



November 2014 Academic Advocacy Committee Meeting

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Patrick Zerr moves to approve the agenda. Seconded by Sean Doughty

Agenda approved at 5:13pm

2. Approval of Minutes

- a. June Meeting: June 3, 2014
- b. July Meeting: July 10, 2014
- c. September Meeting: September 8, 2014

Ryan Gomes moves to adopt the minutes. Seconded by Jimmy Cui

Ryan explains that these are the minutes from previous AAC meetings. He states that since the AAC was not yet an 'official' committee (ie. Ratified as part of Bylaw 1) he held off on approval until now. Ryan encourages everyone to go through the minutes and ask any questions.

Patrick asks what the Academic Advocacy Report is (see September minutes). Ryan explains that Teresa is producing this report as a 'report card' on the faculty and how they are doing. Patrick asks how this will affect the AAC. Ryan clarifies that the AAC will get to have some input, but that this report is being authored solely by Teresa and will only be shaped. He states that the report will still take into account the AAC's feedback.

Motion passes unanimously

3. MOTION by Ryan Gomes to receive the midterm evaluation results

Seconded by Marissa Zhang

Ryan states that over 135 people answered the survey, which was fantastic (mostly on the first day). He mentions that the survey began in the days after the CIV100 midterm, which probably was why there was so many responses. He mentions there were some troubling things that came up with in particular in particular with APS105.

He states he tried to summarize what the general feedback was below in the comments and people really thought the tutorials were undervalued. In terms of the other ones, some of them were quite mixed. I think people had a lot of issues with their textbook for APS111.

Jimmy states that the responses for CIV102 in his year generally had very mixed responses.

Oghosa: CIV102 has an average of 2.7 right? Isn't that okay?



Ryan: The problem with the tutorial/lab is that you have to apply the concepts right after you learn them, so the labs can be quite confusing.

Marissa: What are our next steps to communicate these results to the profs?

Ryan: I want to pass this off towards the class reps and get them to communicate this information to their profs.

Marissa: Have you considered putting more of an emphasis on the academic role of class reps?

Ryan: The problem is that the class reps are both involved with the discipline clubs and EngSoc, so sometimes they don't take the initiative in academics, but it is kind of up to them. What I was hoping is to put these results on Skule.ca and motivate people from there.

Kat: I think putting these up on a public forum and stating that class reps will bring up these concerns would be a good motivation for them to do so.

Patrick: There is a challenge with that. I don't know if all class reps would want to do this. Even in general, it's certainly better to have the class reps approach.

Oghosa: Our Indy class rep both communicates information from class to the profs and the profs to the class reps.

Ryan: I don't want to tell the class reps what to do, but I'm going to trust that they're going to communicate information they deem important to the respective profs. I don't want to step too much on their toes.

Jimmy: The role of a class reps isn't advocacy under you, is it? Aren't they under discipline clubs?

Ryan: Technically class reps are under me, but most of the discipline clubs have changed their constitutions that the class reps are under them as well. That leaves class reps balancing themselves between a social aspect (discipline clubs) and academic aspect (me).

Jimmy: I guess this is just an open question: How come we don't have a near 100% response rate?

Kat: Some people might think that it also doesn't affect them.

Ryan: I think that people being busy contributed to that. This might not have been a high priority item for them. Laziness could also be a big factor.

Sean: A lot of first years that I've talked to and some of them have struggled with the concept of checking their email and everything. People are still getting used to going through emails.

Oghosa: We got most responses for CIV right after their midterm, so what if we did the survey right after midterms?



Ryan: That's a good point, but it's hard to co-ordinate and have every eval go out after every courses midterm. I want to convince the executive committee to send a mass mail next term to increase awareness, and I want to get more time to process these results by deploying earlier.

Marissa: We should also get the class reps to do class speaks.

Ryan: That's a fantastic idea.

Jimmy: It's also important for us to explain the positive impacts that this has to students. I think that could increase the motivation for filling this out. People definitely do have feedback but they need to see results.

Kat: Just want to mention that with the midterm idea, we can get really good responses after the midterm, but it could also be really biased. If someone has a good midterm, they could say "yeah, this course is alright", but if it goes badly they might just want to complain

Ryan: Definitely something we'll have to keep in mind going forwards.

Motion passes unanimously

4. MOTION by Ryan Gomes to discuss Faculty Council Standing Committees updates

Seconded by Ernesto Diaz Lozano Patino

Ryan: Whose committees have met so far?

Patrick: So the TMRC is the Faculty Council's standing committee on teaching methods and resources, and it's quite a large committee. The main point of discussion that we had was on two things; the first was Blackboard. There was some discussion on whether or not to replace Blackboard. The university has a "learning toolkit" which encompasses all of the software that they use for teaching. APS111 has many different software and logins for students to use. The second item was teaching awards. Each discipline offers teaching awards, and there's a limited amount of responses towards teaching awards. Part of the issue is that the application package is like 30 pages long, so that's something that we have been working on.

