

FAUW Responses to CTAPT and CEPT(2) Reports May 15, 2020

The [May 20 Senate meeting agenda package](#) includes an interim report from the Complementary Teaching Assessment Project Team (CTAPT) and an update on the second phase of the Course Evaluation Project Team (CEPT2).

FAUW is very grateful to its CEPT2 appointee, Professor Jasmin Habib, for her service on the taskforce. We appointed her to the taskforce because of her solid commitment to equity and fair, transparent processes, and are very confident that she was an effective advocate throughout the CEPT2 process.

Here are FAUW's responses to the Senate meeting motions and the recommendations of CEPT(2) and CTAPT.

FAUW does not support the following motion relating to the CEPT(2) Update to Senate:

Motion: That Senate endorse the decision of Deans' Council to accept and act on the recommendations described in the report, including the launch of the new Student Course Perception Instrument, currently planned for winter term 2021.

FAUW reminds Senate that Deans' Council is a confidential advisory body to the provost and is not empowered to make academic decisions. Senate should not be asked to endorse a decision of Deans' Council.

In light of its HeForShe commitments, FAUW calls upon Senate to recognize the growing consensus among academic bodies, including CAUT¹, OCUFA², the American Sociological Association, the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, the American Anthropology Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Historical Association³, the UWaterloo Psychology Department⁴ and FAUW's Equity Committee⁵, that Student Course Perception Surveys (SCPS) cannot provide a valid measure of instructional performance due to bias that is based on a combination of non-instructional factors, including instructor gender, race and ethnicity.

The focus on rolling out new SCPS without finalizing the implementation of the use of teaching dossiers and peer reviews of teaching as recommended by CTAPT implicitly supports the notion that SCPS are what matter most, in contravention of the spirit of Policy 77 – Tenure and Promotion of Faculty Members, which indicates that:

Teaching quality should be assessed broadly using evidence gathered from as many sources as practicable. Responsibility for providing documentary evidence on teaching rests with the candidate and, to a lesser degree, with the department Chair. A teaching dossier developed by the candidate may be the most effective way of assembling this information.

¹ CAUT (2016, November). [CAUT Policy Statement on Use of Student Opinion Surveys](#).

² OCUFA (2019, February). [Report of the OCUFA Student Questionnaires on Courses and Teaching Working Group](#).

³ American Sociological Association (2019, September). [Statement on Student Evaluations of Teaching](#). This statement is endorsed by 17 other professional associations.

⁴ UWaterloo Department of Psychology (2017, January). [Response to the CEPT Report](#).

⁵ FAUW Status of Women and Equity Committee (2017, January). [Response to the CEPT Report](#).

We therefore do not support the motion and recommend that:

1. attention should be focused on incorporating multi-faceted assessment methods recommended by CTAPT before acting on the recommendations described in the CEPT(2) report; and
2. SCPS should not be used to measure teaching effectiveness for tenure & promotion⁶, nor for other aspects of performance evaluation that affect pay, career status and career progress⁷

FAUW supports the following motions relating to the CTAPT Interim Report to Senate:

Motion 1: That Senate endorse the decision of Deans' Council to accept and act on the recommendations as described in the report.

Motion 2: That Senate endorse the continued work to develop feasible mechanisms for the implementation of Teaching Dossiers and Peer Review of Teaching as part of the processes for assessment of teaching at the University.

Motion 3: That, regarding continuing work on teaching performance review, and in support of continuing improvement of teaching and learning at the University and fairness in performance review, the University continues working towards a system for summative assessment of teaching that considers many sources of information about all aspects of effective teaching.

FAUW responses to recommendations in the CEPT(2) Update and CTAPT Interim Reports

CEPT(2) 1: That the new core set of questions for SCP surveys (as modified in light of the results of the pilot test) be employed by all Waterloo Faculties and participating AFIW, beginning in Winter Term 2021.

- FAUW continues to oppose the imposition of mandatory University-wide questions.⁸
 - A one-size-fits-all model does not provide instructive feedback for formative purposes.⁹
 - This also interferes with long-term datasets developed by some Faculties.
- If adopted, new core questions should be placed on hold until CTAPT recommendations 2 and 3 are implemented, specifically:
 - Core questions should not be finalized without a comprehensive definition of “teaching effectiveness” at the University of Waterloo.
 - New SCPS should not be implemented without (i) a clear understanding of the role of SCPS in formative and summative evaluation and (ii) implementation of teaching dossiers and peer reviews.

CEPT(2) 2: That over the next 18 months, each Faculty will engage in a consultative process to select an appropriate second tier of questions to be asked in every course in the Faculty; further tiers (for Departments or Programs, and perhaps for formative-only course specific questions) will be developed later.

⁶ See the decision of Arbitrator William Kaplan in Ryerson University v Ryerson Faculty Association, 2018 CanLII 58446 (ON LA), <<http://canlii.ca/t/hsgkz>>. Arbitrator Kaplan found that SCPS “results provide information about the student experience, and, contextualized, are appropriately considered for tenure and promotion although, to repeat, not for reaching conclusions about teaching effectiveness.

