



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

Wednesday, April 28, 2021  
Zoom Virtual Meeting  
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

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**ATTENDEES:**

John Nychka, Chair  
Benjamin Cheung  
Bora Kim  
Janice Kung  
Hollis Lai  
Brian Maraj  
Kerry Mummery  
Karsten Mündel

Connie Winther  
Cheryl Poth  
Sachiketha Reddy  
Norma Rodenburg  
Ali Shiri

*non-voting:*  
Mike MacGregor  
Kate Peters

**REGRETS:**

Abner Monteiro  
Cosette Lemelin  
Pascal Lupien  
Simran Ghoman  
David Draper  
Ivan Fair

Staff:

Heather Richholt, Coordinator

**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), Chair GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Motion: Poth/Mündel

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

**CARRIED**

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of March 3, 2021

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Motion: Cheung/Maraj

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of March 2, 2021.

**CARRIED**

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

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

*Discussion:*

The Chair noted that Fall 2021 planning continued in particular the necessary changes to accommodate in-person learning.

The Chair thanked student members who were completing their mandates and welcomed Karsten Mündel, serving as a Provost Fellow on work-integrated and experiential learning activities, and Connie Winther, who would be serving as delegate for the Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian. In addition, the Chair noted that several member mandates were expiring, and thanked them for their service.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 4. Updates

#### A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

*Dr Lemelin was not in attendance.*

#### B. Information Technology - Technology Specifications

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

#### *Discussion:*

After providing confirmation that the Technology Specifications for students have been updated on the IST website, Dr MacGregor noted that 50 classrooms would be outfitted with technology for remote delivery, including video and audio technology. He indicated that this work would be accomplished over the summer and asked members to provide feedback on essential technology for recording for asynchronous delivery.

Dr MacGregor explained that IST was working to find a video platform to organize video content for the University. The ideal platform would provide both archival and enhanced engagement with students; for example, in-class quizzes, feedback to instructors, and collaboration. The Teaching and Learning Steering and Advisory committees were already providing feedback on the requirements for these platforms.

Members asked how the classrooms and technologies were selected for updates. Associate Registrar Rodenburg responded that classrooms were identified by their size, usage, location on campus, and existing technological capabilities. She noted that classrooms were centrally booked and that additional classrooms were being considered for remote delivery technology as well.

Dr MacGregor committed to bring back information on the final technologies implemented in classrooms.

#### C. Library and Museums

*Presenter(s):* Connie Winther, Associate University Librarian

#### *Discussion:*

Ms Winther noted that Cameron library opened briefly and then was closed in compliance with Public Health Regulations. She provided an update on plans for Fall, 2021.

#### D. General Faculties Council

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

#### *Discussion:*

Ms Peters provided an update on several items coming forward to GFC including:

- Consultation on the GFC Meeting Procedural Rules and the Roles and Responsibilities of Members;
- Consultation on the creation of a new GFC Standing Committee made up of Indigenous members who would make decisions on documentation of Indigeneity for the purpose of admission or academic awards in cases where documentation could not be provided according to existing regulations;

- Consultation on disbanding the GFC Undergraduate Awards and Bursaries Committee; and
- Questions on the GFC Facilities Development Committee and the GFC University Teaching Awards Committee.

5. Update on the Provost's Taskforce on Remote Teaching and Learning (no documents)

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

*Discussion:*

The Chair provided a brief update on the work of the Taskforce and emphasized their efforts to consult broadly and involve all groups on campus. He noted that the work of the committee included providing advice and strategies to both instructors and students on how to manage teaching and learning in the remote environment. In addition, he noted that the Taskforce looked at remote proctoring of exams, the needs of international students, delivery in a blended classroom, and accommodations for students.

There were no questions.

6. Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation Policy (Early Consultation)

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

*Discussion:*

The Chair explained how to interpret the documents provided to the committee and noted that much of the content was taken from the GFC Policy Manual. Dr Nychka provided background on the initiative, including:

- past work of CLE on a policy;
- project scope and the connection to the Framework for Effective Teaching and Evaluation;
- timelines for consultation and approval, including the groups that would be consulted and how;
- key considerations including needs of different parties, benefits, policy intersections, EDI and the impact of the pandemic;
- a focus on student feedback, including how to close the loop, interpretation of feedback, use of USRIs and ongoing involvement of students;
- how instructor feedback was being solicited including consideration of bias awareness and equity-focused concerns, principles underpinning multi-faceted evaluation of teaching, and the need to get this policy right; and
- takeaways from initial consultations including better survey questions, the unique role of graduate students, and the need to improve response rates.

