

Valuing Teaching and the 5-Year Academic Plan

TAWG

January 29 2018

The Teaching Assessment Working Group, TAWG, was established by Vice President, Academic and Provost Peter Keller in August 2017 to encourage an active conversation amongst faculty at SFU about how we assess and value teaching. The group includes representation from all faculties, from SFUFA, SCUTL, and Faculty Relations, and includes both teaching and research faculty.

We have met with several groups to identify concerns and invite feedback, and we have also reviewed several recent reports related to these issues:

- Task Force on Teaching and Learning: Final Report (2010)
- Teaching and Course Evaluation Project: Final Report (2013)
- Developing a Teaching Assessment Framework for Simon Fraser University: Final Report of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Course Working Group (Draft)

Based on this work, we have articulated a number of issues that should be considered. We are sending this early summary of our work to inform the university community as it prepares the 2018-2023 Academic Plan.

To preface this discussion, we'll start with SFU's Mission Statement:

To be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of **innovative education**, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement.

Our belief is that an **innovative education** requires a faculty that is engaged in their teaching and that support and encouragement are required to enable faculty to create and implement innovations. However, various concerns about the climate for teaching and teaching support have been raised in our consultations:

- Faculty are reluctant to try new things because it may negatively impact their teaching assessments and evaluations
- Faculty do not feel their teaching is valued
- Teaching excellence is not broadly recognized, rewarded, celebrated or communicated
- TPCs are not comfortable using methods of teaching assessment other than student surveys
- There is a lack of alignment between departmental TPC Criteria and TPC practice
- After at least ten years of discussion and reports, some progress has been made (e.g. creation of TLC, introduction of university-wide student evaluation system, establishment of a new Associate Vice President, Academic - Learning and Teaching, introduction of Faculty Teaching Fellows) but more could be done to make ongoing professional development in teaching a core value of the institution

Based on these concerns, we discussed what goals we would like to achieve in this 5-year planning cycle. We hope that faculty, academic units, and the university will keep these in mind during the development of their contributions to SFU's 2018-2023 Academic Plan. Goals for faculty, academic units and the university are described below.

1. Faculty members are reflective practitioners within a community of teaching
 - They are aware of teaching expectations for their rank and position
 - They are reflective and responsive teachers
 - They adapt their teaching to changing environments
 - They are comfortable taking risks and are rewarded for experimenting with their teaching practices
 - They feel they are part of a culture where teaching is valued
 - Outstanding teaching is celebrated
2. Academic units value and reward teaching as one of the primary academic responsibilities
 - Expectations for different ranks for teaching and research faculty are clear
 - Teaching is valued at hiring and promotion
 - TPCs have the tools and knowledge to value effective teaching
 - Multiple teaching assessment methods are integrated into the work of TPCs
 - TPC criteria reflect best practice and current teaching research, and are used to inform tenure and promotion decisions; criteria, practice and assessment are aligned
 - Academic units identify and promote their best teachers for faculty, university, national, and international teaching awards
3. The University provides support to faculty members and academic units for the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of quality teaching
 - SFU has articulated a vision statement and principles to provide direction and common purpose around teaching and learning
 - The capacity to understand teaching and evaluate it well is present in all steps in the process
 - There is a clear definition of expectations for both teaching effectiveness and teaching excellence, and the standards expected for different ranks for teaching and research faculty
 - A general framework for methods of teaching assessment has been adopted, which can be used to inform the work of academic units
 - There is a program of professional development and support that is clearly aligned with this evaluation framework
 - The University has established a support system to provide formative feedback and instructional development to all interested faculty
 - There is a program of support and/or training for all those involved in the review process
 - The expectations, evaluation framework, and support mechanisms are regularly reviewed

- Institutional policies regarding teaching and learning are regularly examined and revised
- Appropriate resources, including the TLC, are tasked with supporting the advancement of teaching and learning throughout the university

We hope you will consider these goals as you craft your submissions to SFU's 2018-2023 Academic Plan. During the next months TAWG will consider a road map of how these goals could be achieved. We will also be developing a set of strategies to value teaching practice and will be making recommendations to facilitate consistency, flexibility and robustness of reviews of teaching practice of use to all stakeholders.

