

# Faculty Personnel Policy Committee

**To:** Felix Ngassa, Chair of ECS  
**CC:** Shawn Bultsma, Vice-Chair of ECS  
**From:** Marie McKendall, Chair of FPPC  
**RE:** Evaluation of Teaching  
**Date:** March 14, , 2020

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## **Charge: Synopsis of the Two Teaching-Related Charges from ECS:**

- Define effective teaching; define excellent teaching
- Define “consistently”
- Specify the necessary documentation
- Develop university-wide practices and methodology for peer evaluation of teaching, including in-class observation, a teaching portfolio, and review of self-evaluative statements.
- Create a standard form for the feedback that faculty receive from these three parts. Summative feedback would be included in personnel and annual review procedures.

## **Background:**

The Higher Education Learning Commission visited GVSU to review the University for reaccreditation. The report written by the visiting team noted that the standards for personnel decisions and the evaluation of faculty responsibilities was too variable across colleges. GVSU has responded by introducing a reasonable amount of standardization into the definitions and measurement of teaching, scholarly/creative activities, and service.

- In 2016, a common instrument to collect student perceptions of teaching was introduced.
- In 2017, a separate instrument for online/hybrid classes was approved.
- In 2016, modified classifications for service activities was passed.
- In 2017, a new typology of scholarly/creative activities and university-wide requirements was passed.

A charge received by FPPC in 2017 (see first paragraph) asked that we continue our work on defining and evaluating effective/excellent teaching. The FPPC has been engaged in this work for the last two years. The chair of the FPPC has discussed the evolving proposal four times with ECS and four times with UAS. A university-wide survey was conducted at the end of 2018. The proposal was reviewed by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Advisory Board. Results from all of these events have been used to make adjustments to the proposal.

## **Current Language**

BOT 4.2.9

**4.2.9 Areas of Evaluation for Renewal of Probationary Appointments, Promotion, Tenure, and Periodic Performance Reviews.**

**1. College Regular Faculty.** The individual College's Personnel Committee will use the evaluation criteria indicated in this section in arriving at its recommendations. All regular faculty, whether full- or part-time, shall be evaluated on the same criteria and shall be expected to demonstrate that they meet the level of performance consistent with the expectations of their rank. In these personnel actions, except Dismissal for Adequate Cause, the burden of proving that their performance warrants the personnel action under consideration rests with the regular faculty member to be reviewed. It is the University's responsibility to process the requested personnel action. Each of the criteria listed below must be demonstrated to some degree, but teaching is regarded as the most important.

It is essential that regular faculty review be thorough, fair and in accord with clearly stated standards and criteria ([Section 4.2.9](#)) and procedures ([Section 4.2.10](#)). Faculty reviews should promote a culture of continuous improvement.

**A. Effective Teaching.** Effective teaching facilitates student learning and includes, but is not limited to, ~~knowledge of the field taught, classroom and mentoring performance, and communication and human relations skills.~~ Faculty members teach effectively by challenging and engaging students, by supporting their academic and professional growth, and by establishing and maintaining high academic standards. They address in their courses relevant knowledge together with intellectual and practical skills pertinent to the discipline or profession. They use appropriate pedagogies and relevant assessments of student learning. They contribute to revising or developing courses and curricula as needed by their units. demonstrating disciplinary knowledge, teaching students skills that will help them effectively address complexity, diversity, and change, and organizing content and activities to create a coherent learning structure. Faculty members teach effectively when they create an equitable learning environment, challenge students and set high expectations, employ relevant assessment of student work, and engage students through the use of appropriate pedagogies, Effective teachers reflect on their teaching and refine their courses, and develop new courses and curricula as needed. Effective teaching must be documented by a) self-evaluation, b) peer evaluation, and c) student evaluations.

SG 3.01

## POLICY STATEMENT

The role of a faculty member involves an interlocking set of responsibilities to students, to colleagues in both the institution and the wider profession, to the institution itself and its surrounding community, to the advancement of knowledge and understanding in the faculty member's field, and to the ideals of free inquiry and expression. Normally, these are articulated as the areas of teaching (Regular Faculty) or professional effectiveness (Library Regular Faculty), scholarship and creative activity, and service, as outlined in the Board of Trustees' Policies [BOT 4.2.9](#).

