



MINUTES OF MEETING #1 (2008-09)

SENATE TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2008, 3:00 PM

SANKEY CHAMBER, MACKENZIE CHOWN COMPLEX

PRESENT: Professor Paul Zelisko (Chair), Dr. Karen Bordonaro (Vice-Chair),
Professor Mohamed Ayadi, Ms. Katie Cocchio, Professor Maureen Connolly,
Professor Patricia Debly, Mr. Kurtis McCartney, Professor Frances Owen,
Professor Virginia Reh, Professor Anna Lathrop, Professor John Sivell, Dr. Philip Wright

Mr. Patrick Beard, Ms. Barb Davis, Margaret Thompson, Administrative Support

REGRETS: Dr. Greg Finn, Ms. Margaret Grove, Professor Julian Kitchen, Dean Marilyn Rose

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Zelisko welcomed members to the inaugural meeting of the 2008-09 Teaching and Learning Policy Committee and called the meeting to order. Self-introductions were made.

2. Terms of Reference

[The Committee's Terms of Reference, as outlined in Faculty Handbook II: 9.8, had been electronically distributed to members with the meeting materials.]

The Chair provided a brief overview of the Committee's Terms of Reference. He encouraged members to bring forward issues of interest for the consideration of the Committee.

3. 2007-08 Annual Report

[The Committee's 2007-08 Annual Report to Senate had been electronically distributed to members with the meeting materials.]

The 2007-08 Annual Report to Senate was received for information.

4. Report of the Chair

Professor Zelisko noted that there were several outstanding issues that the Committee would continue to examine this year. The Academic and Student Risk Management Committee would be forwarding a draft student risk management policy to the Committee for review. The Committee awaits feedback from the Committee of Academic Deans with respect to the

designation of new context courses (referred by Senate to CAD at Senate 552). As well, the issue of Brock's grading system would continue to be examined and would be further discussed under the next agenda item.

5. University Grading Scheme - Discussion re: Next Steps

Professor Zelisko provided background information regarding discussions held by the 2007-08 Teaching and Learning Policy Committee with respect to Brock's current grading scheme.

The following is a summary of the background information:

In 2007-08, the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (A. Lathrop) questioned if the Committee was aware of any concerns related to the University's present system of numerical grades (FHB III: 10.3) and the rounding of the score, at the discretion of the instructor, to comply with the 0, 2, 5, 8 marking scheme to arrive at a final grade (as opposed to the use of "raw" grades). The Registrar, Barb Davis, had been in attendance and provided an overview of the history of the marking scale which has been in effect since 1967, although slightly modified during the years. The limited rationale for the development of the scale included that it would permit the instructor to indicate whether the student comes high, low or in the middle of a grade. The Registrar had also provided a summary that demonstrated the use of a variety of numerical and alphabetical grading systems within other Ontario universities. Only one university (University of Toronto) had undertaken a change to their grading system.

The Committee had concurred that it would be beneficial to gather preliminary feedback to determine if there was a need to reexamine the current system. From those who responded, the following was reported back to the Committee:

- The Associate Deans and the Office of the Registrar were not aware of any major concerns with the current system.*
- The Faculty of Graduate Studies showed support for a transition to a "raw" grade system.*
- Several Chairs within the Faculty of Mathematics and Science would prefer the use of "raw grades".*
- The Committee of Academic Deans indicated that CAD was not opposed to a change, as a body, nor is it particularly in favour of it. Generally speaking, CAD was in favour of changing Brock transcripts so that course medians appear beside the grades so that the grades can be better interpreted by the readers of those transcripts. CAD does not think the issue should be settled on the basis of whether or not a change would be difficult to implement. For CAD, the important questions are academic (i.e. whether the raw grades would be a better reflection of student performance and whether the use of medians on transcripts would assist transcript readers to better interpret Brock student grades when considering them for awards or admissions elsewhere).*

A comprehensive discussion ensued during which numerous potential implications were identified that would need to be closely examined when considering a change to the current grading system,

including financial implications, impact on scholarships and bursaries, admission to graduate school, SHERC funding, etc.

The Committee agreed that further information was needed from both undergraduate and graduate faculty, students and staff to determine next steps, such as if the examination of a potential change to the current grading system was warranted or if the development of a best practices guide for utilizing the current system would be beneficial and/or there was a need to further expand on the current policy as outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

Professor Zelisko undertook to gather preliminary information from Deans and Committee Chairs and would report back at the next meeting.

Ms. Davis retired from the meeting.

6. Forms of Recognition for Senate Service

As per a request from the Chair of Senate during a recent meeting of the Senate Governance Committee and Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Secretaries, the Committee examined ways in which Senators might be recognized for their service to the University. Dr. Connolly noted that the question had been presented to her from a member of the Board of Trustees.

During discussion, several ideas were generated such as potential implementation of awards, recognition within promotion and tenure for faculty members, mentorship programs, honorariums, receptions, to name a few. Members were requested to forward additional ideas in writing to Professor Zelisko and information would be sought from other universities. A summary would be drafted for review at the next meeting prior to presenting the information to Senate.

7. Library Report

Dr. Bordonaro was pleased to note the recent opening of the Matheson Learning Commons. It was suggested, and concurred, that a tour of the facility be scheduled for Committee members. The potential to hold a future Committee meeting in the Matheson Learning Commons would also be examined.

Dr. Bordonaro expanded on several new library databases. Detailed information regarding the Digital Content Infrastructure for the Human and Social Sciences would be electronically forwarded to members following the meeting.

8. Other Business - None

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.