Tensions around Valuing and Evaluating Teaching at McMaster University

Report prepared by the Valuing and Evaluating Teaching Hub Advisory Group, July 2023

1. Where do we want to be?

McMaster's Institutional Priorities and Strategic Directions (Office of the President, 2021) and the Partnered in Teaching and Learning Strategy (Office of the Provost, 2021) aim to support and promote inclusive, scholarly, and innovative teaching practices, while also recognizing and valuing the role of teaching in the McMaster community. The goal is to create a culture that fosters excellence in teaching and learning and clearly articulates how teaching is evaluated in a fair, equitable, and transparent way. Both strategies point to the opportunity to refine policies and processes to demonstrate that teaching is valued and recognized as a professional practice.

Taking into consideration the direction McMaster University is taking with respect to valuing and evaluating teaching, this report highlights some of the tensions between policy and practice that currently exist in this sphere. These tensions broadly fall under three categories: limited reference criteria, applicability to different groups, and inconsistencies between policy and practice. The report concludes with some recommendations and considerations for advancing the valuing and evaluation of teaching at McMaster.

2. Where are we now?

Connecting with stakeholders involved in valuing and evaluating teaching projects across campus revealed three primary sources of tension:

- Definitions of "effective teaching" within McMaster's policies do not reference how effective teaching can be evidenced
- Differing expectations/standards of teaching between teaching-track and tenure-track professors; and
- Implementation of policy is inconsistent across McMaster and in conflict with evolving good practice in evaluating teaching

Further details and examples related to each source of tension are provided in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.

2.1 Definitions of "effective teaching" within McMaster's policies do not reference how effective teaching can be evidenced

Effective teaching is a condition for promotion through the professorial ranks, the granting of tenure or permanence, salary increments based on merit, and University teaching awards (e.g., the President's Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Teaching & Learning). McMaster University has two key policies that address the concept of "effective teaching": the Revised Policy and Regulations with Respect to Academic Appointment, Tenure and Promotion, and SPS B1 (Procedures for the Assessment of Teaching).

SPS B1 defines effective teaching as:

> *[… A] condition for promotion through the professional ranks, the granting of tenure or permanence, salary increments based on merit, and University teaching awards (the President's Awards). These processes allow opportunities for the improvement of teaching through formal and informal feedback. Such feedback is particularly important for faculty at the beginning of their teaching careers, where it can and should provide a useful contribution to the development of teaching skills (Art. 1).*

While this definition describes the function of effective teaching in a faculty member's career, it does not specify how effective teaching can be evidenced. Section III, Art. 23 also refers to "high quality teaching" and "good record as a teacher" without additional definition.

The Revised Policy and Regulations with Respect to Academic Appointment, Tenure and Promotion (2012) provides the language closest to an evidence-based definition of teaching effectiveness:

> *"Committees, in judging teaching effectiveness, shall seek assurance that the candidate has a scholarly command of his or her subject, is both willing and able regularly to assist students in understanding the subject, and is able to assess students' performances in an equitable and effective manner" (Section III, Art. 5).*

The Partnered in Teaching and Learning Strategy suggests that evaluation of teaching needs to be multi-faceted and include self-reflection, peer observations and student voices. SBS B1 similarly emphasizes the multiplicity required to assess "sound evaluation of teaching" (Art. 9), implicitly suggesting that data from student and peer feedback can indicate effectiveness. But existing policy does not provide guidance about what capabilities should be considered. The suggested examples of activities to include in one's teaching portfolios focus primarily on actions related to teaching (e.g., observing or being observed by a peer) but do not reference achievement that might indicate "effectiveness." One may participate in peer observation, for example, without necessarily doing it well. There are two important exceptions: SPS B1 Art. 14(c) references "evidence-based development" and "innovative teaching practice," and Art. 14(f) references "evidence of response to the concerns of students." These criteria are often used in other institutional contexts as indicators of teaching effectiveness (e.g., Graduate Faculties Council – University of Calgary, 2021).

