

SRA MAROON PAPERS



THE McMASTER STUDENTS UNION | KEY POINTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SRA POLICY PAPERS

POLICY PAPER COURSE REGISTRATION

PREAMBLE

Course registration is an exciting time for most McMaster students: it provides the opportunities to get into classes that develop one's knowledge and skills, expand one's horizons, and get that much closer to completing that coveted degree. However, feedback on course registration reveals that many students are annually frustrated and dissatisfied with the process. This policy focuses on key concerns tabled by McMaster students, ranging from first year students just entering the system, to concerns levied by frustrated recent graduates.

PRINCIPLES

The MSU believes that:

- Students should have access to courses that guide them towards their personal, academic and/or career goals.
- Students should be granted unlimited access to all courses on their program lists or department.

CONCERNS

The MSU is concerned that:

- Many students are currently unable to get into courses that are not required, but recommended, for advancement in their academic career.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The MSU recommends that McMaster University:

- Require programs and/or departments to identify courses which they deem as



TO LEARN MORE VISIT
WWW.MSUMcMASTER.CA/GENERALPOLICIES



“Recommended”, to the Faculty and Registrar. These “Recommended” courses shall be those, which traditionally exhibit high student demand, and are prerequisites for a significant number of upper-year courses.

- Incorporate a waiting list for courses into Mosaic.
- Incorporate a tracking system into Mosaic for the number of students unable to register for a particular course. This data can be used in subsequent years for resource planning.
- Should implement a lottery system for student log-in times if Mosaic were to limit the maximum number of students using the system at any one time
- Should grant students the option to customize their academic path to the highest degree possible in advance of course registration, including the declaration of a double-major or minor.
- Provide information on the number of seats in each course on the Undergraduate Calendar/Course Timetable, in order to provide the most information to students as possible in the course planning process.
- Upon course cancellations, indicate the cancellation as a note underneath the cancelled course on the Undergraduate Calendar.

FURTHER READING

For more information about Course Registration, visit the **General Policies section** of the MSU website to read the full Policy Paper.



TO LEARN MORE VISIT
WWW.MSUMcMASTER.CA/GENERALPOLICIES





POLICY PAPER

Course Selection and Registration

Table of Contents

Introduction.....2

Principles.....3

Concerns.....4

Recommendations.....5

Appendix A.....11

Authored by:
Vice-President (Education) 2013-2014

Introduction

Course registration is an exciting time for most McMaster students: it provides the opportunities to get into classes that develop one's knowledge and skills, expand one's horizons, and get that much closer to completing that coveted degree. However, feedback on course registration reveals that many students are annually frustrated and dissatisfied with the process.

During summer 2013, the MSU asked students to write and send in letters outlining their recent experiences registering for courses for the 2013-2014 academic year. These letters serve as a barometer for overall student opinion on the course selection and registration process, with specific cases highlighted throughout this policy. These letters are compiled in Appendix A, with names and student numbers removed.

Unsurprisingly, students are most dissatisfied with the arguably out-of-date SOLAR, particularly in regards to inconvenient system glitches and the maximum number of users that the system allows. The MSU is pleased that the university is currently in the process of developing the enterprise resource system Mosaic, which aims to replace SOLAR by March 2015. The MSU is confident that Mosaic will address the basic, but important concerns of user capacity, glitches, and ease of use.

However, students do have other concerns that may or may not be addressed by the implementation of Mosaic. This policy focuses on a few key concerns tabled by McMaster students, ranging from first year students just entering the system, to concerns levied by frustrated recent graduates. Although students' experiences with course selection and registration are diverse, common themes include:

- Restricted access to courses, both within and beyond one's home faculty;
- Inability to declare a minor before proceeding with course selection;
- Informational discrepancies between the Undergraduate Calendar and the system registration software;
- Unusually late log-in times;
- Absence of wait-list functionality in system registration software, both for the purposes of student course access and for university resource planning.

For these reasons, the course registration policy will shift its attention to these issues, and provide the following recommendations:

- Require programs and/or departments to identify courses which they deem as "Recommended", to the Faculty and Registrar. These "Recommended" courses shall be those which traditionally exhibit high student demand, and are prerequisites for a significant number of upper-year courses.
- Mosaic should incorporate a waiting list for courses.

