

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

Wednesday, November 29, 2023  
SAB 3-07  
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

**ATTENDEES:**

Karsten Mundel (Chair) Shauna Wilton (Vice-Chair) Pedro Almeida Angela Bayduza Federick Brick Kim Frail Zachary Friggstad Christine Hughes Rija Kamran Jesse Luyendyk	Pauline Paul Muneeba QaDir Allison Sivak Gregory Thomas Patrick von Hauff  <u>Non-Voting Members</u> Ashley Bhatia Deanna Davis Kate Peters Jeff Rawlings (Delegate IST)	<u>Regrets</u> John Hu Jana Grekul Chris Reyns-Chikuma John Lemieux  <u>Guests</u> Orest Zwozdesky  <u>Staff</u> Faiza Billo
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**OPENING SESSION**

*Presenter(s):* Karsten Mündel, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair, Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE); Orest Zwozdesky, Indigepreneur and Chief Value Officer of Orest Zwozdesky International

The Chair invited O Zwozdesky to lead the committee in ceremony. O Zwozdesky invited members to smudge if they wished.

The Chair acknowledged that the University of Alberta is located on Treaty 6 territory and that we respect the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

O Zwozdesky asked members to consider and to share how to approach our current work with a beginner's mind and to help us to remember this on an ongoing basis.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Karsten Mündel, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair, Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

*Discussion:*

The Chair offered the opportunity to provide input, items or feedback on the agenda. Hearing none, he suggested the committee move forward with the agenda as set out.

2 Comments from the Chair (no documents)

*Presenter(s)*: Karsten Mündel, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair, CLE

*Discussion:*

The Chair introduced a new member of CLE, the interim director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), D Davis. He then provided updates and made comments related to:

- a new Learning Management System (LMS);
- the newly selected Syllabus Tool for the University;
- Teaching Awards; and
- The Awards for Faculty Excellence and a request for a member of CLE to sit on the Adjudication Committee.

J Luyendyk, the delegate of the Vice-Provost and University Registrar on CLE, provided updates on exam scheduling changes for the 2024-2025 academic year. He noted:

- the provisions set out in policy for the academic schedule with regards to scheduling exams;
- that three exams will be scheduled per day because of recurring issues leaving the university short on teaching days and impacting exam periods;
- increased needs for consolidated exams and accommodations, and overlapping exam conflicts;
- that the University of Alberta joins other U15 institutions that schedule three exams per day; and
- proposed timing of exams and the creation of a policy for deferred exams when students are asked to sit more than three exams in a 24 hour period.

Members asked about the start and end time for exams and commented on the pressures of childcare responsibilities for students who parent.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

3. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of September 27, 2023

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of September 27, 2023.

**CARRIED**

**ACTION ITEMS**

4. ProDean for Graduate Examinations

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s)*: Micah True, Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS)

*Discussion:*

The Chair reminded members of their authority to review and recommend to GFC on policy and regulations related to student evaluation that apply to a substantial group of students. M True presented the change to graduate regulations and clarified that the proposed changes apply to all graduate exams. He explained that the intention of the ProDean role was designed to be an advocate for student interests and to ensure procedural fairness. M True mentioned that the ProDean may not be appropriately versed with the students' thesis and/or disciplinary area and, therefore, should not be allocated a vote unless in the rare circumstances a vote is required to break a tie. M True indicated that the proposal seeks to: remove the vote from the ProDean; clarify their role to ask questions, correct procedural problems, adjourn an exam, and ensure fairness to the student; and establishes the ProDean as an individual who can break a tie in rare cases where a tie is possible. He further noted that the U of A is currently the only university in the U15 who has a voting ProDean.

The Chair moved in a circle to determine if members were in agreement with the proposal moving forward to GFC in January. Seeing no indications that members had any questions/comments and that no one opposed, the Chair stated that the proposal could move forward with a recommendation from CLE.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 5. Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Sarah Wolgemuth, Project Director, Student Experience Action Plan, Office of the Deputy Provost (Students and Enrolment); Danielle Gardiner Milln, PhD Student in the Faculty of Education and Lead on the SEAP Project

*Discussion:*

S Wolgemuth and D Gardiner Milln noted that these proposals had been developed through co-creation with students in collaboration with the campus community. They outlined the phases of development and implementation for SEAP and described the content within the plan. They emphasized areas of short term foci and described how they had come to prioritize these areas. Finally, they left the members with a link to the draft accountability framework that will support accountability, as well as a question of what SEAP could look like in the classroom.

Members asked questions and made comments including, but not limited to:

- how the data collected reflected different experiences across faculties and programs, especially in professional programs where they are learning on the job as much as they are learning in a professional context;
- whether the priority of safety included lab safety, and the experience in different learning facilities; and
- the perspective of non-academic staff and what opportunities are available for staff to participate in co-creation.

### 6. Teaching Evaluation in Clinical Contexts

*Presenter(s):* Trish Mann, Associate Dean, Education, College of Health Sciences - Dean's Office

*Discussion:*

T Mann explained her work to develop a clinical context appendix as Associate Dean in Health Sciences Education. T Mann spoke to her work within the College of Health Sciences to collaborate on teaching and the diversity and variability within the College including: early discussions on an Appendix C for evaluating teaching in clinical environments; the Framework of Effective Teaching to support discussions; and the adaptation when it came to aspects like the learning environment. T Mann noted there was currently a best practice document for evaluation across different programs and the tensions that exist as well as the desire to ensure more consistency across the health sciences faculties.

