PhD Program in Classics

Professional Development and Professional Ethics Assessment Report

March 15, 2016

Introduction. This report was developed by a committee of five faculty members (Profs. Ancona, Clayman, Simpson, Thibodeau, and Yarrow) and four students who regularly sit with the Executive and Admissions Committees (Davies Mason, Morrison-Moncure, Perez-Diaz, Weimer). Each received a packet of information about the various activities undertaken by the program to address the students’ professional development and their awareness of professional ethics. To assure a high level of student input, the student members, under the leadership of Irene Morrison-Moncure, developed a survey (attached) that was sent to all the students in the program. The response rate was close to 30%.

I. Learning goals. The learning goals for professional development and professional ethics are posted on our webpage. Here is a brief summary:

1. Teaching: Students will be prepared to become effective teachers who manage their classrooms with integrity.

2. Research and publication: Students will learn to carry on research in the field and to communicate it by speaking at conferences and/or by publication in peer-reviewed journals.

3. Creating venues for communicating research to the academic community and the public: Students will learn to communicate research by organizing a professional conference.

II. Our offerings that address these goals include courses, workshops, and special events.

1. Teaching: This goal is met by facilitating appointments for the students as adjunct instructors throughout the City University and in other undergraduate institutions in the New York area. In this context, a student’s teaching is assessed by classroom observations performed by senior faculty at the colleges and by student evaluation forms administered by the undergraduate department in which the student teaches. Both the observations and the student evaluations are required by the contract that governs employment at CUNY. Students also may enroll in short courses in pedagogy offered by the Provost’s Office and in our own semester-long course in Teaching Classics where they are assessed by the instructor.

2. Research and Publication: While almost every course requires students to write papers and to make an oral presentation, two courses, the Greek and Latin Poetry Seminars, focus on various issues involved in doing research at the professional level and in thoroughly documenting it. These include ethical issues such as how to avoid plagiarism. Students in the poetry seminars spend an entire semester writing a fully documented research paper, an abstract based on the paper, and a version for oral presentation. They present their papers in a panel at the end of the semester and many
are subsequently submitted to conferences and journals. In addition, all students complete the **Responsible Conduct of Research training** required by the Graduate Center. The Classics Program also schedules practice sessions for students before they speak in professional venues, and this year for the first time we have scheduled a workshop on writing effective grant proposals.

3. **Creating venues for communicating research to the academic community and the public.** This goal is met through our annual graduate student conference on a theme chosen by the students. They promulgate the call for papers, referee submissions anonymously, select the participants, raise the necessary funds, set up the schedule, advertise and host the conference in a professional manner. The students have also founded an online scholarly journal, *Periodos*, which is just getting under way.

4. **Preparing for the academic job market.** This goal, newly added due to the challenges of the current job market in the humanities, is met by our Professional Development Workshop for level 3 students. Here students become familiar with various venues in which jobs are advertised and how to read the job descriptions. They also develop a set of documents that traditionally are required by hiring institutions, such as a cv, cover letter, and statement of teaching philosophy, and practice interviewing techniques. Career choices outside of the academy are also discussed.

III. **Evidence for assessment.**

The results of a student survey, composed and administered by the students on the committee, provided key evidence for the success of our professional development offerings across the board. A copy of the survey is attached. In addition,

1. The assessment of our effectiveness in preparing students to teach is based on the students’ excellent observation reports and student evaluations at the colleges.

2. The assessment of our effectiveness in preparing the students for research and publication comes from the outstanding record of publications, conference papers, and grants won by our students. A list of these for 2015 and 2016 (so far) is attached.

3. The assessment of our effectiveness in preparing students to organize venues for communicating research to the field and to the public is the longevity and excellence of our annual student conference.

4. The assessment of our effectiveness in helping students navigate the world beyond the PhD is ongoing. The Workshop in Professional Development for level three students is a relatively new course, taught last year for the first time.

IV. **The findings**

Overall, the survey showed that the students are broadly satisfied with the Program’s offerings in the area of professional development. Some of the suggestions that were made for improvements, such as offering the Introduction to Classical Studies to each incoming class in the fall, are desirable, but not possible due to restrictions on the
number of teaching units available. Other helpful suggestions are discussed below under in section 5.

1. Evidence of success in preparing students for teaching: Our students are constantly in demand as adjunct instructors not only at CUNY’s undergraduate colleges, but at colleges throughout the tristate area including the intensive Summer Latin/Greek Institute where one student directs the entire Greek program.

2. Evidence of success in preparing students to speak at conferences and publish their research: Our students have an enviable record of publication, public speaking engagements, and winning grants. A complete list is attached for 2015 and a list-to-date for 2016. It includes four published papers and a review (plus several encyclopedia articles forthcoming), six grants, nineteen conference papers and seven more on the calendar. In judging this achievement it is important to note that the total enrollment in the program is only twenty-four students including four first-year students who are not yet active in research and publication.

3. Evidence of success in preparing students to create venues to communicate research to both scholarly and public audiences is the success of our Annual Graduate Student Conference which is now in its ninth year. The continued funding of the conference by the New York Classical Club and the Classical Association of the Atlantic States testifies to its excellent reputation in the field of classics beyond the Graduate Center.

4. Evidence of success in preparing students to navigate the world beyond the PhD is incomplete. So far the only student who attended our Level 3 Professional Workshop is on the job market. He reports that the workshop has been extremely useful to him especially in preparing for various types of interviews and a campus visit, but more time is needed to weigh its effectiveness.

V. Proposed Changes.

It is clear that our efforts in professional development have been broadly effective. The student survey, however, suggests that the students are not always aware of how to find relevant information. For example, one respondent suggested that we should circulate contact information for undergraduate chairs to help students find adjunct teaching. Such a list has been on our webpage for some time, though it has not been kept up-to-date. Another suggested that we post a list of opportunities for students to speak. Though there is no central online clearing-house for conferences in classics, it would be possible to list deadlines for conferences of national and regional classics associations and links to classics lists where announcements of conferences are likely to appear.

There were also a few suggestions for changes in our courses devoted to professional development. One such suggestion, that in addition to poetry seminars we might also offer the same format for prose, is attractive and easily done. Another, that we offer as
more basic professional writing course to precede the seminars, needs discussion and should be referred to the curriculum committee.

One unaddressed need is for more guidance in pedagogy and in navigating the challenges of adjunct teaching at CUNY. It is not possible to offer our course in classics pedagogy often enough to serve the students’ needs. One respondent suggested that we address this need with student-run workshops. Since many of the students have considerable experience teaching at the undergraduate colleges this seems like an excellent idea that will benefit the organizers as much as the participants.

VI. Next steps

1. Work with the students to create student-run workshops in teaching classics.
2. Create a list of organizations that offer opportunities for scholarly communication with a calendar of deadlines for abstract submissions.
3. Request that the Curriculum Committee consider a proposal for a basic scholarly writing course to precede the poetry/prose seminars.