Taylor et al. (2022) raised similar critiques around the definition of "teaching excellence". The authors interviewed McMaster administrators, faculty, staff, and students to obtain perspectives from around the university on teaching excellently and how it is evaluated at the university. One administrator shared that a definition was never the goal—that a diversity of approaches and perspectives is a strength and the ideal. Many of the participants indicated that they felt their understanding of teaching excellence had changed over time, shifting from "tidy perfection" to more open-ended.

However, the authors note that the possibility of not having a definition breaks down when we consider assessment. University processes for evaluating teaching that are not rooted in a common understanding of "excellence" or "effectiveness" have led to consequences, some of which will be described in section 2.3.

2.2 Differing expectations/standards of teaching for Teaching-track vs. Tenure-track Faculty

The Partnered in Teaching and Learning Strategy emphasizes the importance of ensuring that teaching excellence is equally valued, recognized and supported at the university. Currently the language of "exceptional" and "excellent" teaching (as distinct from "academic excellence" more broadly) applies exclusively to teaching-track and permanent teaching faculty, highlighting a disparity in expectations for different types of positions at McMaster. Whereas tenure-stream and tenured faculty are expected to demonstrate "effectiveness" in teaching for the purposes of promotion, teaching-stream candidates for permanency and promotion must demonstrate "continued exceptional teaching as the primary way by which academic excellence is demonstrated" (Tenure & Promotion Policy, Section III, Art. 3). These distinctions between tenure-track and teaching-track faculty are intentional, with the policy stipulating that "the required standard of performance is higher for teaching-stream faculty than for tenure-stream because this is the primary criterion by which teaching-stream faculty are judged; there are not two equally important criteria as there are for tenure-stream faculty" (Tenure & Promotion Policy, Section III, Art. 6).

In defining what constitutes "exceptional", the policy references engagement with scholarship related to teaching, providing as examples contributions to curriculum development beyond the course level, and pedagogical presentations or publications. While scholarly teaching is highlighted both within McMaster's Institutional Priorities and the Partnered in Teaching and Learning Strategy, current reference to this activity within existing policies is limited to teaching-stream faculty. Even then, the expectations for engaging with scholarship related to teaching are unclear, described in the Tenure and Promotion Policy as "ideally (but not always)" (Section III, Art. 4). Most recently, the Record of Activities form was revised to include, as part of one's "Contributions to Teaching", a category on "scholarly development in teaching and learning", which can be utilized by both tenure-track and teaching-track faculty members.

For a person appointed to a teaching-track position, promotion and permanence are not linked (Tenure & Promotion Policy, Section III, Art. 27). For promotion to Associate Professor of a teaching-stream candidate, criteria include evidence of recognition external to the Department for the candidate's teaching and/or teaching-related contributions in two or more areas (e.g., adoption of the candidate's teaching innovations by others, mentoring of other teachers). For promotion to Professor of a teaching-stream candidate, the criteria include evidence of a national or international reputation for teaching and/or teaching-related contributions (e.g., significant teaching awards from bodies external to the home university, peer-reviewed and/or invited conference papers on pedagogy presented at national and/or international conferences).

Recognizing the inconsistencies between these two groups, a joint administration/faculty association Working Group has been struck to prepare a report with recommendations for the Joint Committee. Data collection will proceed through the spring/summer and fall terms of 2023.

2.3 Implementation of policy is inconsistent across McMaster and in conflict with evolving good practice in evaluating teaching

2.3.1 Incorporating student input on teaching and learning

Current policy limits student input on teaching and learning in one's Teaching Portfolio (Part A) (SPS B2, Art. 3(v)) and in the Departmental Teaching Evaluation Report (SPS B1, Art. 14) to the summative question from student feedback surveys. Indeed, SPS B2 expressly prohibits inclusion of student comments in the Executive Summary (Part A), citing concerns about the reliability and validity of anonymous statements (SPS B2, Art. 6).

