



AskAway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 28, 2020

3:00 – 4:30pm

Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Michel Castagné, Capilano University, *Member-at-Large*

Ania Dymarz, *Simon Fraser University*

Lynette Gallant, North Island College, *Rural Colleges*

Aleteia Greenwood, *University of British Columbia*

Sybil Harrison, Camosun College, *Urban Colleges*

Lisa Petrachenko, *University of Victoria*

Suzanne Rackover, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, *Small Universities*

Christopher Reimer, University Canada West, *Member-at-Large*

Debbie Schachter, Capilano University, *Teaching Universities & Technical Institutions*
(Chair)

Administrative Centre:

Anita Cocchia

Cristen Polley

Megan Robertson (Recorder)

1. Adoption of Agenda

Adopted as approved.

2. Member-at-Large Selection

D. Schachter outlined Advisory Committee membership transitions on October 1st:

- D. Schachter renewed for a second term as Chair as well as Teaching Universities and Technical Institutions representative
- S. Rackover renewed for a second term as Small Universities representative
- L. Gallant stepped into the role of Rural Colleges representative, as Gregg Currie completed his final term
 - This opened a Member-at-Large position

The Committee reviewed the recommendation to select a new member-at-large, with consideration for their goal of ensuring balanced representation. It was agreed that the Committee would benefit from representation from the Thompson Okanagan region and from a two-year institution represented among members-at-large.

MOTION: To acclaim Eva Gavaris (Okanagan College) as new Member-at-Large.

Moved: A. Greenwood

Seconded: C. Reimer

Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION (Admin Centre): Notify Eva and add Eva to the Advisory Committee webpage and mailing list.

3. Service Update

C. Polley provided an AskAway Service update:

- In response to the needs of participating libraries, AskAway opened for the Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020 term two weeks early on September 8th
 - Over 50 service providers attended four online basic training sessions; approximately one third of those who attended said they would be staffing only institutional queues
 - In early Fall, service seeing an approximately 50% increase in the number of chat sessions compared to the same period in 2019
 - In survey feedback, students, graduate students, researchers, and educators continue to say they rely on immediate, knowledgeable, and friendly chat reference help, especially at this time
- A survey will be sent to all participating libraries to determine service needs for December and January break, when the service would typically be closed (December 12, 2020 to January 18, 2021)
- An online local coordinators meeting was held October 7th
 - Coordinators agreed to move forward with the patron file sharing feature; before feature is enabled, the Admin Centre will look into privacy considerations and draft privacy and service limit scripts
 - Attendees discussed how to support service providers responding to students who are stressed and on rare occasions, expressing frustration in chat sessions; scripts have been drafted and will be shared in a blog post that individuals or institutions can customize for their own use
 - To wrap up, everyone moved into smaller groups via break-out rooms and shared updates on AskAway at their libraries
- Admin Centre continues to check-in regularly with Canadian collaborative chat services using LibraryH3lp software (OCLS, OCUL, and Novanet)
 - Since the start of the pandemic, many libraries have shifted to staffing only their institutional queues and this has led to growing confusion

that institutional queues are a standalone service when instead they are supplemental to the collaborative service and software

- Institutional queues allow service providers to see and work with their patrons first when they're staffing the collaborative, provincial service (this is known as the Home Team First model in LibraryH3lp)
- The shift to staffing only institutional queues has presented challenges (e.g. building the collaborative schedule) and the AskAway Admin Centre is thinking about how to address these moving forward

In response to the item about students who are feeling stressed at this time, S. Harrison shared a link to an upcoming speaker series *Thriving Beyond Campuses: A Dialogue Series Connecting B.C. Post-Secondary Schools*:
<https://covid19.bccampus.ca/thriving-beyond-campuses/>

4. Staffing Commitments Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021

A. Cocchia reminded the Committee of the increase to Base Staffing Commitments for the Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020 term:

- As a proactive response to increased traffic to the service as a result of campus closures and online classes, the Committee approved the following increase to Base Staffing Commitments at the July 28th meeting:
 - Tiers 1 and 2: Two additional hours per week
 - Tiers 3, 4, and 5: Three additional hours per week
 - For all Tiers, one of the additional hours must be an evening or weekend hour
- Overall, this approach has worked well and the service has been able to meet the increased demand this Fall
- Most participating libraries were able to meet the new staffing commitments, with some taking on more than one evening / weekend hour, but a handful of Tier 1 and 2 libraries have expressed challenges meeting increased hours, in particular the evening/weekend requirement

C. Polley outlined the proposal for Base Staffing Commitments in the upcoming Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021 term. Overall, the proposed approach is to continue with the same model but to offer some flexibility to libraries experiencing difficulties meeting the increased commitment:

- As classes continue online, continue to respond proactively with increased staffing capacity
- Keep the same tiered model as Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020

- If an institution (especially Tier 1 or 2) is having trouble meeting the increased commitment and/or the evening/weekend requirement, they should notify the Admin Centre to work together on a sustainable solution

L. Gallant noted that a more flexible approach to the evening/weekend requirement would be welcomed by some Rural Colleges.

C. Polley clarified that libraries experiencing challenges with the increased commitment or that would like to adjust the additional shifts they signed up for in Section 1 2020 should notify the Admin Centre after the draft Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021 schedule has been shared with local coordinators.

MOTION: For Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021, continue with the Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020 increase to AskAway participating libraries Base Staffing Commitments.

Moved: S. Harrison

Seconded: A. Greenwood

Motion carried unanimously.

As next steps, this information will be shared with participating library directors and local coordinators and building the schedule for the Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021 term will begin.

5. Request for Short-Term Assistance (VIU)

D. Schachter presented Vancouver Island University (VIU) Library's request for short-term staffing assistance for the Section 1 (Sep-Dec) 2020 and Section 2 (Jan-Apr) 2021 terms due to unexpected staffing shortages. The [AskAway Partner Benefits and Responsibilities](#) outline remedies for institutions facing short-term staffing shortfalls.

C. Polley presented the details of VIU Library's request:

- In Section 1 2020, VIU Library is requesting a release from their staffing commitment for the remainder of the term, approximately 42 hours in total
- In Section 2 2021, VIU Library is requesting to provide compensation in place of staffing; these funds (approx. \$2,730) would be used by BC ELN to hire auxiliary staff

The Committee then discussed VIU Library's requests:

- Members acknowledged the challenges that VIU Library staff are currently facing due to the unforeseen staffing shortages
- In Section 1, the Committee felt that a full release from VIU's base staffing commitment of 7 hours per week would create a significant gap in the collaborative schedule

- In Section 2, members felt that more information was needed before a decision could be made
- It was decided that the Chair, on behalf of the Advisory Committee, will contact VIU Library to seek more information and discuss options for staffing, with the aim of providing relief for VIU Library while ensuring service sustainability for all participating institutions

6. New Business

No new business.

7. Wrap-Up

The next meeting will likely take place in mid to late February to approve Service Support Fees for 2021/22 and review the Expenditure Plan. The Admin Centre will send out a Doodle poll to pick a date.