- Mosaic should incorporate a tracking system for the number of students unable to register for a particular course. This data can be used in subsequent years for resource planning.
- Should Mosaic limit the maximum number of students using the system at any one time, the university should implement a lottery system for student log-in times.
- Grant students the option to customize their academic path to the highest degree possible in advance of course registration, including the declaration of a double-major or minor.
- Provide information on the number of seats in each course on the Undergraduate Calendar/Course Timetable, in order to provide the most information to students as possible in the course planning process.
- Upon course cancellations, indicate the cancellation as a note underneath the cancelled course on the Undergraduate Calendar.

Principle One: Students should have access to courses that guide them towards their personal, academic and/or career goals.

In the growing knowledge economy, the majority of new jobs require some form of post-secondary education. While this alone may support a collective investment in successful students, studies additionally demonstrate significant social and personal benefits of a university education. Furthermore, a quality university education is significantly reliant on access to courses which broaden a student's knowledge, skills and abilities.

The decision to pursue a university degree is not taken lightly. Post-secondary education presents a high financial cost and time commitment to each student. Taking multiple factors into account, thousands of individuals opt to pursue a degree every year, and this decision is made based on a variety of positive outcomes to the student. Many of these reasons also lend themselves to student course preferences throughout the course of a university education.

Clearly, building skills and knowledge for a future career is one reason for degree and course selection, but oftentimes a student's career path is guided by pure interest and pursuit of knowledge in a certain discipline. Whereas courses make up the "meat and bones" of a university education, it is imperative that students have access to those courses that guided their decision to pursue the degree in the first place.

Principle Two: Students should be granted unlimited access to all courses on their program lists or department.

In many programs, important/recommended courses (i.e. courses that may cover a significant topic in the field, or those that act as a prerequisite to more advanced topics) are not always mandatory for program completion. However, it could be argued that access to

recommended courses is just as important as access to required courses for student academic success.

Many students proactively plan their academic pathway out multiple years in advance. When charting out one's progress in a degree path, many students assume that they will be granted access to the courses on their program list. It becomes disappointing and frustrating to students to be denied access to courses which unlock access to further courses or opportunities in their field. Some of these stories are highlighted in the student letter package provided.

Concern One: Many students are currently unable to get into courses that are not required, but recommended, for advancement in their academic career.

The registrar's office currently holds seats for students in mandatory courses for their program; as such, the university regularly grants access for those students who need it most. However, this policy does not extend to courses outside the definition of 'required'. This has led to enrolment limits that do not accurately reflect legitimate student demand.

In her submitted letter, a recent Honours Life Science graduate describes her experience with Biology 2B03, Cell Biology. She writes, "[Cell Biology] was full by the time I had tried to register. It's a crucial course to have in order to attend the third year cell bio courses, and yet, it was full [...] Because of this, I didn't take any cell biology courses and [this] greatly limited my choices in my final year."

Figure 1 shows the Honours Life Science course requirements. Although Biology 2B03 is listed as one course of multiple options required, the student could not gain access to the course.

<p>Levels II-IV: 90 units</p> <p>3 units LIFE SCI 2A03</p> <p>9 units from BIOCHEM 2EE3, BIOLOGY 2B03, 2F03, KINESIOL 2Y03, 2YY3, LIFE SCI 2C03, 2D03, 2G03, 2H03, 2N03</p> <p>6 units from LIFE SCI 3A03, 3B03, 3C03, 3D03, 3F03, 3H03, 3J03, 3K03, 3M03, 3R03, 3X03, 3Z03, ENVIR SC 3B03, 3CC3, BIOLOGY 3DD3 (or LIFE SCI 3DD3)</p> <p>36 units from the Honours Life Sciences Course List of which at least 18 units must be Levels III, IV (see <i>Program Notes 2, 3 and 4</i> above)</p> <p>0-3 units from BIOPHYS 1S03, MED PHYS 1E03, PHYSICS 1B03, 1L03 if not completed in Level I (see <i>Admission Note 1</i> above)</p> <p>33-36 Electives (see <i>Program Note 7</i> above) units</p>
--

Figure 1: Honours Life Science Levels II-IV Degree Requirements

There are multiple other examples of restricted course access to relevant and topical courses. Figure 2 displays an excerpt from the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Calendar and shows

the degree requirements for Honours Biology; of particular importance is the Biology Course List from which students are expected to fill 18 units.

