



**SENATE ACADEMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES**

Monday 29 March 2021 3:31-5:03 p.m. via Zoom

**Attendees**

**Senators**

M. Aronson  
E. Bhangu  
J. Burnham  
J. Gilbert  
S. Gopalakrishnan  
P. Harrison  
C. Krebs  
K. Lo (Chair)  
C.W. Marshall

S. Matsui

A. Pratap Singh  
K. Smith  
R. Spencer (Vice-Chair)  
H. Zerriffi  
J. Zheng

**Ex Officio**

M. Quayle  
K. Ross

**Guests**

Z. Xu

**Senate Staff**

J. Cowen  
C. Eaton  
J. Iverson

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Senate Academic Policy Committee (the “Committee”) was called to order at 3:31 p.m. on 29 March 2021 by K. Lo, Chair.

**Agenda**

***THAT THE Senate Academic Policy Committee adopts the 29 March 2021 agenda as presented.***

Moved: C. Krebs  
Seconded: P. Harrison  
**Carried.**

**Meeting Minutes**

***THAT THE Senate Academic Policy Committee approves the 22 February 2021 meeting minutes as presented.***

Moved: H. Zerriffi  
Seconded: E. Bhangu  
**Carried.**

**Business Arising  
from the Minutes**

K. Lo reported discussing with J. Fox, Chair of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, ideas for improving communication between the groups, including expanding each committee's membership to include the Chair of the other. The Committee was broadly supportive of the idea. K. Lo said the discussion would continue with the Senate Nominating Committee.

**Faculty of Land  
and Food Systems  
> Academic**

***THAT THE Senate Academic Policy Committee approves revisions to the Withdrawals and Academic Leave Calendar entry set out in the proposal.***

Z. Xu explained the revised Calendar entry clarifies the process for requesting transfer credit. It also includes additional information for international students.

R. Spencer expressed concern about provisions that put the onus on students but agreed requiring advanced approval is good advice. K. Lo noted the existing Calendar language already states permission is required. Several members suggested alternate language and formatting.

C. Eaton noted the proposed statement includes information on transfer credit that exists elsewhere in the Calendar. He advised the Faculty against creating clashing statements. K. Ross suggested linking the proposed statement to the campus-wide policy on letters of permission. R. Spencer said the notion that students cannot do anything without permission will always be tested. C. Eaton said some students will take a course that they are worried about failing at UBC at an “easier” institution and then seek transfer credit. This is a particular issue for some courses and letters of permission are meant to curtail the behavior. Further edits to the proposal were suggested. C. Krebs asked whether course articulation should be addressed in the proposal but the statement was not amended accordingly.

Referring to the final paragraph, J. Gilbert questioned whether a stronger imperative than “encouraged” should be used. Recognizing the intersection with students’ immigration eligibility, he suggested students “should” consult rather than be “encouraged.” P. Harrison agreed that is an important aspect but was unsure how it could be imposed. H. Zerriffi said there is policy and then there are procedures. He suggested information on how the policy is operationalized at the Faculty level be included in the procedures.

K. Lo summarized the revisions made by the Committee:

1. Create numbered Letter of Permission section (beginning with “A student who wishes...”)
2. Remove proposed sentence (beginning with “The Faculty is not obligated...”)
3. Link directly to campus-wide policy on letters of permission
4. Change “encouraged” to “should” in final paragraph

With those amendments the Committee voted.

**Carried.**

**Policy V-102:  
Examination  
Hardships and  
Clashes**

K. Lo explained the policy before the Committee is a housekeeping change resulting from the Okanagan Senate approving Policy O-102.

