

## EQUILAVENCY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### I. Rationale:

The Community College teaches non-traditional students as well as traditional students in non-traditional disciplines in addition to traditional disciplines. The Community College of Baltimore County is committed to the continued development of its faculty in order to provide the best opportunity for learning to its students. The College recognizes that while traditional postgraduate education is an important aspect of professional development, there might be situations where the best preparation for a faculty member involves activities other than post-graduate education. The purpose of this policy is to provide a standard set of expectations and procedures for faculty to document the need for and verify completion of non-traditional educational options for promotion.

General Recommendations of the Promotion Equivalency Committee Fall 2003 - While credit-granting policies vary widely, normally 60-90 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate are required in the field of Master of Fine Arts. In addition, the MFA often requires a distinguished record of performance or practice, often demonstrated by the development of a portfolio of work or documentation of performance. The committee found that degrees such as the MFA might be shown to be equivalent to the PhD when the credits earned are considered along with the body of professional work the faculty member has completed. Consequently, the committee recommends that faculty with a MFA with 60-90 credits and a substantial body of professional work that has earned recognition from their peers be automatically accepted as equivalent. If an MFA was awarded with less than 60 credits and without the requirement for distinguished work or performance, the faculty member should submit evidence of equivalency.

The JD and MD, if granted by regionally accredited US institutions are equivalent to a Ph.D. The MD should require an exam (usually a first level state board exam) before graduation and receipt of the degree.

### II. Definitions:

Applicant: An individual seeking Equivalency.

Board Equivalencies: CCBC Board of Trustees approved academic criteria for equivalency to academic degrees. Faculty Promotion Policy Approved 6/11/01 and Revised 11/ 25/02.

College: The Community College of Baltimore County.

Equivalency: A formal acknowledgement by the PEC that certifies that a candidate for promotion has met the educational requirement for academic rank by substituting non-

traditional academic or professional experience for some portion of the traditional postgraduate credits or degrees required for promotion to a specific academic rank.

Equivalency Plan: A plan that defines a series of educational activities and explains why those activities are appropriate substitutes for some portion of the traditional postgraduate coursework or degrees required for promotion. The Plan will include endorsements by the applicant's Dept. chair and Dean. Once approved by the PEC, the plan is a contractual agreement between the College and the applicant and defines what a faculty member must do to earn Equivalency. Plans may include a mix of traditional academic activity (coursework or progress towards a postgraduate degree) coupled with other activities that build professional recognition or competence. Each plan will normally include a time frame for completion, and the plan will remain in effect until that time has elapsed. Once the PEC certifies that an Equivalency Plan has been completed, Equivalency is automatically granted to the applicant.

Equivalency Request: An equivalency request is submitted to the PEC by faculty that have not completed an equivalency plan and consists of evidence that the applicant's professional development is equal in breadth and depth to part or all of the postgraduate education normally required of an applicant for promotion to a specific rank. The Equivalency request will be submitted several months before an application for promotion is submitted.

Promotion Equivalency Committee: (PEC) A standing committee of the College charged with evaluating an applicant's proposal for Equivalency, evaluating Equivalency Plans and determining if an applicant has successfully completed an Equivalency Plan. The PEC is governed by this policy and will use the criteria described in the PEC standard recommendations guidelines to equate non-traditional and traditional graduate education when appropriate.

Request for Equivalency: A portfolio assembled by the candidate for promotion to document the activities that justify receipt of an "Equivalency". The portfolio will include a rationale and documentation of the nature of the activities submitted in lieu of graduate credit and evidence as to the intensity of participation by the applicant.

### III. Equivalency Procedures:

Faculty will follow one of three general procedures based on their academic history.

- A. Faculty that have traditional academic credits and degrees will use traditional academic options for promotion. Those individuals do not need to use the equivalency option and should follow the standard promotion policies as defined by their school or division. This is the process by which faculty in most disciplines should seek promotion.
- B. Faculty that meet the standard equivalency criteria established by the CCBC Board of Trustees as described in "Faculty Promotion Policy" Approved 6/11/01 and Revised 11/ 25/02.