The Chair concluded by informing the committee about next steps including the need to align the work of the Taskforce on the Student Experience of Teaching and Learning (SETL) and approvals by GFC and the Board of Governors.

The committee asked questions and expressed feedback, including but not limited to:

- How graduate education was considered in the policy, the unique role of graduate students, different disciplinary approaches to graduate education, and the intersection with the FGSR Graduate Student Supervision Policy;
- The need for consideration of delivery mode as a factor that impacts multifaceted teaching and learning;
- The need to consider how the policy would be operationalised given the different expectations for teaching and research and how research was rewarded differently than teaching;
- The congruence between the work of SETL and the policy being articulated; and
- Differences that may be observed in the clinical environment, lab, or field and how the policy purpose should accommodate those disciplinary differences.

6. Student Experience of Teaching and Learning (SETL) Taskforce Update (no documents)

*Presenter(s):* Brian Maraj, Co-Chair SETL Taskforce; Cheryl Poth, Co-Chair SETL Taskforce

*Discussion:*

The co-chairs expressed their thanks to the subcommittee members and summarized their work to:

- review the history of student evaluation at the University of Alberta;
- reflect on students' desire to express feedback and hear back on how the information was used;
- understand experiences of faculty and instructors with the current system; and
- review research on inequities and lack of construct validity in the current system.

Dr Maraj and Dr Poth provided some early insights into their forthcoming report, including the need to reset these evaluations in a way that ensured students could see evidence that their voices were being heard, and that instructors were given access to timely, valid and useful information to inform improvements. They noted that the short report would include some guiding principles and recommendations.

Members had no questions.

8. Experiential and Work-Integrated Learning (no documents)

*Presenter(s):* Karsten Mündel, Provost Fellow (Work-integrated Learning)

*Discussion:* Dr Mündel provided context on the work he has been tasked with including inquiry into diverse forms of work-integrated learning (WIL), the benefits to students, alignment with the Institutional Strategic Plan, the need to consider equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), and the expectations of the Ministry of Advanced Education. He then asked members to share and identify examples, opportunities, and possible gaps in policy.

Members had questions and feedback including:

- How to define work integrated learning and the need to capture different forms of learning;
- Different mechanisms that may clarify for students how to search for and find opportunities;
- The opportunity to integrate WIL into recruitment materials, to make it easier for students to search for opportunities throughout their degree program and to equip students to talk about these experiences in ways that were meaningful for employers;
- How to integrate WIL into programs and the student experience more broadly;
- How to set targets and a baseline for WIL when it was difficult to measure the opportunities and the number of students who had actually taken up those opportunities;
- How micro-credentials factored into the WIL strategy and what should be included in a typology of opportunities;
- The role of central administration vs faculty-based units who already managed work integrated learning;
- How remote and international students were considered in developing and communicating these opportunities, and the specific needs of international students;
- Considerations of EDI for students and society more broadly;
- The hidden opportunities that may be found in courses and informal practices across the University; and
- The debate around "work-ready" students, competency based study, and the role of the University to ensure quality learning experiences and education for students.

9. Question Period

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

*Discussion:* Members asked questions about what we have accomplished as an institution on teaching and learning over the past year.

The Chair responded by reflecting on the move to remote learning in response to the COVID pandemic. In particular, the experimentation of instructors, the innovation required, and the accommodations provided to students. Looking forward, the Chair reflected on the need to think strategically about the online environment and how best to respond to the needs of students and continue to attract new ones. In addition, the chair recognized the challenge of maintaining adaptability and flexibility as the pandemic continued. The Chair also recognized the impressive work of instructors, the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and students and administrators to adapt. Finally, the Chair recognized the work of the Committee over the past year in spite of difficult circumstances, especially through taskforces.

## **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

- Next meeting of CLE: September 30, 2021

- Next meeting of GFC: June 7, 2021

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.