Each unit shall establish expectations, in writing for all its faculty, in the areas of teaching (for Regular Faculty) or professional effectiveness (for Library Regular Faculty), scholarship and creative activity, and service based on disciplinary standards and best practices and unit, college and university goals and work. Teaching (for Regular Faculty) or professional effectiveness for (Library Regular Faculty), scholarship/creative activity, and service are included in each faculty member's workload. For both Regular Faculty and Library Regular Faculty, these unit expectations will be approved [by the process described in BOT 4.2.9.](#)

### A. Teaching and Professional Responsibility

#### **Regular Faculty**

The primary responsibility of faculty is effective teaching [as described in the Board of Trustees' Policies [BOT 4.2.9](#)]. Effective teaching must be documented by a) self-evaluation, b) peer evaluation, and c) student evaluations. Evidence of effective teaching is a significant factor in contract renewal, tenure, promotion, and salary increment decisions. Units should periodically review and clarify course expectations of students. Appropriate course expectations, pedagogies, and assessment vary, depending on the discipline, course level and class size.

A regular faculty member whose appointment is at least half-time but less than full-time shall be considered "part-time" when referred to in the *Faculty Handbook*. Part-time regular faculty are expected to complete the same kind of work as full-time regular faculty, but in proportion with their appointment. Relevant items such as workload and significant focus expectations, sabbatical eligibility, promotion eligibility, and performance evaluation procedures shall be stated in writing from the Dean. These terms may be modified from time to time as circumstances change. [See also Board of Trustees' Policies BOT 4.2.4.](#)

#### **Library Regular Faculty**

The primary responsibility of Library Regular Faculty is professional effectiveness [as described in the Board of Trustees' Policies [BOT 4.2.9](#)]. Evidence of professional effectiveness is a significant factor in contract renewal, tenure, promotion, and salary increment decisions. Evaluation of professional effectiveness will be on the basis of the judgment of colleagues and/or those who are instructed or served.

### ~~A. Teaching and Professional Work~~ B. Teaching and Professional Workload

#### **Regular Faculty: Workload**

Normally, within a full-time load, the expectation for teaching shall be 18 credits per academic year. Evidence of effective teaching is significant in decisions on tenure, promotion, and salary increments. Each unit, with the approval of its dean, shall determine the number of courses that are required when any or all of the courses are other than three credits. Each unit, with the approval of its dean, shall also determine equivalencies of studios, labs, rehearsals, team-teaching, distance education, supervision of theses or student research, clinical or internship supervision, independent study or reading courses, teaching extraordinarily large classes, and other such formal teaching activities. Normally, no more than three different course preparations will be required of any faculty member in any semester.

### **Library Regular Faculty: Workload**

The expectations for Library Regular Faculty are particular to each position, detailed in position description documents approved by the dean. Normally, within a full-time load, professional work assignments combine with scholarly/creative activities and service in 12-month appointments to equal full-time appointment.

**Note: All Material from this point forward is a proposed addition to the Handbook**

### **C. Definition of Effective Teaching**

Effective teaching at GVSU consists of creating and maintaining an environment that promotes learning. Effective teachers:

***1. Demonstrate disciplinary expertise appropriate to the level and purposes of the course.***

Effective teachers must possess disciplinary expertise. The content chosen should fit with course learning goals, have importance in the discipline, be based on scholarship, and reflect current practices and information in the discipline.

***2. Teach skills that will prepare students to deal with complexity, diversity, and change.***

Effective teachers help students become independent thinkers open to diverse perspectives while being able to ask questions, critically evaluate information and claims, generate solutions to problems, and effectively communicate with others.

***3. Teach content in a coherent, organized manner to aid student learning.***

Effective teachers help students frame their course experience by organizing content and activities to create a purposeful learning structure. When a course is taught using an intentional and definable approach, students are able to learn and retain material, synthesize ideas, and improve academic achievement.

***4. Cultivate a learning environment where all students are treated equitably, have equal access to learning, and are valued and supported in their learning.***

Effective teachers are responsive to social justice issues in teaching and learning. There are many ways to help all students learn, including learning students' names, structuring meaningful peer learning opportunities, choosing examples from a broad range of cultural domains to illustrate course concepts, identifying effective study strategies for exams, effectively managing course discourse, providing grading rubrics that outline clear criteria for success on writing assignments, identifying learning objectives for class activities, explaining how students should communicate with you, being available to students, and making clear how student work will be assessed in every dimension of the course, including participation.