These individuals should follow the standard promotion policies as defined by their school or division and the College. The School/Division or College promotion committee will review the faculty member's documentation to confirm that the faculty member met Board Criteria.

C. Faculty that have not completed either traditional academic credentials or Board approved equivalence.

Equivalency should be used when the applicant can demonstrate that:

1. No appropriate postgraduate academic programs are available,  
or;
2. when non-traditional professional development will better prepare the faculty member to meet his or her professional responsibilities than postgraduate educational courses or degrees available to the faculty member.

#### IV. Equivalence Plans:

When possible, faculty are urged to plan both for promotion and, if appropriate, for equivalency. In the first year of this policy, and in exceptional cases, some faculty may seek promotion and equivalency without having developed and completed an "Equivalency Plan". Therefore, there are two categories of faculty that may seek equivalency.

A. Faculty seeking Equivalency without a "Plan".

These individuals should submit an Equivalency Request as described below to the PEC before submitting their promotion documentation to the promotion committee.

1. Specific dates for submission of an Equivalency request should conform to School/Divisional or College Promotion schedules to allow the PEC time to process the request and interview the candidate. In general, if Promotion committees meet in the spring of the year, Equivalency requests should be submitted by Oct. 15 of the preceding fall.
2. An Equivalency Request will consist of five sections:
  - a. Rationale that explains why seeking an Equivalency is the best option to meet the needs of the Faculty member and appropriate to the needs of the College. (This should address III C, 1&2 above.)
  - b. Precedents, if available, that provide the PEC with other similar situations.
  - c. Activities that the faculty member would like to have considered in the evaluation of the Equivalency request including graduate degrees, graduate coursework, undergraduate coursework, continuing education, industry specific courses, licensing courses, professional certification courses, planned professional presentation and participation in professional activities. Each activity will be documented with material that will show as clearly as possible what the applicant did. Such material as programs of events the applicant attended, programs indicating that the applicant was a speaker or otherwise participated in the program, continuing education or other certificates of completion, certifications, licenses earned, published reviews, published

- criticisms and personal letters attesting to the nature and intensity of an applicant's participation are appropriate.
- c. Support letters from the Dept. Chairperson and Dean that explain why they recommend that the applicant be granted Equivalency.
  - d. A Signature area that includes the signatures of the faculty member, Chairperson and Dean and space for the signature of the Chairperson of the PEC.
3. The PEC will review the evidence and consider the quantity and quality of the applicant's activities as documented in the Request. The criteria for approval will be:
- a. There is no appropriate postgraduate coursework or program to provide appropriate professional development in the applicant's area of professional responsibility and that the activities completed by the applicant would be equivalent to a graduate courses or program if one existed.  
or:
  - b. If a postgraduate program exists in the area of the applicant's professional responsibility, the activities the applicant completed were as appropriate in providing relevant and equivalent professional development for the faculty member.

The PEC will use the "Standard Guidelines for Equivalency" to equate relevant non-traditional learning activities to graduate credit.

4. The PEC may either grant or deny Equivalency.
- a. The PEC chairperson will sign the Equivalency Request and append a brief letter of approval  
Or
  - b. append an explanation as to why the request was denied.

The Chairperson will retain a copy of the proposal and return copies accompanied by the PEC's decision to the faculty member, Department Chair and Dean.

B. Faculty seeking to develop an "Equivalency Plan."

Faculty are urged to develop Equivalency plans when non-traditional learning options best prepare them to facilitate learning as indicated in \_\_\_\_\_.