Historically, this summative question has also been a significant factor in assessing faculty members' career progress/merit as it relates to teaching effectiveness. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Joint Administration/Faculty Association Committee (2021) issued a statement on use of student survey results, indicating that 2020 data should not be used as an assessment tool for faculty performance. Instead, instructors were given the option to include their reflection on students' feedback in their Record of Activities. Currently, faculty are no longer required to include information from student surveys, but the moratorium on use of this data is no longer in place – it is at the discretion of the Chair whether to request inclusion of this data.

The work of MUFA's ad-hoc committee on student evaluation of teaching (Grignon et al., 2019), identified concerns with the way McMaster uses Student Evaluations of Teaching (since renamed Student Course Experience Surveys) in assessing teaching for merit and tenure and promotion. Concerns include low response rates, validity of measures, and biases in responses. The committee made several recommendations about the inclusion of student input, suggesting this information be used for three different purposes: formative feedback to inform instructor's teaching development; summative feedback to assess quality and effort of individual instructors; and programmatic feedback to help with accountability and help a program adjust and improve. The committee recommended replacing the current Likert-based questionnaire, suggesting ratings give an illusion of objectivity, with a collection of qualitative feedback on learning experiences (e.g., via open-ended questionnaires, focus groups).

In response to this report, work has been underway to address some of the recommendations made by the ad hoc committee. Following an iterative feedback process, changes are being made to the survey questions, with the hope of launching the revamped questions in Fall 2023. These changes are in line with better practices for involving students in providing input on their learning experiences (e.g., Kreitzer & Sweet-Cuschman, 2021). The questions include a mix of scaled quantitative questions and structured open questions for specific topics framed around the Stop-Start-Continue model. To help automate this process and make it easier to access data and run surveys, survey distribution is being transitioned from an internally developed system from the Faculty of Humanities to the platform Blue by Explorance. A group is also working on improving the text analytic capabilities of this platform using machine learning to make it easier for instructors to navigate qualitative comments provided. The philosophy behind these changes is to inform instructor's professional development, as well as provide a reflective space for students to take account of their own learning. This is a significant shift from what policy currently dictates and would require changes to policy and available supports to put in place.

While this work has helped move the committee's suggestions forward, it also highlights the inherent tension between the use of end-of-term feedback surveys for formative and summative purposes. As

one faculty member shared, they knowingly risk not getting positive student evaluations for the benefit of fostering more effective student learning, going on to say that they believed the assessment of teaching and teaching excellence at McMaster were misaligned because achieving one risks failure in the other (Taylor et al. 2022). An administrator within the same study suggested that a more formative approach would involve regularly checking in with students—looking for "input" rather than "the answer"—which would be a stronger basis for change and improvement in both learning and teaching, allowing instructors to review, reflect, respond, and reiterate.

2.3.2 Peer observation of teaching

Departmental Teaching Evaluation Reports in Tenure and Promotion dossiers vary significantly across academic units and are not supported by a consistent set of formative teaching evaluation activities. While some useful formative teaching evaluation activities are mandated by university policy, these components are scattered across policy documents in a way that limits a full understanding of teaching evaluation guidelines at McMaster.

SPS B1 indicates that a department's submission on the evaluation of teaching for reappointment, tenure, permanence and/or promotion should contain "observations from peers' visits to lectures or other teaching situations and evidence that the observations have been discussed with the colleague" (Art. 14). Further, Article 9 highlights the importance of evaluation by multiple people, on multiple occasions and in multiple contexts:

> *"Faculty members use a variety of pedagogies and work with students in multiple settings with multiple aids. For this reason, departmental evaluation cannot take the form of a single classroom visit, or an opinion expressed by a single individual after review of a single component of teaching, for research has shown that this method of evaluating teaching is unreliable. Instead, departmental evaluation must adhere to the principles of involving more than one evaluator and more than one site or occasion of evaluation."*

In practice, resourcing and professional development for peer observers have proven challenging. Some Faculties have developed their own resources/processes (e.g., observation templates, workshops for peer observers) to support the peer observation process within their Faculty with a range of outcomes (more information is provided in the Faculty case studies below).

