



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

Wednesday, December 04, 2019
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

John Nychka, Chair
Cathy Adams
Joel Agarwal
Radim Barta
Ivan Fair
Bora Kim
Mike MacGregor

Brian Maraj
Janice Miller-Young
Milad Nazarahari
Norma Rodenburg
Jennifer Tupper
Mani Vaidyanathan
Christine Wiesenthal

REGRETS:

Dale Askey
Pascal Lupien
Amber Sayed

Staff:

David Epp, Coordinator

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Maraj/Adams

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of October 30, 2019

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Wiesenthal/MacGregor

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of October 30, 2019.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

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

Discussion: The Chair welcomed new committee members Bora Kim, support staff representative, and Ivan Fair, department chair representative.

The Chair noted that at the November 25, 2019 meeting, GFC approved the revised CLE Terms of Reference that will go into effect January 1, 2020, the thesis-based Master's and PhD learning outcomes, and the statement on free expression. GFC approved the addition of one sentence to the statement: "*However, this administrative discretion should not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with the University of Alberta's overarching commitment to free expression.*" The statement will now move forward to the Board of Governors

for December 13 and the final, approved version needs to be posted by December 15 to meet Government requirements.

The Chair noted that he attended the November 28, 2019 Council on Student Affairs (COSA) meeting to receive feedback on teaching evaluation and assessment and that their main concern was the availability of USRI data for students.

The Chair gave a brief update on budget implications, noting that details are not final but it is clear that the cuts over the next 3 years will be severe, creating a challenge to maintain excellent teaching and learning.

The Chair provided an update on Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and experiential learning noting that: owing to the complicated nature of WIL, the University will work toward agreeing upon a more high-level definition of WIL; the Campus Bridge Coalition uses an ORBIS software platform to track all opportunities for experiential learning and to make connections and job placements with the Career Centre; course descriptions should include *how* a course is being taught; and how to track teaching effectiveness of experiential and other types of learning.

The Chair noted that the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) call for applications is out and that information on priority areas can be found on the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) website.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. FGSR Supervisory Tool: Supervisor-Student Guidelines, Standardized Annual Progress Report

Presenter(s): Brooke Milne, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee because it introduces two new tools to assist in the administration of the supervisor-student relationship and to more consistently monitor student progress in program. The first tool is the Student Supervisor Guidelines. The second tool is a standardized Annual Progress Report form.

Discussion: Dr Milne provided background information on the proposed tools that will provide a mechanism for graduate students to have conversations with their supervisor and receive timely, meaningful feedback. Dr Milne noted that the university has 7,600 graduate students and is the only U15 institution without a centralized reporting structure, and reports are required in 11 of the U15 institutions. Dr Milne requested that committee members provide feedback on the content, as the format will be changing, noted that the dates referenced are working dates not final dates, and any further feedback can be emailed to her.

Comments and questions from members included, but were not limited to: flexible timelines for striking a committee and the need to meet with an advisor if a committee is not struck in the first year of the program; the form would replace existing documentation practices and be prepared in tandem with an accreditation document if required, and would normally be filled out only at the beginning of the program; whether implementation could give a supervisor too much power and disadvantage the student; some supervisors may resent a central requirement and prefer to let departments provide oversight on a trust basis; implementing this should be a minimum requirement because it is not an equal power relationship; technical details would be at the department level and reports can be run to trigger conversations if forms are not completed; the forms will help reassure students that they can be proactive if they have an unresponsive supervisor and any misuse of the forms will draw attention to them; the Graduate Students' Association did a survey on this topic and helped develop the form; and the tone of the form's language is not gentle but it needs to be clear and direct.

5. Information Technology Steering Committee-Teaching and Learning (ITSC-TL) Update (no documents)

Presenter(s): Jeff Rawlings, Director, Digital Learning Environments

Discussion: Mr Rawlings explained that the committee provides direction for IT in teaching and learning, and provided an update on the ITSC-TL meeting of October 16, 2019, which was the first meeting of the academic year and mainly dealt with orientation of new members. Topics included the terms of reference, governance structure, strategy overview, and related initiatives. The next meeting is December 5, 2019 and the main topic will be the impact of the budget cuts and what the Faculties' response to them will be.

6. Student Rights and Responsibilities Resource

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

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee to gain feedback on a planned approach to improving students' awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the context of University Policy.

Discussion: Ms Bhatnagar used a presentation, which utilized survey results, to provide background information on the issue that most students are unfamiliar with the substance of student policy documents and do not know how to access information on how to make an appeal. The proposed solution is to create a Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities that will serve as a consolidated document of all of a student's rights and responsibility, creating a culture of improved clarity and accountability, with a preamble to set the tone of the document. Ms Bhatnagar noted that once the document is made available online it will have to be publicized, and will augment what students hear at orientation.

Comments and questions from members included, but were not limited to: possibly include a link to the document in course syllabi; the Graduate Students' Association are working on their version of this; the consolidation of documents is helpful; use language that resonates with students and don't replicate the original policy; link to details not in the overview document, perhaps in a list of FAQs; how to choose the most important policies to include; maintaining the document will be handled by staff in the Students' Union; and many comments of support for the idea.

7. Learning Spaces on Campus (no documents)

Presenter(s): Lorna Baker-Perri, Director, Space Management; Norma Rodenburg, Associate Registrar

Discussion: Ms Baker-Perri used a presentation to inform the committee on space management objectives, governance, process, responsibilities, principles, terminology, definitions, and current priorities. Ms Rodenburg provided information on scheduling and timetabling considerations.

8. An Ethics Framework for Student Learning Analytics

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Mike MacGregor, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Services & Technology)

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee to discuss and provide input into the proposed ethics framework.

Discussion: Dr MacGregor noted that the proposal for an ethics framework is only to inform and guide the use of student learning analytics, not mental health.

Comments and questions from members included, but were not limited to: the utilization of analytics is organically driven by instructors, departments, and program requirements; the cost is high for data analytics and this proposal is just to guide their use, not to implement; there would be a large cost if poorly implemented, including a loss of reputation; the university community needs to be adequately informed; there must be compliance with the privacy policy and the IT users and management policy; consent is required for only some of the data available, not for things such as mouse clicks on university web pages, although instructors should reveal to students that those are visible; instructor and teaching analytics are not being considered; and the programs that are behind this are to promote student success.

9. Updates

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) – Dr Miller-Young noted that the Alberta OER (Open Educational Resources) Community of Practice will hold a one-day summit spanning topics of policy, copyright, pedagogy, technology, and copyright on May 20, 2020.

B. Information Technology – Mr Rawlings reported that the Learning Assessment Centre (LAC) evaluation was completed it will be funded for at least one more year. Deferred exams are facilitated through the LAC.

C. Learning Services – There was no update.

D. General Faculties Council – Dr Adams reported that GFC met on November 25, 2019 and that the President commented on the budget, the clean air strategy, and the Board/GFC/Senate summit on January 24, 2020. Action items included the statement on free expression, the revised CLE terms of reference, the thesis-based Master's and PhD Learning Outcomes, and the Student Financial Support policy suite were all approved. Early consultation items included the proposed graduate student-supervisor tools, the ethics framework for student learning analytics, and weapons on campus.

10. Question Period

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

A member commented on the increased demand for accessibility resources on the small staff under the Dean of Students.

INFORMATION REPORTS

11. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable) (no items to date)

12. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings Link to an Alex Usher blog post entitled "That Alberta Budget."

CLOSING SESSION

13. Adjournment

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