A Level IV Honours Biology student wrote, “It’s upsetting that I am a student with [Health Science 3I03 (Introductory Immunology) and 3K03 (Introductory Virology)] on my course list, and yet I cannot find a seat in these classes... Clearly there is a demand for these courses”. Although simple interest in the subject matter is important to students when choosing courses, the decision to take a course often is made on a deeper level. For instance, Health Science 3I03 and 3K03 are particularly relevant to many science students seeking to consolidate their knowledge on multiple biological topics including cell and molecular processes and anatomy.

<p>Biology Course List</p> <p>BIOLOGY 2A03, 2B03, 2D03, 2EE3, 2F03, 2G03, 2L03, all Biology and Molecular Biology Level III and IV courses; all Biochemistry courses for which the prerequisites are met; CHEM BIO 2A03, 2P03, 3OA3, 4OA3, 4OB3; EARTH SC 2B03, 2C03, 2E03, 2EI3, 2GI3, 2Q03, 2W03, 3B03, 3GI3, 3J03, 4B03, 4C03, 4EA3, 4FF3, 4GI3; ENVIR SC 2MB3, 3EP3, 3SA3; HTH SCI 3I03, 3K03, 4II3; LIFE SCI 2C03, 2D03, 2H03, 3A03, 3B03, 3DD3, 3K03; MED PHYS 4B03, 4U03; ORIGINS 2LU3, 3D03, 3E03, 3F03; PSYCH 2D03, 2E03, 2F03, 2N03, 2NF3, 2TT3, 3A03, 3F03, 3FA3, 3S03, 3SN3, 3T03, 4R03, 4Y03</p> <p>Requirements</p> <p><i>120 units total (Levels I to IV), of which no more than 48 units may be Level I</i></p> <p>Level I: 30 units 30 units (See Admission above.)</p> <p>Levels II-IV: 90 units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">3 units BIOLOGY 2C033 units STATS 2B03 (see Program Note 4 above)9 units from BIOLOGY 2A03, 2B03, 2D03, 2EE3, 2F03 (see Program Note 3 above)3 units from CHEM 2E03, 2OA3, 2OC318 units from Biology Course List (see Program Note 3 above)15 units Levels III, IV Biology and Molecular Biology, of which at least 3 units must be Level IV and may include BIOLOGY 4C09 or 4F060-3 units from PHYSICS 1B03, 1L03 if not completed in Level I (see Admission Note above)36-39 units Electives (see Program Note 2 above)
--

Figure 2: Honours Biology Degree Requirements

Recommendation One: Require programs and/or departments to identify courses which they deem as “Recommended”, to the Faculty and Registrar. These “Recommended” courses shall be those which traditionally exhibit high student demand, and are prerequisites for a significant number of upper-year courses.

A recommendation process will grant Faculties and the Registrar’s Office the ability to make better informed decisions on course capacity and seating reservations for students. Along with the course code, the program head or department should indicate how many student seats should be added for each ‘recommended’ course. ‘Recommended’ courses could be analyzed

by the Faculty and/or Registrar's office on an annual basis to ensure that the size of teaching space and/or number of core lectures and tutorials are adequately reflected in advance of course registration.

However, this process should by no means guarantee that the Faculty reserve seats for specific students. It should only serve to open formal lines of communication between programs and the registrar to address course limitations. Recommendations shall act as one piece of the puzzle when making judgment calls on course sizes and number of cores offered. In regards to the relative importance of 'recommended' courses, a breakdown of the three levels of courses proposed is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Levels of Courses

Type of Course	Currently Exists?	Description	Recommended Policy
Required	Yes	Course is deemed as relevant and important enough to be deemed as mandatory for student to take for completion of degree	Seats are reserved for students who are required to take course
Recommended	No	Course is not relevant or important enough to enforce every student to take the course; yet the course is relevant and important to students who wish to continue on a certain academic path or focus, <u>or</u> the course is on the <i>program list</i> as one of several mandatory options for completion of degree.	Annual evaluation of the total number seats available in the course to ensure supply of course seats is consistent with student demand.
Regular	Yes	Course is completely optional for students enrolled in a program/major, and is not deemed as required or overly relevant for continuation in above program/major	No seats reserved for student in program/major, no re-evaluation of course limits required

Recommendation Two: Mosaic should incorporate a waiting list for courses once they are full.

