Standard Practices for Placement and Performance Review of Contingent Faculty

Proposal: Arts and Sciences should develop and implement standard practices for placement and performance review of contingent faculty (adjuncts and full-time term hires). The primary purpose of the review is formative feedback on teaching, though instructors may use the review to demonstrate teaching effectiveness and evaluators may use the review as a resource for recommending instructors for reappointment or for a professional reference.

Background and Rationale: The most recent accreditation review by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) included a request for information about how department chairs review the performance of contingent faculty (adjuncts and full-time term hires). A January 2018 sample survey of a few departments revealed a mixture of practices or approaches, and no formal standard practice for reviewing contingent faculty across departments and programs.

Arts and Sciences conducted a study of contingent faculty from January 2014 through April 2016, culminating in a Contingent Faculty Reform Initiative (CFRI). The objectives of the CFRI were “promoting the teacher-scholar model of faculty appointment;” “reducing the reliance on contingent faculty;” and “improving treatment and compensation of contingent faculty.”

Although the CFRI has produced positive results, it did not include practices for overseeing or reviewing the courses or teaching effectiveness of contingent faculty. While we should not assume that contingent faculty are not performing well, there are several reasons for prescribing and implementing standard practices of evaluation.

(1) Students deserve well-designed and challenging courses taught by knowledgeable and engaged instructors. Even as we strive to rely less upon contingent faculty, students should expect the highest quality instruction from them.

(2) Contingent faculty benefit from the input and advice of supervisors in the planning, execution, and evaluation of courses. Contingent faculty want their students to learn, many use their experience as a springboard to a position at another university, and others wish to return to Richmond to teach additional courses. Constructive input from a supervisor can better align their teaching with department and university expectations, and evidence of well-designed courses and teaching effectiveness improve the chances of advancement. Indeed, many chairs serve as references or write letters of recommendation for contingent faculty, and the chair’s review could serve as a basis for a reference.

(3) A standard set of evaluative practices for contingent faculty is a sign of effective administration and personnel management. Those practices can be employed consistently during the course of a chair’s term and provide new chairs with reliable guidelines.
Placement and Evaluation of One-time (Not Reappointed) New Contingent (Term or Adjunct) Faculty

(1) During the hiring phase, the department chair\(^1\) should ask prospective faculty about their teaching methodology and request course syllabi if available. Before offering a position, the chair should describe typical course expectations and pedagogical methods and the types of students the instructor will be teaching. The chair should also explain the forthcoming review process.

(2) The chair should offer to share sample syllabi from the course the instructor will be teaching and, if at all possible, should review the instructor’s syllabus (or syllabi) a few weeks prior to the semester and offer prudent guidance.

(3) The chair should “check in” during the first four to six weeks of the semester to inquire about the instructor’s experience and offer any assistance as needed.

(4) Within one month after the instructor’s first semester of teaching (either the fall semester or the academic year), the chair, or designee, should review available materials related to teaching (e.g. syllabi, assignments, and Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) results), complete the *Contingent Faculty Review* form, and send a copy to the instructor and the Dean. (The chair or designee may wish to discuss the evaluation rubric with the instructor).

(5) Within three months of the instructor’s final term, the chair, or designee, should complete an updated *Contingent Faculty Review* form and send a copy to the instructor and the Dean.

Evaluation of Retained or Reappointed Contingent (Term or Adjunct) Faculty

(1) Within one month after each semester of teaching (either the fall semester or the academic year), the chair, or designee, should review available materials related to teaching (e.g. syllabi, assignments, and Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) results), complete the *Contingent Faculty Review* form, and send a copy to the instructor and the Dean. (The chair or designee may wish to discuss the evaluation rubric with the instructor).

(2) Within three months after the completion of the instructor’s teaching appointment (either a fall semester or the academic year), the chair, or designee, should complete and submit an updated *Contingent Faculty Review* form to the instructor and the Dean.

Approved by Academic Council discussion, February 19, 2019

---

\(^{1}\) The department chair may appoint a designee with specialization in the subject matter to collaborate on the tasks outlined in this section.