McGill is committed to providing students with supportive learning environments. To achieve this goal, curriculum and program designs are expected to incorporate, as appropriate, the strategies listed below. These strategies have been identified as central to the development of programs that prioritize student development and help improve student retention, student engagement, and academic performance.

At the program level, these strategies increase the possibility that students of all backgrounds will have positive, strong learning outcomes. They have been identified as High Impact Practices (HIPs) by The National Survey of Student Engagement and the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

A commitment to providing students with a healthy learning environment also means that McGill needs to be inclusive of all students and their ability to fully benefit from these high impact practices. Therefore, consideration must be given to elements of program design that can have important consequences for students’ ability to access student aid, and meet full-time status and visa requirements. One out of every three full-time degree students is on some form of need-based (often debt-based) government or institutional financial aid. The necessity for student financial assistance can sometimes preclude students in financial need from participating in certain programs (or opportunities within programs) due to the constraints around their aid. The Scholarships & Student Aid Office and International Student Services offer important considerations for program design to minimize this negative bias:

All semesters within a program can be taken as full-time.

- Quebec students on government aid must be registered in at least 12 credits per term to be considered full-time and eligible for aid. (Other provinces enforce 9 credits; the U.S. enforces 7.5 credits.) Where possible, programs should not be designed such that it is mandatory to be part-time for a particular term. Under such conditions, and only in some provinces, students can resort to applying through the Part-time Loan program, which only covers tuition (not living expenses). Students are also not eligible to use the Part-time Program if that student period is between two full-time periods.
- International students are required to maintain full-time status per Quebec and Canada immigration policies. In some cases, at the time of renewal, McGill can explain why students had to be part-time (usually for medical reasons). A student who has studied part-time is not eligible to obtain a 3-year Open Work Permit after graduation.

Projects, stages, co-ops, etc. that are a mandatory part of a program are recognized as full-time effort.

- Students in financial need are unable to receive government aid if their program requires them to work on projects full-time (often during the summer) for which no
credits are attributed. Some stages require full-time effort but only attribute part-time credits. Students in financial need find themselves working full-time, unpaid, and are not eligible for aid. The ideal approach is to have full-time effort recognized with full-time credit. The Scholarships & Student Aid Office may be able to suggest other options.

- International students may only obtain a co-op work permit if the stage/co-op/placement is an integral part of the program of study (i.e., required for all students in the program for completion of the program).

**Financially supported experiential learning opportunities should be considered.**

- Offering opportunities for service learning/community-based learning and discipline-related internships can be problematic for students in financial need if the experience is unpaid and the effort does not award full-time credits. Moreover, these efforts tend to preclude students from being able to earn money through part-time work. To ensure these opportunities are accessible to all, they should be for-pay arrangements or the program should offer awards to offset the impact.
- For international students, co-op work permits are required whether the placement is paid or unpaid.

**Alternatives to mandatory courses delivered online should be considered.**

- Mandatory courses with all or a significant online component prohibits American students from accessing their government aid. Consult the Scholarships and Student Aid Office to study the impact on your student body and to understand alternative solutions.

Some examples of High Impact Practices (HIPs) from programs at McGill are available at https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/program-design/healthy-program-design. If your program incorporates any of these strategies, please let us know at tls@mcgill.ca so that we can highlight them for the community.

**STRATEGIES**

1) **Provide structures that facilitate a common intellectual experience**

- Ensure (groups of) students take 2 or more classes together
- Offer first-year seminars to encourage incoming students to get to know each other and the program in smaller classroom contexts
- Offer discipline-linked seminars (methodology, ethics, professional skills) to encourage inter-year interaction
• Offer capstone courses in the final year/term to provide graduating students the opportunity to revisit their first-year cohorts and reflect on the program as a whole.
2) **Emphasise diversity and global learning**
   - Offer opportunities for service learning/community-based learning
   - Offer opportunities for discipline-related internships, both within the university and outside of it
   - Create opportunities for public demonstrations of competence
   - Include courses focused on professional ethics
   - Encourage the development of a personal philosophy through creating supportive structures for self-assessment.

3) **Facilitate student-faculty interaction**
   - Provide undergraduate research opportunities
   - Offer discipline-linked seminars and events where students can learn not only about the discipline but about the different approaches to it represented by the faculty members
   - Outline mentorship expectations for program faculty, including providing training and resources for faculty

4) **Create structures to produce program-level takeaways**
   - Offer capstone courses with final integrative/cumulative projects
   - Offer discipline-linked and/or methodology seminars
   - Require students to develop a personal learning plan and a cumulative portfolio, regularly assessed at the program level

5) **Emphasise individual learner development**
   - Provide research opportunities for undergraduates
   - Provide opportunities for service learning/community-based learning
   - Provide internship opportunities
   - Offer capstone courses
   - Offer discipline-specific courses (e.g. methodology, professional skills)
   - Offer basic skills courses
   - Provide opportunities for public demonstrations of competence
   - Encourage the development of a personal philosophy

Please do not hesitate to contact Teaching and Learning Services (tls@mcgill.ca) for additional information or to request a consultation.