Minutes of a Special 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. T. Chen
Prof. M. Gabbert
Dean E. Jurkowski
Prof. C. Miller
Dr. T. Mondor
Ms. T. Nagra
Prof. D. Oliver
Dr. J. Ristock
Prof. A. Schultz
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
Ms. J. Minarik
Prof. M. Shaw
Prof. D. Watt

Regrets:
Prof. R. Biscontri
Prof. P. Blunden

Absent:
none

Also present:
Dean J. Black-Branch
Ms. M. Watson

President Barnard remarked that the committee was meeting via BlueJeans, as the University community had moved online while it adopted measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He was impressed by the high-quality work and dedication of many individuals, which had quickly made it possible to proceed with the Winter Term. He expressed his appreciation for people’s efforts.

I CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 18, 2020

Professor Chen MOVED, seconded by Professor Miller, THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Senate Executive Committee held on March 18, 2020, be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

II BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES - none
III RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ACADEMIC ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE PANDEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. Temporary Revision of the Grade Point Averages Policy

President Barnard reminded the committee that, on March 16, 2020, Senate had delegated its approval authority to the Senate Executive Committee for academic matters arising during the emergency period. The Pandemic Planning Committee had established an Academic Advisory Sub-committee chaired by Dr. Mondor, Deputy Provost (Academic Programs and Planning).

Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee had been meeting regularly. One matter it had considered was how to deal with course grades, given the difficulties with learning situations in the current context. The Sub-committee had considered several approaches and was recommending that students be allowed to choose whether or not grades obtained from 2020 Winter Term or spanned courses scheduled over the 2019 Fall – 2020 Winter Terms (September - April) would be used in calculations of their University of Manitoba Grade Point Averages. The recommended approach was the one favoured by most Deans and Directors. Recognizing that different solutions might be preferred in some units, Dr. Mondor said Faculties, Colleges, and Schools would have the option to bring forward alternate proposals for their programs, for consideration by Senate Executive.

Dr. Mondor said the proposed solution would protect students from negative consequences of low grades, including being in jeopardy of losing good standing in their program. Internally, the Adjusted Grade Point Averages would be used for award selection purposes, to protect students’ from losing eligibility for awards as a consequence of a lower grade. Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee had considered the possibility of giving students the option to choose between receiving either a pass/fail grade or a letter grade. A number of drawbacks to this approach were identified during conversations with Deans and extensive consultations at the Sub-committee, including potentially devaluing content that remained to be covered in courses and not having the information necessary to understand whether individual students were prepared to progress in their programs based on coursework they had completed.

Dr. Mondor referred the committee to proposed, temporary revisions to the Grade Point Averages policy, to reflect the proposal to permit students to choose whether their course grades would be included in calculations of their Grade Point Averages.

Professor Miller observed, with respect to the proposal that students would have seven calendar days from the date on which a final grade was posted in Aurora, to declare to the Registrar’s Office that the course grade was to be excluded from Grade Point Average calculations, that students would not necessarily know the exact date that a final grade was posted, including, some Indigenous students who had returned to their home communities and might not have internet access. She proposed that students should be given until the Fall to indicate whether they wanted particular grades to be included in their Grade Point Average calculations.
Dr. Mondor acknowledged there would be a need to recognize and grant exceptions for students who did not have internet access. He said he would work with the Registrar’s Office to develop a strategy to accommodate these students, so they would be able to take advantage of the proposal to have particular grades excluded from Grade Point Average calculations.

Professor Miller suggested that the allowance for exemptions and the process to be followed should be communicated to Student Advisors at the Indigenous Student Centre. Dr. Mondor supported this suggestion.

Professor Schultz suggested these details should be included in the proposal. Dr. Mondor said some details about the process would need to be determined first.

Ms. Minark suggested the seven-day timeframe to declare that a course grade was to be excluded from their Grade Point Average calculations was too short and might lead to a large number of requests for exemptions. She asked about the rationale for the seven-day limit.

Dr. Mondor said the seven-day limit was a recommendation from the Registrar’s Office, which thought it would be a reasonable period of time for students to make their decisions. There was also a deadline by which Grade Point Averages would be required in order for academic units to make admission decisions for the Fall 2020.

Professor Chen raised the possibility of establishing the deadline for students to declare courses to be excluded from Grade Point Average calculations relative to the end of the final examination period. Fourteen days would allow four days for instructors to submit grades and would also allow students to make decisions for all of their courses rather than doing this course-by-course.