**5. *Establish and communicate challenging learning goals and high expectations.***

Instructor expectations have a direct effect on upon student achievement. Effective teachers believe in students' abilities, expect students to perform at their full potential, and help them achieve course learning goals.

**6. *Assess student performance in an appropriate and sufficient manner.***

Effective teachers assess student performance in the areas of both knowledge and skills. They use assessment measures appropriate to the course level, size, discipline, and learning goals.

**7. *Competently use teaching pedagogies to help improve student performance by actively engaging students in their learning.***

Research finds strong relationships between student engagement and student achievement. Effective teachers use evidence-based techniques that will actively involve students in the learning experience.

**8. *Refine courses using feedback and reflection.***

Effective teachers regularly think about how they teach, learn from their experiences, and work to improve their instruction. They develop their skills to better serve students.

**D. Definition of Excellent Teaching**

For promotion to full professor, a faculty member must consistently demonstrate at least effective teaching on annual reviews. In addition, the faculty member must have engaged in several meritorious activities and accomplishments that extended beyond normal teaching duties and performance during the previous six years. A college or unit can be more specific about how much or what type of activity it requires.

A list of NON-EXHAUSTIVE examples can be found at (LINK to Provost's website)

- Successful implementation of innovative teaching strategies designed to promote intellectual or creative achievement
- Successful development or major revision of courses and curricula in response to changes within a discipline and/or the better education of students.
- Receipt of peer-reviewed awards or recognition for excellence in teaching
- Refereed presentation on teaching at a seminar, workshop, or conference at the regional, national, or international level
- Supervising student research projects or creative works beyond expected course load and duties
- Supervising a team of students competing for an award
- Mentoring students who present their research or creative work at a regional, national, or international level
- Documented, in-depth, one-on-one mentoring of graduate students
- Documented pattern of mentoring GVSU undergraduates to seek advanced degrees

- Acquisition, development, and departmental sharing of significant new teaching materials

**E. Documentation of Effective Teaching**

Effective teaching is documented by a) self-evaluation, b) peer evaluation of a course dossier and observation of classroom teaching, and c) student impressions of faculty teaching. This aligns with current general requirements in the Faculty Handbook (see BOT 4.2.9.1.A).

Category	Possible Sources of Evidence
Disciplinary Expertise (1)	Course Dossier (assignments, tests, lab manuals; syllabus); Classroom observation
Student Skills (2)	Course Dossier (syllabus, lab notebook, assignments); Self-evaluation; Student work
Organization (3)	Course Dossier (syllabus); Student Impressions; Classroom observation, Self-evaluation
Create Learning Environment (4)	Self-evaluation; Student Impressions and comments; Course Dossier (syllabus statements, materials, assignments)
Challenge and High Expectations (5)	Class grading distributions; Course Dossier (assignments and tests), Classroom observation; Student comments.
Assessment of Student Work (6)	Course Dossier (graded student work; rubrics; tests and assignments); Student Impressions
Teaching pedagogies (7)	Classroom observation; Course Dossier; Student comments; Self-evaluation
Refine Courses (8)	Self-evaluation; Course Dossier

*1. Student Impressions of Faculty Teaching:*

Student input will continue to be gathered each semester through the use of the LIFT instrument. Student impressions for each course taught in the relevant time period are used in personnel decisions.

*2. Peer Review*

Peer review consists of examination of a course dossier and in-class observations for one course.

During Years 1 and 2, there will be a formative review of the candidate's teaching. Formative review is a developmental, confidential "in-progress" assessment; its purpose is to provide instructors with feedback and suggestions that will help them improve their teaching. The reviewer(s) act as a mentor or coach. Results of the review belong to the faculty member.

