

A NOTE ON THE EVALUATION OF FACULTY PERFORMANCE DURING PERIODS OF UNREST

Noting that “the novel Coronavirus pandemic and racial unrest has disrupted faculty activities in teaching, research and scholarly and creative activities” CSUF Academic Senate resolution 20-93 instructed all levels of review to consider these factors so they could properly evaluate faculty performance under these conditions. It also provided for a note concerning the materials. This is that note, which originates from a template created by the California Faculty Association (Fullerton) with input but not endorsement from Faculty Support Services.¹

(Note: This document references many resolutions and statements which appear in footnotes with a reference list and links at the end. While this document includes factual statements, paragraphs in italics are interpretations of policies and serve as possible language that instructors can modify as they see fit. Ultimately, instructors are free to make any changes to this note they see fit.)

Impact of the Global Pandemic on Instructional conditions

The global pandemic resulted in a shift to virtual instruction in mid-March, 2020 and has had ongoing impacts in subsequent semesters. Numerous bodies have outlined the enormously negative impact these developments have had on teaching conditions.

The CSUF Academic Senate noted “the pandemic and racial unrest have impacted faculty work in all of these areas due to challenges related to converting courses to new modalities, working from home, family life complications related to working from home, and other challenges that emerge and are being faced by all in our current environment”² and “the mandate for primarily virtual instruction is extended through the end of Spring 2021, which requires that faculty and students may be forced into instructional modalities that are not their preferred or most effective modality”.³ They further noted “Stay at Home” policies place an additional external burden on faculty with young children or family members with underlying health conditions.”⁴

In particular, “lecturers have transformed their courses to all-virtual modes of instruction in the middle of the semester became a necessary yet unexpected and time-consuming task for CSUF for all those involved including the lecturers teaching the courses” and thus “all faculty

¹ This document references many resolutions and statements which appear in footnotes with a reference list and links at the end. Other content offers interpretations or suggestions about how to fairly apply standards in the context of the racial unrest/Covid-19 era. Ultimately, instructors are free to make changes to the original template they see fit. While Faculty Support Services offered input this is a template of the CFA that instructors are free to modify, all offered under authority of ASD 20-93.

² Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-93

³ Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-93

⁴ Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-37

members teaching performance will be impacted by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ To this list of hardships, the statewide-body (Academic Senate of the CSU or ASCSU) has added that it recognizes “the myriad inequities associated with working remotely, including access to technology, lack of privacy, family concerns and interruptions, and others.”⁶

Processes for fair evaluations in these circumstances

To insure fair reviews, the CSUF Academic Senate recommended that SOQs should be excluded (at instructor discretion) for the spring 2020 semester (ASD 20-26), that lecturers be allowed to extend their evaluation period (ASD 20-45), that all grade distributions, peer reviews, and SOQs be excluded at instructor discretion (ASD 20-93). The ASCSU recommend that all faculty have the right to determine whether the results of their surveys of student perceptions of teaching be placed in their Personnel Action File (PAF), that no faculty be penalized in any way for exercising their right to exclude the results of their surveys of student perceptions of teaching from their PAF during this period; that all CSU Campus Provosts...place a letter in every faculty member’s PAF (including lecturers) that provides the context for understanding the circumstances surrounding the periods including spring 2020, summer 2020, and potentially fall 2020.⁷

Ultimately, the CSUF Administration allowed only for the exclusion of Spring, 2020 SOQs and grade distributions data⁸ and adopted the Senate Resolution that allowed that “any materials from Spring 2020 through Spring 2021 related to teaching, including but not limited to peer reviews, SOQs, and grade distributions, be clearly marked with a note, provided by the faculty member, indicating that the materials are from these semesters.”⁹ This document constitutes the note identified in ASD 20-93.