Dr. Mondor supported this suggestion and indicated he would discuss it with the Registrar.

Professor Chen observed that some other institutions had decided on blanket pass/fail grades. She supported the University’s decision not to take this approach, as many students had put significant effort into their coursework, in order to raise their marks and their Grade Point Averages. The proposal that Senate Executive was being asked to consider would not only recognize that some students would experience difficulties in the current situation, but it would safeguard students’ academic standing, which would be considered in scholarship selections and admission decisions.

Professor Chen said she was happy to learn there would be exceptions granted for students, including international students who had returned home, who were not able to respond within the seven-day timeframe, to request that a course grade be excluded from their Grade Point Average calculations.

Ms. Bonner-Proulx thanked Dr. Mondor and members of the Academic Planning Sub-committee for their work on the current proposal. For clarification, she asked whether all grades would be included in the calculation of Grade Point Averages used for admission purposes, including admission to programs at the University.
and other institutions, regardless of whether a student had chosen to have particular grades excluded from their Grade Point Average calculations.

Dr. Mondor confirmed that, internally, all course grades would be used in the calculation of Grade Point Averages used for admission purposes. Mr. Adams, Executive Director, Enrolment Services, felt this would be important, in order to ensure the equitable assessment of all applicants to limited entry programs. With respect to other institutions, Dr. Mondor said each institution would make its own determinations about how to assess applicants to their programs, but he anticipated that every institution would recognize the extraordinary conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Leclerc added that the University of Manitoba would include a notation on students’ transcripts, to indicate where particular grades had not been used to calculate Grade Point Averages and Dr. Mondor anticipated that other institutions might include a similar notation.

Ms. Bonner-Proulx acknowledged the concerns identified by the Deans, with respect to the prospect of adopting an over-arching pass/fail grading mode for courses completed in the 2020 Winter Term and spanned courses. She said a significant concern for students, in addition to having the opportunity to have certain grades exempted from Grade Point Average calculations, was to have an opportunity to choose whether or not certain grades would be used for admission purposes, whether in the calculation of Grade Point Averages or where minimum grades were required in particular courses. The current proposal would potentially disadvantage students who had worked hard through the academic year to obtain a high grade. Ms. Bonner-Proulx proposed that the University might consider the approach adopted at the University of Calgary, which was to give students the choice to either retain the letter grade obtained in particular courses or receive a pass/fail grade. She suggested that, in this scenario, a minimum grade of “C” might be established as a passing grade.

Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee did consider the issues identified by Ms. Bonner-Proulx. The Sub-committee also recognized that no approach would address every question or concern. The Sub-committee had decided that the current proposal was the best approach for the University, together with other decisions it had made to support students’ success in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including allowing students to self-declare an illness to receive an appropriate academic accommodation and suspending the Limited Access provision, among other things.

Professor Miller raised the possibility of allowing students to choose whether to receive either a pass/fail or letter grade before the end of classes based on changes to their course syllabi. She suggested this might lead some students to remain in their courses and receive credit, rather than choosing to voluntarily withdraw.

Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee and Deans were strongly against the option for a pass/fail approach for the University as a whole. He suggested Professor Miller might raise the idea with her Faculty Dean.
Dr. Ristock MOVED, seconded by Dean Jurkowski, that the Senate Executive Committee approve on behalf of Senate:

THAT, for the 2020 Winter Term only, students will have the option to include or exclude a final course grade in calculating their Grade Point Average at the University. This option will apply to all courses using standard letter grades scheduled in the 2020 Winter Term or spanned courses scheduled over the 2019 Fall – 2020 Winter Terms; and

THAT students can opt to exclude a course grade following receipt of the final grade and can elect to do so on a course-by-course basis; and

THAT grades excluded in the calculation of the Grade Point Average will not be used in calculating Grade Point Averages for the purpose of program progression and/or overall graduation Grade Point Average requirements; however, course grades will continue to be used to satisfy prerequisite requirements for entry into other courses and to satisfy any other program requirements; and

THAT grades will show on an official transcript but will be flagged (by an asterisk or something similar) with a notation that the course was excluded in the Grade Point Average calculation due to the COVID-19 response; and

THAT grades, by default, will be included in the Grade Point Average; students must opt to exclude the course and inform the Registrar’s Office by May 15, 2020, to ensure that the course is removed from the Grade Point Average calculation; and

THAT Section 2.3 of the Grade Point Averages policy, be revised, for final term grades for the 202 Winter Term only, as follows:

Section 2.3. The following rules apply in regards to calculating GPA at the University:

(a) All-standard letter grades (A+ to F) will be included in GPA calculations, unless a student opts to exclude a grade, and will be displayed on a Student’s Official Record in the Term they were completed.