A waiting list would be an incredibly helpful tool for students who are unable to register for a recommended or elective course. The current system forces students to consistently log back onto SOLAR once it reopens later in the summer, a major inconvenience that could easily be fixed with a waiting list. Priority could be given to students for whom the course is recommended for their degree program, on a first-come-first-served basis. Priority then would extend to students taking the course as an elective credit. An email notification system should also be built into the system to alert students that they have moved up the list. Finally, the student's

position on the waiting list should be made publically available to them, so that the student is able to explore other course options if they are low on the waiting list.

Recommendation Three: Mosaic should incorporate a tracking system for the number of students unable to register for a particular course. This data can be used in subsequent years for resource planning.

In conjunction with a waiting list and the implementation of 'recommended' courses by each program, an additional means of judging student demand for a course could be built into Mosaic's functionality by tracking those students who are unable to register for any particular course. To provide an example of how this system could work: first, a student would log onto Mosaic and proceed to select their courses. Should a course be full at that time, the student would be able to add themselves to the waiting list for the course. If the student is unable to get into the course by the add/drop deadline, the student would be able to check a box on the Mosaic user screen to indicate if they had strongly intended to take the course. A maximum number of checkboxes per student (2 or 3) would oblige the student to only select their most important courses.

This information would be collected and summarized by the Mosaic system to provide analytics regarding which courses are unavailable to the most number of students who need them. This is a more direct form of measuring student demand than reports from each faculty or waiting lists, as many students simply accept courses as being full, and proceed to select other courses without vocalizing their situation to their faculty or program advisor.

In future years, the Registrar can look at the history of previous years' courses, and use the analytics to determine which courses students had the most trouble getting in to. In combination with discussions at the faculty and program level, the Registrar will be in a well-informed position to make judgment calls on the valuable classroom facilities and human resources required to open the course up to more students.

Recommendation Four: Should Mosaic limit the maximum number of students using the system at any one time, the university should implement a lottery system for student log-in times.

The MSU offers a suggestion that would minimize the amount of time wasted by students each year attempting to log into the system. Before course registration occurs each year, the Registrar could randomly place students into timeslots for course selection, based on the number of users the system is able to support. Ideally, students would be able to select dates and times that they are unavailable *in advance* of course registration. Secondly, it would be ideal if these times were spread throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening instead of

at midnight. This system is fairer - primarily because it can save thousands of students' valuable time.

An incoming Level I Life Sciences student remarked, "I stayed up until midnight on my assigned registration day, hoping to get in at 12:01 am, since it was my prom night... I remained in front of my computer until 3:00 am, and I finished without being able to select the two courses [Physics 1B03 and French 1A06]".

Unfortunately, a large number of McMaster students share this student's difficulties. If this student had been assigned a timeslot for course selection instead of fruitlessly attempting to get onto the system for hours, her time would have been much better spent gaining a restful sleep before her big night.

Concern Two: Though students have the ability to declare their upper-year program and/or intended major, students do not have an official means of declaring a minor in advance of course registration, thereby limiting student access to courses in their intended discipline.

SOLAR currently allows students (primarily those going into Level II) to apply for a major, or entrance to an upper-year program. Before course selection for that year, students receive either confirmation or rejection for the program or major. Upon acceptance by the student, the required courses for that student will be reserved for them. However, a process for declaring a minor in advance of course selection does not currently exist for most students.

A level II Psychology student highlights this idea in his submitted letter (Appendix A). He writes, "I struggled and tried to get into [Spanish 1Z06] in my first year and was unsuccessful with that. I plan to get a minor in Spanish, and I really hoped that this year I'd get into the course. The moment registration was available for my program I successfully got into SOLAR onto to see that the course was already full! ...I'm really concerned that I won't be able to fulfill what I had planned coming into this university".

A Humanities student, who intended to complete a B.A. in Honours Anthropology with a minor in Classics, noted a similar struggle. "Anthropology 2E03 and 2FF3 are mandatory and were full, and I was planning to minor in classics, and wanted to take the mythology course which was also full."

Recommendation Five: Grant students the option to customize their academic path to the highest degree possible in advance of course registration, including the declaration of a double-major or minor.

While some students may decide to declare a double major or a minor after taking electives in a subject area, other students plan their education according to a defined path. Student stories have highlighted the barriers to completing a minor due to restricted course access. By allowing students to declare a minor before course registration, the faculty will be better equipped to provide access to the students who require it for a certain course. This may come in the form of reserving a limited number of seats for students intending to do a minor in the discipline, or for future planning purposes of the course.

Principle Three: All course information presented in the Undergraduate Calendar should accurately reflect the availability of courses available to students.