1. The primary tool in preparing for promotion should be a professional development plan that identifies the strategies and activities the faculty member will use to earn promotion. An Equivalency Plan should be developed by the faculty member seeking promotion in cooperation with his or her Dept. Chair and approved by their Dean as a supplement to that plan. It should be developed three to four years in advance of promotion if possible.
2. The intent of the Equivalency Plan is:

- a. To document why non-traditional professional development activities are preferable to the traditional educational requirements.
  - b. To define activities that the faculty member will complete to develop content knowledge and professional skills.
  - c. To demonstrate that the activities are as, or more, relevant to the faculty member's responsibilities as traditional postgraduate education.
3. The Plan will consist of a minimum of five sections:
- a. Rationale that explains why seeking an Equivalency is the best option to meet the needs of the Faculty member and appropriate to the needs of the College. This should address the questions raised in III, C, 1&2 above.
  - b. Precedents that provide the PEC with other similar situations.
  - c. Activities that the faculty member intends to complete including broad categories such as advanced degrees graduate education, undergraduate education, continuing education, industry specific courses, licensing courses, professional certification courses, planned professional presentation and participation in professional activities.
  - d. Support letters from the Dept. Chairperson and Dean that document their support of the plan.
  - e. Signature area that includes the signatures of the faculty member, Chairperson and Dean and space for the signature of the chairperson of the PEC.
4. The Applicant will submit four copies of the Equivalency Plan to the PEC during the Spring Semester at about the same time Promotion Requests are to be submitted to the Promotion Committee.
5. The PEC will review the evidence and consider the quantity and quality of the applicant's activities proposed by the plan. The criteria for approval will be:
- a. There is no appropriate post-graduate coursework or program to provide appropriate professional development in the applicant's area of professional responsibility and that the activities planned by the applicant would be equivalent to postgraduate courses or a program if one existed.  
or:
  - b. If a postgraduate program exists in the applicant's area of professional responsibility, the planned activities are as appropriate in providing relevant professional development for the faculty member to the available postgraduate courses or programs.
6. The PEC will use the "Standard Guidelines for Equivalency" to equate relevant non-traditional learning activities to graduate credit.
- a. The PEC may approve the plan as written, reject the plan outright, return the plan for revision, or add stipulations to the plan. Stipulations may include requirements such as addition of specific or general categories of credit or non-credit activities, and requirements regarding how activities must be documented.

- b. If the PEC approves the plan, the chairperson of the PEC will sign the Plan and attach a letter that indicates approval and includes any stipulations or required additions to the plan. The chairperson will attach copies of the letter to the four copies of the Plan. One copy will be returned to applicant, one will be retained by the PEC, and one copy will be sent to the Dept. Chairperson and Dean.
  - c. If the PEC does not approve the plan, the PEC Chairperson will return the plan, with a letter explaining the PEC's decision to the applicant, the applicant's Dept. Chairperson and Dean. The PEC may not approve a plan if it:
    1. is inappropriate and the PEC decides the applicant should seek promotion through traditional means.
    2. may be appropriate, but the applicant has not submitted enough information to justify committee approval.
    3. is appropriate, but some information is lacking. The faculty member may conduct a quick revision and resubmit within a period of time to be defined by the committee.
7. After a plan is approved, the faculty member will be responsible for completing the activities in the Equivalency Plan and maintaining documentation that describes the activities in a way that will enable the PEC to determine that the activity has met the intent of the equivalency plan. The Equivalency Plan will remain in effect for the length of time planned to complete the activities outlined in the plan.
8. If for some reason, it is necessary for the faculty member to revise the plan, the approved plan should be returned to the PEC along with an explanation for the change. Minor changes (for example substituting one activity for another or updating a certification) may be addressed by a short explanation accompanied by a signature of approval from the faculty member's Dept. Chairperson and Dean. Major changes (substituting an entire category of activity for another or eliminating planned academic coursework) will require that the applicant address the change in the five-part format of the original application.
9. After completing the plan, the applicant will compile the evidence that the plan is complete:
- a. The applicant should write an Equivalency request that explains that the plan is complete and that equivalency is requested.
  - b. The applicant will append a narrative that explains how the evidence submitted corresponds to the activities defined in the plan, and a portfolio of evidence that the activities in the plan were completed. The narrative may be very brief depending upon how clearly the activities in the portfolio match the plan. Typical evidence will be registration forms, catalogs, reviews, event schedules, completion and competency certificated, transcripts, and certifications.
  - c. The applicant should attach letters from the Dept. Chair and Dean indicating whether they agree that the faculty member completed the plan.
  - d. The applicant should submit four copies of the plan, narrative and letters and a portfolio containing the evidence of completion to the PEC by OCT 15 in the fall semester preceding the anticipated submission of promotion documentation

