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

Wednesday, March 04, 2015
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Robert Luth	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Gerald Beasley	Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative (Category B1.0), elected by GFC
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative, selected by Chairs' Council
Glen Loppnow	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or equivalent)
Colin More	Member (Delegate), President of the Graduate Students' Association
Roger Graves	Member (Delegate), Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Kathryn Orydzuk	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff
Sarah Wall	Member, Academic staff member (Category A1.0)* and currently a member of GFC

Presenter(s):

Ken Cor	Associate Director (Assessment), Centre for Teaching and Learning
Robert Luth	Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Roger Graves	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Kathryn Orydzuk	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union

Staff:
Andrea Patrick, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Emily Paulsen, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Motion: Delinger/Leighton

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda.
CARRIED

2.   Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 28, 2015

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Motion: Leighton/Orydzuk

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of January 28, 2015.
CARRIED

3.   Comments from the Chair

There were no comments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4.   The Role of Rubrics in Promoting Fair Grading and Assessment Practices for Evaluation of Undergraduate Term Work and Assignments at University of Alberta

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Kathryn Orydzuk, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union; Ken Cor, Associate Director (Assessment), Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Purpose of the Proposal: To undertake a discussion with GFC CLE members about the best way to move forward on promoting the use of rubrics to evaluate undergraduate term work and assignments among instructors as well as supporting them in this new approach to assessment, particularly in 100-200 level courses.

Discussion:
Ms Orydzuk introduced the discussion item to members explaining that the goal was to improve assessment and grading through the promotion of rubrics. She explained that rubrics make the grading process transparent and inform students of instructor requirements, and that instructors improve reliability by using rubrics and the tool can help to enable future improvement. She noted that a great deal of research has been done in support of this item.

Dr Cor continued with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, explaining that more performance-based assessments are being utilized within post-secondary education, and rubrics are becoming increasingly useful for effective, fair, and informed assessment. He reported that it is important that rubrics be attached to well written learning objectives, adding that rubrics must also be used with a rating scale appropriately matched to each learning objective. Dr Cor noted that training instructors how best to employ rubrics is an important process in the utilization of this assessment tool.

During the extensive discussion surrounding this presentation, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: whether evidence exists to support the notion that there is a significant problem at the institution which rubrics could help solve; that instructors with high Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) scores might be reluctant to make significant changes to their assessment method; that training staff to recognize when and how to use rubrics is important; that fairness is an important issue which rubrics aim to solve; that the lack of resources in many areas of the University might hinder the implementation of a new system; that this idea seems to place too much pressure on educators to do more; a request for more data about the current state of grading and assessment at the University, particularly in regards to students' perceptions; and, concern that the pressure to provide data on student grading will not encourage instructors to use rubrics but rather for instructors to favor summative assessment.

5.   GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE): Consideration of Evaluation of Teaching and the Use of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) Working Group

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
The Chair provided a brief history to members regarding the involvement of this Committee in relation to Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs), explaining that in 2013, the Committee was interested in establishing a Working Group on evaluation. He invited members to discuss possible ways to move forward on this issue, and whether a new Working Group should be established.

During the ensuing discussion surrounding this item, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: concern that the establishment of another USRI Working Group might duplicate the work of the previous Group; the importance of identifying a specific issue to focus on; clarification regarding the delegated authority of GFC CLE in terms of policy development surrounding this issue; clarification about the mechanisms available to gather the necessary information; clarification surrounding the specific scope of the Working Group; discussion about the risks associated with institutional change, including resistance from students and faculty members; the high cost associated with innovation; that the USRI tool is not the issue, but that the problem lies with the implementation of USRIs; that there is an opportunity to evaluate and transform relevant policy as this section moves from the GFC Policy Manual into the University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online (UAPPOL); the existence of encouraging evidence, other than USRI scores, to showcase excellent teaching, especially at Faculty Evaluation Committees (FEC); student support for changes to USRIs; that there are a high number of sessional instructors currently teaching in many Faculties who do not go through the FEC process; that the mandatory questions on USRIs are not appropriate for online courses; and, concern regarding student response rates.

The Chair stated that the Committee will continue to work towards striking a Working Group with careful consideration as to the scope and mandate.

Several members of GFC CLE agreed to membership on the Working Group, and members also voiced preference that a representative from sessional instructors and online students should also sit on the Working Group.

6.   <u>Formative Assessment using Electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (e-USRI)</u>

There were no documents.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
The Chair deferred this item.

7.   <u>University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Update from the Associate Director (Educational Technology)</u>

There were no documents.

Presenter: Norma Nocente, Associate Director (Educational Technology), Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
The Chair deferred this item.

STANDING ITEMS

8.   <u>Question Period</u>

A member enquired about the possibility of additional input and participation in classroom design planning.

INFORMATION REPORTS

9.   <u>Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable)</u>

There were no items.

10.   <u>Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings</u>

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

11.   <u>Adjournment</u>

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:02 p.m.