Minutes of a meeting of the Senate Executive Committee held on the above date at 1:30 p.m., remotely via BlueJeans

Those present:

Dr. D. Barnard, Chair
Prof. J. Anderson
Prof. R. Biscontri
Prof. P. Blunden
Prof. T. Chen
Prof. M. Gabbert
Dean E. Jurkowski
Prof. C. Miller
Dr. T. Mondor
Prof. D. Oliver
Dr. J. Ristock
Prof. A. Schultz
Prof. M. Shaw
Dean J. Taylor
Ms. L. Zapshala-Kelln
Mr. J. Leclerc, University Secretary
Dr. S. Coyston, Associate University Secretary

Assessors present:

Ms. S. Bonner-Proulx
Ms. N. Lam
Prof. D. Watt

Regrets:

none

Absent:

Ms. J. Minarik

Also present:

Mr. J. Adams, Executive Director, Enrolment Services
Ms. L. Duke, Client Relations Coordinator, Marketing and Communications Office
Ms. P. Gareau, Awards Establishment Coordinator, Financial Aid and Awards
Dean G. Jacoby, I.H. Asper School of Business
Ms. H. Morris, Director, Student Advocacy and Case Management
Ms. L. Schnarr, Vice-Provost (Students)
Acting Dean L. Simard, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Dr. M. Torchia, Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)

President Barnard thanked members of the Senate Executive for participating in the meeting, in what was an unusual way, given a necessity to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. He expressed his appreciation for the efforts of many faculty members and staff, in what was a challenging time, to take steps to continue to deliver classes and undertake research, while also limiting the number of people on the campuses, practicing social distancing, and adjusting courses so these could be offered online or using some other alternative format. President Barnard anticipated that the situation would carry on longer than what was first thought and there would be many things that would need to be worked out over time.

The committee agreed with the Chair’s suggestion to reorganize the agenda to deal with item IX (1) on the addendum to the agenda, followed by items of business on the regular agenda and a discussion of possibilities for dealing with the April Senate meeting.
IX ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

1. Recommendations Arising from the Academic Advisory Sub-Committee of the University of Manitoba Pandemic Planning Committee [March 18, 2020]

The Chair reminded committee members that on March 16, 2020, Senate delegated its approval authority to the Senate Executive Committee for academic matters arising during the emergency period. He reported that the Pandemic Planning Committee had established an Academic Advisory Sub-Committee Chaired by Dr. Mondor, Deputy Provost (Academic Planning and Programs). The Sub-Committee had made seven recommendations for Senate Executive’s consideration and approval, as detailed in the addendum to the agenda distributed to the Committee earlier in the day.

Dr. Mondor acknowledged the hard work of members of the Academic Advisory Sub-Committee and expressed his appreciation for all of their advice.

Dr. Mondor briefly reviewed the recommendations of the Sub-Committee, as outlined in the attachment to the addendum to the agenda. He noted one change with respect to a recommendation that there be no in-person final examinations. In particular, the Registrar was requesting that Faculty offices, rather than instructors, consult with the Registrar’s Office regarding any intention to offer a scheduled online final examination.

Dr. Ristock MOVED, seconded by Ms. Zapshala-Kelln, that the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, THAT:

- registration for Summer Term courses (defined as courses offered May – August) be suspended indefinitely;
- Duo-lingo be approved as an acceptable test of English Language Proficiency (ELP) for the purposes of applying for admission for the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 intakes. The proposed minimum acceptable test score is 115 which equates to approximately 7.0 on the IELTS test;
- section 2.5 (a) of the Repeated Course policy be suspended indefinitely;
- students not be required to provide medical notes in support of absences from class activities/requirements and from evaluations including final examinations. Students will be required to self-declare through an email note to an Advisor in the relevant faculty that they will be unable to meet their course obligations. This declaration will be treated as necessary and sufficient for the student to be afforded reasonable accommodation;
- no in-person final examinations be held for any courses offered in whole or in part in the Winter 2020 term, and that all assessments be completed by alternative means. Instructors will have the latitude and responsibility to adjust assessments as they deem most suitable and appropriate (e.g., online tests, take-home tests, new assignments, adjusted weightings of completed assessments, etc.) and to communicate these changes promptly to students and unit heads. The current exam period (April 13-25) will be maintained to provide a
dedicated period within which online examinations may be scheduled. Faculty offices must consult with the Registrar’s Office regarding any intention to offer a scheduled online final examination;

- no in-person instruction or assessment for any courses take place until at least September 1, 2020. All instruction will take place by alternate methods until at least September 1, 2020;
- summer courses (broadly defined as courses that were scheduled to take place between early May and the end of August) begin no earlier than June 1, 2020 and be completed no later than August 31, 2020. The Registrar’s Office will be responsible for determining an academic schedule for this period. At this time, recognized Distance Education (DE designated) courses, already scheduled to commence in early May, are excluded from this recommendation.