10. The PEC will review the evidence to determine if the activities completed fulfill the plan.
  - a. If the activities in the plan have been completed as planned, the PEC will approve the Equivalency Request. The PEC chairperson will sign the Equivalency Request and append a brief letter of approval. The PEC will retain a copy of the plan and the narrative, and return copies of the plan and narrative to the applicant, Dept Chair and Dean. The portfolio of evidence will be returned to the applicant.
  - b. If the planed activities have not been completed, the PEC will deny equivalency and the PEC chairperson will append a letter of explanation to the Equivalency request. The committee will retain one copy, and copies will be sent to the applicant, the Dept Chairperson and Dean. The portfolio of evidence will be returned to the applicant.

#### V. Right of Appeal

A faculty member may appeal a PEC decision based on non-compliance with this policy to the Grievance Committee.

## VI. Equivalency Process Flow Chart

| Traditional Promotion  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Faculty member has met traditional Academic Criteria (graduate credits and degrees.)   |  | Promotion package Submitted to Promotion Committee |  |
| Faculty member has met Board Approved Academic Equivalency:  |  |  |  |
| Equivalency Promotion  |  |  |  |
| Part 1. No Plan has been developed or Plan has been completed, the faculty member is seeking promotion in current year, and meets PEC criteria for Equivalency.                                |  |  |  |
| Oct 1-15   | Oct 15-Nov 10.   | Nov 15.  | Spring   |
| Faculty member submits Equivalency application to PEC  | PEC meets with applicants  | PEC returns application approved, or denied.       | Candidate for promotion turns in Promotion package to promotion committee including Equivalency. |
| Faculty member completes the equivalency plan  |  |  |  |
| Part 2. The faculty member plans to seek promotion not less than one year in the future and meets criteria defined in PEC policy.  |  |  |  |
| Jan 1-30   | Feb 1-15   | Feb 30   | April 10   |
| Faculty member consults with Department chair and develops an Equivalency Plan   | Faculty member and Dept. Chair submit Plan to Dean for approval. | Faculty member submits plan to the PEC.            | PEC returns plan approved, approved with modifications, or rejected                              |
| All Dates are tentative: Scheduling will be conforming to the schedule adopted by PAC and the promotion committee.   |  |  |  |
| In general, Equivalency Plans will be submitted at the same time promotion requests are submitted while Equivalency requests will be submitted three to four months before promotion requests. |  |  |  |

### Standard Guideline for Equivalency

These guidelines will be used to equate hours of non-traditional academic activities in an Applicants area of professional responsibility to graduate credit. Teaching is an area of professional responsibility for all faculty. The PEC may grant higher “ratios” of equivalency upon receipt of documentation or testimony that demonstrates that specific activities are substantially similar to graduate coursework or programs.

| Credit | Definition of Inclusion  | Examples   |
|--------|--|--|
| 15: 1  | - Active Participation with testing component<br>- Single developed presentation in field given to a professional organization | - CEUs awarded after testing<br>- Poster presentation of original work.<br>- Scholarly paper in the applicant’s field.<br>- Award of a relevant professional License or Certification after examination. |
| 30:1   | Active Participation   | - A repeat presentation.<br>-College presentation<br>-Virtual Academy (VA) attendance with evidence of application of topic material.  |
| 45:1   | Passive Participation  | -Attendance at a workshop<br>-All College based programs in a teaching realm, except VA  |
| 60:1   | Personal Enrichment at the College   | -Any program presented at the college not related to the faculty’s field   |

Formally approved on February 23, 2004.