

**OUTLINE OF ISSUE**

Agenda Title: **Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation and the Use of the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) as an Evaluative Tool**

**Preamble:**

A Notice of Motion was submitted by a member of GFC regarding the use of USRIs (see Attachment 1). This item was discussed by the GFC Executive Committee who agreed that this is an important issue but that it would benefit from a wider review. As such, the GFC Executive Committee recommends a modification which extends the original motion to include not only the review of how USRIs might be modified, augmented, or possibly replaced, but also considers the development and implementation of a more robust solution to teaching assessment and evaluation.

**Motion:** THAT the General Faculties Council, on the recommendation of the GFC Executive Committee, request that the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment report by 30 April 2017, on research into the use of student rating mechanisms of instruction in university courses. This will be informed by a critical review of the University of Alberta’s existing Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) and their use for assessment and evaluation of teaching as well as a broad review of possible methods of multifaceted assessment and evaluation of teaching. The ultimate objective will be to satisfy the Institutional Strategic Plan: For the Public Good strategy to: Provide robust supports, tools, and training to develop and assess teaching quality, using qualitative and quantitative criteria that are fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and meaningful across disciplines.

**Item**

Action Requested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion/Advice <input type="checkbox"/> Information
Proposed by	Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Presenter	Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Subject	Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation and the use of the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) as an evaluative tool

**Details**

Responsibility	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
The Purpose of the Proposal is (please be specific)	The Provost’s Office supports the idea of examining the USRIs, but would like to undertake this task with a broader consideration of how USRIs might be modified, augmented, or possibly replaced over time. Since the GFC Policy 111 specifies required use of the USRIs as a means of achieving instructor feedback from students, the USRIs cannot be simply removed without a replacement. Additionally, as specified in the GFC Policy 111, there must be multifaceted assessment and evaluation of teaching and while this exists in some areas, it is not being carried out throughout the university. Thus a broader approach to this problem would support the development and implementation of a more robust solution to teaching assessment and evaluation.
The Impact of the Proposal is	An examination of both the USRI and the need for multifaceted review of teaching will lead to rescission of the current GFC Policy 111 and creation of a new UAPPOL policy to support teaching and learning and teaching assessment and evaluation. Recommendations on the rescission of the GFC Policy 111 and creation of new UAPPOL policy to support Teaching, Learning and Teaching Evaluation will come forward

	to GFC for approval.
Replaces/Revises (eg, policies, resolutions)	N/A
Timeline/Implementation Date	April 30, 2017
Estimated Cost	N/A
Sources of Funding	N/A
Notes	Both GFC policy and collective agreements mandate that there must be a student evaluation of teaching. Currently the USRI fills this role and it could not be discontinued without an appropriate replacement.

**Alignment/Compliance**

Alignment with Guiding Documents	<p>Institutional Strategic Plan: For the Public Good “OBJECTIVE: Inspire, model, and support excellence in teaching and learning. [...] iii. Strategy: Provide robust supports, tools, and training to develop and assess teaching quality, using qualitative and quantitative criteria that are fair, equitable, and meaningful across disciplines.”</p>
Compliance with Legislation, Policy and/or Procedure Relevant to the Proposal (please quote legislation and include identifying section numbers)	<p>1. <b>Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)</b>: The PSLA gives GFC responsibility, subject to the authority of the Board of Governors, over academic affairs (Section 26(1)).</p> <p>2. <b>General Faculties Council Terms of Reference (4. GFC Procedures)</b></p> <p>“Notice of Motion A Notice of Motion is a method of informing the membership in advance of the intention to make a specific motion.</p> <p>When Notice of Motion has first been given at a GFC meeting, the GFC Executive Committee will decide whether it is appropriate that such a motion be placed on the Agenda of the next GFC meeting.”</p> <p>3. <b>GFC Executive Committee Terms of Reference (3. Mandate of the Committee)</b></p> <p>“5. <b>Agendas of General Faculty Council</b> GFC has delegated to the Executive Committee the authority to decide which items are placed on a GFC Agenda, and the order in which those agenda items appear on each GFC agenda.”</p> <p>4. <b>GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Terms of Reference (3.Mandate of the Committee):</b></p> <p>“The Committee on the Learning Environment is a standing committee of the General Faculties Council that promotes an optimal learning environment in alignment with guiding documents of the University of Alberta.</p> <p>The Committee on the Learning Environment is responsible for making recommendations concerning policy matters and action matters with respect to the following: [...] b) To review and, as necessary, recommend to the GFC Academic Planning</p>

