



AskAway Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 5, 2021
1:00pm – 2:30pm (PT)
Virtual Meeting

In Attendance:

Michel Castagné, Capilano University, *Member-at-Large*
Ania Dymarz, *Simon Fraser University*
Lynette Gallant, North Island College, *Rural Colleges*
Eva Gavaris, Okanagan College, *Member-at-Large*
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*
Debbie Schachter, Capilano University, *Teaching Universities & Technical Institutions*
(Chair)

Administrative Centre:
Anita Cocchia
Cristen Polley
Elizabeth Traylor (Recorder)

Regrets:

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

1. Adoption of Agenda

D. Schachter added an item to New Business on behalf of L. Petrachenko. The agenda was adopted as amended.

2. Service Update

D. Schachter reflected on AskAway's response over the past year as institutions offered remote course and library service delivery during the pandemic:

- Participating institutions stepped up to support one another and students across the province
- To meet increased usage, libraries added additional hours to the collaborative schedule, ensuring service providers have a manageable number of chats and patrons continue to receive high quality service
- AskAway was open an additional 52 days to provide students convenient access to library help via chat between terms, when classes begin, and during exams

- AskAway continued to see high usage through late fall and winter, an average increase in traffic of approximately 45% compared to the same time last year
- Survey feedback shows students often expressing appreciation for the kindness of service providers

D. Schachter shared upcoming changes to participation that include two institutions leaving the service and two institutions moving Tiers. A. Cocchia provided a more detailed explanation of these changes in the presentation of the 2021/22 Expenditure Plan.

C. Polley provided updates on the Visibility Tip of the Month and the decision to extend AskAway hours through mid-April to mid-May:

- AskAway will be open through mid-April to mid-May to allow students and faculty to receive help while in-person services are limited
 - The decision is based on results from a survey of participating libraries
 - During this time, service hours will be Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm
 - As with past extensions, libraries will be given the option to remove themselves from the schedule
 - News will be shared with local coordinators next week
- AskAway launched a Visibility Tip of the Month in January, which is being shared with AskAway Coordinators
 - The tip draws on AskAway's Visibility Best Practices to share bite-sized, actionable information with examples from participating libraries
 - January's introduced entry points and how to make them inviting to users; February's shared a tip for making AskAway available on the library's homepage
 - Libraries have contacted the Admin Centre to put the tips into practice

C. Polley clarified that there will be no break before the extended period of operation. Friday, April 16th is the last day of the Section 2 (Jan-Apr) term, and the extension will begin Monday, April 19th.

Visibility tips received positive feedback from Committee members, and the Admin Centre is happy to work with libraries to implement them.

3. Expenditure Plan 2021/22

A. Cocchia presented the 2021/22 Expenditure Plan, beginning with the 2020/21 Projected Summary for the current fiscal year:

- BC ELN increased its contribution from \$5,000 to \$10,000 due to the need for additional Coordinator support hours during the pandemic

- Auxiliary contract costs remain stable as institutions contributed additional hours

A. Cocchia presented the proposed 2021/22 Expenditure Plan and Service Support Fees:

- AskAway anticipates a carryforward of \$3,142
- BC ELN plans to continue with its contribution of \$10,000; this makes it possible to keep the recommended Service Support Fee increase low at 2%
- The service will see participation changes in 2021/22, reflected in the Service Support Fee and Flexible Support Contributions:
 - Quest University Canada may not choose to participate in the service in 2021/22
 - Vancouver Island University (VIU) submitted their 12 months' notice of withdrawal from the service in December, citing ongoing staffing and budget shortfalls; they will participate in AskAway until December 2021
 - Trinity Western University will move from Tier 1 to 2 due to increased FTE
 - Thompson Rivers University will move from Tier 2 to 3 due to increased FTE
- Auxiliary contract costs are expected to remain stable
- There are no anticipated increases to technical infrastructure costs

MOTION: To approve the 2021/22 Expenditure Plan.

Moved: A. Greenwood

Seconded: E. Gavaris

Motion carried unanimously.

