

A LEVEL THAT SPEAKS TO EXPERIENCE: NAVIGATING THE INSTITUTE PLACEMENT COMMITTEE



Have a conversation with the FSA members that sit on the IPC.



Ray deVries, thank you so, so much for visiting us today and answering a few questions. I really appreciate it.

RdV: Thank you for having me.

How long have you been at BCIT, Ray, and in what capacity?

RdV: I've been at BCIT just over 20 years as an FSA Specialized Faulty member, in the role of counsellor in BCIT's Counselling & Student Development.

The reason I asked you here today is because you have experiences navigating the Institute Placement Committee (IPC) process.

RdV: We had a member join our Department in September 2019 as a temporary contractor backfilling for a leave of absence. At the time of hiring the person was initially placed on the salary scale by the Selection Committee.

The member was not informed that they could challenge the initial placement and then COVID happened. The member received an additional credential and was eventually told that they could apply for a salary advancement. So, they made an application to the Institute Placement Committee (IPC), which was declined.

We were surprised the member was declined by the committee, so we let the member know they ought to appeal it. They appealed and were declined a second time. And around that same time, we had two other members hired, both of whom obtained additional credentials and both of whom applied to the IPC for advancement. Their step increase was also declined. We learned then that a non-voting representative could be nominated from the Department to speak to the IPC and when the time came for that next meeting, I was waiting in the wings to speak. However, I was never invited into that meeting, which was a big surprise.

Afterwards, I spoke to Terry Gordon, then FSA Treasurer, to convey our Departmental practices. Our first member made their third appeal and the other two members made their second. I was invited into the meeting and spoke to the IPC about our Departmental practice of recognizing this particular credential and having it recognized in a step increase. The third decision was made in our applicant's favor.

Why was it that this person was too low on the placement scale? Do we know why that came about?

RdV: The first person hired was on backfill. Subsequent to their starting work here, they were granted a professional registration, and then made the application for step increase based on that.

The same thing applied to the other two applicants. I'd said earlier that we hired two new people after the first applicant. In fact, three new people were hired in total after the first IPC applicant I mentioned. Of the three new hires, one person already had the registration and got credit for it. The other two were similarly new graduates who got their registration after being hired. When we got to the third appeal for the first applicant, the other new members' applications were also on the table and had in fact been denied once. So, all three people got a retroactive decision in our favor—which was backdated to the time of their initial applications.

So, when a new hire is made, whose job is it to recommend initial placement on the pay scale?

RdV: It's the selection committee's job (see Collective Agreement Article 5.2.3.2.5), which then

goes to their related manager for review, or Dean. If there's disagreement between the Dean, or equivalent, and the committee, the former is required to provide a rationale. Departmental selection committees are comprised of 50% FSA members and 50% management. Even if there's only one manager and five FSA members, it's a 50-50 split.

What else comes to mind that could help our members navigate the IPC process?

RdV: One great piece of advice—one really great suggestion that was made by our FSA folk—was to caucus or have a conversation with the FSA members that sit on the IPC so as to convey the rationale for a step increase. That was a very, very useful suggestion because my understanding of the IPC is that it's made-up of 11 people. One is the chair, and the other ten members are half FSA members, half non-FSA. And so, because we were able to caucus with our FSA members, we were able to present our rationale more clearly.

On top of that, members need to pay attention because sometimes there are small changes that can significantly affect the process. So, one thing that I noticed was that when I was initially hired in 2002, I got a paper copy welcome to BCIT acceptance letter. And in that letter was a sentence that said you can appeal your initial placement. My colleagues hired later that I mentioned had electronic

welcome to BCIT letters which made no mention that you have the right to appeal.

Neither did anybody on the selection committee. Nor the manager. When COVID commenced and the person was making their first application at some point the manager said, "Oh, by the way, you have the right to appeal," which was new information to my colleague. Something in the paperwork had been changed along the way.

And so, for me, this was one of the recommendations that I made, whether it was direct or sort of insinuated: that the old paper copy had had clear information to new people that they could appeal initial placement as well as make appeals and request salary advancement on the basis of achievements. All that information was now unavailable on the digital sheet new hires received.

That's a big deal. The FSA tries to inform our members of that in the literature, but we don't have access to all new members. Moreover, it's BCIT who's granting us access to them in the form of orientations. So, it's always something that can be revoked or withheld.

RdV: I completely agree. I've made it a point for me to inform new members, "welcome to our Department and oh, by the way, you have the right to appeal the initial placement as well as you

have the right to apply for a step increase on the basis of a registration."

That's the advice that our LR team also gives to folks who sit on selection committees because of how important it is. Ditto when I do orientations. Almost invariably if the group is more than 10, one or two will come to me saying, "you know, I think that maybe was I misplaced." It's extremely common.

RdV: Part of the reason is that the resume, as applicants apply for a job, puts their best foot forward, so to speak. It doesn't necessarily include all of the work experience that they've had. So, when making an application, and a selection committee is determining initial placement, all the work experience might not be on hand for the committee to access.

So, it behooves somebody—whether it's HR or whether it's the committee or whatever—once the candidate has been determined that they are going to be offered a job, to ask if their resume includes relevant work experience because part of determining initial placement is based on past work experience. And if it's not all on the resume, well, we can't give you credit for it.

Ray deVries, thank you so much for speaking with me today. I know that the membership will get a lot out of it.

RdV: Thanks, Matt.