

To: Members of Academic Council

From: Andy Shennan, Provost, Megan Núñez, Dean of Faculty Affairs, and the 2020-21 Committee on Faculty Appointments

Re: Adjustments to SEQs for 2020-21

Date: October 9, 2020

Last May, the members of the 2019-20 CFA wrote to acknowledge the immense and, at the same time, inevitably variable impact of COVID-19 on Wellesley faculty members' work. As the College embarks on a new academic year in the shadow of the continuing pandemic, we share our predecessors' determination to fulfill our evaluative responsibilities in a spirit of empathy and appreciation. We also share their belief that these unprecedented circumstances will necessitate adjustments to some of our normal procedures. In making adjustments, our goal should be to introduce flexibility where it is helpful without imposing new burdens and without undermining the fairness and equity of the overall process.

As the year progresses, we will consider the need for such adjustments in all review areas (including our expectations of faculty research) and will issue further guidance. However, there is a particular time-sensitivity in relation to the evaluation of teaching. Every course that is being taught at Wellesley College this fall is, to some degree, an experimental course. The College is asking faculty to adapt to an accelerated class calendar, to switch formats across terms (even, in a worst case, unexpectedly within a term), to teach remotely, or to teach in person with masks and social distancing. Every instructor is adapting to radically novel conditions in the classroom (real or virtual), and teaching students who are themselves experiencing novel stresses in their lives. Many instructors are doing so while managing their own challenging personal or family circumstances brought about by the pandemic. We have every confidence in the capacity of our faculty to succeed in these experiments and, equally, every confidence in our students' continued commitment to excellence in their academic work. Nonetheless, we should be realistic about the imponderables that complicate any effort to assess the quality of instruction this year, when half the students and faculty are engaged remotely and half in person, when so much is being improvised or adjusted without prior experience.

The committee is supportive of the efforts already underway under Dean Núñez's leadership to review the College's whole approach to assessment of teaching. But this is not the year to complete that work, and in the interim the existing mechanisms for evaluating teaching (both SEQs and class visits by R&P colleagues) remain necessary for the College's appointments process to operate.

Therefore, we do not feel that it would be appropriate to suspend SEQs altogether, as we did during last spring's emergency. For some of our colleagues, especially those with relatively little prior experience at Wellesley, evidence of strength in teaching during the current year is essential to their case for reappointment. Also, the opportunity for students to provide instructors with feedback on their experience is more meaningful than ever in a year when so much instructional experimentation is taking place. The committee views the feedback and developmental function of SEQs as especially valuable this year, and feels strongly that the

evaluative function is one that should be treated with greater than usual caution. For this reason, we are proposing a resolution to Academic Council that in 2020-21, SEQs be collected and shared with the instructor for all courses, but that faculty teaching more than one course have the option to designate one course (or two, in the case of faculty teaching five courses) as developmental, with the effect that those SEQs would not be shared with their chair, R&P, CFA or merit committee. Further detail about how this policy would be implemented is below.

In our reading of this year's SEQs and class visit reports, the CFA will foreground evidence of the efforts that faculty have made and are continuing to make to adjust creatively to COVID conditions with new teaching methods or new ways of engaging students. We will also foreground evidence of faculty members' dedication to their students and student learning in a time of adversity. We will de-emphasize our normal practice of viewing the current year within a longer-term trajectory, recognizing that for so many reasons this year is an outlier.

We recognize that adjustments such as these will not fully address all of the pandemic's effects on faculty members' professional lives. For some faculty, external factors may cause this year's teaching, research and service records to look very different from the way they otherwise would have looked, and this and future CFAs will need to acknowledge that fact as they assess colleagues' contributions. The 2019-20 CFA invited faculty under review to include an optional statement regarding how the pandemic has affected their work, and we'd like to reissue that invitation, underscoring that it is an invitation, not an expectation.

Our committee's work is just beginning, and we hope this message will address some of the concerns that faculty have expressed to us and convey the spirit in which the CFA will conduct its work this year.

**Resolution:** For 2020-21 only, faculty teaching between two and four courses<sup>1</sup> may choose to treat one course's SEQs as developmental rather than evaluative, meaning that course's SEQs will be withheld from the department chair, R&P, CFA and/or merit committee.<sup>2</sup> Faculty teaching five courses may withhold two courses' SEQs.

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<sup>1</sup> The end of this document provides detail about how a "course" is defined in special circumstances.

<sup>2</sup> This only applies to SEQs that normally would have been considered evaluative; SEQs that are excluded in accordance with legislation, (i.e., SEQs for the academic year following a tenure decision, and SEQs from the first semester of an initial four-year contract as an assistant professor), will continue to be withheld.