The teaching portfolio is also identified as a tool that could be used to ground conversations about one's teaching with peers to "allow peers to evaluate the appropriateness of the individual's teaching approach, effectiveness of his or her teaching practice, the robustness of the evidence adduced in support of the instructor's effectiveness, and the importance of the individual's teaching contributions" (SPS B1, Art. 10). Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is limited engagement with this practice alongside or apart from peer observation of teaching.

Case Study: Implementing Peer Observation of Teaching in the Faculties

Supports around peer observation of teaching emerged in the Faculty of Health Sciences with the launch of its Peer Observation of Teaching initiative (Walsh et al., 2016). This initiative is intended to support the launch of peer observation and coaching programs in schools, programs, and departments within the Faculty. A tool kit has been developed, along with training sessions and materials for instructors and workshops focused on setting up a program and training observers. Peer Observation of Teaching resources, which can be applied to a variety of teaching contexts, have been developed by the Program for Faculty Development. A joint research study with the Universities of Ottawa and Toronto recently began to examine how universities develop and implement peer observation of teaching (POT) initiatives and what factors influence its implementation and sustainability. One of the motivations for this project was limitations in our knowledge about peer observation of teaching. For example, the quality and sustainability of peer observation of teaching after initial implementation remains a challenge for faculty development programs in Canada.

The Faculty of Engineering (Chiang et al., 2018) and Faculty of Science (Knorr et al., 2019) both partnered with the MacPherson Institute to review existing documents and provide guidelines for assessing teaching in their respective Faculties, with an emphasis on how formative evaluation activities could inform existing summative practices. Peer teaching observations are identified as a teaching activity that could offer a focus for formative teaching evaluation, along with reflections on part of the instructor and a meeting with the Chair/Director. While self-reflection and meeting with one's Chair/Director are expected to occur on an annual basis, there was no direction provided as to the desired frequency of peer observation, beyond that it occurs on an ongoing basis to better inform formative evaluation.

The Faculty of Science incorporated peer observation as part of its New Faculty Mentorship Program. This practice is intended for developmental purposes only and not officially "counted" as part of one's departmental teaching evaluation report or shared with Chairs/Directors. Meanwhile, peer observation that counts toward teaching evaluation reports occurs within departments/schools is guided by the procedure and resources outlined in the Faculty's ad hoc committee's report.

The Faculty of Engineering established the Instructor Development and Evaluation Committee (IDEC), which is responsible for carrying out formative observation and summative reviews of teaching within the Faculty following the Faculty's Policy on Evaluation of Teaching, fostering a community of practice of educators, and training of reviewers to perform these tasks. Following its launch in the 2022-2023 academic year, the committee identified areas for improvement around communication (e.g., with Chairs, clarity of expectations), workload, and support for summative reviews (IDEC Report 2022-2023).

The Faculty of Social Sciences (Prowse et al., 2019) underwent a similar review in consultation with the MacPherson Institute to develop peer teaching assessment guidelines. Clear parameters were provided around the timing of reviews:

> *"For new (tenure-track/teaching stream/CLA) faculty, it is recommended that the first peer assessment occur before the end of the first year of the new faculty member's probationary period. Peer assessment should be undertaken at least once in years 1, 2, and 4 of the appointment to ensure that there are multiple peer assessments. Additional reviews may be required if deemed necessary by the department/program Chair/Director. CLAs should be reviewed regularly so that peer assessments of teaching are available prior to renewal decisions. Peer assessment of teaching should occur in both undergraduate and graduate*