Members asked questions and made comments including, but not limited to:

- the definition of clinical instructors and whether they were currently being evaluated using SPOT;
- the small number of students in many cases who are exempt from the SPOT policy and the methods by which these student perspectives could be captured;
- the possibility of the self-evaluation of teaching in cases where it is not possible to get student feedback; and

- clinical faculty in Medicine and Dentistry and what these instructors were looking for in terms of evaluation.

7. Review of the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy - Appendix A: Student Perspectives of Teaching (SPOT) Survey

*Presenter(s):* Lia Daniels, Professor, Faculty of Education; Sara Dorow, Director, Faculty of Arts - Deans Office; Michelle Marato, Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts -Sociology; Celine Beaulieu, Graduate Teaching Assistantship, Faculty of Arts

*Discussion:*

Members were reminded about the commitment to a formal evaluation of the SPOT tool. L Daniels noted that the evaluation included mixed methods to evaluate the implementation of SPOT surveys and the guiding question of: "would information from this question help you improve your teaching?" She reminded members that the SPOT survey had been designed in a rigorous manner and spoke to linkages with the Framework for Effective Teaching. M Marato then spoke to the design of the evaluation, which is being supported through a Sociology course on research, indicating that students will have the opportunity to support development of a student and instructor survey and support data analysis and reporting. She noted the guiding research questions that cover both instructor and student perspectives and the comparison between USRIs and SPOT questions. She expressed hope that they would receive about 200 responses from students and about 100 responses from instructors in each of the three colleges, noting that in addition to surveys, focus groups would be run in each of the colleges to obtain more detailed responses to questions. L Daniels emphasized the value of student involvement in the project.

Members asked questions and made comments including, but not limited to:

- the outcomes and reporting;
- suggested timing on the distribution of the instructor surveys;
- consideration of the standalone faculties as well as the Colleges;
- the SPOT data available from the institution;
- Academic Teaching Staff (ATS) perspectives and the challenges associated with inconsistent employment;
- ATS employment parameters constraining instructors and the corresponding impact on the teaching and learning environments and inequitable SPOT results as an outcome;
- the high proportion of ATS instructors and the effect on quality education and its' evaluation; perhaps considering a different tool for ATS instructors may be valuable;
- how the project could contribute to a broader conversation of how ATS can progress in the university;
- ensuring feedback is gathered by varied means in diverse constituencies (e.g. department Chairs)
- occurrences where SPOT results are distributed 20 days after the course was not presented in that window;
- suggestions that providing historical data to instructors may assist instructors with considering change in pedagogy and could assist with growth; and
- that the Framework for Effective Teaching and other improvements could better assist some of the challenges and that SPOT is only one aggregate of many as a part of this work.

8. Revised Draft of the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy - Appendix B: Multifaceted Evaluation of Teaching: Indicators and Evidence

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Karsten Mündel, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair GFC Committee on the Learning Environment; Bradley Ambury, Lead Educational Developer, Provost & Vice-President Academic - Centre for Teaching and Learning

*Discussion:*

The Chair noted that the Centre for Teaching Learning was supporting the development of Appendix B on Multifaceted Evaluation of Teaching. B Ambury noted that the Framework for Effective Teaching was the foundation for the work and that indicators within the framework were being used to generate evidence that could be used in multifaceted evaluation of teaching. B Ambury noted that evidence was divided into three different voices - students, peers, and instructors, and that the document is intended to be used as a tool or reference for the university community.

K Mundel asked members to consider the domain for the learning environment that the instructor doesn't have control over such as the scheduling of the class, the classroom environment, and the technology available. Noting the time, the Chair asked members to consider whether this document should be provided to GFC in January.

Members asked questions and made comments including, but not limited to:

- that the evidence being set out in the document should be contextualized to ensure it can be actioned;
- the possibility of different presentation formatting;
- whether indicators needed to be repeated for each domain;
- the prominence of content of the Framework for Effective Teaching in the Appendix;
- the distinction between formative and summative evaluation in the use of the Framework and the value of having a document that can serve both purposes; and
- if the document could be articulated as a form of documentation of artifacts that members are more familiar with, (e.g. course outlines, SPOT, self-reflection etc.).

The Chair considered the feedback received from the Committee and committed to bringing back the document before forwarding to GFC for discussion.

9. Question Period

*Presenter(s):* Karsten Mündel, Acting Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair, CLE

*Discussion:*

Item was deferred.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

10. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

- Meeting Cancellation Notice - October 26, 2023

**CLOSING SESSION**

11. Closing Circle

*Presenter:* Orest Zwozdesky, Indigepreneur and Chief Value Officer of Orest Zwozdesky International

*Discussion:* Members were asked to consider how they might co-create feedback that they might like to receive.

12. Adjournment
  - Next meeting of CLE: January 24, 2024
  - Next meeting of GFC: January 29, 2024