

Committee on Policy Review (CPR) Spring 2022 Semester Report

Membership for 2021-2022

Chair: Cindy MacGregor, COE; Chris Herr, COAL, Faculty Senate Chair; Mike Hudson, CHHS, Faculty Senate Chair-Elect; Christina Simmers, COB, Faculty Handbook Revision Committee Chair; Scot Scobee, Human Resources representative, *ex officio*; Chris Craig, Office of the Provost, *ex officio*; Angela Young, Office of the Registrar, *ex officio*; Rachael Dockery, General Counsel, *ex officio*; Mike Foster, COAL; Cathy Pearman, COE; James “Jack” Morgan, SGA rep, *ex officio*.

Membership (from Bylaws): The Chair of the Faculty Senate, the Chair-Elect of the Faculty Senate, and the Chair of the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee shall be members of the Policy Review Committee.

A minimum of three additional faculty members will be appointed by the Chair of the Faculty Senate, so as to provide representation from various academic colleges. These additional faculty members will serve a two-year term and may be reappointed for up to two consecutive terms. One of these faculty members will be appointed by the Chair of the Faculty Senate to serve as committee chair.

The Student Government Association shall provide a representative to the committee who will be *ex officio* without vote. The Director of Human Resources, the Provost, a representative from the Registrar's office, and General Counsel will be *ex officio* members without vote.

Purpose (from Bylaws)

Shall meet up to twice monthly to discuss pending policies under consideration by university leadership and to review current content in the university Policy Library. Shall identify current and emerging content in the university Policy Library (excluding the Faculty Handbook) that should be reviewed by the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee or warrants further review by the faculty. Shall prepare and present periodic reports with recommendations to the Faculty Senate regarding policies being referred to the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee, pending operating policies (OP) under consideration by university leadership, and other Policy Library content that should be further reviewed by the faculty.

Policies Reviewed and Actions Taken

- *Financial Hold Threshold.* The university registration hold threshold was recently increased from \$200 to \$2000 (during the pandemic) to help remove barriers that might impede students from persisting. That threshold amount has also been applied to financial holds placed on official transcripts. Any student owing more than \$2000 to the university has a registration hold applied to their account which blocks them from registering for classes and a transcript hold which blocks them from receiving an official copy of their transcript. We discussed how this threshold amount is communicated to students. *We recommended that the amount be included in the webpage that shows what the various*

holds are. [Office of the Registrar's Hold Codes webpage](#) now includes that information and a contact person for student questions (see FF and FT).

- *Faculty Handbook revisions.* CPR serves as an additional source of review for the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee (FHRC); some revisions brought forward to Faculty Senate by FHRC have been previously discussed by CPR. *During the spring semester we reviewed proposed revisions to the Faculty Handbook as requested by the FHRC chair. We also recommended a work group (between HR and faculty) to investigate alignment of the Employee Handbook and the Faculty Handbook. Again, any proposed changes would progress through FHRC.*
- *Blackboard Guidelines* – We continued our discussion of progress/process for developing/approving guidelines for faculty for minimal use of Blackboard. *An ad hoc committee is being formed, to consist of Mike Hudson, Chris Herr, Cindy MacGregor and an SGA rep. This committee will suggest wording for the Faculty Handbook and will report to the CPR as they develop that wording. Such wording will progress through the normal revision process for the Faculty Handbook as per the Faculty Handbook Revision Committee.*
- *Medical Excuse notes and the University Syllabus Template for Seated Classes* – The committee composed this response:

Early in the fall 2021 semester, the Committee on Policy Review (CPR) was asked by Avery Russell to investigate the requirement of medical excuse notes to document absences from class. The point of contention originated from an investigation of The University Syllabus Template for Seated Classes

(https://www.missouristate.edu/Provost/Files/Syllabus_Template_Seated.docx) which includes the following statement:

Missing Class If You Are Sick:

*While missing class is usually not advisable, it is important to stay home when sick to avoid the spread of communicable illness. If you are sick or not feeling well, please do not come to class but rather seek medical attention from your doctor or at Magers Health and Wellness Center. They can provide you a **medical excuse** and advise you when it is safe to return to class. Contact your instructor to let them know that you are sick and will not be in class. By working with your instructor, you will be able to keep up with readings and assignments through the Blackboard course site.*

The syllabus includes the following for any attendance policy:

Attendance: Participation

[insert attendance statement here]

CPR investigated this concern extensively and discussed it across several meetings. Rachael Dockery determined that there had been no complaints documented in her office or in the disability office. Furthermore, no issues related to the use of medical excuses have been presented to BIT.

It is important to note that the university syllabus template is not a policy. Furthermore, this template does not require medical excuses as part of an attendance or participation statement, as no statement is included in the template. The **required syllabus statements** can be found at: <https://www.missouristate.edu/provost/bbsyllabus.htm> . There is no required syllabus statement regarding attendance or medical excuse documentation.

A relevant policy is Op 3-04-10 <https://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/attendan.htm> which states:

*"Because class attendance and course grade are demonstrably and positively related, the University expects students to attend all class sessions of courses in which they are enrolled. Each instructor has the responsibility to determine specific attendance policies for each course taught, including the role that attendance plays in calculation of final grades and the extent to which work missed due to non-attendance can be made up. On the first day of class, each instructor will make available to each student a written statement of the specific attendance policy for that class. The University encourages instructors not to make attendance a disproportionately weighted component of the final grade. The University expects instructors to be **reasonable** in accommodating students whose absence from class resulted from: (1) participation in University-sanctioned activities and programs; (2) personal illness; (3) temporary military orders or Veterans Administration medical appointments; or (4) family and/or other compelling circumstances. **Instructors have the right to request documentation verifying the basis of any absences resulting from the above factors.** Any student who believes that his or her final grade for a course has been reduced unfairly because of attendance factors has the right to appeal that grade under the process outlined below."*

The remainder of the policy clarifies the appeals process for students who have experienced "attendance-related grade reductions."

Two important components of the policy are the university expectations that instructors "be reasonable in accommodating students" and that "Instructors have the right to request documentation verifying the basis of any absences resulting from the above factors."

Given that there is no documented evidence that instructors are being **unreasonable** in requiring documentation of medical absences it is not currently justifiable for CPR to make a recommendation to change a policy. Furthermore, the syllabus template is not a policy and is not a required template for instructors to utilize. Lastly, the required syllabus statements do not include an attendance statement for which medical absences require medical documentation.

At this time, CPR has no policy changes to recommend.

- *External Review.* CPR has been reviewing the policies for external reviews for faculty applying for tenure and/or promotion. The Provost website and the *Faculty Handbook* describe the expectations and processes but have some incongruent language. *CPR recommended alignment of the website with the Faculty Handbook. The Provost office is working on aligning the wording on their webpages to be congruent with the Faculty Handbook. CPR will continue to oversee the alignment and any changes to the Provost webpages or to the Faculty Handbook.*