work on the Appendix to ensure the questions are revised, validated and verified in collaboration with CRAME and a working group. He also spoke to the need for different appendices for different contexts such as clinical settings, online or virtual teaching.

He encouraged members to consider the elements included in the SPOT procedure, especially the need for student feedback to be collected in a timely manner, that it should be specific and actionable, the ways that questions can avoid bias, and that questions be crafted in a way that is useful to the instructor.

Finally, he spoke to the plans to revise the Appendix and the development of questions by the CRAME Advisory Working Group to CLE. This work is not included in the decision before CLE but will be supported by the approved procedure.

The committee expressed thanks for all the work that had gone into the proposal. Members asked questions and received answers, and made comments, including but not limited to:

- The value of appendices for discipline-specific pedagogy;
- An opinion that mixing old and new questions was valuable;
- Concern that the limitation of use of the general survey questions when there is no instructor is responsible for at least 20% of the course will have a negative impact on instructors' ability to receive feedback and perhaps even impact their motivation to teach;
- That the 20% threshold is related to workflow and that moving forward, this could be addressed by having more focused and specific surveys for different contexts;
- A suggestion that a new rationale be included for the purpose of course evaluation, specifically, that they be articulated to "provide formative and summative data to instructors in the development of their teaching skills, expertise, and scholarship";
- The acceptance of the language to be added under 2a as a friendly amendment:
 - o Under C.2.a "to provide formative data used by instructors to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses and, in doing so, giving guidance for the improvement or refinement of teaching skills, expertise, and scholarship, and to improve the students' learning experience;", where there would be an addition of the terms expertise and scholarship;
- That "summative and formative data" is included elsewhere in the document but that formative data will be captured as set out in 2b; and
- The status of existing approved questions set out in the Appendix, and the plans to update the questions based on recommendations from the working group and task forces

Motion: Shiri/Cheung

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment recommend that the Board of Governors approve the proposed UAPPOL Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy Suite as amended, and as set forth in Attachments 1, 2 and 3, to take effect July 1, 2022.

CARRIED

Motion: Shiri/Cheung

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment recommend that General Faculties Council rescind GFC Policy 111 pending final approval of the UAPPOL Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy suite, to take effect July 1, 2022.

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

7. Exploration Credits

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Norma Rodenburg, Interim Deputy Registrar Abner Monteiro, Vice President Academic, University of Alberta Students' Union

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is to get advice on the adoption of an Exploration Credits policy at the University of Alberta.

Discussion:

The proponents provided an update on the final proposal for the development of regulation on exploration credits for implementation in the next academic year. In particular, they presented on changes made to address feedback received in the fall of 2021. They explained that this proposal would come to Programs Committee for recommendation in February and for approval by GFC in March.

Members discussed the possibility of adding a clear statement to define "exploration" credits in the hopes this will clarify the intent of this policy for students. The proponents noted that the Calendar language represents the policy statement but there could and should also be other avenues for communicating these changes to students including the development of a website, making sure advisors have the information and key messages, and that information would be provided to students when they apply. They also discussed the ways that Faculties can help to ensure that as many courses as possible are open for exploration.

Members discussed the grading mechanisms that are set out in the policy and the blind spots that instructors will have about the students who have received and CR/NC grade.

8. Question Period

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), and Chair of CLE

Discussion:

CLE discussed the issues that students are experiencing in the current remote learning context and received information about a recent student survey. In particular, WIFI instability, practicum uncertainty, negative experiences with remote proctoring, unstable living situations, and instructors indicating that their courses will continue online even after the return to in-person learning at the end of February. The committee discussed the need to bolster communication with students and instructors, the role of Department chairs in communicating with Faculty and staff, the staff and resources within CTL, the impact on attendance and the student experience more generally, and the need for CLE to inform the work of the AIT. Members also remarked the significant burden that is being placed on faculty and instructors at the University. The committee supported the need to work on improving the online experience more generally and spoke about the ways that community members can innovate, support each other, and share practices for effective teaching.

INFORMATION REPORTS

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

9. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

- University of Alberta Mail - Request for Feedback_ Draft Indigenous Institutional Strategic Plan
- University of Alberta Mail - TLE Policy Suite - Request for Feedback

CLOSING SESSION

10. Adjournment:
 - Next meeting of CLE: March 30, 2022
 - Next meeting of GFC: January 31, 2022

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.