

Professional Standards Committee (PSC) 2016-2017 Year-End Report

Committee Members: Kris Bartanen, Denise Despres, Fred Hamel, Suzanne Holland, Amanda Mifflin, Garrett Milam, Jennifer Neighbors (Chair), Amy Odegard, and Matt Warning

This report is divided into four parts: 1) work completed by the PSC in response to official charges by the Faculty Senate; 2) work on standing charges, 3) additional work in response to requests from departments and individuals, and 4) ideas for future charges.

PART I: SENATE CHARGES

Charge 1: Recommend to the Senate specific, concrete changes to the evaluation process to mitigate well-documented bias in student evaluations during the evaluation process.

Report: A PSC representative met with the Committee on Diversity (COD) on November 16th to discuss this charge, since this year the Committee on Diversity was asked to “develop and implement a strategy to educate students about bias in course evaluations.” Both the PSC and the COD shared concerns about putting any significant responsibility for eliminating bias on the shoulders of students, and agreed that some progress might be made by working to better educate faculty who will be reading and interpreting student evaluations. As a result, the PSC has created, and is in the process of annotating, a SoundNet site containing articles documenting the many forms of bias in the evaluation process ([https://soundnet.pugetsound.edu/sites/Team/WorkTeams/psc/Bias in Student Evaluations/](https://soundnet.pugetsound.edu/sites/Team/WorkTeams/psc/Bias%20in%20Student%20Evaluations/)). The PSC will add language to the 2017-2018 Faculty Evaluation Procedures and Criteria document that directs faculty who will be reading evaluations to the site, and asks them to engage in some self-education about the bias they will encounter in evaluations. The PSC plans to continue to discuss significant issues related to bias in student evaluations. See Part 4: Future Charges.

Charge 2: Develop a policy or set of guidelines for course/faculty evaluation of team-taught courses.

Report: The PSC informally gathered feedback from faculty who have experience with team-taught courses, to gauge their concerns about the current evaluation process and their suggestions for how to improve or modify the current forms. Based on that feedback and after considerable discussion of potential options, the PSC created and approved a new plan for team-taught courses for the 2017-2018 academic year. Faculty in team-taught courses will now have three options when it comes time for student evaluations: 1) to use the current, standard evaluation option; 2) to use the current, standard evaluation option with a one-page addendum that focuses on the team-taught aspects of the course; and 3) to use a new form that focuses on the team-taught nature of the course rather than evaluation of the individual faculty members. The addendum and the new form can be found below in Appendix A. One member of the PSC, who is currently team-teaching a course, will use the new form (option 3 above) in their team-taught course this term, and will provide feedback on their experience to the PSC in the fall.

The 2017-2018 Faculty Evaluation Procedures and Criteria document will include all three evaluation options as well as a reminder that when considering which form to choose, faculty should be aware that depending on the term, they might need to submit those forms with their files for evaluation.

PART 2: STANDING CHARGES

Review Cycle for Departmental Evaluation Standards: As part of its standing charge “to recommend and improve continually the instruments and methods of Faculty evaluation and to facilitate their use in the University community” (Faculty Bylaws V.6.E.c.1), the PSC established a review cycle whereby each university department will be asked to review and revise its departmental evaluation procedures (i.e. its departmental guidelines for promotion, tenure, and other reviews) every eight years. This review is meant to help ensure that departmental evaluation standards stay up to date with the Faculty Code as well as changing norms and practices within each discipline. This new review cycle was first presented to the Faculty Senate on December 5, 2016. After feedback from the Faculty Senate, the PSC added language to the review cycle memo to clarify that “faculty undergoing evaluation may choose to use either the newly approved departmental evaluation standards or the most recent prior version of their department’s evaluation standards, so long as the most recent prior version was in effect on the date that the faculty member’s tenure-line appointment began.” The finalized review cycle (see Appendix B) was presented to the faculty at the faculty meeting on March 7, 2017. The 2017-2018 Faculty Evaluation Procedures and Criteria document will include language directing evaluatees and department chairs to specify in evaluation documents which set of departmental evaluation standards are being used in evaluatees’ reviews.