Students consistently rely on the Undergraduate Calendar to provide them with the official course offerings and course descriptions for the upcoming year. Students use the Undergraduate Calendar to gauge potential interest in a topic and to plan ahead by taking prerequisites for higher-level courses. Thus, accuracy in official university communication is paramount for student success.

Recommendation Six: Provide information on the number of seats in each course on the Undergraduate Calendar/Course Timetable, in order to provide the most information to students as possible in the course planning process.

When it comes to selecting courses, every piece of information a student has at their disposal is valuable. Providing the seat count for each course on the Undergraduate Calendar will help students in their course planning process. For example, if a student understands that there are only a limited number of spaces in a certain course, they may be more likely to think about a potential substitute course in advance of course selection, should it be full.

Concern Three: Misinformation exists between the Undergraduate Course Calendar and SOLAR, most notably the inclusion of cancelled courses and courses listed as offered every other year.

When students view and select courses based on information provided by the Undergraduate Calendar, their expectation is that those courses will appear as an option on SOLAR. However, this is not necessarily always the case, as courses are often cancelled.

As one student in biology wrote about her experience, “It is frustrating if you are counting on those classes to complete a minor – for example, Music 2A03, which has never been offered during my three years at Mac. Why is it put into the course calendar if it’s not going to be offered?”

Recommendation Seven: Upon course cancellations, indicate the cancellation as a note underneath the cancelled course on the Undergraduate Calendar.

The Undergraduate Calendar should be a fluid, dynamic document that is regularly updated when courses are cancelled or altered in any way. While the Course Timetable provides this information, many students may still be unaware of the cancellation, especially closer to the course registration date. Regularly updating the Undergraduate Calendar will minimize miscommunication between the university and its students.

Appendix A: Student Feedback Letters on Course Registration

██████████, BSc '13

Hello,

Thank you for finally trying to do something about this SOLAR mess. My name's ██████████ and I am a recent graduate of McMaster's Honours Life Sciences program. As soon as I read what you were doing, I knew I had to contribute my part. I've graduated and moved on from McMaster, but I really feel that the future students should not have to deal with something like SOLAR. That said, I can't even count the number of hours I wasted trying to get into SOLAR (and MUGSI) and the sleep deprivation it required. Any timetable I've ever made prior to registration fell apart in the first minute of course selection...because I've had to battle for 3 hours to get onto the system. I recall a time in my second year when Cell Biology (Bio 2C03? 2B03?) was full by the time I had tried to register. It's a crucial course to have in order to attend the third year cell bio courses, and yet, it was full and my other semester was full of pre-reqs so I couldn't take it in my second year. Because of this, I didn't take any cell biology courses and greatly limited my choices in my final year.

We pay thousands every year for tuition and that doesn't even include the fees for classes themselves. I've taken a handful of 'filler' elective courses, because the interesting electives relative to my studies were full, or not offered that semester. Why was I paying good money for courses of little interest just in order to fulfill a credit?

McMaster is supposed to be a top university, and in many ways, it is. However, our registration system is flawed, and it's time that the administration finally tries to do something about it.

██████████
Honours Life Sciences Graduate, 2013

██████████, Level II Psychology

To whom it may concern:

I'm going into my second year at McMaster this coming fall and yet I'm still having difficulties getting into the course "Spanish 1Z06". I struggled and tried to get into this course in my first year and was unsuccessful with that. I plan to get a Minor in Spanish, and I really hoped that this year I'd get into the course. The moment registration was available for my program I successfully got into SOLAR only to see that the course was already FULL! I contacted the program and was told I'd receive an apparent "guaranteed response" within two business days. I contacted them about a month ago and still to this day no response. I sure don't hope that my chance of getting into a 1st year program will be when I'm in 3rd or 4th year, not to forget that I'll require the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year credits in order to get the minor. The course isn't even offered as a summer course.

I'm really concerned that I won't be able to fulfill what I had planned coming into this university. Would it be possible to use a bigger lecture hall for the course, or provide another core, since the course seems to be high in demand? I really hope this could be resolved.

██████████, Level II Humanities

I hope you don't mind me explaining my situation.

