

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

March 27, 2020, 1:00 p.m.
via Microsoft Teams

Present via Remote Connection: F. Antonelli, K. Bell, P. Berry, A. Beverley, F. Black, B. Blakney, JP. Boudreau (Chair), C. Brett (Secretary), A. Cannon, A. Cockshutt, O. Corrigan, J. Devine, S. Doyle, J. Dryden, E. Edson, B. Evans, A. Fancy, N. Farooqi, C. Forstall, S. Garrett, A. Grant, D. Hamilton, L-D, Hamilton, M. Hamilton, K. Hele, J. Holton, D. Hornidge, R. Inglis, C. Ionescu, G. Jollymore, D. Keeping, L. Kern, D. Lieske, M. Litvak, K. Meade, A. Nurse, C. O'Connor, J. Ollerhead (Vice-Chair), G. Ouellette, J. Rogers, S. Runge, V. St. Pierre, E. Stregger, E. Titarenko, J. Tomes, S. Unger, C. VanBeselare, J. Vickery N. Vogan, K. Wilock

Regrets: A. Fancy, R. Inglis

01.03.27 Land Acknowledgement

JP. Boudreau read the land acknowledgement and encouraged Senators to embody indigenous ways of knowing, learning, and relating. He thanked everyone for finding ways to do so.

02.03.27 Approval of the Agenda

Motion (J. Ollerhead/K. Bell): that Senate adopt the Agenda as circulated.

Motion Carried

03.03.27 Approval of the Senate Minutes of March 18, 2020

Motion (J. Ollerhead/F. Black): that Senate adopt the Minutes of the meeting of March 18, 2020.

Motion Carried

04.03.27 Business Arising from the Minutes

J. Ollerhead offered a clarification on the certificate programmes in Data Science. He noted that the approved certificates comply with Calendar regulations governing certificates.

05.03.27 Report from the Chair

JP. Boudreau expressed his hopes that everyone is well, safe, and secure. He then gave updates on the University's response to the COVID-19 outbreak. He noted the regular meetings of the Response Team and the special committee of the Board of Regents. He reported no cases to date in Sackville or the Mount Allison community. The President also informed Senate that there are 64 students remaining in university residences. He also acknowledged that the entire community adjusting to working at home. He thanked faculty for adjusting their teaching practices and students for engaging with course material in new ways.

The President officially informed Senate of the decision to cancel Convocation for this May. He noted that plans will be developed to confer degrees and to celebrate the Class of 2020.

Finally, the President noted that this Special Meeting was called to deal with urgent issues that require the approval of Senate. Unlike Mount Allison, some other universities have a Senate Executive with powers to act without calling special meetings. He acknowledged that in this time of stress and anxiety, there is a place of full and engaged debate.

06.03.27 Motion to Allow Consideration of Motions without 48-Hour Notice

Motion: (J. Ollerhead/N. Farooqi) that for this meeting Senate allow consideration of motions introduced without 48-hour notice.

Motion carried

07.03.27 Motions on Changes to the Academic Calendar in Response to COVID-19

Motion: (J. Ollerhead/M. Litvak) That Convocation for this academic year be held in a virtual format on Monday, 25 May 2020.

Motion Carried

J. Ollerhead remarked that this motion is intended to allow flexibility in course deadlines.

C. Forstall asked whether instructors are permitted to accept work after April 18. J. Ollerhead answered that this is permitted in some circumstances and for individual cases. New deadlines may be worked out, but only if this motion were to pass. F. Black asked when new deadlines would be made known. J. Ollerhead answered that this would be worked out over the next few days.

M. Hamilton asked whether exams will proceed in their current slots. J. Ollerhead answered that he expects take-home exams to be posted in their current slots, with perhaps a couple of days for completion. J. Holton asked whether faculty need to advise the Registrar's Office of the dates of their take-home exams. J. Ollerhead responded that it would be wise to do so if the date is very different from the one in the published exam schedule.

C. vanBeselaere asked whether virtual lectures and class meetings can continue past April 7. J. Ollerhead asked faculty to please finish these by April 7.

