## Academic Integrity Subcommittee

## Minutes of the Meeting of 25 February 2021

Meeting held from 3.00-4.00pm via zoom

Present

Members: Tamara Mitterer, SGPS, Claire O’Brien (secretary) John Pierce (chair) Cheryl Pulling, School of Nursing, Kate Rowbotham, Smith

Observers: Lavonne Hood, Ombudperson, Lon Knox, University Secretary, Anthony Lomax, SGPS

Guests: Sue Blake & Gillian Ready, Provost’s Office, Lisa Newton and Melissa Seal, Legal Counsel

Regrets: Johanne Benard, Arts and Science, Matthew Mellon, AMS

1. Agreement of Agenda

It was agreed that the agenda should proceed as circulated.

1. Agreement of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11 December 2020 were agreed as circulated.

3. Chair’s report

John Pierce reported that a new position of Academic Integrity Co-ordinator had been created in the Provost’s Office, and that the hiring process for this role had begun.

A new system for online reporting of departures from academic integrity is being developed, using Advocate software that is already used at Queen’s for non-academic misconduct cases.

Undergraduate student Kody Klupt, a current member of the Academic Integrity Roundtable, will be invited to fill the AMS student-at-large vacancy on this committee.

4. Academic Integrity Survey: Summary

Kate Rowbotham summarized key findings from the survey of Queen’s students on academic integrity, that she and colleague Kate Packalen had conducted in 2020. The survey revealed that violations that students categorized as ‘trivial’ were far more prevalent than has previously been suggested in the literature. Drs. Rowbotham and Packalen will give a fuller presentation on this topic at a future meeting.

5. Amendments to the Senate Policy on Academic Integrity – Requirements for Faculties and Schools

John Pierce noted that a guide for instructors would be developed to accompany the policy. He outlined areas of the policy that are substantively different from the existing procedures, including:

* Introductory section 1.1 states the purpose and scope of the policy.
* Section 4 on appeals adds a requirement that a student must have grounds for appeal, and removes the “de novo” consideration of appeals. These changes mirror the proposed changes to the Senate Policy on Student Appeals, Rights and Discipline, which will be reviewed by Senate in April.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

* Faculties are dealing with more and more large-scale incidents of cheating, involving large numbers of people. Members discussed whether the revised procedures could reflect the reality of investigating over a hundred incidents simultaneously. There was agreement that procedures need to be followed in all cases, and faculties would need to find additional administrative resource to help deal with these cases.
* The guidance document for instructors should include information on what evidence is - what it looks like, and how it is collected. This should be made available when the policy is released.
* What is the procedure for dealing with academic misconduct other than cheating – e.g. racist behaviour in a course. The Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning) and University legal counsel undertook to consider this matter further. The student code of conduct and the revised harassment and discrimination policy may both be relevant.
* Time limits on stages of the procedure are helpful for students. They could be expressed as a time range, or a maximum limit of time between stages.
* The revised procedures suggest categorizing academic integrity findings as Level 1 (minor) and Level 2 (major). This practice is used in some faculties (e.g. Arts and Science) but not others (e.g. Engineering and Applied Science, Smith School of Business). Level 1 findings are not added to the student’s ‘official file’; they are only consulted if the same student has a second finding of departure from academic integrity. Level 2 findings are added to the student’s file and retained for 10 years after the student’s graduation.
* Members saw the benefit in this approach of holding students accountable without creating a lasting impact for a minor departure. However, it may be difficult to implement practically, as the definition of a student’s “official file” is unclear. It was suggested to follow the principles applied to the official file of a staff member or faculty member in defining a student’s official file. Under this model, key information like AI findings would be retained on file, but not records of informal actions like conversations outside of the AI process. **Action:** The group of provost’s office and university secretariat staff coordinating the procedures will explore this further, referencing the provisions of the Queen’s-QUFA collective agreement on what is kept on an official file.
* Appeals of academic integrity findings and sanctions were discussed. There are different appeal avenues and structures in different faculties and schools. Some have two levels of appeal within the faculty, some only one. In some faculties an Associate Dean considers appeals alone in the first instance; in others an appeal panel considers all appeals. The merit of standardizing processes across faculties was discussed. Several elements must be weighed in any changes to appeal process. In offering multiple levels of appeal, some existing processes can be very lengthy, which is not ideal for students. Appropriate appeal avenues for students must be retained in any simplification of appeal procedures. Adequate appeal consideration within faculties is important, as those appeal panel members are somewhat familiar with the subject matter. It should always be made clear to students who the members of an appeal panel are.

Members were invited to send further comments on the procedures directly to Sue Blake after the meeting.

6. Open Book Exam Guidelines

John Pierce noted that the guidelines had originally been developed by committee member Johanne Benard. The Centre for Teaching and Learning has added to the original version; the revised version was introduced. There were no comments, and the revised guidelines were considered agreed. They will be posted for instructors’ use.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4.00pm.