Interpretations of the Faculty Code: On April 3, 2017 the PSC approved the following two interpretations of the Faculty Code. The PSC considers these interpretations to be clarifications, not significant interpretations.

Interpretation of Chapter I, Part D, Section 4.a. Professional Ethics:

The term “public law” includes applicable statutes, ordinances and regulations. In addition to public law, the university also applies university policies, including but not limited to current university policies on discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct.

Rationale: “Public law” could be federal or state statutes, city or county ordinances, as well as the regulations enacted to enforce them (typically regulations would be federal regulations and Washington administrative codes). Such regulations need to be complied with.

Updated Interpretation of Chapter I, Part C, Section 2 and Chapter I, Part D, Section 4. Faculty as Teachers, Professional Ethics, and Relationships between Faculty and Students:
Intimate relationships (including romantic and sexual relationships) between a faculty member and a student violate acceptable standards of professional ethics as required by the Faculty Code, Chapter I, Part D, Section 4 and impair the role of teacher as defined in Chapter I, Part C, Section 2. This policy statement aligns with the university’s conflict of interest provisions in the Code of Conduct as well the Prohibited Relations section of the Campus Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct.

Rationale: The Gender and Sexual Violence Policy Subcommittee has determined that the term "intimate" should be used as the umbrella term for faculty-student relationships, to accord with current US government guidelines, and the PSC concurs with that decision. The previous interpretation, affirmed by the PSC on April 4, 2016, used the phrase "sexual and/or romantic" to characterize such relationships and did not reference the new Campus Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct.

PART 3: ADDITIONAL WORK

In addition to taking up formal charges, the PSC attended to other matters during the 2016-2017 academic year. Those actions, and the meeting dates when those actions were taken, are summarized below:

- The PSC approved a revised memo to chairs and administrative assistants regarding the administration of student evaluations. This revised memo contains language requesting that "faculty members should normally avoid scheduling required evaluations on the last day of class." The rationale for this request was that some faculty reviews had to be postponed due to missing evaluations. (September 15, 2016)
- The PSC reviewed a report from the School of Physical Therapy (PT) on its trial run with electronic student evaluations in Spring 2016. The PT experiment seemed to be successful. The PSC approved PT's request to continue using electronic student evaluations, so long as 1) students use electronic devices with physical keyboards (to encourage students to write more complete answers to the evaluation questions) and 2) so long as at least one laptop computer as well as paper copies of course evaluations are available (in case troubles arise with electronic devices). (October 10, 2016)
 - Update: Late in the year the PSC received an informal report that the way that electronic evaluations for PT are being aggregated and conveyed to faculty does not give faculty access to each individual evaluation form. The PSC found this concerning and will follow-up on this matter with PT. (April 17, 2017)
- The PSC approved a request from Occupational Therapy (OT) to use electronic course evaluations so long as OT follows the same rules and guidelines as apply to PT. (October 10, 2016)
- A PSC member served as a representative to the ad hoc committee creating procedures to be used in the event of a sexual misconduct complaint against a faculty member. (Ongoing, AY 2016-2017)
- The PSC was asked to rule on whether a head officer can submit a "minority report" on an evaluation in the case of a tie vote in a promotion or tenure decision (Faculty Code Chapter III, Section IV.b.1.c). The PSC ruled that a minority report is allowed in such a case. The rationale was that a tie vote means that a department cannot recommend a positive evaluation – in effect, this is a negative conclusion. In this sense, "minority" in the identified code section refers to the fact that the head officer disagrees with the prevailing conclusion. (October 24, 2016)
- The PSC was asked to clarify the following language in the Faculty Evaluation and Procedures document (p. 4): "Newly approved departmental criteria for evaluation,

