Report on Academic Review Board Activities
Academic Year 2017-8

A) The Academic Review Board (ARB) is charged with evaluating appropriateness of previously unlisted courses to fulfill Tufts’ requirement for World Civilization, or part of Tufts’ requirement for Culture or for Distribution. The role of ARB is to implement policy, not to make it.

ARB strives to respond to petitions within five working days.

-For Distribution credit, 74 petitions were reviewed; of these, 7 were denied
-For Culture credit, 72 petitions were reviewed; of these, 5 were denied.
-For World Civ, 36 petitions were reviewed; of these, 3 were denied. In addition, the Chair of the World Civ subcommittee (David Proctor) met with 7 students to review courses before petitioning them; in each case the student decided it was better not to petition since there was little chance the courses in question would be approved.

In addition, 31 courses approved by A&S faculty were evaluated for Distribution attributes. ARB makes decisions about Distribution attributes based on the primary focus of the course, and the course learning objectives. A Distribution attribute is assigned if more than 50% of the course focuses on principles and approaches associated with that distribution area. A course normally does not receive two Distribution attributes.

Tufts is moving to the SHU (Semester Hour Unit) credit system, which requires a new system for building student records. Advisement Reports are no longer available to students, for them to check curricular progress and the status of petitions they may have submitted. Until Dowling Hall gets UAchieve installed, personnel trained on it, and coded there is no place where students can see their curriculum updated. At this time (Spring 2018), the petitions from students *other* than Seniors will be dealt with over summer into fall, after the Seniors graduate.

Students contacting ARB months after their petition was approved are advised to check on their petition by e-mailing their request to studentservices@tufts.edu. This gets forwarded to their Records Coordinator, who can tell students whether their petition has been recorded or not.

B) ARB responded to Experimental College concerns that ExColl course attributes were not being assigned in time to inform student (including SMFA students) choices of ExColl courses. (this issue was brought up in Nov 2016). By April 2018, ExColl staff had sent petitions for Distribution attribute approval to ARB in time to inform students at registration.
C) Membership in ARB is declining (now down to 4) due to faculty leaves and end-of-terms on the committee. The ARB has evolved to conduct all of its work on line, with at most one year-end in-person meeting of the committee itself. ARB duties do not intrude on faculty schedules; petitions can be evaluated at any hour accessible by computer. (responses may require office scanners to generate pdf’s usable to Dowling Hall). Past members have enjoyed the work and expressed regret that their terms could not be renewed indefinitely. In other words, the work is interesting and not onerous, but only those who serve on ARB seem to realize this. Membership for 2018-19 seems like it may be skeletal. As of May 8, 2018, it appears ARB may be down to a membership of 4 for the 2018-9 academic year. ARB counters this shortage by discussing problematic petitions with ARB colleagues, and outside the ARB with non-voting experts at Tufts (often Chairs or Transfer-of-credit Representatives of Departments related to the field mentioned in petition).

There should be 10 active voting members on ARB:
   1 Chair
   3 Distribution Subcommittee members
   3 Culture Subcommittee members
   3 World Civilization Subcommittee members

We hope new memberships in ARB will be filled by Committee on Committees assignments for AY 2018-9.

Respectfully submitted by
Prof. George Ellmore, Chair
Academic Review Board
May 10, 2018