> *courses (if applicable). It is recommended that tenured faculty have regular peer assessment of teaching (e.g., once every three to four years, or every 60-80 units). If feasible, the teaching of sessional faculty should also be evaluated by departments, particularly if there is the potential that the sessional instructor will be re-hired" (p. 2)*
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> The Faculty of Social Sciences began offering some workshops for peer observers in the Fall of 2019. However, this process was significantly impacted by the pandemic. Anecdotally, Chair/Directors have indicated that peer observations have been limited to tenure-track/teaching-track faculty members going up for tenure and promotion, and in some cases contractually limited appointments going up for re-appointment. There was a general sentiment that the process was a big addition to workloads and getting multiple observations at multiple times by multiple people in time for tenure and promotion and other deadlines has been a challenge.

2.3.3 Teaching portfolios as a tool for regular reflection

There is an expectation that every faculty member has a teaching portfolio that they update regularly, as detailed in SPS B2. The teaching portfolio is intended to "facilitate yearly annual review and discussion of teaching between the Department Chair and each faculty member, as well as the departmental evaluation that is part of tenure, promotion and/or permanence processes" (SPS B1, Art. 10). In practice, there is limited individual or departmental engagement with one's teaching portfolio outside of the tenure, permanence, and promotion process [1].

As SPS B1 and SPS B2 are evaluative in nature there is little emphasis on ongoing professional development of faculty members. Indeed, SPS B2 relies on "description" of one's activities/contributes, framing the portfolio as compilation, rather than a reflective tool. With this emphasis on teaching portfolios as a document for summative evaluation, portfolios tend to read as a "highlight reel", and do not include learnings from failure, challenges, or risk taking. This speaks to the potential tension of using a summative evaluation tool for developmental purposes.

To incorporate this reflective element and ensure ongoing engagement with one's teaching portfolio, one possibility is to update teaching portfolios as part of the annual Career Progress/Merit process, bringing more alignment between the Career Progress/Merit and Tenure and Promotion processes. This could be done by aligning/connecting to Section 5 of the revised Record of Activities form, which prompts faculty to reflect on their teaching, research, and service over the past year. This section is intended to be used for developmental purposes. Some examples of how reflection is being brought into other teaching evaluation processes are described in the case study below.

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[1] Normally, a newly appointed Assistant Professor spends five years in full-time service before being considered for tenure/permanence; for those first appointed as Associate Professor or Professor, tenure/permanence is considered in the third and second year of appointment respectively. For promotion to the rank of Professor, a tenure-stream faculty member normally must spend at least six years in the Associate Professor rank. For a person appointed to a teaching-track position, promotion and permanence are not linked. Promotion may also happen but is not expected to occur at the same time.

> *Case study: Building in opportunities for reflection*
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> A Partnered Teaching and Learning Garden Grant, "Towards a more scholarly teaching practice: Making conversations about teaching easier", aims to build capacity for improving the construction and assessment of authentic teaching portfolios. As part of this project, a meeting was organized in February 2023 with educators and administrators in the Faculties of Science and Engineering (De Paoli et al., 2023). A common theme of the conversation was the importance of the use of teaching portfolios for professional and personal growth through reflection.
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> As part of their review of teaching assessment practices, the Faculties of Engineering and Science developed a template for instructors to engage in self-reflection. Elements 3, 4, 5, and 6 in SPS B1[2] were identified as evaluative aspects that could be better addressed, in part because the appropriate data are not gathered on a regular basis. The committees proposed that instructors themselves respond to these elements prior to their annual meeting with the Chair/Director. Instructors are prompted to consider things going well, things that could be improved, and steps to be taken toward improvement.

3. Where do we go from here?

We offer three recommendations to help with addressing these sources of tension and bridging the gap between policy objectives and the realities of practice.