When applying on SOLAR in June I was told by my Humanities advisors that I would be able to choose a double major option when choosing my courses (I originally only wanted to major in Honours English but changed my mind to a double honours in English and Theatre and Film). Needless to say when I logged onto SOLAR I was not able to choose my double honours and had to choose only one program (Honours English). Because of this I was only able to choose the English courses I need for a double honour, not my Theatre and Film courses. As a result, the two courses I need (2AA3 and 2DP3) are now full. I have filled out a seat request form for both courses and am currently on a waiting list.

I was just wondering if there was anything you could do to get me into the classes I need. This situation is really stressful and I've tried everything to get into my courses.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

██████████

██████████, Level II Honours Anthropology

Hello,

My name is ██████████. I am entering my second year undergraduate program at McMaster and am majoring in honours anthropology. During course registration this year, I had trouble logging on to SOLAR, and finally managed to log in an hour after it opened, only to find 4 of the courses I needed already full. Anthropology 2E03 and 2FF3 are mandatory and were full and I was planning to minor in classics, and wanted to take the mythology course which was also full.

I am also very interested in becoming fluent in Spanish, and I wanted to take Spanish 1Z06. That was full as well. This course is as important to me as the mandatory courses, and the course selections on SOLAR always stress me out knowing I will not be able to get many courses that I need.

I also tried contacting my department for help, and was told all I can do is wait on SOLAR for a chance to find a seat in all these courses.

I ended up choosing irrelevant courses to fill up my unfavourable schedule, and will be waiting until July 8th when SOLAR opens to see if I can fix up my schedule. Any help or advice regarding getting into my courses would be much appreciated.

Thanks,

██████████

██████████, **Level I Life Sciences**

Hello,

My name is ██████████, and I'm going into first year Life Sciences at McMaster. I've had trouble registering for Physics 1B03 in Term 2 as well as French 1A06. This has been as a result of the fact that SOLAR's servers aren't up to standards. I stayed up until midnight on my assigned registration day, hoping to get in at 12:01am, since it was my prom night. Even though I managed to get on the server at around 1:30, as soon as I finished selecting my courses, the server glitched and kicked me off. I had to start the process all over again, beginning with trying to get a spot on the server in the first place. I remained in front of my computer until 3:00 am, and I finished without being able to select the two courses I listed above. This meant that I had to take more time out my day later on, in order to try and figure out who I could email (or even if I could email anyone) about the problems I had with those courses.

Now, the difficulties I encountered with SOLAR would not bother me as much as they do, if I weren't aware of how easily servers can handle more people. With the social networking age that we live in, I'm very unpleasantly surprised that McMaster's SOLAR technology is unable to achieve its sole purpose.

Thank you for your time McMaster.

██████████

██████████, **Level II Honours Political Science**

Hi,

This message is to express my ongoing frustration with the current SOLAR system that McMaster University uses to manage its courses and academics. I can't say that I have concrete answers for how to resolve these problems, but I do know that something (many things) needs to change.

One of my first impressions of our school was the frustrating and disheartening experience of picking courses in the summer before I began first-year. I remember staying up to the early hours of the morning clicking endlessly to open SOLAR, only to find out that because the rest of my faculty was doing the same, I wouldn't be getting anywhere. The fact that such a large body of students has to fit through such a narrow bottleneck represents a fundamental system flaw in my opinion, of how we cater to the needs of our students. Students deserve better for a system they themselves are funding.

When I finally got through to SOLAR and figured out the options presented to me, I remember being puzzled and dismayed that I couldn't take several of the courses I wanted because they were already full. When an undergraduate degree is so costly, it is unacceptable that a student cannot even take the courses he or she wants to take. This year I expected that second-year students wouldn't be subjected to the same arduous process but I found myself up for several hours again encountering full courses, courses that did not show up at all in SOLAR that I wanted to take, and getting kicked from my place in line because my internet browser froze - losing my courses I was about to submit.

I hope that your proposal can spur change in the necessary direction and allow McMaster to take the steps necessary to resolve these pressing issues. Thank you for your time.

██████████
Second-year Student, Honours Political Science

██████████, **Level III Honours Biology**

Hello,

It has become increasingly frustrating to deal with SOLAR. One would expect that as they became an upper year that course selection would become less arduous, and yet this year's course selection (level 3), was probably my worst one yet. After finally getting onto the system at 3:26 am for the first time before getting bumped off, I was further frustrated by the fact that many of the classes I had wanted to take were already full. Upon entering the system some of the courses I need to fulfill professional school prerequisites were full, and left me scrambling to fill my schedule with courses that I have no interest in simply to fill spaces.

