

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE: MINUTES

November 13, 2013

Present: William Barry, Kristine Bartanen, Geoffrey Block, Jennifer Hastings (chair), Tiffany Aldrich MacBain, Andreas Madlung, Mark Reinitz, and Kurt Walls

1. Approval of minutes from November 6, 2013 meeting.
2. The Committee returned to discussion of new guidelines for Course Assistants, spending most of the hour on whether a statement about Course Assistants and grading should be included in the Guidelines. (No such statement exists in the current Guidelines.) Issues included whether Course Assistants should be permitted to grade at all; if they were permitted, whether grading should be limited to objective assessment only; whether guidelines around grading should be left entirely to the discretion of the department. The Committee opinion converged around the following wording: "all Course Assistant duties with respect to grading must be limited to all objective evaluation." The Committee also discussed briefly the supervision of Course Assistants, retitling the list of responsibilities of Course Assistants, and the inclusion of confidentiality guidelines and selection guidelines in the third paragraph of new statement. (For complete revisions to Course Assistant document, see attached.)
3. Communication from LMIS was relayed to the Committee indicating that LMIS would forward its work on converting to electronic student evaluations to the PSC and also LMIS' judgment that, given Technology Services' engagement in getting PeopleSoft up and running, any discussion of converting to electronic evaluations should be postponed. It was agreed to discuss this recommendation and also Senate charges at the Committee's next meeting.
4. The Committee adjourned at roughly 8:50 AM. Next full meeting of PSC is Dec. 6th.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Barry

Interpretation of Chapter I, Part C, Section 2, a. Guidelines for the Use of Course Assistants (Report to Faculty Senate Date to be inserted here): Current

Definition of Course Assistants

Course Assistants are either paid employees of the university or students receiving compensation in a different form for their assistance in coursework.

Responsibilities

The responsibility for teaching and instruction at the University of Puget Sound resides with the faculty members. The university recognizes, however, that in special cases it is appropriate or necessary to utilize the services of students as course assistants. Course assistants do not replace full or part time faculty. Rather they extend and augment the ability of a faculty member to fulfill the objectives of a particular class. The use of course assistants in no way reduces, replaces, or eliminates the authority or responsibility a faculty member has for a course as specified in the Faculty Code.

Requirements for Departmental Guidelines for Course Assistants

Specific activities for course assistants will of necessity vary (from department to department and from course to course). Each department must develop a clear statement for each course concerning the use of course assistants. The statement should discuss, at least, the following: (1) faculty supervision; (2) the role of course assistants in the classroom or laboratory; (3) the specific tasks assigned to course assistants; (4) the degree and type of interaction between the course assistants and students; (5) the role of course assistants in grading and evaluating student work; (6) the expected number of hours of work; (7) the method of evaluating performance of the CA; (8) how confidentiality of sensitive material is ensured (in some cases course assistants will have access to confidential information e.g., grades, performance records, or evaluations about the students enrolled in the class. The department and the supervisor must make every effort to restrict course assistants' access to confidential information to a minimum. Course assistants must be made aware of the sensitive nature of such information and should be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Abuse of this privilege should be grounds for dismissal of a course assistant from employment.); and (9) the process of selection of course assistants. (Each department must develop a procedure for selecting course assistants, which is consistent with both the needs of the department and with the prevailing university policies and practices. Selection criteria should correspond to the departmental statements about the duties and responsibilities of the course assistant position. The primary concern of the department in selecting course assistants must be the ability of individuals to perform satisfactorily the expected functions of a course assistant. To the extent possible, departments should select students who qualify for university matching funds under existing work-study programs. Applications for positions should be solicited from all qualified students. Notification to both selected individuals and unsuccessful applicants should be in

writing. The department should ensure that each selection is based on rational criteria and procedures so that they are not perceived as arbitrary or capricious. The department should be willing to discuss its decisions with unsuccessful applicants. After the selection process is completed the department is responsible for working with the university's Office of Student Employment to execute the appropriate documents as applicable.)

This statement should be made available to all prospective course assistants and reviewed specifically with all course assistants at the beginning of their employment.

Supervision and Responsibility of Course Assistants

Each course assistant must be under the direct guidance and supervision of a faculty member. All course assistant duties with respect to grading must be limited to objective evaluation. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to see that the course assistant successfully fulfills the requirements of the job. The supervisor will meet in a timely fashion with the course assistant to develop appropriate material for the course and to assess the course assistant's performance.

The supervisor, or faculty member responsible for the course, should inform the students enrolled in the course about the role and duties of each course assistant. Students should also be informed that they have the right to appeal decisions made by any course assistant to the faculty member or supervisor.

Role of Professional Standards Committee

Since course assistants perform some of the activities and have some of the responsibilities of faculty members, it is in the interest of the university to monitor their use. Thus, each department employing course assistants should submit to the Professional Standards Committee a document, which explains the duties, responsibilities, and supervision of course assistants, and which should regularly be reviewed by the PSC. The committee will review any revised departmental statement and determine whether it is appropriate. When the department obtains committee approval it may then employ course assistants in accordance with these procedures and the departmental document. Current departmental statements regarding the use of CA stay in effect until a revised version is requested by the PSC.