tenure, and promotion normally take effect at the beginning of the next academic year following PSC approval.” The committee was asked whether new evaluation procedures which “take effect” at a certain date (e.g. August 2016) apply to all evaluations which arise during that year. The issue is that some evaluatees may have been hired under, or assuming, different evaluation standards – such that to evaluate them on a newly approved set of standards and procedures effectively “moves the goalposts.” The PSC asserted that the word “normally” in the identified language in the Faculty Evaluation and Procedures document allows flexibility for departments to apply criteria in a way that is fair and consistent with what an evaluatee has understood or under which the evaluatee has pursued the evaluation. The committee noted that if a variation from “current” criteria occurs – e.g. if older criteria are grandfathered for an evaluatee – it is essential for the department to include in its summary of deliberations which set of criteria were used and the rationale for using those criteria. The PSC advised that, at the time when changes to evaluation procedures take place, it is important for a department to document the process used in making revisions and who specifically was involved, which allows a way to track how specific criteria came about, if questions arise at a future date. (October 24, 2016)

- Update: The PSC notes that with the recent approval of a review cycle for departmental evaluation standards, this issue is no longer of concern.
- The PSC was asked to clarify whether head officers need to complete class visits for faculty undergoing streamlined evaluations. The PSC determined that the Code does not require class visits in such cases. (November 7, 2016)
- The PSC reviewed and approved departmental evaluation standards for Environmental Policy and Decision-Making. (January 23, 2017)
- The PSC reviewed, endorsed, and affirmed the new Campus Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct (CPPSM) and Campus Policy Prohibiting Harassment (CPPH), while suggesting that additional language be added to the “Prohibited Relations” section of the CPPSM as follows: “At no point in this policy is intimate used to describe acts or a relationship that might be considered as simply platonic. The Campus Policy Prohibiting Sexual Misconduct does not prohibit platonic friendship or mentorship between faculty and students.” (April 3, 2017)
- The PSC reviewed and approved minor changes to the evaluation standards for PT. (April 17, 2017)
- The PSC reviewed and offered feedback on revised departmental evaluation standards for Math and Computer Science. (April 17, 2017)

PART 4: FUTURE CHARGES

The work that the PSC hopes to address in the 2017-2018 academic year includes:

- Continuing its work on bias in the student evaluation process, and re-assessing the student evaluation process as a whole. As a result of work on the SoundNet site described in Part I, the PSC has increasing concerns about the use of student evaluations in the review process. The PSC hopes to explore several options that might address bias: 1) modifying the current student evaluation forms; 2) lowering the weight of student evaluations in the faculty review process; and, 3) eliminating entirely the required use of student evaluations in the review process. The PSC is

aware that either of the last two options would require both an increase in the number of class visits by colleagues and changes to the language of the Faculty Code.

- Reviewing departmental evaluation criteria from History, Economics, Classics, German Studies, Geology, and Hispanic Studies. (Revised evaluation standards from History and Economics should be in-hand by the end of the current academic year, but not in time for the PSC to review them.)
- Exploring whether labs in the sciences should be evaluated separately from the courses with which they are associated.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the PSC,

Jennifer Neighbors, Chair

Appendix A

PUGET SOUND Team-taught Course Evaluation Form

To the Student: A team-taught course relies on the collaborative work of two or more instructors. Because team-taught courses are meant to be collaborative efforts, this form asks you to evaluate the course you have just taken using criteria related to the joint work of your instructors.

The evaluation you are about to write is an important document. The information provided will be used by the university in the evaluation of your instructors' teaching. It will also be used for improving course structure and teaching. Your evaluation does count. You are encouraged to respond thoughtfully, to take this evaluation seriously, and to provide written remarks. Your instructors will not see these evaluation forms until after they have turned in final grades. If you do not want the instructors to see your hand-written form, check this box [] and your responses will be typed before it is given to the instructors.