⁷ See CAUT 2016 and OCUFA 2019. OCUFA states: “However unintentional, using SQCT scores to evaluate performance has effects on pay, career status, and career progress that are negative, iterative, and systemic. For those subject to intersecting biases, gender and race or ethnicity for example, the added effect can be even larger gaps in earnings” (10).

⁸ FAUW (2017, January 18). [Response to Course Evaluation Project Report](#).

⁹ See OCUFA 2019 (11, 51).

- FAUW supports a consultative process, but see above re: mandatory questions. We also note that additional questions will add new potential sources of bias not addressed in the pilot survey.

CEPT(2) 3: That two Users' Guides, one for Instructors and one for Evaluators (Chairs, Performance Review Committees, T&P Committees) be created.

- FAUW appreciates the need for user education, but cautions that according to research in psychology, it is nearly impossible to adjust social judgments when bias is suspected.¹⁰ There is no research to support the idea that education via user guides can effectively counter the biasing effects of non-instructional factors in SCPS scores.

CEPT(2) 4: That the University work out an agreement with the Evaluate team and the Faculty of Science to use Evaluate as the platform for SCP surveys at Waterloo for the next five years.

- We support this so long as appropriate institutional support structures are established and maintained.

CEPT(2) 5: That the University should reassess the rules surrounding responses to open-ended questions on the SCP survey.

- FAUW continues to support the original CEPT recommendation, which was adopted by Senate in 2017 and is supported by OCUFA, that SCPS written comments are for the instructor only and should be treated as confidential except at the instructor's discretion.¹¹
- FAUW supports measures to ensure that faculty are not subjected to harassment via SCPS. We recommend that students be informed in advance of the University's policy on harassment and the scope of confidentiality they can expect in the event of an investigation of alleged harassment or threat of violence through SCPS.¹²

CEPT(2) 6: That the University should continue to study the behaviour of the new tool once it is implemented.

- FAUW is concerned that the CEPT(2) recommendations give insufficient weight to the growing body of published and peer reviewed research, which shows that SCPS cannot provide a valid measure of instructional performance due to bias that is based on a combination of non-instructional factors, including instructor characteristics such as gender, race, and ethnicity.
 - The report does not reflect Psychology expertise in the domains of survey responding and statistical analysis of perception measures.¹³
 - The report provides evidence that student surveys are gender biased. It focuses on the "small magnitude" of this unidimensional bias. The pilot did not address the range of other non-instructional factors that are known to influence survey results¹⁴, including:
 - nature of the course material, level of the course, and whether it is required
 - size of course, time of day, and physical condition of classroom
 - instructor age, attractiveness, expressiveness, race, and whether instructor speaks with an accent or is a native speaker

¹⁰ See UWaterloo Department of Psychology 2017 (5-7).

¹¹ OCUFA 2019 (11, 52). FAUW 2017.

¹² OCUFA 2019 (45-49, 52-53).

¹³ We draw Senate's attention to the letter written by Professor Ramona Bobocel (Psychology), a member of CEPT(2), to Faculty of Arts Senators, UW Administrators, CEPT(2), and Department colleagues explaining why she was unable to attach her name to the CEPT(2) report and recommendations.

¹⁴ In addition to the research cited in the previously referenced documents, Professor Jay Michela (Psychology) has conducted an extensive literature review and original research in this area. We are grateful for his expertise, which informs FAUW's positions as well as OCUFA's 2019 report (see Appendix B: Methodological issues in use of student questionnaires to assess teaching effectiveness (95-98)). Professor Michela has been proactive in sharing ongoing research with the CEPT(2) committee.

- There is little discussion and no evidence regarding the cumulative effects of intersecting biases based on instructor visible characteristics (e.g., gender and race/ethnicity OR gender and race and language ability) let alone less visible characteristics, which may include disabilities.

CTAPT 1: Continue to enhance culture of teaching at UWaterloo

- We support this recommendation.

CTAPT 2: Adopt a comprehensive definition of teaching effectiveness

- We support this recommendation.

CTAPT 3: Officially incorporate multi-faceted assessment (teaching dossiers, peer review, SCPS campus-wide – each is useful for formative; use of multiple methods appropriately implemented for summative can help reduce bias and improve triangulation)

- FAUW strongly supports CTAPT's call for Senate support in working towards finalizing implementation of teaching dossiers and peer review of teaching.
- We remain extremely concerned about the use of SCPS in summative evaluation. If used as part of a suite of tools, "it is not scores that are informative, but instructor's explanation of how the responses figure in the faculty member's own evaluation and development of their courses."¹⁵

CTAPT 4: Provide opportunities for non-faculty instructors to have their teaching assessed

- We support this recommendation.

¹⁵ OCUFA 2019 (11, see also 52,55).