Details of policy:

For 2020-21 only, faculty teaching between two and four courses<sup>3</sup> may choose to treat one course's SEQs as developmental rather than evaluative, meaning that course's SEQs will be withheld from the department chair, R&P, CFA and/or merit committee.<sup>4</sup> Faculty teaching five courses may withhold two courses' SEQs.

For most faculty, the choice of which SEQs to withhold will be made at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. As a result, most SEQs for the 2020-21 academic year will not be available to department chairs or R&Ps until after this election is made in May 2021.

Decisions about which SEQs to withhold may be made earlier for faculty who are scheduled to be reviewed for reappointment, tenure, promotion or merit in spring 2021.<sup>5</sup> Any faculty under review this spring who are teaching more than one course in fall 2020 may choose to withhold one fall course's SEQs from this review. That decision will need to be made after SEQs for term two are released, and any remaining SEQs from terms one or two will be included in the spring review. Since spring semester SEQs ordinarily are not part of those reviews, term three and four SEQs will not be made available to department chairs, R&Ps, the CFA and/or merit committee at the time of those reviews. Eligible faculty under review in spring 2021 who choose not to withhold any fall SEQs may later decide to withhold spring SEQs from their record for a future evaluation.

We encourage faculty to take advantage of this opportunity. In some circumstances, faculty may decide that they would like all SEQs from this year to be considered evaluative, but there should be no explicit or implicit pressure to do so.

The below table provides detail about how this policy would apply in individual circumstances:

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<sup>4</sup> This only applies to SEQs that normally would have been considered evaluative; SEQs that are excluded in accordance with legislation, (i.e., SEQs for the academic year following a tenure decision, and SEQs from the first semester of an initial four-year contract as an assistant professor), will continue to be withheld.

<sup>5</sup> Since fall semester SEQs are not ordinarily part of fall tenure reviews, SEQs from term one will not be available to R&Ps or the CFA during fall 2020 tenure reviews. As candidates are always free to share any information with the CFA, candidates may choose to share term one SEQs with the CFA, but it is not expected.

Faculty	Options to withhold	Deadline to decide which SEQs to withhold
Faculty teaching <b>between two and four</b> courses in 2020-21, who are <b>not</b> scheduled to be reviewed for reappointment (tenure-track or non-tenure-track), tenure, promotion or merit in spring 2021	May choose to withhold SEQs from one course taught during 2020-21.	May 28, 2021
Faculty teaching <b>more than four</b> courses in 2020-21, who are <b>not</b> scheduled to be reviewed for reappointment (tenure-track or non-tenure-track), tenure, promotion or merit in spring 2021	May choose to withhold SEQs from any two courses taught during the year.	May 28, 2021
Faculty teaching <b>between two and four courses</b> in 2020-21, who <b>are</b> scheduled to be reviewed for reappointment (tenure-track or non-tenure-track, including reviews that do not go to the CFA), promotion or merit in spring 2021	Two options: (1) Withhold SEQs from one course in either term one or two. SEQs from that course will not be included in a spring 21 review. (Note: this option is not available to faculty under review only teaching one course in the fall, as some 20-21 SEQs need to be available for a spring 21 review.) (2) Do not withhold any term one or two SEQs from spring 21 review. In May, may choose to withhold SEQs from a course in term three or four.	(1) January 15, 2021: decide whether to withhold any SEQs from terms one or two (2) May 28, 2021: if no SEQs are withheld in terms one or two, may withhold from terms three or four
Faculty teaching <b>more than four</b> courses in 2020-21, who <b>are</b> scheduled to be reviewed for reappointment (tenure-track or non-tenure-track, including reviews that do not go to the CFA), tenure, promotion or merit in spring 2021	Two options: (1) Withhold SEQs from one course in term one or two. SEQs from that course will not be included in a spring 21 review. In May, may choose to withhold SEQs from one additional course in term three or four. (2) Do not withhold any term one or two SEQs from spring 21 review. In May, may choose to withhold SEQs from one or two courses in terms three or four.	(1) January 15, 2021: decide whether to withhold any SEQs from terms one or two. (2) May 28, 2021: if SEQs from one or fewer courses are withheld in terms one or two, may decide whether to withhold any SEQs from terms three or four
Faculty teaching only one course in 2020-21	That course's SEQs may not be withheld.	N/A

**Definition of a “course” in special circumstances**

For ISLs: one course = two labs. Labs from different terms may be withheld.

For PERA faculty: one course = two PE courses. PE courses from different terms may be withheld.

For faculty teaching half-unit courses: one course = two half-unit courses.

For faculty who teach both a lecture and an associated lab or discussion section: one course = the lecture and lab or discussion section.

For hybrid courses: one course = both the in-person and remote sections.