C. Forstall asked whether this motion had implications for changing the deadline for withdrawing from courses. This issue was taken up later in the meeting under Other Business.

Motion: (J. Ollerhead/M. Litvak): that Calendar regulations 10.10.5 and 10.9.2 be modified for the Winter 2020 term as below.

I. Regulations and Timetable for Submitting Thesis

1. The student must submit the thesis to the department or program for grading ~~no later than April 8~~ **no later than April 22nd**. (Calendar Regulation 10.10.5);

2. The instructor or evaluation committee will submit the mark for the thesis to the Registrar's Office no later than ~~four calendar days after the last day of the April examination period on April 22~~ **May 6th (14 days after the revised submission date)**. (Calendar Regulation 10.9.2);

3. The student is responsible for submitting ~~two copies; (one digital via email to deans@mta.ca and one bound paper copy must be submitted to the Deans' Office no later than April 17~~ in accordance with Calendar Regulation 10.10.5. The hard copy of the thesis is placed in the University Archives; the **one complete digital copy via email to the Deans' Office by May 6th** is made available electronically via the Library catalogue. Some departments require that another bound copy be submitted for the departmental collection. It is also expected that the student will wish to keep at least one copy for her/his personal library. (Reproduction/Binding can be done at Departmental Support Services in the Wallace McCain Student Centre).

Motion Carried

J. Ollerhead noted that the university will make arrangements for printing hard copies of theses and submitting them to the University Archives.

Motion (S. Unger/E. Titarenko): that Senate approve giving students the option of choosing how their grade is recorded on their transcript for the Winter 2020 Semester, which could include a letter grade as normal or opt for a Conditional Pass, Pass, or Fail (CP/P/F) option. Students will have until April 18th to make that choice.

Motion Carried, as amended below (3 nays, 4 abstentions)

Motion (M. Litvak/M. Hamilton): that the motion on the floor be amended to change the date April 18th to the date April 7th.

Amendment Carried (7 abstentions)

S. Unger spoke in support of the motion. He noted that these are unusual, stressful, and confusing times for students. Many are adjusting to new living situations, time zones, and course delivery. They have differential access to technology. The CP/P/F grading option is offered by some other universities, and students have asked MASU to bring the idea forward at Mount Allison. He acknowledged that some students prefer traditional grading options, and these would remain under the proposal.

E. Titarenko thanked faculty and administrators for smoothing the transition away from face-to-face instruction, and acknowledged that everyone is under stress. She informed Senate that MASU has circulated a petition in favour of the proposed optional grading scheme. She noted that the text of the petition includes information about some of the possible consequences of the system for GPA calculations and graduate school applications. She said that students were told

that they would need to complete course work to obtain a CP or P grade. In light of this information, nearly 50 percent of Mount Allison students have signed the petition.

J. Ollerhead noted that extending the CP/P/F grading scheme may have consequences for GPA calculations, standing, scholarships, and perhaps other items. The details of these may need to be discussed at a later meeting of Senate.

J. Devine asked if it is possible to implement the opt-in on Moodle. J. Ollerhead responded that he was not sure, but that some process for implementation would be found, if needed.

J. Dryden asked whether instructors would know whether a student had opted for CP/P/F in advance of submitting their grade. S. Garrett responded that the answer to this question might depend on how student decisions are tracked and recorded by the Registrar's Office.

J. Dryden responded that it seems that Senate is being asked to approve the spirit of this motion, with hopes that suitable details can be worked out later. S. Garrett agreed with that interpretation. She also noted that the proposal is more comprehensive than the systems adopted at some universities in that it allows students to choose CP/P/F grading in all of their courses.

M. Litvak, J. Holton, and D. Hamilton all argued that faculty should know of students' decisions before final exams are graded. This would inform them on how to arrive at an appropriate grade. For this reason, they argued that the April 18 date is too late. K. Bell noted that asking students to decide on their preferred grading scheme before exams may allow them to better plan which exams they need to complete.