Prior to each personnel action, there will be a summative peer review of the candidate's teaching performance; these will occur in Year 3 for contract renewal, Year 6 for tenure and promotion to associate professor, and the year before application for promotion to full professor. A summative evaluation is the measure of the level of teaching performance that will be used as evidence in a formal personnel action.

a. Schedule:

- In Year 1, the unit-appointed mentor(s) will review available course materials and observe a class. A unit can use a peer-review team instead of the mentor(s) if it prefers in Year 1. Results will be shared only with the instructor.
- In Year 2, a three-member peer review team will perform a formative review of a course dossier and observe one class each. Results will be shared only with the instructor.
- Summative evaluations will take place in Fall of Year 3, the Fall of Year 6, and the year before promotion to full professor.
- If a faculty member still needs formative help after the contract renewal, that faculty member should be referred to the Teaching and Learning Center.
- If a faculty member was hired with one or two years towards tenure, the summative reviews are required, but the formative reviews are at the faculty member's discretion.

b. Team of Peer Reviewers:

The course dossier review and in-class observations will be conducted by a team of three tenured faculty members. The unit head is responsible for assembling the team. Normally, at least one should be a specialist in the discipline of the person being evaluated. When possible, the other two should be from the person's department. If desired, smaller departments can use reviewers from other units. All peer reviewers will have been trained by the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center.

c. Preparation of the Course Dossier

Prior to each personnel decision, the faculty member will assemble a course dossier for one course. These materials will be used to evaluate these categories of effective teaching: course organization, disciplinary expertise, student skills, challenging goals and expectations, assessment of student work, and teaching pedagogies.

Units can establish page limits for the course dossier if desired. Materials in a course portfolio should include the following:

- Syllabus

- Assignments/projects with rubrics, if used
- Tests or other methods of evaluation
- A sample of graded student work
- Lab manuals, if applicable

d. Assessment Instruments

Two samples of Course Dossier instruments and two samples of Classroom Observation instruments that are based on GVSU's definition of effective teaching are available here ([LINK](#)).

If a unit or college does not want to use the sample instruments, it can design its own instruments. All Course Dossier Instruments must assess disciplinary expertise, student skills, organization, challenging goals and expectations, assessment of student work, and teaching pedagogies. All Classroom Observation instruments must assess disciplinary expertise, organization, learning environment, challenging goals and expectations, and teaching pedagogies. A unit can add additional criteria or use a different format. If desired, different instruments can be used for formative and summative evaluations. Instruments created by a unit or college must be approved by the University Personnel Review Committee.

e. Procedure:

The faculty member will make course materials available to the mentor(s) at a point of mutual agreement in Year 1. The faculty member will submit the course dossier by the start of winter semester classes in Year 2 and by the start of the fall semester classes in Years 3 and 6, and the start of classes the semester before promotion to full professor. The completed dossier will be made available to members of the peer review team by the beginning of the semester in which the peer review and peer observation will take place.

Each member of the team will perform an independent assessment of the course dossier and fill out a Peer Review of Course Dossier instrument. After they have examined the course dossier, each peer reviewer will visit one class. Instructors will be notified when an observation is scheduled. Reviewers should not observe the same class, so the instructor will be visited three separate times. If the unit wants to add visits to other courses, it may do so.

f. Results

After the peer reviewers have independently examined the course dossier, observed a class, and filled out the appropriate instrument, the three will meet to discuss their assessments. A team report will be written that includes the summary of both instruments. The team will meet with the faculty member to share its report. Results of a formative evaluation will be discussed with the faculty member only. Results of summative evaluations will be given to the faculty member and the department chair, be considered part of the faculty member's official record, and be used in personnel decisions. The faculty member can insert a rebuttal to a summative report if desired.

### 3. *Self-Evaluation of Teaching*

Self-reflection will be used to evaluate the teaching dimension of course refinement. The following self-reflective question appears on the annual Faculty Activity Report:

**Reflection on Teaching:**

*Reflect on your performance in teaching/professional work for the year under review. Include a discussion of efforts to improve your teaching or courses based on consideration of feedback from peer observations or student LIFT surveys.*

*The teaching self-evaluation should describe the course or teaching improvements/innovations attempted, dimension(s) of teaching the change will improve, why they were undertaken, and a reflection on whether they worked with supporting evidence. (Note: A faculty member will not be penalized because something did not work.)*

A faculty member being considered for a personnel action should consult their reflections over the relevant time period. A discussion of these items should be included in the candidate's personal statement (described in BOT 4.2.10.5.B)

### **F. Summary of Teaching Effectiveness**

The unit's recommendation for contract renewal, tenure, and promotion must address the following components (listed in order of importance):

1. *Peer Review of Course Dossier and Peer Classroom Observation*

The peer review team's report and summary instruments should be included. This component is the most important for assessing teaching effectiveness.