**THAT THE Senate Academic Policy Committee approves Policy V-102 Examination Hardships and Clashes to replace Policy J-102 Examination Hardships and Clashes.**

Moved: C.W. Marshall  
Seconded: E. Bhangu

P. Harrison asked what policy changes the Okanagan Senate approved. K. Lo said the definition of examination hardship was amended to three exams within 27 hours. J. Burnham noted there is an opportunity in recognizing the Okanagan has extended the criteria for what makes a hardship. K. Ross said Enrolment Services cannot implement the 27-hour rule in the existing software even though the recommendation was passed. She further noted there are some practices that are creating hardships and compressing the exam schedule. The university can make other changes that better serve students.

**Carried.**

**Policy J-XXX:  
Academic Freedom**

K. Lo said the policy is approaching a draft to be distributed for consultation. The only addition to the version before the Committee relates to the University Act references.

**THAT THE Senate Academic Policy Committee approves Policy J-XXX: Academic Freedom to distribute for consultation.**

Moved: P. Harrison  
Seconded: C.W. Marshall

K. Lo noted the first step will be consulting with the Okanagan Senate Academic Policy Committee given it is a joint policy. Broad consultation will follow.

P. Harrison sought direction on the use of “abhorrent.” R. Spencer said the critical part of the section is that ideas might challenge an individual’s personal identity. He offered “offensive” or “deeply offensive.” K. Lo suggested adding to, rather than replacing, what is already in the policy. With respect to academic ideas, H. Zerriffi said popularity has nothing to do with it but contention does. He suggested removing references to personal identity and popularity. C. Eaton said “abhorrent” is the secular equivalent of “blasphemous.” The policy requires encompassing language that does not implicate insult. The purpose is free inquiry into areas of knowledge where people may hold beliefs. R. Spencer added the idea is to not let a deep sense of offense stop ideas from being discussed. That might be appropriate in some cases, but not all.

E. Bhangu agreed with H. Zerriffi about not challenging personal identity and asked what that clause is intended to cover. K. Lo explained the context for that wording is that personal offense is not grounds for restricting academic freedom. C.W. Marshall noted an individual can be offended by another's actions without that person actually doing anything. This point is different than directed hate.

C. Krebs asked how the policy addresses intent to harm. Something that is said or done out of ignorance can have downstream impacts. She wondered if it would be advisable to include something about intent, noting contention is ok but harm is not. R. Spencer said the UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff covers intent.

E. Bhangu asked how the policy would apply to the contentious speakers that were recently on campus. K. Lo said those events are what prompted a re-examination of this issue. The room booking aspect is handled by Offices of the President and Provosts; however, such speakers could still be invited and thus bypass room booking procedures. The academic freedom policy would apply to those circumstances.

C. Eaton suggested seeking a legal opinion on the policy before proceeding much further. Similar legislation has "good faith" exemptions, and intent does matter to an extent. He said it is difficult to simultaneously respect beliefs and argue about those beliefs.

H. Zerriffi reminded the Committee of the "guided by scholarly integrity" part of the policy. Some with scholarly integrity may still put forward ideas that counter personal identity. The policy goes so far as to protect personal identities, which he said is not required. Personal identity is problematic because it implies that is grounds for attack. P. Harrison said people may be exposed to unpleasant ideas at the university and this policy makes space for a discussion of those ideas. He agreed that including personal identities may go too far.

K. Lo asked the Committee if references to personal identities and "highly" (from "highly contentious") should be removed from the policy. C. Eaton said there is where legal input is needed. Some things are offensive by their very nature, and offensive carries different meaning depending on the context. He added there are circumstances in which people may dislike a subject but the subject itself will continue to be studied; one's discomfort with a subject matter is not enough to say something cannot be studied. This relates to the notion of good faith; we do not want to limit debate to what is orthodoxy. Debating ideas, not people, is difficult to parse in policy. **Action item: C. Eaton to send draft policy to the Office of the University Counsel prior to distributing for consultation.**

P. Harrison supported consultation with the OUC as the next step before amending the language any further. He withdrew his motion to approve for distribution for consultation.

**Withdrawn.**

**Next Meeting**            The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 26 April 2021 3:30-5 p.m.

**Adjournment**            The meeting was adjourned at 5:03 p.m.