J. Tomes did not think that students should be allowed to change their marking scheme after writing an exam. She also noted that the motion leaves unanswered many questions about standing, graduate school applications, and faculty workload, to name a few. She expressed concern about unintended consequences.

J. Devine asked about the implications for students wishing to repeat courses.

JP. Boudreau acknowledged that the Provost and the Registrar would have to think through many things should the motion be adopted.

E. Titarenko agreed that there is much to do, but she noted that the experience of other universities shows that it can be done. She also remarked that students who wish to go to graduate school have the option of the standard grading scheme. Students who wish to pursue other choices after Mount Allison may prefer the CP/P/F option. She thinks that students can be trusted to make their own best choices.

K. Meade informed Senate that Student Affairs has noted 26 Calendar regulations that may be affected by this proposal, none of which raise significant concerns. She noted that the spirit of the proposal to ensure that students and faculty are not disadvantaged by the current pandemic.

She assured Senate that the Registrar's Office and Student Affairs would do whatever it takes to implement the scheme should the motion pass.

J. Dryden expressed her support for the spirit of the motion and for the move to have students declare their intentions sooner rather than later. She also thought it unlikely that graduate schools would look unfavourably at CP/P/F grades in the current term, as they would be mindful of COVID-19 outbreak.

J. Tomes asked about the impact of CP/P/F grading on scholarship renewals. K. Meade noted that current policy has an appeals mechanism for students who lose scholarships. A. Cockshutt noted that CP/P/F grading is currently used for students on exchanges and that many of these students retain scholarships. C. O'Neal informed Senate that current practice is to assess students who come back from exchanges on the basis of their most recent term (or year, as the case may be) of work for which letter grades are available.

S. Runge noted that Mount Allison has the ability to accommodate student needs in ways that larger universities may not.

K. Hele emphasized that students would need to complete their course work to an appropriate standard to achieve a CP or P grade. J. Ollerhead echoed that remark.

G. Oullette wondered whether the proposal was counter to the goal of promoting student resilience.

B. Blakney thought that moving the date forward to April 7 could pose problems for students, especially if they have to make decisions on their grading schemes without knowledge of exam formats. He said that he found the discussion of student resilience unhelpful. He said he preferred that everyone focus on working together to help each other in this time of global crisis.

C. Forstall wondered what information students would receive about the change in grading system and whether it might lead to hastily-made decisions. E. Titarenko said that MASU would work with Student Affairs to make sure that students had accurate information and the support they require to make their decisions.

E. Titarenko thanked Senate, on behalf of MASU, for adopting the motion.

JP. Boudreau congratulated Senators on the thoughtful discussion held in an unconventional format.

08.03.27 Other Business

C. Forstall asked whether students who had withdrawn from a course in recent days would have made a different choice had the CP/P/F system been available. J. Ollerhead suggested that

students should be given the option to consider withdrawal decisions. S. Garrett thought that would be the fair thing to do.

J. Ollerhead also thought it appropriate to make the deadline for withdrawal from courses line up with the date for students to opt into a CP/P/F grade. K. Hele had also raised this point earlier in the meeting.

J. Tomes expressed concern over students re-entering courses having missed multiple weeks of coursework. M. Litvak stressed the need to put a time limit on the process of re-entering courses, so that instructors would not have the burden of managing make-up work or other arrangements for re-entering students.

In response to this discussion, the following motion came to the floor.

Motion (A. Nurse/V. St. Pierre): that the date for late withdrawal without academic penalty be moved to 7 April and that any student who has withdrawn between 18 March and 28 March can reverse that decision until 31 March.

Motion Carried

C. Forstall wondered whether the changes made at this meeting would significantly lighten the stress or workload of students, given the insistence on students needing to finish their coursework for any type of grade. A. Cockshutt noted that worries about how a CP/P/F grade will be interpreted are likely overblown, given that they will be interpreted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. J. Ollerhead noted that it is nearly impossible make general statements about the effects of the changes across the over 400 courses of instruction at Mount Allison.

09.03.27 Adjournment

There being no further business or announcements, the meeting adjourned at 3:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig Brett
Secretary