

University of Montana Unit Standards Committee Annual Report

Academic Year 2022-2023

Submitted by: Donna McCrea, Chair

Date: April 18, 2023

Committee Members:

Donna McCrea, Mansfield Library (2025)

Ona Renner-Fahey, World Languages and Culture (2025)

Jennifer Schoffer Closson, Speech, Language, Hearing and Occupational Sciences (2025)

Diana Six, Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences (2024)

Mathew Taylor, Economics (2024)

Ekaterina Voronina, Division of Biological Sciences (2025)

Ke Wu, Mathematics (2025)

Purpose of the Unit Standards Committee

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) states, “The University Standards Committee shall work with units to bring the Unit Standards into compliance pursuant to Section 10.130 and following the guidelines in Section 10.120.” (CBA 10.100)

Committee Review Process

For the past several years the Unit Standards Committee (USC) and Provost’s Office have used Box to share files and e-mail to communicate about the status of standards.

The USC Procedures indicate that standards approved by their units and dean should be received by the Provost’s Office for distribution to the USC on or before September 30. In practice the Provost’s Office receives standards throughout the academic year (generally in the Fall). The USC queues standards for review according to when they were received. The USC chair communicates review timeline expectations with the unit and the Provost’s Office. [Note: the CBA expectation that all standards received by the USC be reviewed within 40 working days is unrealistic.]

All USC members review each set of standards. When the USC believes additional work is needed on a set of standards they are sent by the USC chair back to the department chairperson, copied to the Dean and the Provost’s Office. The USC provides comments, concerns and recommendations.

When a set of standards is approved by the USC, a Worksheet with the USC’s comments (if any) and formal documentation of approval is completed and submitted to the unit, Dean and Provost.

Standards Reviewed This Year

During the 2022-2023 academic year the USC reviewed standards received from 10 units: Economics, English, Environmental Studies, Geosciences, History, Integrated Physiology and Athletic Training (IPAT), Mathematics, Physical Therapy, and Psychology. Of these, five were approved by the USC on or before April 18, 2023.

The Committee also reviewed a revision of Philosophy’s standards, which were originally submitted during the 2021-2022 academic year, and a minor revision to Theatre and Dance’s standards, which were approved during the 2021-2022 academic year.

USC Comments and Recommendations from the 2022-2023 Review Year

General comments

- The USC is a committee where important work is accomplished, and where every member of the committee contributes. Any faculty member interested in helping UM ensure a fair evaluation, tenure and promotion process – or who wants to better understand how their own unit’s standards function and could be improved – should consider service on this committee.
- The USC should have 10 members. The USC was short members this year (as are other campus committees). This, of course, increases the workload for each committee member. Ideally the committee would always have at least nine members, three of whom have three or more years of experience on the committee and three with two or more years of experience. There is a learning curve to the committee’s work.
- Most units whose standards were last revised prior to 2018 are trying to clearly articulate for the first time their criteria for normal, above normal and outstanding. Helping units address this CBA expectation has resulted in what is likely a higher-than-usual number of comments from the USC to units and a higher-than-usual number of units whose standards were not approved upon first review by the USC. Barring additional substantive changes to the CBA, the revision and review process should get easier for units and the USC.
- In April 2023, the Faculty Senate approved revisions to the Operating Procedures and Guidelines for Unit Standards Review (Procedure 501.10) to reflect current CBA language, current section numbering, and the current process for moving standards through the approval process.
- The USC received a number of notes of thanks from units this year, as well as comments that the USC’s review had strengthened and/or added clarity to their standards.

CBA-related comments submitted to the UFA and the Provost’s Office for consideration

These comments are included in this annual report in the interest of transparency.

- Per CBA 10.120, “If the Unit Standards Committee does not approve any specific set of unit standards within forty (40) working days of submission by the unit, those standards shall be forwarded directly to the Provost for consideration.”
 - In practice, this timeline is not feasible when multiple sets of standards are received on or near the same time. Forty working days is an unrealistically short turn-around time for the USC to conduct its review, even when it is fully populated. The USC recommends that the Committee’s review period be extended to 90 days, and that the CBA include an option for the USC to request an extension of the review period from the unit and Provost’s Office. (The Provost’s Office may also wish to request extra time for its review.)
- There are several areas of CBA 10.000 which refer to section 10.340, even though there is no longer a section 10.340.

- The Outstanding Performance Award (OPA) is currently lumped in with the Merit award in CBA 10.110.c.a. Information about the OPA should probably be in a separate subsection so that it can be clearly stated that non-tenure-track (ntt) 'performance is to be evaluated consistent with workload assignment.' Meaning that it should be clear that if a ntt faculty has workload assignment only in Teaching they do not need to demonstrate activities in Service or Scholarship to qualify for the OPA.
- The CBA does not currently provide a means for non-tenure-track faculty who do not have Teaching or Service and especially Scholarship contributions to be promoted to Associate or Full Professor, despite the fact that some ntt faculty have only one of the three areas in their workload assignment. Specifically, CBA 10.110 reads: "In all applications for promotion, performance in teaching, community and University service, and scholarship are all important and essential as set forth in section 6.200. ... [A] faculty member must have the level necessary as defined in the CBA and unit standards in teaching, scholarship/creative activity, and service. However, no faculty member may be promoted to full professor on the basis of teaching and service alone."
- CBA 10.220 states: "Copies of the SEC, FEC, chair, dean and Provost's recommendations from all evaluations during the performance period must be included in the Individual Performance Record (IPR) before transmittal to the dean." In some units these documents are required to be a part of the IPR that goes to the FEC. In other units, this information is provided only to the Dean.
 - What is the intent of the process? Can each unit define this process for themselves?
- Is the USC an advisory body or an approval body? Can the Provost alone approve standards? There are areas in the CBA related to the role of the Unit Standards Committee that appear to contradict each other.
 - CBA 10.130 – units submit their standards for evaluation every 5 years and 'The unit faculty, department chairperson, the Unit Standards Committee, the appropriate dean, and Provost must approve any proposed change.'
 - CBA 10.120.3.j – [standards must] "be approved by the Unit Standards Committee, the appropriate dean, and the Provost prior to application for evaluation purposes."
 - Yet also in CBA 10.120, is this sentence: "Units may submit unit standards modified at the request of the Provost directly to the Provost's office without need to have approval from the Unit Standards Committee. In this latter event, the Provost shall so inform the Unit Standards Committee and subsequently provide the Unit Standards Committee with the final disposition of the issue."