4. Staffing Commitments Summer 2021

C. Polley presented a proposed increase to the Base Staffing Commitments by Tier for the summer Section 3 (May-Jun) and Section 4 (Jul-Aug) 2021 terms:

- Proposed Base Staffing increases:
 - Tiers 1 and 2: One additional hour per week
 - Tiers 3, 4, and 5: Two additional hours per week
 - For all Tiers, one of the additional hours should be an evening or weekend hour
- The Base Staffing Commitment increases for Section 1 (Sep-Dec) and the current Section 2 (Jan-Apr) terms have been successful at meeting increased usage of the service

- It is anticipated the service will continue to see the same 40-50% increase in traffic over Section 3 and Section 4; proposed staffing increases have been adjusted to reflect that summer terms are quieter than the Fall and Spring terms
- If a library is having trouble meeting the increased commitment or requirement for evening and weekend staffing, they should contact the Admin Centre

To ensure more equal opportunity for libraries to sign-up for desired shifts, local coordinators will be given advance notice.

Concern was expressed about the ability of Tier 1 institutions to provide additional evening and weekend staffing. A. Cocchia acknowledged that it is challenging for some Tier 1 institutions to meet the requirement but that many have done so. Institutions should contact the Admin Centre if they are unable to meet the commitment and discuss possible alternatives.

MOTION: For Summer 2021 Sections 3 and 4, increase AskAway participating libraries' Base Staffing Commitments by one hour for Tiers 1 and 2 and two hours for Tiers 3, 4, and 5, with one additional hour being evening or weekend for all Tiers.

Moved: S. Rackover

Seconded: A. Greenwood

Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION (Admin Centre): Provide advance notice to local coordinators of shift sign-up.

5. Proactive Chat Pilot Recommendation

C. Polley presented a recommendation for a proactive chat pilot via LibraryH3lp, with up to five participating institutions acting as the working group to test the feature, analyze its impact, and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee.

The recommendation was met with enthusiasm about reaching students at their point-of-need during the pandemic and beyond. The following concerns were also expressed:

- Increased AskAway traffic may overtax the service to the detriment of both staff and students
- Unique challenges may arise from conducting the pilot during a pandemic

The Committee also sought clarification on how proactive chat and the working group would function.

In response to concerns and questions, C. Polley and A. Cocchia provided the following clarifications:

- Summer was considered the ideal time to carry out the pilot as it's the quietest AskAway term
- The pilot provides an opportunity to test the feature and its impact on the service on a small-scale and in a controlled environment
- The pilot working group will be a representative body tasked with developing the pilot scope and timeline, running the pilot, and assessing its impact; the working group will not be expected to add additional staffing hours to the service
- The proactive chat pop-up invitation is automated with customizable settings (e.g. wait time before pop-up) to help maintain a manageable amount of traffic
- Incoming proactive chats are routed in the same way as all other chats – those staffing the service will not see any difference between questions coming through proactive chat widgets and current widgets
- There are no increased licence costs to offer proactive chat
- If the working group recommends moving forward with proactive chat, they could suggest an incremental rollout to keep workloads manageable; this would likely begin in January 2022, as the Fall term tends to be the busiest

D. Schachter and A. Cocchia emphasized that a pilot will allow the Committee to investigate feasibility and make an informed decision about proactive chat moving forward.

MOTION: To launch a proactive chat pilot, with up to five participating institutions acting as the working group to test the feature, analyze its impact, and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee.

Moved: A. Greenwood

Seconded: E. Gavaris

Motion carried unanimously.

ACTION (Admin Centre): Send a call out for pilot working group participants in April to begin work in May 2021.

6. New Business

L. Petrachenko informed the Committee that the University of Victoria Library has been doing some restructuring, resulting in her position changing departments. She will be leaving the Committee and will pass on her representative role as appropriate.

7. Wrap-Up

The next meeting will take place in the summer, likely in June. The Admin Centre will send out a Doodle poll to pick a date.