

Minutes of the Professional Standards Committee
February 17, 2015

Present: Kris Bartanen, Geoffrey Block, Doug Cannon, Betsy Kirkpatrick, Tiffany MacBain (chair), Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, and Amy Spivey

MacBain called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

I. The minutes from the January 27th meeting were approved.

II. The committee has been charged to work collaboratively with the student life committee to: 1) investigate existing University policies pertaining to the display of materials for campus/public consumption, 2) make recommendations for changes or additions to the existing University policies including the possibility of another statement regarding freedom of expression, and 3) consider revision or clarification of the procedures for “immediate response” to reported incidences of Bias-Hate (“Response Protocol of Bias-Hate Incidents,” Section V.B.1.). There was a discussion regarding the appropriate role of PSC in this work. It was decided that we will compare the current text in the “Response Protocol of Bias-Hate Incidents” document with the Faculty Code to determine whether the two are consistent, and to determine whether the current code text is sufficient.

III. The committee finished its discussion of the evaluation guidelines for French Studies; a set of recommendations will be sent to the chair.

IV. The committee discussed a subcommittee report regarding recommended interpretations of the faculty code (report appended). Much of the discussion focused on issues related to outside letters submitted for evaluations. The committee affirms the right of evaluatees to receive letters and include them in their evaluation files regardless of whether the file is open or closed. The committee will continue its discussion of how outside letters are solicited at its next meeting.

The committee adjourned at 8:50.

Respectfully submitted by Mark Reinitz.

Recommended Revisions to Interpretations of the Faculty Code

Professional Standards Committee 2014-15

(Fact-checked by Block and Spivey, Feb. 9, 2015)

Members: Kris Bartanen, Geoffrey Block, Douglas Cannon, Betsy Kirkpatrick, Tiffany MacBain (Chair), Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, Amy Spivey

APPENDIX

Page 39, line 8: Because the Appendix contains current interpretations and interpretations that are no longer active, change “This Appendix contains current interpretations” to read “This appendix contains such interpretations.”

Page 39, lines 23-48: Given that technology has evolved to the point where it is easy to search PDFs, and given the potentially incomplete nature over time of the list of references to “working days” in these lines of the Code, the PSC recommends that lines 23-48 be deleted from the Appendix.

Page 41, lines 42-49: Committee members expressed concern about ambiguity in the text regarding the timing of PSC reviews of departmental guidelines for the use of course assistants. Change the sentences beginning with “Thus” in line 42 to read, “Thus each department employing course assistants should submit to the Professional Standards Committee a document that explains the duties, responsibilities, and supervision of course assistants. The PSC will review departmental statements for agreement with the guidelines. Upon obtaining committee approval, the department may then employ course assistants in accordance with the departmental document and need not submit that document again for PSC review until the guidelines in the Code or the departmental document are revised.”

Page 43, line 15: To correct a problem with sentence structure, the PSC recommends changing the first sentence of line 15 to read, “The evaluation process is clearly career-influencing.”

Page 43, lines 38-39: To correct a typographical error sending readers to an incorrect section of the Code, and to align with the recommended language for page 45, line 5 (below), the PSC recommends changing the lines to read: “If you have concerns regarding obligations under this policy, please refer to Chapter 1, Part D, Section 4 of the *Faculty Code* (“Professional Ethics”) and/or speak with your head of department, school, or program or the Academic Vice President. The font size and type should be the same as the surrounding document.

Page 45, line 5: “department head” becomes “head of department, school, or program.” Change sentence to read: “The faculty member must request that there be a delay in consideration for tenure or promotion by writing to the head of department, school, or program and the Academic Vice President, normally no later than one semester before the scheduled evaluation.”

Page 47, lines 31-34: To correct outdated language (“photocopied”) and to affirm the writers’ ownership of their letters of evaluation, the PSC recommends that the lines read: “In the case of an open file, the faculty member being evaluated has access to letters in the evaluation file and may take notes while reviewing the file. If the faculty member desires copies of the letters, the faculty member must seek copies from the writers.”

Page 48, lines 30-31: Because the university affirms the validity of electronic signatures, change bracketed note to read: “As defined for purposes of interpretation, a letter of evaluation is a signed document.”

Addenda to proposed changes to Interpretations of the Faculty Code, from PSC members Geoffrey Block and Amy Spivey (Feb. 9, 2015) –

Revisions to Buff Document

The following revisions to the Buff document are recommended, to align the Buff document with the revisions to the Interpretations of the Faculty Code listed above:

1. The revision to page 48, lines 30-31 (evaluation letter is a “signed document”) impacts page 9 of the Buff document at the top and possibly the rest of pages 9 and 10 of the Buff document.
2. The revision to page 45, line 5 (replace “department chair” with “head of department, school, or program”) might suggest similar changes throughout the Buff document.

Unresolved questions about Interpretation of Chapter III, Sections 4, a (1) and 4, a (1) (c). (Letters of evaluation from persons outside the department), found on page 47, starting at line 37.

1. Item 1 on page 48, lines 4-7, does not distinguish between the process for an evaluatee who has chosen an open file and an evaluatee who has chosen a closed file. It seems that evaluatees who have chosen closed files should not be receiving outside letters and placing them into the file themselves. (This issue was raised recently by Derek Buescher to Dean Bartanen and the PSC chair.)
2. Item 2 on page 48, line 17, uses the phrase “has chosen confidential letters.” Is that the same as “has chosen a closed file”? Should we clarify the language?
3. In the case of an open file, what if the writer of an outside letter wants the letter to remain confidential? (For example, a letter written by a staff member who reports to the evaluatee?).