Course # _____ Semester _____ Year _____

Instructors' Names _____

Major _____ Minor (if applicable) _____

Status: ___ First Year ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior ___ Graduate Student

1. Course Design, Collaboration, and Communication

a. There was evidence of a thoughtful team-teaching approach/design to the course.	1 2 3 4 5
b. Overall the course was well organized.	1 2 3 4 5
c. Collaboration between instructors and/or joint teaching enhanced the course.	1 2 3 4 5
d. The instructors were well prepared for class sessions.	1 2 3 4 5
e. The instructors established clear expectations of students' responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the choices you checked above with comments that help give context to your ratings.

2. Promotion of Students' Learning

a. The combined efforts of instructors helped students master relevant concepts and skills	1 2 3 4 5
b. The instructors were intellectually challenging.	1 2 3 4 5
c. The instructors encouraged students to take learning seriously and to think critically.	1 2 3 4 5
d. The instructors encouraged students' intellectual self-reliance and self-motivation.	1 2 3 4 5
e. Instructors presented material in a manner that facilitated student learning.	1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the choices you checked above with comments that help give context to your ratings. If you wish to speak to an individual instructor's promotion of learning, please do so here.

3. Interaction with Students

a. The instructors showed concern for the students' understanding of the material.	1 2 3 4 5
b. The instructors were respectful of a variety of viewpoints.	1 2 3 4 5
c. The instructors were available during office hours and by appointment.	1 2 3 4 5
d. The instructors led students to engage the course material.	1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the choices you checked above with comments that help give context to your ratings. If you wish to speak to an individual instructor's interaction with students, please do so here.

4. Evaluation of Students' Learning

a. Evaluated coursework (papers, activities, performances, quizzes, group projects, tests, etc.) contributed to my learning.	1 2 3 4 5
b. Coursework and assessments were consistent with course content and goals.	1 2 3 4 5
c. Instructors provided reasonable preparation for graded coursework.	1 2 3 4 5
d. Instructors did a thorough job of evaluating my work.	1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the choices you checked above with comments that help give context to your ratings. If you wish to speak to an individual instructor's evaluation of students' learning, please do so here.

5. Overall Course Evaluation

After carefully considering the items above, provide an overall rating for this team-taught course.	1 2 3 4 5
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- a. What were strengths of the team-teaching in this course?

- b. What might be improved? Please provide feedback about the course that would be helpful for the instructors to know in preparing to teach this course again.

PUGET SOUND Evaluation Addendum for Team-taught Courses

To the student: Team-taught courses rely upon the collaborative work of two or more instructors in course design, instruction, and assessment. This evaluation page asks you to evaluate the course you have just taken using criteria related to the joint work of your instructors. Your responses will be used by instructors to improve the course as a whole and by the university to inform the evaluation of an individual's instructor's teaching. Your instructors will not see these evaluation forms until after they have turned in final grades.

Collaborative / Joint Teaching Criteria

a. There was evidence of a thoughtful team-teaching approach/design to the course.	1 2 3 4 5
b. Communication and collaboration between instructors enriched the course overall.	1 2 3 4 5
c. The collaborative teaching added to the level of intellectual engagement and critical thinking in this course.	1 2 3 4 5
d. The team teaching or collaborative instruction enhanced my learning.	1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the choices you checked above with comments that help give context to your ratings.

Overall Comments. Please consider your overall experience with this team taught course:

c. What were strengths of the team teaching dimension of this course?

d. What might be improved with respect to the team teaching dimension of this course?

e. What other observations would help the instructors of this course understand your experience of their team teaching?

Appendix B

DATE: February 20, 2017

FROM: Professional Standards Committee

TO: Faculty Senate

SUBJECT: Review Cycle for Departmental Evaluation Standards

As part of its standing charge “to recommend and improve continually the instruments and methods of Faculty evaluation and to facilitate their use in the University community” (Faculty Bylaws V.6.E.c.1), the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) has established a review cycle whereby each university department will be asked to review and revise its departmental evaluation procedures (i.e. its departmental guidelines for promotion, tenure, and other reviews). This review is meant to help ensure that departmental evaluation standards stay up-to-date with the Faculty Code as well as changing norms and practices within each discipline.

