

2018-19 Report
Committee on Instruction
BMCC Academic Senate

May 23, 2018

Members: Jean Amaral, Library
Benjamin Powell, Speech, Communications, and Theater Arts
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Hardaye Hansen, Health Education
Gloria McNamara, Health Education
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Chair: Andrés Colapinto
Secretary: Hardaye Hansen
Representative to the Executive Committee: Andrés Colapinto

The committee had several charges this year, dealing both with systemic matters at the College, and more targeted issues regarding language on the standard syllabus template.

1. Changes to the syllabus template:

- a. We received a suggestion from the Office of Student Affairs to revise and amplify language on the syllabus regarding care and support services for students. The committee significantly revised the suggested language, and proposed to the Senate, where it was approved for Spring 2019. (See Academic Senate minutes for 10/24/2018.)
- b. We received a suggestion from the Office of the Registrar to replace the description of BMCC's attendance policy. Since CUNY is no longer an attendance-taking institution, BMCC's official policy was not in line with University policy. The proposed language—describing a Class Participation policy—was proposed to the Senate, where it was approved for adoption in Fall 2019. (See Academic Senate minutes for 5/22/2019.)

Three major charges of the Committee were addressed by the formation of subcommittees, consisting both of Instruction Committee members and other faculty at the College. These committees met monthly and reported to the Instruction Committee, which then provided ongoing feedback to the subcommittees. The work, conclusions and recommendations of these subcommittees are described in sections 2-4, below.

2. Development of Online Courses

- a. This sub-committee was formed to consider the process through which online courses are developed and approved, and to ensure that there is faculty input regarding changes to policies concerning online course development.

- b. The subcommittee met with Christopher Medallin and the staff of the E-Learning Center to discuss the role of faculty in the on line course approval process.
- c. The subcommittee communicated with the E-Learning and Digital Education Council, of which Lisa Rose (also on the Instruction Committee and Chair of this subcommittee) is a co-chair. This Council revised its bylaws to include language ensuring faculty involvement on the council, and cooperation with the instruction committee. In particular:
 - i. It is now stated that “The council will advise, consult, and collaborate with the Academic Senate Instruction Committee” and that the “Council will be co-chaired by a faculty member elected by the Council...and will serve as a liaison to the Academic Instruction Committee.”
 - ii. The bylaws also call for representative from each academic department, including the Library, serve as members of the Council, along with staff from Instructional Technology and the Media Center, among others.
 - iii. The faculty Co-Chair of the Council will serve as liaison to the Instruction Committee.

The Instruction Committee agreed that that language establishes the groundwork for the two bodies to work collaboratively in order to ensure faculty engagement in the online course approval process.

- d. The subcommittee, together with the Instruction Committee, considered whether current policy regarding approval of online courses should be changed. Currently, once a faculty member is approved to teach one online course, the instructor can then develop new online courses without an additional approval process. We did not see a reason to change this policy.

3. Peer Evaluation of Online Courses

- a. This subcommittee was formed in order to develop policies concerning peer observation of courses taught online, since such policies do not currently exist. This committee submitted its own report, which is attached. It contains a proposal (approved by the Instruction Committee) for new guidelines for online teaching. Since these may depart significantly from current practices, it was decided that these should be tested next year in a volunteer-only pilot program. It is recommended that Instruction Committee contact department chairs next year to seek out participants. (Both chairs and faculty should agree to participate.) It should seek and evaluate feedback from participants, modify the proposal if necessary, and propose a permanent policy resolution in Fall 2019. (See attachment A.)

4. Student Evaluations of Teaching

- a. This sub-committee was convened in order to review and revise practices concerning the use of student evaluations of teaching (SETs) at BMCC. Participants reviewed and discussed a range of research on SETs, looked at practices at other institutions, and critically evaluated our current practices. Participants also spoke with Christopher Schultz Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning, who expressed a shared understanding of the problems with SETs, and an affirmation of the authority of the faculty to determine their nature and use.
- b. However, the sub-committee found the issue too large to reach a resolution or proposal by the end of this year. While we determined some changes that could be made to the

questions that currently exist, we felt that a piecemeal approach was not adequate, and that we need to consider and develop substantive changes to how the College seeks feedback from students, how this information is used by the College to help faculty improve their teaching, and how it is used for decisions concerning promotion and tenure. Faculty serving on the subcommittee agreed to continue this important project in the 2019-2020 academic year.

- c. Here is a brief summary of findings, principles, and long-term goals which the subcommittee decided should guide any future work:

Findings

1. National research convincingly demonstrates that SETs are not an effective measure of instruction. In particular, they are not a reliable measure of student learning.
2. National research also demonstrates that student evaluators are prone to bias on the basis of the race, ethnicity and gender of instructors, among other ascriptive characteristics.
3. The current system of SETs at BMCC, with its focus on dubious quantitative measures, is not conducive to the improvement of teaching.