3.1 Recommendation 1: Adapt and implement a teaching framework to guide the assessment of teaching quality

Results from Taylor et al. (2022) suggest that teaching excellently can be done in many ways, is nuanced and evolves over time, and is not appropriately assessed by a single score in a course evaluation. As such, they suggest teaching excellence is instead best understood as a process, with its assessment requiring a similarly nuanced and process-oriented approach as teaching itself. In Canada, some higher education institutions have begun to articulate what the process of teaching assessment could look like in their institutional contexts (e.g., Simon Fraser University, 2017; University of Saskatchewan, 2017; University of Waterloo, 2019), with the University of Saskatchewan developing its own "Teaching Quality Framework".

Teaching frameworks have been proposed as one tool to help "define" quality teaching and provide guidance on its assessment. One of these, the Career Framework for University Teaching was developed to provide a structured pathway, customizable to a university's unique context, to guide career progression based on faculty members' contributions to university teaching and learning, as well as provide an evidence base through which to evaluate and demonstrate teaching achievement during appointment, promotion, professional development and annual appraisal. Its development was informed by 15 university partners from 12 countries around the world.

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[2] These elements are related to: significant contributions to the curriculum; significant contributions to the development of course materials; significant participation in pedagogical discussions with students, colleagues, TAs, in the department or elsewhere; and evidence of incorporation of some form of formative evaluation in courses and evidence of response to the concerns of students.

The Framework is structured around four progressive levels of university teaching achievement. Level 1 – 'the effective teacher' – represents a threshold of teaching achievement which all academics should attain. For each of the four levels of teaching achievement, the Framework addresses the following three questions: what is the academic's sphere of impact? What promotion criteria define the academic's achievements in teaching and learning? What forms of evidence can be used to demonstrate the academic's teaching achievement? This structure, however, is as a proposal that is intended to be customized to best fit a university's teaching and learning culture, academic career structures, and progression points. Once adapted, the Framework serves the purpose of transparently communicating to the university community how teaching is valued and evaluated.

The global academic network associated with the Career Framework for University Teaching project offers insight into how this process of reform might be planned and implemented in their Roadmap for Change document, outlining a seven-step process that culminates in launching an adapted framework after consultation and iterative improvement. In the months preceding and following the launch of the framework, successful universities typically engaged in activities to aid its implementation and further its reach: offering new professional development opportunities to support the first promotion round under the new framework; developing new support materials with concise and accessible guidance that described how the framework would be applied in practice; and aligning other institutional policies and practices with the new framework. This approach aligns with the third recommendation in this report, which will be described in section 3.3.

3.2 Recommendation 2: Ensure consistency in how teaching is valued, recognized and supported across various types of positions, abilities and interests

To establish a culture that nurtures teaching and learning, teaching must be equally valued, recognized, and supported within the university. Underlying this sentiment is a belief that all academics who teach should continue to strengthen the quality and impact of their teaching activities throughout their career. This requires a common framework for evaluating teaching to be applied to all academics with any responsibility for teaching. Though there have been efforts to give greater recognition to teaching contributions, these changes have largely affected only a small group of the academic community, largely those in teaching-focused roles making high-profile and externally recognized contributions to teaching and learning.

In 2014, University College London (UCL) embarked on a root-and-branch reform to its three academic career pathways: teaching fellow track, research fellow track, academic track (blending research and teaching). The reforms were driven by a recognition that limited consistency and coherence existed between the university's three career tracks, and their scope was insufficiently flexible to recognize the full range and mix of activities undertaken by UCL academics. At its heart, the plans for change were driven by a desire to improve the recognition and status of teaching and learning on campus. The new UCL Academic Careers Framework uses a single model to support all three career pathways, introducing a 'threshold' criteria for each academic grade that requires all promotion candidates to meet a threshold level of teaching quality. The introduction of 'core' and 'extended' criteria also accommodates a greater breadth of academic profiles, including those with specialist contributions to teaching. Under this framework an individual on either the academic track or teaching fellow track can identify education as their 'extended' ability and can progress to full professorship on that basis (more information is available in this Case Study).