After reviewing information on when each department last conducted a formal review of its departmental evaluation standards, the PSC has established a rolling schedule whereby each department will conduct such a review once every eight years:

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year One</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(first review in spring 2017)</p> <p>Environmental Policy and Decision Making (fall)</p> <p>History (spring)</p> <p>Economics (spring)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year Two</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(first review in 2017-2018)</p> <p>Classics (fall)</p> <p>German Studies (fall)</p> <p>Geology (spring)</p> <p>Hispanic Studies (spring)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year Three</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(first review in 2018-2019)</p> <p>Religious Studies (fall)</p> <p>Exercise Science (fall)</p> <p>Psychology (spring)</p> <p>Sociology and Anthropology (spring)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year Four</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(first review in 2019-2020)</p> <p>Science, Technology, and Society (fall)</p> <p>African American Studies (fall)</p> <p>Theatre (spring)</p> <p>Chemistry (spring)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year Five</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Year Six</u></p>

(first review in 2020-2021)	(first review in 2021-2022)
International Political Economy (fall)	Physics (fall)
Education (fall)	Politics and Government (fall)
Communication Studies (spring)	Music (spring)
Asian Languages and Cultures (spring)	Mathematics and Computer Science (spring)
<u>Year Seven</u>	<u>Year Eight</u>
(first review in 2022-2023)	(first review in 2023-2024)
Philosophy (fall)	Physical Therapy (fall)
Biology (fall)	French Studies (fall)
Business and Leadership (spring)	Occupational Therapy (spring)
English (spring)	Art and Art History (spring)

Departments will be required to submit their revised standards to the PSC for review no later than midterm of their assigned semester.

If a department finds it important to review or change its departmental standards earlier than its designated review year, it is free to submit revised guidelines to the PSC at any time. However, the department will still need to conduct a review during its next regular, designated review year.

Faculty undergoing evaluation may choose to use either the newly approved departmental evaluation standards or the most recent prior version of their department’s evaluation standards, so long as the most recent prior version was in effect on the date that the faculty member’s tenure-line appointment began.

Guidelines to Departments

As departments conduct their reviews, the PSC asks them to consider, among other issues, the following:

- Whether there are any unclear or contradictory statements that might mislead or confuse a junior or newly-arrived faculty member, or that could confuse the Faculty Advancement Committee (FAC) when attempting to apply the guidelines.
- Whether there are rules that are overly restrictive, and that could delay an evaluation or force the FAC to return a file to the department. The PSC recommends modifiers like "normally" to allow for illness, leaves of absence, etc.

- Whether norms and practices in the relevant discipline(s) have changed since the last review of their departmental standards, and if so, how departmental standards should be revised to reflect those new norms and practices.
- Whether any aspects of the guidelines contradict provisions in the Faculty Code, especially Chapters III and IV. The PSC asks that departments pay particular attention to several issues:
 - The specification of criteria for tenure and promotion are not the same.
 - Colleague letters are to be completed before department deliberations.
 - Where standard departmental practice is to establish an evaluation committee that is smaller than the whole department or includes members of other departments/programs, departments should provide guidelines for the composition of that evaluation committee, making sure that its composition accords with provisions outlined in Chapter III, Section IV, Part III of the Faculty Code.
 - Departments are reminded that only tenure-line faculty, ongoing instructors, and clinical faculty may participate in the evaluation process.
 - Departments should ensure that all aspects of departmental guidelines accord with the most recent version of the Faculty Code.
 - References to page numbers in the Faculty Code should be avoided, since those numbers can change, invalidating guidelines.

Evaluation standards should also indicate the names of the faculty members who participated in the process of revising the departmental evaluation standards.

Final copies of guidelines should include the date of departmental approval and the date of PSC approval.