



AskAway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 5, 2025

1:00pm – 4:00pm (PT)

Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Trish Rosseel, Douglas College, *Urban Colleges* (Chair)

Gregg Currie, Selkirk College, *Rural Colleges*

Deirdre Grace, BCIT, *Member-at-Large*

Aleteia Greenwood, *University of British Columbia* (Working Group Member)

Ebony Magnus, *Simon Fraser University* (Working Group Co-Chair)

Shannon Moist, Douglas College, *Member-at-Large*

Todd Mundle, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, *Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions*

Karen Munro, *University of Victoria* [joined meeting during agenda item 3]

Nicoletta Romano, University Canada West, *Small Universities*

Melissa Svendsen, Thompson Rivers University, *Member-at-Large*

Guests from the AskAway Commitment Models Review Working Group:

Alexandrea Flynn, Camosun College (Member)

Alison Griffin, BCIT (Co-Chair)

David Leggett, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (Member)

Kealin McCabe, University of Northern British Columbia (Member)

AskAway Administrative Centre:

Sasha Han (Recorder)

Leah Hopton (Facilitator)

Sunni Nishimura, BC ELN Executive Director

Cristen Polley, AskAway Coordinator (Working Group Member)

Regrets:

None

Territorial Acknowledgement

1. Welcome

T. Rosseel welcomed committee members and AskAway Admin Centre staff and shared a territorial acknowledgment. Members of the AskAway Commitment Models

Review Working Group were welcomed as guests to present the findings and recommendations from their final report, included in the agenda package

The agenda for this special purpose meeting was adopted as presented.

2. Working Group Presentation

T. Rosseel reminded the committee about the context for forming the Commitment Models Review Working Group, then invited the Working Group's members to present.

Working Group members introduced themselves. E. Magnus, Co-Chair of the Working Group, outlined the background for the report. Members of the Working Group then presented each section of the report, including the guiding principles behind the work, methods and data collection, key findings, and final recommendations.

During the presentation, qualitative examples were shared to complement quantitative findings. These examples highlighted staffing challenges at smaller institutions as well as technical barriers that can affect usage.

E. Magnus noted the Working Group's discovery of differentiated pressures faced by each institution, but that further investigation was required to develop targeted action. The recommendations from the report were conscientiously scoped with this in mind.

3. Q&A and Discussion

T. Rosseel invited L. Hopton to lead committee members in a facilitated discussion of the report, with the opportunity to ask questions of the Working Group.

Reactions

- Overall, committee members expressed enthusiasm for the scope and type of data collected for the report and for increased clarity in service expectations.
- There was acknowledgment that change is needed but that implementation would be complex and necessarily require a sizable amount of work from the AskAway Admin Centre.
- Equity among participating libraries was repeatedly highlighted as a guiding principle in this work, both by the Working Group members as they put together the recommendations and by Advisory Committee members as they consider next steps.

Need for clarity around volunteer and evening/weekend hours

- Committee members asked for clarity regarding the number of institutional queues that exist across the service and how many volunteer hours are being

provided above and beyond staffing commitments. Admin Centre staff clarified:

- Institutional queue staffing practices at participating libraries can vary from term to term and would require further action from the AskAway Admin Centre in order to track.
- Currently, in the spring and fall terms, there are approximately 10 hours volunteered per week, and in the summer this varies and volunteer hours are often contributed on a week-by-week basis.
- Committee members discussed how evening and weekend staffing is currently approached:
 - E. Magnus confirmed that there is currently no proportional allocation of evening and weekend hours in the Base Staffing Commitments.
 - C. Polley noted that approximately half of the institutions participating in AskAway contribute evening and weekend hours, with higher contribution levels in tiers 3–5.
 - Several committee members noted constraints to staffing evening and weekend hours, including staffing shortages, library hours, and collective agreements.

Consultation

- A question was asked about item B under *Recommendations for Further Investigation* in the report, and why it was not included as a recommendation for immediate action.
- A. Griffin noted that any changes to base commitment hours would preferably be done after further consultation with member institutions and investigation into the impact of those changes.

Operational considerations

- Committee members reacted positively to heat map data, particularly for determining where local scheduling adjustments could be made.
- Members expressed caution against overemphasizing usage statistics, which can vary depending on how an institution is promoting AskAway and how heavily in-person reference is prioritized.
- Members also raised concerns about an overreliance on student FTEs, particularly in a time of significant FTE shifts, and when student FTE does not necessarily correlate with library staff FTE.
- One committee member noted that service quality should take priority and suggested that maintaining a strong service with fewer hours is preferable to stretching resources too thin.

4. Break

Attendees took a 10-minute break. Guests from the AskAway Commitment Models Review Working Group left at this time.

5. Advisory Committee Discussion

Committee members continued discussion of the recommendations, and touched on equity, the availability of AskAway data moving forward, and the importance of communication as this work progresses.

There was a question about the timeline for this work if the recommendations were endorsed as is. E. Magnus, on behalf of the Working Group, shared that the work outlined in the recommendations is expected to begin in the approaching 2025/26 fiscal year, with implementation in fiscal 2026/27. Changes would be enacted in time for the start of fiscal 2027/28.

MOTION: To endorse the AskAway Commitment Models Review Working Group recommendations as presented.

Moved: T. Mundle

Seconded: D. Grace

Motion carried.

Next Steps

- T. Rosseel will present the endorsed recommendations to the BC ELN Steering Committee and seek their endorsement. S. Nishimura will liaise with the BC ELN Steering Committee Chair and Vice-Chair to determine scheduling and format for this presentation and communicate this back to the Advisory Committee.
- The outcomes of the Steering Committee and Advisory Committee meetings will be shared with the AskAway community (i.e., library directors and local coordinators) after the Steering Committee meeting.
- If the recommendations are also endorsed by the Steering Committee, the next AskAway Advisory Committee meeting will focus on action planning.
- C. Polley welcomed anyone interested in providing support for this work and joining the Working Group suggested in recommendation #5 to get in touch with the AskAway Admin Centre.

6. Closing

T. Rosseel thanked committee members for their participation. The next Advisory Committee meeting will likely be in the Spring, to be scheduled following consultation with the Steering Committee.