Committee and GFC Executive Committee as relates to the development and implementation of policies on teaching, learning, teaching evaluation, and recognition for teaching that promote the University Academic Plan.

c) To develop policies that promote ongoing assessment of teaching and learning through all Faculties and units.

d) To nurture the development of innovative and creative teaching practices.

e) To encourage the sharing and discussion of evidence about effective teaching and learning.

f) To encourage the sharing and discussion of evidence about effective teaching, learning, and the services.

g) To promote projects with relevant internal and external bodies that offer unique teaching and learning opportunities that would benefit the university community.

h) To consider any matter deemed by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment to be within the purview of its general responsibility.

### **5. GFC policy 111 Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation**

#### **“111.2 Teaching Evaluation**

1. Evaluation of teaching at the University of Alberta serves two purposes:

a. Summative – Evaluation provides a review and overview of an instructor’s teaching that is an essential element in promotion and tenure decisions. In its summative form, teaching evaluation forms a basis for rewarding excellence, as well as the basis for withholding reward.

b. Formative – Evaluation provides helpful feedback to teachers by identifying teaching strengths and weaknesses and, in so doing, giving guidance for the improvement or refinement of teaching skills.

2. Evaluation of teaching must be multifaceted. Multifaceted evaluation shall include the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction set out in Section 111.3 and other methods of assessing teaching designed within individual Faculties to respond to the particular conditions of that Faculty. Such assessments shall include one or more of the following: input from administrators, peers, self, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni.

3. Recognizing that the evaluation of teaching at the University shall be multifaceted, Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) decisions concerning tenure, promotion or unsatisfactory teaching performance must be based on more than one indicator of the adequacy of teaching.

4. Assessment of teaching involving input from administrators, peers, self, alumni, or undergraduate and graduate students in addition to the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction should occur annually prior to tenure. For continuing faculty (ie, Categories A1.1, A1.5 and A1.6), such assessment will occur at least triennially.

5. The University shall continue to support University Teaching Services in its education programming which is focused on the development and improvement of teaching and learning and its efforts to enhance research in university teaching.

#### **111.3 Universal Student Ratings of Instruction**

In recognition of the University's commitment to teaching, the General Faculties

Council endorses a system of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction. This system, however, is only one part of the multi-faceted approach described in Section 111.2.

The Universal Student Ratings of Instruction are administered electronically via a system known as the eUSRI system.

The Universal Student Ratings of Instruction are designed to provide a minimal university-wide base of information on student ratings to the parties listed in this Section. With this purpose in mind, the General Faculties Council adopts the following policies:

A. All Faculties will ensure that evaluation of all instructors and courses will take place each time a course is offered. The term 'instructors' is meant to include tenured professors, tenure-track professors, sessional instructors, clinical instructors, field supervisors and graduate teaching assistants with responsibilities for courses.

[...]

D. The anonymity of student responses to the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction is of fundamental importance in maintaining student confidentiality and encouraging the free expression of views. Under normal circumstances, the anonymity of students will be protected. Universal Student Ratings of Instruction offer an avenue of feedback, including feedback critical of instructors.

[...]

G. The numerical summaries for the ten Universal Student Ratings of Instruction questions will be reported to the instructor, the Chair, Director or Dean and students.

[...]