Principles

1. Because of the unreliability and bias risk of SETs, they should not be prioritized when considering faculty reappointment and tenure.
2. The primary purpose of SETs should be to provide meaningful feedback to instructors for the improvement of teaching.

Recommended Long-term goals

1. Fall 2019 - Develop a substantially reformed approach to SETs that is designed to provide meaningful feedback on teaching. This will include a revision of the type of questions asked, and how answers are reported, with a greater focus on qualitative measures over quantitative ones.
 2. Spring 2020 – Conduct a pilot test of the new SETs, with tenured faculty volunteers. Revise based on feedback.
 3. Fall 2020 – Finalize new SETs and propose to the Senate for college-wide adoption.
- d. As part of its research, the subcommittee composed a survey on the value of BMCCs existing SETs to be completed by department chairs. This was distributed late in Spring 2019, and so far we not received many responses. The survey is attached. (See attachment B.)
5. The Instruction Committee strongly recommends that its two main charges next year be the continuation of its work on student evaluations of teaching, and on peer observations, expanding this to include a review of current practices concerning face-to-face observation as well. We also urge the Senate to populate this Committee with more members, noting that this year the number was reduced from ten (2017-18) to eight.

This report is respectfully submitted by the Chair of the Instruction Committee 2018-2019,

Andrés Colapinto

Social Sciences, Human Services and Criminal Justice

Report of the Sub-Committee on Instruction

prepared by

Professor Clock (Chair of the Sub-Committee)

Subcommittee Members: Professors Clock, McNamara, Gokcora, Licwinko, Tippit, Chung, Karaalioglu, Longley, Garte, Asknes, McGee, Seyam.

Our mission was to determine the guidelines for observations of online courses at BMCC. Since these guidelines do not exist within BMCC, we researched what other institutions were doing for peer evaluation of online instruction.

With the generous assistance of Professor Offenholley, representing the PSC, we determined that online course evaluation at BMCC should closely resemble that of traditional in-class observations. As such, we have agreed that there should be *guidelines* for the Observer and the Observee to follow with regard to online class evaluations.

We propose that our recommendations be used in a *pilot* program, which should be on a volunteer basis, during the academic year of 2019-20 to determine the efficacy of these recommendations per department and, therefore, all departments.

The *traditional BMCC summary form*¹ used for in-class peer observations should also be used for online class evaluations. When used for online class evaluations, this form should indicate the *method* of evaluation.² Lastly, both the Observer and Observee should be aware of the following guidelines.

Guidelines for Online Observation:

1. Online course observations should be as close as possible in structure to in-class observations.
2. In order to mirror the time frame of face-to-face course observations, there will be a maximum twohour time limit of observation of a past class period's content, as defined by the Observee, and decided upon in advance. This could mean that (i) the Observer and Observee sit down to look at the lesson together, or (ii) the Observer will be allocated the two hour (maximum) window of time to observe the lesson.
3. Ideally, the Observer and the Observee should mutually agree on (i) which type of class should be observed, traditional face to face course OR online course, and (ii) should agree on the time and method of observation. If the observation is of an online class, the Observer must be trained in online teaching.
4. The Observer's role is not to evaluate course design (as defined in the E-Learning Checklist).
5. If the observation takes place online, without the Observer and Observee meeting together (method (ii) in Guideline 2), then the observer must be enrolled in STUDENT ACCESS. The Observer's access to the class will be closed (unenrolled) by the Observee after the mutually decided upon two hour (maximum) window.

¹ It was found during Committee's research that, in fact, no single "form" is used for peer observations across departments at BMCC. Despite this, we refer to the common set of standards and PSC guidelines regarding peer observations (imbued in the variety of forms) as the "traditional BMCC summary form."

² The two "methods" of evaluation for online classes are described in Guideline 2.

Attachment A

Respectfully submitted,

Professor Gerard P. Clock, 9 May 2019

Department: Click or tap here to enter text.

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Note: this form will not be made public, although we may at some point discuss general results of the surveys (without identifying information) in a report to the Senate.

Do you feel that the current Student Evaluation of Teaching system provides an accurate view of the teaching effectiveness and potential of the faculty in your department? [Click in text area to choose from dropdown or type in answer]. Choose an item.

If you could change anything about the Student Evaluation of Teaching system, what would it be?

Click or tap here to enter text.

On a scale of 1-10 rate the degree to which Student evaluations of teaching influence your department's decisions on faculty reappointment and promotion: 1 being not at all and 10 being more than any other measure. (Click in text area to choose from dropdown menu.)

FT and/or TT Faculty re-appointment Choose an item.

FT and/or TT Faculty Promotion Choose an item.

Adjunct Faculty re-appointment Choose an item.

Adjunct Faculty Promotion Choose an item.

What do you usually do when a faculty member performs poorly on Student Evaluations of Teaching?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Are there any discipline-specific issues that you have encountered with Student Evaluations of Teaching? (For example, are there certain types of courses that tend to receive lower evaluations?)

Click or tap here to enter text.