2. *Self-Evaluation of Teaching:*

The candidate's self-evaluation should include, but is not limited to, a summary of what was done during the relevant time to improve teaching and course effectiveness and what evidence indicated the effort did/did not work.

3. *Student Impressions of Teacher Effectiveness:*

All LIFT results for the relevant time frame can be used.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Revise BOT 4.2.9.
2. Update Section 3.01 A-B.
3. Add Section 3-.01 C-D, which has already been supported by ECS and UAS, to the Faculty Handbook.
4. Approve 3.01 E-F in principle with final approval in Winter 2021.
5. Rewrite the "Reflection on Teaching" statement that appears on the FAR (see 3E above).

6. Conduct a pilot that includes several units of different sizes across different colleges in Fall 2020. Use Winter 2021 to assess results, make changes, and train faculty members. The program will begin university-wide in Fall 2021, and results will be used in personnel decisions starting Winter 2022.

***Charge: Please evaluate the six issues identified in pages 8-9 of the April 2019 Final Report of LIFT-MC, and in particular concerns raised there (i) that there is high variability across colleges (and possibly across units) in how LIFT data are used and interpreted and (ii) that some colleges (and possibly units) are using LIFT data in ways inconsistent with IASystems documentation and USETI/UPLIFT task force recommendations.***

***Unless it appears that these concerns are misplaced, frame a policy proposal that would regulate the use of numerical benchmarks for evaluating teaching effectiveness. [SHORE Log: 1134-2019](#)***

#### A. Issues identified by LIFT Taskforce

- There is not universal understanding of how the summary statistics (“Combined Median”, “Adjusted Combined Median” and CEI) are calculated nor what they mean
- For many colleges, response rates are lower than recommended for reliability
- There is high variability across colleges (and possibly across units) in how LIFT data are used and interpreted
- We have evidence that some colleges (and possibly units) are using LIFT data in ways inconsistent with IASystems documentation and USETI/UPLIFT task force recommendations
- Given recommendations from IASystems and the previous task forces plus the lack of clarity and consistency in the use of LIFT data at GVSU, we discourage the use of a numerical benchmark for evaluating teaching effectiveness. Teaching effectiveness is better assessed using a combination of methods, including peer evaluation, course materials, and student evaluations.
- While we discourage the use of single-value benchmarks and the exclusive use of LIFT data for making conclusive judgments about teaching effectiveness, LIFT data can be used productively. We note that 60-70% of the responses to the summative questions are either “Very Good” or “Excellent” and only 3%-5% are “Poor” or “Very Poor.” We believe, therefore, that “outliers” in LIFT data, if they occur in more than two consecutive semesters, can be used to identify possible issues in teaching performance that should be investigated.

#### B. Future Work

This report focused on analysis of LIFT data at the college level. Future reports may include:

- Analysis of LIFT data by discipline, course level, and instructor gender, race, rank, and years of service

- Analysis of CEI data along the same dimensions and suggestions for how to interpret and use CEI results
- Analysis of best practices for use of written comments
- Recommendations for the format of LIFT reports

### C. Other Recommendations

- We believe that workshops are needed to help faculty interpret and use LIFT results.
- We also encourage the development of workshops for deans and unit heads to learn how to interpret LIFT results and discuss how LIFT data can inform annual review and personnel decisions. LIFT-MC is available to consult in the development of these workshops.

#### **From our last discussion:**

1. Student ratings of teachers do not measure learning outcomes. They probably measure how satisfied a student is with the course experience. Is enjoyment a legitimate teaching criteria? If so, LIFT has a role in summative evaluations.
2. Agreement that LIFT should not be more than 1/3 of teaching evaluation. What does that mean for annual reviews?
3. Agreement that numerical benchmarks should not be used.
4. LIFT numbers should not be used to construct a rating scale.
5. Agreement that written comments must demonstrate a persistent pattern – shouldn't use a few comments as evidence of anything.
6. Only 3-5% of LIFT data is "Poor or "Very Poor". Should we assume that everyone else is competent in the areas that LIFT measures? Does it make any sense to try and break it down further than that?
7. Can it be used to identify those who perform especially well when 60-70% of ratings are "Excellent" or "Very Good"?
8. Lift data should not be used unless backed up by another source.