(b) When a Student repeats a course or takes an equivalent course or mutually exclusive course (for example, a course that may not be held for credit with the original course), all attempts at that course, with the exception of those courses students opted to have excluded, shall be used in the calculation of the TGPA and CGPA. Whether or not grades for repeated courses are used toward the DGPA will be subject to Faculty policy.

(c) Grades not included in GPA calculations (for example: Pass/Fail, VW, AW) are displayed on a Student’s Official Record. This includes any standard letter grades where students opted to exclude in GPA calculations.

(d) Courses completed from another institution by means of a Letter of Permission shall be used in the calculation of CGPA and DGPA, but shall not be used in the calculation of TGPA.

(e) Courses completed by means of Challenge for Credit shall be used in the calculation of CGPA, DGPA, and TGPA.
The motion was CARRIED.

Professor Miller and Ms. Nagra asked that their abstentions be noted.

IV RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY SECRETARY RE: ELECTIONS TO SENATE AND SENATE COMMITTEES

- Extension of Deadline, Election of Academic and Support Staff to Senate
- Extension of Appointments to Senate Committees
- Extension of Student Senators’ Terms

Mr. Leclerc made several requests, which were necessary to ensure there was continuity of membership on Senate and Senate committees through the next several months. The first was to extend the deadline by which Faculties and Schools must report on Senate elections to May 15, 2020. The second was to extend appointments of faculty and student members to Senate committees, in the event that the Senate Committee on Nominations was not able to recommend nominees for certain vacancies that would arise when some terms of appointment conclude on May 31, 2020. The third request was to extend incumbent student Senators’ terms on Senate, where particular student associations were not able to complete their elections by April 30th, until such time as a successor was elected.

Professor Oliver MOVED, seconded by Ms. Nagra, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve on behalf of Senate, the extension of:
- the deadline for the Election of Academic and Support Staff to Senate, to be completed and reported to the University Secretary by May 15, 2020; and
- where necessary, appointments of faculty and student members to Senate Committees, whose terms end on May 31, 2020, until such time that the Senate Committee on Nominations is able to make recommendations to Senate for new appointments; and
- incumbent student Senators’ terms until such time as a successor is elected, where elections of student Senators have not been held by April 30, 2020.

CARRIED

VII REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES OF SENATE, FACULTY AND SCHOOL COUNCILS

1. Report of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Law Addendum, Page 2
   RE: Grading System for 2020 Winter Term in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Dean Black-Branch said the Faculty of Law was requesting that Juris Doctor (J.D.) courses completed in the 2020 Winter Term and spanned course scheduled over the 2019 Fall – 2020 Winter Terms be graded using a pass/fail grading mode. This would require an exemption from the proposal approved
under item III (1) on the agenda, to give students the option to have certain course grades excluded from Grade Point Average calculations.

Ms. Nagra MOVED, seconded by Dr. Ristock, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, that all Juris Doctor (J.D.) courses offered by the Faculty of Law, including (i) spanned courses offered over the 2019 Fall and 2020 Winter Terms, including first-year courses, and (ii) 2020 Winter Term courses, be graded on a mandatory pass-fail basis.

CARRIED

2. Report of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies RE: Extension to Maximum Time Allowed for Completion of Graduate Degree Requirements

Dr. Mondor said the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Graduate Studies was recommending a four-month extension to the maximum time allowed for completion of graduate degree requirements, for Master’s and Doctoral students, in recognition of the disruption to their studies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The maximum time to complete a Master’s degree was three years for students registered full-time and six years for part-time students. The maximum time to complete a Doctoral degree was six years for full-time students and seven years for part-time students.

Dean Mondor observed that the Faculty of Graduate Studies might need to revisit this matter depending on how long the current situation carried on.

Professor Miller MOVED, seconded by Ms. Nagra, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, a four-month extension to the maximum time allowed for the completion of graduate degree requirements for all graduate students.

CARRIED

In response to a question, Dr. Mondor said there was no connection between the four-month extension and continuing fees. Students would be subject to existing rules concerning tuition.

V ADDITIONAL BUSINESS - none

VI ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

These minutes pages 1 to 7, together with the agenda, pages 1 to 5 and the addendum to the agenda, pages 1 to 4, comprise the minutes of a Special Meeting of Senate Executive Committee meeting held on March 25, 2020.