I am aware that SOLAR will be gone in two years but for the time being I feel that there is a better way to control the flow of students entering the system. It's foolish of the university to believe that it is practical for some of the largest faculties to be picking at the same time, and at such an inconvenient time of day. There is no reason that level four science students should have to pick at the same time as the engineering and nursing students.

I believe that having a lottery system to assign students to an entry time slot would alleviate a lot of the stress that students face as they complete course selection. For example, stagger the students to choose in timeslots that are 45 minutes- 1 hour apart, around the maximum capacity of the system. After their initial time slot students would not be allowed in again until after everyone from their respective program or perhaps year had gotten their first chance at picking. This would make it easier for students to get in as they wouldn't be fighting thousands of people for a space, and would waste much less student time.

I know that this is an issue that has been persistent and has no easy fix. However, as student enrolment increases the problem will only be exacerbated. We are the ones paying for our education and as such we should be able to take the courses that we are interested in and not merely the ones that are empty.

This year I had been really excited to know that I was able to take some Health Sciences courses - 3I03 and 3K03. I have heard from many people 1) how great these courses are and 2) how great the learning environment in the Faculty of Health Sciences is. I was ready to step away from the standard Bio Department way of learning. Of course, after getting into SOLAR, both are full. It's upsetting that I am a student with these courses on their course list and yet I cannot find a seat in these classes. I have tried every day since to get in, to no avail. Clearly

there is a demand for these courses so why not offer them to more students or create another core? Another problem is courses that say they will be offered every other year and then they are not. It is frustrating if you are counting on those classes to complete a minor - for example, Music 2A03 has never been offered during my three years at Mac. Why is it put into the course calendar if it's not going to be offered?

One of my friends who is entering fourth year had a lot of trouble this year with cancelled classes. There are very few fourth year bio courses outside of thesis and ecology/environmental courses, and it is growing increasingly frustrating to be able to fulfill professional school requirements/personal interest with the lack of courses offered in fourth year. Below are three courses that were cancelled that she was planning on taking.

Med Phys 4C03 - Human Clinical Anatomy and Physiology

- When she contacted the Med Phys Dept as to why it was cancelled they offered her an answer that indicated that they had no concrete reason for cancelling this class.

Biochem 4EE3 – Research Advances in Cell Biology and Biochemistry

- This course was changed to an "alternative" course that is unrelated to the original course.

Mol Bio 4P03 - Medical Microbiology

- When she contacted the department to see why the course was cancelled, she was told it was because the prof is busy.

It's unfair to students to cancel classes without prior notice. Classes should be predetermined for the next two years of whether or not they will be offered. This would alleviate stress on both students and faculty knowing their commitments and course availability for half of their degree.

██████████
Honours Biology, Minor Music and Music Cognition Level III

██████████. Level IV Honours Biology (Physiology Specialization)

To whom it may concern:

Course selection at McMaster is a very stressful event for many reasons. Miscommunication between students and the Undergraduate Calendar is one of them. I have noticed and heard stories about courses that are listed inside the Undergraduate Calendar but are actually not being offered during that academic school year. For example, KIN 3M03, Foundations of Athletic Coaching, is one of the courses that is listed under the Kinesiology Course Listing section, but when I went to choose that course on SOLAR, it wasn't available. That was very frustrating because I had chosen my specific courses according to my future goals. With an interest in counselling youth and in physiotherapy, I had decided to take more Kinesiology courses in my final school year. Also, being a camp counsellor, I thought that the course would help me build on skills that I could apply not only in school but also at work.

So when I found out through SOLAR that it was unavailable, I felt overwhelmed because I now had to find a similar course. The Kinesiology Department in fact has only a few courses that are open to non-Kin students and so this course unavailability made my selection even more limited. Students who are not in Kinesiology but who want to enter into the Rehabilitation Science field look forward to such courses, and so an unavailable course can really hinder a

students' career exploration. Furthermore, after finding out that the course was unavailable, I felt panicked when I realized I now had to find another course in that 45-minute time limit, I felt rushed and ended up choosing a random course that I had no interest in. That additional stress made the process of selecting courses even more brutal.

If I had known that the course was not being offered during the 2013/2014 school year, I would have strategized my plan differently. I would have had time to look into similar courses being offered by either Kinesiology or by another department. I hope that the calendar is going to be updated so that students could plan their course selection in advance.

With best,

Sophiya Garasia