Professor Oliver said he supported the recommendations. He asked how these would be communicated to the broader University community, if they were approved. Dr. Ristock said that, following the meeting, she would communicate the decisions to Deans, who would be asked to distribute the information to faculty, staff, and students. In addition, they would be communicated to Senators and would be posted on a dedicated webpage, with updates on COVID-19.

Regarding a recommendation that there be no in-person final examinations for any 2020 Winter Term courses, Professor Oliver said it would be important to have clarity on how the University would propose to coordinate take-home examinations and scheduled examinations to be completed online. Dr. Mondor said the Sub-Committee did not want to include a mechanism in the recommendation, as procedural details would need to be developed by the Registrar’s Office working together with individual Faculties. He recognized the need to provide students with information as quickly as possible.

Professor Blunden raised the possibility of deferring final examinations in some courses until September 2020, with exceptions made for students who required the courses to graduate. He said that, in many disciplines, including Physics, instructors relied heavily on a final examination. He suggested it would not be possible to conduct these examinations online and maintain the integrity of the academic program. In addition, there was the potential that some students would not be able to access the examinations, including if the server went down. Dr. Mondor said he sensed the Sub-Committee would not recommend a change to the final examination period, as it was impossible to know when the COVID-19 situation would end. Also, given an objective to keep things as simple as possible, the Sub-Committee did not want to establish different final examination periods.

Dr. Torchia said the Sub-Committee did discuss the options available for virtual proctoring of examinations, which could be done effectively. There were associated costs for those services. There were also strategies to reduce opportunities for cheating that could be adopted within UM Learn. Faculty who were designing online examinations could contact The Centre to discuss academic integrity issues.
Recalling questions raised at the Special Meeting of Senate on March 16, 2020, Professor Miller asked if there might be a recommendation that students in courses with assessments that could not be completed remotely, for example, ensembles in Music courses or firing ceramics in Fine Arts studio courses, should Voluntarily Withdraw from those types of courses. Dr. Mondor said students would need to make their own decisions about whether they were comfortable with any changes made to their courses. The deadline for Voluntary Withdrawals had been changed to April 13, 2020 to give students time to make those decisions.

Professor Chen understood that final examination scripts were not to be provided to the Registrar’s Office as normal. Rather, these would be provided to the Department Head, for approval and distribution. Faculties would need to inform the Registrar’s Office about the delivery method for any final examination. Dr. Mondor confirmed this would be the process. The Registrar’s Office would contact Faculties for information on how many online final examinations would need to be scheduled, as there was limited capacity to host final examinations in this format.

Professor Miller suggested, based on communications received from faculty, that there had not been sufficient direction about alternative modes of course delivery for some faculty who were being asked to make a significant pedagogical shift in their courses. Dr. Mondor said the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (The Centre) had assembled resources to assist faculty to transition their courses to alternate delivery modes. Acknowledging faculty members’ concerns, he said the University was not dictating the approach faculty should take but trusted they would make the best decisions for their course given the current circumstances. In response to a follow-up question, Dr. Ristock said, if faculty did not find the specific information they required on The Centre’s website, they could contact staff in The Centre or their Department Head or Dean’s Office.

In response to a question, Dr. Mondor said there was no recommendation from the Sub-Committee, at this point, concerning the date for the end of the 2020 Winter Term or the possibility of an extension for completing term assessments. The Sub-Committee was continuing to consider these questions, bearing in mind the need to not disadvantage students.

Professor Miller said some First Nations communities had asked students to return home, where students would not have internet access with the bandwidth required for some online platforms. She had been advising faculty in the Department of Native Studies to deliver their courses via correspondence, including to contact students by telephone and mail, which might require that instructors give students incomplete grades, in some cases. Dr. Mondor said the Sub-Committee had discussed that some students might not have internet access, including Indigenous students returning home, when it had met that morning. It had determined that students who did not have internet access should contact their instructors to seek an accommodation and that instructors should consider delivering the course by correspondence to these students. Ms. Schnarr, Vice-Provost (Students) would be sending a communication to Faculties shortly.
Professor Schultz enquired about plans for practicum courses, observing that the Summer Term was a time when many fourth-year students in Nursing and other health sciences programs would be completing practicums off campus, typically with a preceptor. Dr. Ristock said there was recognition that there might need to be exceptions made for particular courses such as clinical placements, because students needed to complete particular requirements to become certified. She said there were ongoing conversations with Dr. Postl, Vice-Provost (Health Sciences) and Dean, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, concerning issues specific to the health sciences programs, including clinical placements.

In response to questions concerning whether teaching evaluations were to be completed for the Winter Term, Dr. Ristock clarified that the requirement for paper-based Student Evaluations of Educational Quality (SEEQ) had been suspended. The Sub-Committee was continuing to discuss the possibility of digitized and online evaluations and to investigate what other institutions were doing. If the Sub-Committee were to make a recommendation concerning moving SEEQs online, it would be brought forward to the Senate Executive Committee for discussion and a decision.

The motion was CARRIED, as amended.