How to evaluate this file

The materials from this file should be understood in the context of the substantial disruptions due to the global pandemic, which include at least: (a) increased time demands for the virtual conversion, (b) the complications of working from home, (c) the inability of anyone to become a fully proficient all-virtual instructor without notice (in the Spring of 2020) or after a single summer of workshop opportunities (for the Fall of 2020), and (d) the “myriad of inequities” identified by the ASCSU that impacted both instructors and created a series of new student challenges.

All told, first-run and experimental instructional efforts with attendant failures, interruptions, difficulties, and steep learning curves are all to be expected during this time and should not

⁵ Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-45

⁶ Resolution of the statewide body ASCSU AS-3450-20/FA

⁷ Resolution of the statewide body ASCSU AS-3418-20/FA

⁸ <http://www.fullerton.edu/far/covid19/Spring2020SOQ-GDDExclusionForm.pdf>

⁹ Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-93

negatively impact the evaluation. The relevant comparison point is not how well instructors have performed relative to a normal semester, but how well they performed in an entirely unprecedented semester with unavoidable and often unmanageable external pressures.

As directed by the CSUF Academic Senate and endorsed by the Provost, “all levels of faculty review, including Department Personnel Committees, Peer Review Committees, Department Chairs, Deans, the Faculty Personnel Committee, and the Provost, consider pandemic-related challenges to the evaluation of teaching, scholarly and creative activities and service for any materials in a faculty personnel file from all academic terms from Spring 2020 through Spring 2021.”¹⁰

The committee should evaluate these materials with the knowledge that multiple representative bodies, including the CSUF Academic Senate, the ASCSU, and the CFA have all recommended that they be excluded altogether. Rigid standards should be avoided, gray areas of evaluation should be considered with greater sympathy to positive evaluations, and the totality of faculty performance in light of the extremely difficult circumstances should be given greater weight than narrow criteria that assume normal teaching conditions. Negative SOQ results that exist for courses with low response rates should be given less credence; the California Faculty Association encourages reviewing committees to give little or no weight to any negative SOQ content from courses with response rates under 50%.

As a guiding rule, instructors who were otherwise performing well and made a good-faith effort continue instruction in extremely unfavorable circumstances should be favorably evaluated.

Word limits preclude extensive discussion of particular faculty hardships or teaching conditions and thus reviewers should assume the inherent difficulties of teaching during a pandemic are present for all instructors, and this note provides such context.

Full list of documents

Resolutions of the Academic Senate of Cal. State Fullerton

Fall:

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-93%20Resolution%20on%20Faculty%20Evaluations%20Due%20to%20COVID-19%20and%20Racial%20Unrest.pdf

Spring SOQs:

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-26%20Resolution%20on%20SOQs.pdf

Tenure clocks:

¹⁰ Cal. State Fullerton Academic Senate resolution ASD 20-93

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-37%20Resolution%20on%20COVID-19%20and%20the%20Tenure%20Clock..pdf

Resolution on extension of lecture reviews:

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-45%20Resolution%20on%20Evaluation%20of%20SP%202020%20for%20Lecturers%20with%20files%20due%20in%20FA%20of%202020%20or%20SP%202021.pdf

August resolution on lecturer evaluations:

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-83%20CSUF%20Resolution%20on%20Lecturer%20Evaluations%20During%20COVID-19.pdf

Mode of delivery and workload:

https://www.fullerton.edu/senate/publications_policies_resolutions/resolutions/ASD%2020-14%20Resolution%20on%20Faculty%20Workload_Policy%20and%20Procedures%20EPR%2076-36.pdf

Resolutions of the Academic Senate of the California State University (statewide body)

AS-3450-20/FA

Suspension of Mandatory Peer Observations of Instruction and Student Evaluation for Academic Year 2020-2021 <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/academic-senate/resolutions/2020-2021/3450.pdf>

AS-3418-20

ACCOMMODATIONS TO FACULTY DUE TO THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

<https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/academic-senate/resolutions/2019-2020/3418.pdf>