Teaching Assessment Working Group
Strategies to Value Effective Teaching

Preamble

Some 54 Tenure and Promotion Committees (TPC's) exist across SFU each charged with reviewing faculty performance and providing recommendations. Each TPC develops review criteria consistent with their Faculty and disciplinary needs.

Faculty members are evaluated and promoted based on their performance in three areas as set out in the SFU-Faculty Collective Agreement, Section 28.5. These areas are Research, Teaching, and Service. Although the distribution of these areas is not mentioned in the collective agreement it is generally considered to be 40% Research, 40% Teaching and 20% Service for research faculty and 80% Teaching, 20% Service for teaching faculty (these percentages may vary depending on expectations).

In general, the metrics used to evaluate the research component are well known, consistent, and relatively straightforward to apply. The evaluation of teaching practice and related metrics are not as well known across disciplines and, in practice, may not be as consistent or as straightforward to apply. It is the belief of this working group that TPC's are committed to valuing teaching by fairly evaluating all components of a faculty members' teaching practice but may lack a consistent set of evaluation tools to choose from. It will be beneficial to all to review best practices locally, at other institutions, and as identified in the literature and to share these with the SFU academic community.

Purpose of Working Group

The charge of this working group is to provide a set of strategies to value teaching practice and recommendations to facilitate consistency, flexibility, and robustness of reviews of teaching practice that are **useful and usable** by Faculty, Chairs, Tenure and Promotion Committees (TPCs), and Deans.

Scope

The working group should identify current practice and issues of concern by considering the following:

1. Review of current Departmental TPC Criteria to determine the types and ways in which teaching practice are being evaluated,
2. Review of current University Criteria,

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3. The experiences of TPC Chairs and Deans,
4. The experiences of a sample of faculty members who have been reviewed,
5. The experiences of other groups e.g. SFUFA, SCUTL, Faculty Relations.

The working group should explore alternatives to current practice by considering, for example, the following:

1. Best practices at SFU including the types and range of strategies being used,
2. Best practices at other institutions in Canada including the types and range of strategies being used,
3. Recent literature relevant to faculty teaching reviews.

The working group will work to advance awareness of alternatives by considering, for example, the following:

1. Workshops for faculty with experts,
2. Promotion of discussions at department meetings,
3. Development of a website of resources

The working group will write a report summarizing their findings and develop a set of recommendations for different stakeholders regarding:

1. Strategies to celebrate teaching excellence,
2. A broad and flexible set of teaching competencies,
3. Methods for formative and summative evaluation of teaching,
4. Support for faculty including submission templates,
5. Clarification of Departmental and general University criteria,
6. Strategies to increase efficacy, fairness and efficiency,
7. Strategies to promote sustainability of the initiative.

Timeline

The work of this group should be completed by September 2018.

Proposed Membership

Barbara Frisken (Chair) (PHYS)	Faculty of Science
Brad Johnson (Director, TLC)	Teaching and Learning Centre
Natalia Gajdamaschko (EDUC)	Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL)
Russell Day (PSYC)	SFU Faculty Association (SFUFA)
Jennifer Spear (HIST)	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Diana Cukierman (CMPT)	Faculty of Applied Sciences
Neil Abramson	Beedie School of Business
Daniel Ahadi (CMNS)	Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology
Dan Laitsch (EDUC)	Faculty of Education

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Andrew Perkins (GEOG)	Faculty of Environment
Diego Silva	Faculty of Health Sciences
Richard Lockhart (STATS)	Faculty of Science
Doug Thorpe-Dorward	Faculty Relations (Ex-Officio)

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