Praneet: There's no opportunity for nominators, especially students, to come and speak at the committee, is there?

Patrick: No, that's kind of what the letters are for. It's honestly a matter of reducing the amount of time needed to nominate someone. Hopefully we're trending towards shorter packages.

Kat: Another part of that was that the nominees have too much work to do.

Patrick: There's actually a \$5000 bonus that goes with this award, but honestly I haven't heard about these awards. The faculty needs to do a better job at advertising these.



Ryan: The faculty definitely needs to raise their profile. I think that would be beneficial for students to see the faculty cares and is rewarding good teachers.

Praneet: I had a second follow-up question. Were there any alternatives to Blackboard?

Patrick: There's desire to learn used by Waterloo, but most of the alternatives are essentially the same. Another option is to refurbish Blackboard, or you could decentralize and have a central login that connect you to different software services.

Praneet: The faculty should not just benchmark to other Canadian universities. There's pros and cons in all of them.

Ryan: Thanks for the updates on TMRC, Patrick and Kat. Sean?

Sean: I'm a bit rusty on the specific details that we talked about in the Examinations Committee. We handle petitions (approve or deny) and we also make changes towards policy during examinations. It was identified that there was a lot of people graduating with honours with distinction, but they are thinking of adding a second tier that's called high honours (87.5+) rather than 80 which would be a second tier.

Ryan: There's actually a motion going to Faculty Council this Tuesday to make this change.

Sean: Don't quote me like this, but I think they're trying to go along with Arts and Science.

Patrick: U of T also seems to be so concerned with their own prestige rather than the accomplishments of their students.

Praneet: There's people that set their targets at 85 because that's what they set it at. This would be very detrimental to them.

Sean: Another problem with it is that they want to implement it this year.

Jimmy: Obviously this is a pragmatic issue that we need to deal. I think there's a place for that in society but I think too much discussion on this in the first place is not what university is great for.

Sean: The Examinations committee also want to modify the term work petitions. As of now, if you miss a quiz or midterm, you would write a petition and then give it to your prof. It goes online and it will be more centralized. This would allow for more consistency. There will be one person dealing with those petitions. In addition, right now there are students who are having problems overall but not identified as early as they could. This would help the Faculty to identify those students to help and track them.

Third thing is that they want to change the process for reviewing petitions to allow for an initial filter to speed up the process. There's no real reason who have 12 people sitting around in a room to look at lists and lists of people who sit around and look at people who have doctors notes. They want to go for the idea that petitions can be pre-approved.



Oghosa: Some changes have been made to the undergraduate curriculum. Major ones include changes to EngSci biomed, and also their seminar course. BME479 has been cancelled. MSE has a new course called MSE4XX. For the MIE department – two courses MIE297Y and MIE397Y will be cancelled. The design portfolio will be integrated into 4 courses. The next thing for MIE is MIE233 will be created for industrial engineers will be created to replace the course that they had shared with the Mechs. MIE333 engineering physics will be a 4th year technical elective. IBBME - I think that's biomed proposes to modify the biomedical engineering minor.

Ryan: I sat on AAB a little while ago, and was a little surprised how kind some of the profs were.

Marissa: I had the opposite experience. It must depend from prof to prof.

Motion passes unanimously

5. MOTION by Ryan Gomes to discuss open discussion about courses.skule.ca improvements

Ryan states that since the Webmaster is in flux, it is pointless to delve into this matter at the moment. He says it will be revisited at a later date.

6. MOTION by Teresa Nguyen to discuss how the CEAB governs curriculum

Seconded by Praneet Bagga

Ryan states that Teresa wants us to look into which attributes in CEAB that the faculty could be doing a better job at. A letter from Teresa distributed at the beginning of the meeting is reviewed.

Praneet states that the class reps should be the point of reference. He states that since many departments and classes operate differently, it would be hard to pinpoint which requirements are being met in different disciplines.

Ryan states that this will be an item to move forward with. He states that he will solicit feedback from the class reps, and asks for feedback from the committee over the next few weeks. He states he personally believes the faculty needs to address professionalism, as it is severely lacking, but commends them for putting an emphasis on communication, even if this has been to the detriment of other requirements.

Motion passes unanimously

7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. ADJOURNMENT – 6:04

Moved by Sean Doughty, seconded by Kat Turner. Motion passes.



Attendance

Officer		
VP Academic	Ryan Gomes	X
Directors of the Board		
At-Large	Praneet Bagga	X
At-Large	Marissa Zhang	X
Civil Representative	Ernesto Diaz Lozano Patino	X
Standing Committee Representatives		
Standing Committee Rep #1	Patrick Zerr	X
Standing Committee Rep #2	Jimmy Cui	X
Standing Committee Rep #3	Sean Doughty	X

A – Absent AwR – Absent with Regrets P – Proxy

Also in attendance: Kat Turner, Oghosa Igbinakenzua