I. All results given out to students, Chairs, Directors and Deans will have the following cautionary preface:

Student questionnaires form an important part of evaluating teaching effectiveness but cannot be taken alone as a complete assessment of an instructor or course. Factors other than an instructor's teaching ability may influence ratings. These factors include class size, class level, Faculty, time in class, required versus optional course, grade expectations, student GPA, gender, race, ethnicity, age of both students and instructors.

[...]

J. Nothing in this section will prevent instructors from seeking other means of feedback from students during the term."

The full GFC Policy 111 Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation is available at:

<http://www.gfcpolicymanual.ualberta.ca/111TeachingandLearningandTeach.aspx>

**5. University of Alberta Faculty Agreement July 2006** (incorporating June 2007 and July 2008 amendments)

"13.06 The standards for evaluation of teaching performance shall be broadly based, including course content, course design and performance in the classroom. Such evaluation may take into account information such as statistical summaries of responses to student questionnaires, comprehensive reviews of student commentary; reviews by peers, reviews by administrative officials and reviews of teaching dossiers and other materials provided by the staff member."

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**Routing** (Include meeting dates)

Participation: (parties who have seen the proposal and in what capacity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those who have been informed</li> <li>• Those who have been consulted</li> <li>• Those who are actively participating</li> </ul>	Notice of Motion from GFC member to President Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Sarah Forgie, Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment GFC Executive Committee – May 16, 2016
Approval Route (Governance) (including meeting dates)	GFC Executive Committee – May 16, 2016 General Faculties Council – May 30, 2016
Final Approver	General Faculties Council

Attachments (each to be numbered 1 - <>)

1. Attachment 1: (page 1) email Notice of Motion from GFC member Carolyn Sale, May 9, 2016

*Prepared by:* Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost and Sarah Forgie, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives) with the assistance of Meg Brolley, GFC Secretary and Manager of GFC Services, [brolley@ualberta.ca](mailto:brolley@ualberta.ca)

**From:** Carolyn Sale <[sale@ualberta.ca](mailto:sale@ualberta.ca)>  
**Date:** May 9, 2016 at 3:11:31 PM MDT  
**To:** David Turpin <[dturpin@ualberta.ca](mailto:dturpin@ualberta.ca)>  
**Subject:** Motion for GFC's Meeting of 30 May 2016

Dear President Turpin,

I write to ask that the following motion be added to the agenda of the meeting of the General Faculties Council on 30 May 2016:

The General Faculties Council directs that its Committee on the Learning Environment provide it, by 30 April 2017, with a report on research into the use of student rating mechanisms for the instruction in university courses and its recommendations in relation to the University of Alberta's existing Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) so that the General Faculties Council may determine whether it wishes or on what terms it will continue to endorse the use of USRIs at the University of Alberta.

#### **Background for Request**

The paperwork for the report from the Committee on the Learning Environment that GFC received at its January meeting on the introduction of the e-USRIs noted that GFC's policy on the use of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction was first introduced over twenty years ago, in 1995. During the intervening years there have been a great many changes to the academy; and during the last few years, the last year or so especially, there have been many reports on research into such instruments that suggest that they tend to function in inequitable and even discriminatory ways. I would therefore very much like to see the General Faculties Council's Committee on the Learning Environment review this research and report on it to GFC, and to provide at that time its recommendations for any changes to the USRIs that would be appropriate or indeed necessary if the General Faculties Council is to continue to endorse their use.

#### **Timing of Request**

I put this forward motion now rather than in the Fall for two reasons: so that the expertise of any member of the CLE whose term may be ending at June 30th may be captured on this issue to assist with the committee's work next year; and to assist the University in getting out ahead of a policy document that is scheduled to come forward to the Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in the Fall. I would like the General Faculties Council to be positioned to take an informed decision next year on what about our current USRIs would need to change if the GFC were to continue to endorse them.

It is my understanding that there was some work done by the Committee on the Learning Environment on this front six years ago in 2010, but it is time for the committee to do further work on this issue in light of the research on these instruments that has emerged during the last couple of years. Only with that work can the General Faculties Council proceed to informed decision-making on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,  
Carolyn

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