An environmental scan of research on teaching and learning across McMaster University (Harvey et al., 2022) identified a desire to see research on teaching and learning more fully integrated into hiring and tenure and promotion practices. Many respondents felt that teaching and learning research was not part of their primary responsibilities and less valued than disciplinary research. This is despite an institutional culture at McMaster University that supports this inquiry by way of grant funding, the creation and growth of positions whose primary responsibilities are to conduct educational research, and consultative pedagogical support through the Teaching and Learning Centre. The authors recommend taking steps to embed recognition of teaching- and learning-related research into policies and procedures at all levels of appointments and across all faculties at the university. But they note that not everyone can or should be expected to undertake programs of research on teaching- and learning-related topics. Those who do engage in this type of research should be supported by ongoing training and professional development to enhance their skills and be recognized for their efforts.

As previously noted, policy inconsistencies between teaching-track and tenure-track faculty are currently under investigation by a joint administration/faculty association Working Group, which will result in further recommendations to address this source of policy tension.

3.3 Recommendation 3: Update policies to be in line with current and desired good practice and consider implementation supports

Initiatives happening around campus that would see improvements to the inclusion of student and peer feedback and individual reflection as part of the teaching evaluation process are currently not supported by or contradict existing institutional policies. This misalignment between good practice and policy can create challenges and tensions within the education system. Policies are intended to serve as guidelines and frameworks for practice. Alignment helps prevent confusion and contradictions between policy directives and actual implementation. If there is a mismatch between policy requirements and on-the-ground realities, it can lead to resistance, non-compliance, or ineffective execution.

Successful adaptation and implementation of initiatives like the Career Framework for University Teaching has relied in part on aligning other institutional policies and practices with the new framework and the provision of supports to aid in its implementation. Absent institutional supports, evaluation practices will continue to vary significantly across academic units.

Supports around professional development are one area in which the MacPherson Institute can play a role in supporting the implementation of policy changes. For example, professional development has been identified as a need with respect to supporting the development and assessment of teaching portfolios and peer observation.

4. Final thoughts and Future directions

These recommendations seek to address some of the tensions between policy and practice that are impacting how teaching is valued and evaluated at McMaster. Recognizing that policy and culture change take time, these recommendations are offered as possible starting points and considerations moving forward.

Any actions implemented to address these tensions should take into account equity considerations. Recognizing that individuals face different challenges and constraints due to factors such as race, gender, disability, or socioeconomic status, it is important to account for how these contextual factors

may influence teaching performance and evaluation. Taylor et al. (2022) also noted the importance of considering contextual factors, specifically highlighting aspects outside of instructor control (e.g., level of the course, number of students, scheduling of the class, etc.), which potentially impact students' perception of their learning experience.

This report highlights tensions specifically related to the evaluation of teaching, largely focused on those in teaching appointments. There is also an opportunity to explore other tensions between policy and practice at McMaster which have an impact on how teaching is evaluated for those who are in sessional appointments or TA appointments, as well as how teaching is valued at the institution. For example, policies and practices regarding the recruitment and selection of sessional instructors, faculty members and administrators could be re-examined to foreground contributing to/fostering an environment that supports and values teaching.

Further opportunity to advance McMaster's organizational culture around teaching lies in considering the ways in which the University's processes affect practices and attitudes. Continuing the above example, ensuring onboarding processes effectively convey and reinforce a culture which values teaching in the first days of new hires' appointments would align with recruitment and hiring policies and practices which emphasize a similar message. Additionally, reviewing reward systems above and beyond those articulated in policies related to the evaluation of teaching could strengthen McMaster's policies and practices around recognizing and valuing teaching. Finally, reflecting on messages about teaching that are explicitly and implicitly communicated and modelled by leaders at different levels of the institution is essential, as these messages can shape beliefs, attitudes, and practices, and empower the McMaster community to fully realize its desired organizational culture centered around teaching.

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