WORKING GROUP ON ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS’ LEARNING

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

Students have recently expressed their concerns regarding assessment practices at McGill. Furthermore, McGill’s ratings are consistently poor on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) indicator about prompt feedback. This is a problem, considering that research on student learning emphasizes the profound impact that assessment and feedback have on how, and how much students learn. For faculty the challenge is to develop good assessment and feedback practices with limited resources and few incentives to devote the necessary time.

To address these challenges, the APC Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning (STL) struck an Assessment Working Group that will examine current assessment and feedback practices at McGill, and make recommendations for improvement. The working group will focus particularly on the challenges of providing feedback and effective assessment to students in large classes.

TIMEFRAME, REPORTING AND DEADLINES

The working group has an advisory role to STL. It will begin its work in September 2012 and it will meet monthly. Regular updates will be provided to STL, and a report will be submitted in September 2013.

MEMBERSHIP

The working group is chaired by Dr. Mariela Tovar from Teaching and Learning Services (TLS). The membership includes:

- Professors Elisabeth Elbourne (Arts), Dave Ragsdale (Medicine), Rhonda Amsel and Ken Ragan (Science), Shauna Van Praagh (Law) representing a cross section of Faculties;
- Ms. Sharon Roy, representing Content and Collaboration Solutions;
- Ms. Carolyn Samuel, representing the Writing Center;
- Ms. Lorie Kloda, representing the Library
- Ms. Marcy Slappcof, representing the inquiry network
- Dr. Laura Winer, representing TLS
- Two undergraduate students

OTHER RESOURCES

A graduate student will assist with benchmarking, research and reporting.

SPECIFIC GOALS:

1. Investigate existing assessment and feedback practices in large classes at McGill
2. Research effective practices from the literature
3. Benchmark effective practices at other institutions
4. Develop recommendations for a comprehensive program of sound assessment practices for large classes at McGill.
PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Fall 2012
• Develop working definitions, identify issues and challenges related to providing effective and efficient assessment in large classes.
• Develop plan for investigating existing practices at McGill (target population; sampling; development of approach/procedures, e.g., 1 day workshop, development of resources, survey, interviews)
• Benchmark / Research effective practices for providing feedback and assessment to students in large classes.

Winter 2013
• Continue benchmarking / researching effective practices used to provide feedback and assessment to students in large classes.
• Implement approach/procedures for investigating existing practices at McGill
• Analyse data from implementation
• Make recommendations for the development of a comprehensive program to support the implementation of sound assessments practices in large classes at McGill.

Summer 2013
Produce reports

Fall 2013
Present final report to STL